

**The Convenient Label of ‘Third Culture Kids’:
an exploration into the impact of an international
school upbringing on the development of cultural
identity, belonging, and place.**

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Abstract

The rise in globalisation has promoted and necessitated the need for the world to become more interdependent through economic, social, cultural, technological, and institutional processes. As this occurs, the number of families and their children are also increasing, with many enrolling into international schools abroad. In literature, children who have this international school upbringing have often fallen under the umbrella term of a ‘Third Culture Kid’ (TCK). As understandings of the intricacies of this unique international community deepen, the TCK label has undergone definitional changes for the label to be more comprehensive to reflect the expanding and diversifying population.

The aim of this study was to examine the conceptual underpinnings of the TCK label and investigate the impact of an international school upbringing on identity, sense of belonging, and place. To achieve this, I conducted a qualitative study aligned with a constructivist/interpretivist approach that employed a hermeneutic phenomenological method. I carried out 11 in-depth interviews with participants remotely via videotelephone programmes as this research was occurring during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

First, the findings suggest that there were perceptible ideological inconsistencies between the international school curriculum and their proclaimed ideology of international mindedness. Second, participants’ experiences were conditional to their perceived ‘internationalness’, and this was inherently tied to their race. Participants who were Caucasian were regarded as more international as it was often tied to their English-speaking ability and adhered more to the ‘Traditional TCK’ framework. Third, while international schools were reliant on visible diversity to uphold images of ‘internationalness’, the same observable diversities (i.e., variations in English) were invalidated and paradoxically considered ‘un-international’. Fourth, the unequal treatment towards international school kids were shown to have long-lasting implications on self-perceptions of identity, belonging, and place. These findings coalesce to indicate that there is a lack of awareness and institutional guidance to support international school students. Without intervention, the structural and racial inequalities within international schools may reverberate into wider society.

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List of Abbreviations

TCK	Third Culture Kids
TCI	Third Culture Individuals
GN	Global Nomads
IB	International Baccalaureate
IBO	International Baccalaureate Organization
IM	International Mindedness
CAS	Creativity, Activity, and Service
ISK	International School Kids
ISSG	International School of Southern Germany
TIS	The International School
UN	United Nations
NES	Native English Speaker
NNES	Non-native English Speaker
CAQDAS	Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software
TA	Thematic analysis
PYP	Primary Years Programme
GC	Global Citizen
WC	World Citizen
US	United States
UK	United Kingdom
POC	People of Colour
USA	United States of America
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
ISE	International School Education

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Prologue

This thesis is about people who were raised primarily within an internationally mobile environment and the consequences of a schooling system that subscribes to the paradoxes that uphold a skewed image of ‘international’ and ‘cosmopolitan’. Contrary to what many may believe, having an internationally mobile upbringing does not necessitate the experience of living in more than one country. The ‘international’ aspect of this kind of upbringing can also be experienced indirectly, for instance if a person remains static but everything around them is moved or changed. That encapsulates the transient nature of international schools, where students will either move and leave their friends behind, or they will stay and watch their friends leave. The cycle of gaining and losing friends and places becomes a harsh but persisting aspect of the experience of someone who is internationally mobile. Research around these communities tend to highlight the advantages of these people, as they are seen in a way as a by-product of globalisation, but are increasingly also being established as a way for globalisation to grow and flourish. While there is growing research that addresses the disadvantages and effects of this type of international upbringing, the curricular and institutional impact of the international school has been under-researched. These so-called ‘citizens of everywhere’ and ‘global citizens’ seem to struggle with situating their identity conventionally (i.e., with their country of citizenship or where they were born or where their parents were from). This brings us to the conceptualisation of the ‘Third Culture Kid’.

1.2 Third Culture Kid

The Third Culture Kid as a concept stems from Useem and Useem (1967), from an observation made on American expatriate workers and host country nations in India during a period of cultural transition. Third Culture Kids (TCK) are defined by the three ‘cultures’ that a child interacts with during their developmental years: the first culture being the culture of their parents' home country, the second culture is that of the host countries', whilst the third culture is still somewhat debatable. Pollock and Van Reken (2009) argue that the third culture is formed by combining the first two cultures.

Crossman (2016) proposes a slightly different definition of the three cultures – Legal culture: any country that offers legal standing such as a 'passport' country.

Geographical culture: any culture in which a child has lived. Finally, the 'third culture' being relational culture: the culture of shared experiences.

In this thesis, I take the stance that a person only needs to interact with two 'cultures' to be considered a TCK: their legal culture and their relational culture. The relational culture in this sense would be the culture that manifests in an international school environment. In other words, the 'third culture' is created where the 'first culture' and 'second culture' intersects to create a new, and unique culture. This is similar to what Bhabha (1984) describes as cultural *hybridity*, in which in which art, music, cuisine, fashion, mannerisms of different cultures are combined. However, cultural hybridity under colonialism and in the context of immigration seems to overlap with Bhabha's (1984) notion of *mimcry*: when a colonised society imitates their colonisers with an opportunistic pattern of behaviour. In other words, when one imitates the person in power in the hopes of one day also possessing the same power. However, through this process, one must suppress one's own cultural identity to acculturate to the norms of the space they are living in. In the case of TCKs, it is unclear whether they must go through this process of suppressing their own cultural identity, or if they have a coherent cultural identity they need to suppress to begin with. I critically look at various definitions that have been applied throughout the years and investigate how this label/construct has impacted the international school student population beyond the international school space.

1.3 Disclaimer for terms used in this thesis

In this thesis I use the terms TCK frequently even though I find the label to be problematic. I explain and clarify the usage of the term TCK in the next section, along with some disclaimers for the usage of the term 'Traditional TCK', and the seemingly essentialised view on 'culture'.

1.3.1 Clarifying the usage of TCK

Though this study attempts to depart from the conventionalised use of the term TCK to describe people who had an internationally mobile upbringing, I decided to continue using the term throughout most of this thesis, first and foremost to avoid confusion. There are many terms that are used to describe the internationally mobile community, some of which overlaps with TCKs and others which only tangentially relate to TCKs. While the research community, of which encapsulates those researching international schooling, intercultural education, and internationally mobile upbringings, are beginning to express an inclination towards new descriptors, the TCK term remains the most prevalent in research and with mainstream media. This is evidenced with the research cited in this thesis, where most of the studies surrounding internationally mobile people referred to participants primarily as TCK; accordingly, to maintain cohesiveness, this thesis will also retain the usage of the term for the most part.

A second reason, which closely follows the first (in that the TCK term is most prevalent amongst this community) is that participants often described themselves as TCK. As it is such a popular term to this niche community, the decision was made to recruit participants on the basis of this term in the recruiting process. However, it is important to note that the TCK label and identity was not made a prerequisite for participants to engage in this study, but rather a descriptor to help aid prospective participants in understanding the sub-group which was being researched. In principle, the primary focus of the study is not TCKs but rather individuals who had an international school experience. Where participants did not explicitly describe themselves as being TCKs or hesitated to do so, this uncertainty will be indicated as such.

This thesis also makes references to a 'Traditional TCK', which is not a term I necessarily agree with as it also has problematic undertones. However, in literature surrounding TCKs it is often used to refer to individuals who closely adhere to what Pollock and van Reken (2009) have outlined as having a 'traditional TCK experience'. This thesis will venture into this territory of who is and who is not considered a TCK, what experience or qualities qualifies (or disqualifies) somebody from being a TCK. There will come a point in this thesis where there is a departure from the usage of the term TCK, the transition beginning with what is revealed in the data analysis stage, and

consolidated in the discussion section. The personhood element of the term ‘TCK’ will also be discussed in the literature review section alongside the ‘Kid’ element in the term.

1.3.2 Demystifying the title

The Convenient Label of ‘Third Culture Kids’: an exploration into the impact of an international school upbringing on the development of cultural identity, belonging, and place.

I decided to title my thesis this way to bring attention to why I believe the TCK label is problematic, and that comes down to the convenience of the label being so seemingly well-contained. As discussed in the previous section, the TCK label can be beneficial for many who identify with the term – and I do agree that it is a helpful identity marker for those who have felt unrecognised for their unique international upbringing which does not fit into more conventional identity labels. However, the term is only useful for those who fall within the very narrow parameters of what is accepted by the TCK community as being ‘TCK enough’. It is a convenient label because the specifications for being a TCK are often very explicit and based on a very solid notion of culture that falls within the essentialised boundaries of what a culture is. For instance, with Pollock and van Reken’s (2011) popularisation of the traditional TCK experience which stipulates the existence of a ‘home culture/first culture’, a ‘host culture/second culture’, which interact to create the ‘interstitial culture/third culture’ (Pollock and van Reken, 2017: 14). These guidelines became popular amongst the internationally mobile community as it seemed to address the ambiguity of the TCK identity with clear-cut guidelines. However, in designing this convenient protocol for essentially qualifying what a TCK is, many who share similar experiences but fall short of having the ‘three cultures’ are marginalised and left out. That is what the title encapsulates, in accepting that the label of ‘Third Culture Kids’ is convenient, in this thesis I explore why it is convenient, what the ramifications of the convenience is, and posit what might be the future beyond the TCK label as it currently exists as.

1.3.3 Disclaimer for the usage of ‘Culture’

In the realm of international education and specifically TCK research, the notion of culture is often referred to in a very essentialised way. By that, I mean culture is discussed as something that is very solid and calculable; this is evident just by looking at the TCK label alone, with the ‘Third Culture’ representing three distinct cultures, two of which can be ‘attained’ by living in two different countries. Here, the concept of culture is being used in the most efficient but also the most problematic way. As Dervin and Machart argue:

“[T]ranscultural” for which the concept of culture has always played an important but controversial role, this is extremely problematic and the concept of “intercultural” has been similarly qualified as a “chameleon term”, ever changing to adapt to the speaker’s needs (2016: 3).

Within social and human sciences, the idea that culture insofar as it existing in a reified and essentialised way is no longer a widely accepted belief (Dervin and Machart, 2016). These so-called ‘cultures’ result from societal co-constructions, constant negotiation, and instabilities (Early and Peterson, 2004; Hahl, Niemi, Johnson Longfor, and Dervin, 2015). As a researcher I also do not support the stance that ‘culture’ is a static and solid notion that is calculable. However, the research that is available surrounding TCKs and intercultural education tends to discuss culture in as an essentialised notion. My participants that I interview also refer to ‘culture(s)’ in a similar way when they are expressing their experiences with navigating through their cultural identities. For that reason, in this thesis I have decided to adopt this term in the way it is most commonly used in my field and in the data.

1.4 Cosmopolitanism and critical cosmopolitanism

Patriotism is one-sided and petty, but it is practical, useful, joyous and comforting; cosmopolitanism is splendid, large, but for a human being almost too large; the idea is beautiful, but the result in this life is inner anguish.

Laube, 1973: 88

Similar to the TCK, writing on what exactly cosmopolitanism is remains to be a contested subject; that is to say, there is no consensus in what it truly is in the growing literature. In the past, the basis of cosmopolitanism seemed to be accepted as emergent outlooks or affiliations that surpassed the local and the national - an experience that granted a 'delight in difference' and enriched intercultural skills (Hannerz, 1990). While this perspective of cosmopolitanism has not been dismissed, it has been criticised as being overly simplistic and has since been redefined and expanded upon. Beck (2006) for instance, portrays cosmopolitanism as a necessary response to a recent globalised world order which has caused crises that inflict everyone such as climate change, or more recently, global pandemics. He explains cosmopolitanism as the following:

[A] global sense, a sense of boundarylessness. An everyday, historically alert, reflexive awareness of ambivalences in a milieu of blurring differentiations and cultural contradictions. It reveals not just the 'anguish' but also the possibility of shaping one's life and social relations under conditions of cultural mixture (Beck, 2006: 3).

However, Beck has been criticised for the problematic modernisation theory that underpins his work on cosmopolitanism. Costa (2006) and Bhambra (2011) both argue that Beck's (2006) theories maintain that European/Occidental would precede and therefore also determine the development of the rest of the world. Partially drawing on Beck's (2006) work, Delanty (2009) conceives a social-theoretical framework based on the idea of immanent transcendence, which describes how society is able to transcend itself if its own self-understanding is re-worked and re-appropriated (Delanty, 2012). This idea, which Delanty describes as an alternative to internationalism and terms *critical cosmopolitanism*, 'offers a solution to the neglect of globalization and a more general concern with global issues that was a feature of the older critical theory tradition, which in many ways was confined to the analysis of modern European civilisation (Delanty, 2012: 4). Nonetheless, there is always this danger when discussing concepts like cosmopolitanism of merging the ideal with the reality. In this thesis, what cosmopolitan as a construct aims to be and what cosmopolitan is in practice ultimately present very differently.

1.5 Researcher positioning and personal motivation

I am a Thai national, and by that I mean I have a Thai passport as well as parents who have also hold Thai passports. However, I have also never lived in Thailand, I was not born there, and the longest time I have ever spent uninterrupted in Thailand was for three months on an extended holiday. I was born in Indonesia, and attended two international schools in Jakarta, meaning I spent all my developmental years outside what many might consider my 'home'. Throughout my childhood and well into adulthood, I considered Thailand my true home and, in some ways, the only place I could truly claim as home (as that was where I held a passport for).

With the rise of international migration, it has become more common for people to seek opportunities abroad, resulting in many adopting highly mobile lifestyles, my experiences being one of them. Under these circumstances, the idea of home becomes an integral part of identity development as it provides an antecedent for stability in their lives (Chow and Healey, 2008). Returning home was always something I normalised growing up, I always expected to experience this sense of homecoming where things fell into place, and I was no longer the thing that was out of place. As a child, I never imagined that this was something I would never be able to experience; and that was the strange thing about being a TCK, sometimes, you are not able to realise you are one until you leave the place that made you a TCK in the first place.

I had never once heard of the term 'Third Culture Kid' being used by anyone during my time at either international school I attended. I had stumbled upon the term during my first year of university when one of my international school friends shared an article about 'cultural homelessness' and the lifestyle of a cultural nomad. The term quickly became synonymous with children who attended international schools, as the majority of those who attended these schools were children of embassy staff, missionaries, military personnel, or other expatriates working in the country. It was clear after reading that article that my feelings of homesickness and anxiety stemming from this sense of rootlessness were not unusual and unique to my situation. It was like experiencing an epiphany, which was accompanied by a sense of relief when I realised for the first time that I was not alone in feeling alone.

The article had come during a time where I was dealing with overwhelming feelings of homesickness which led to bouts of depression as I was coming to terms with trying – and failing – to fit in with my peers at university. I had chosen to attend a small state university in rural Wisconsin, where over 95% of the student population were from the surrounding city or the neighbouring state. On the weekends, the campus would be almost barren as most of my peers would travel home to visit their parents and friends.

During the first few weeks of university, I was excited at the prospect of meeting new people. There were an abundance of meet-and-greet events and the first day of classes always involved an ice-breaking task. One of the most vivid memories I had was on the first day of a cultural anthropology module, where the professor had assigned everyone to introduce themselves in three ‘simple’ sentences:

1. *What’s your name?*
2. *Where are you from?*
3. *What’s your major?*

Everybody’s answers were short and concise. They were straightforward questions with what should have been straightforward answers, but I was stumped at question two. Do I say the country I was born and grew up in? Or do I say where my parents were from? I settled on the country my passport was issued from because that was what I believed was expected. I did however notice some of my classmates struggling with the last question. Many had answered ‘*still undecided*’ to the question ‘*What’s your major?*’? And this was an accepted response. In retrospect, ‘*still undecided*’ would have been the most concise and genuine way for me to answer the question ‘*Where are you from?*’. Though I wonder if this response would have been as readily accepted, or if my peers and professor would have just wondered if something had gotten lost in translation.

I kept this in mind as I met others during that first semester in Wisconsin, and with every interaction I noticed a pattern. It began with someone asking me where I was from, to which I would reply, hesitantly, that I am from Thailand, following up with the fact that I had never lived in Thailand, but instead had been born and raised in Indonesia. I would then have to explain that I attended an international school in

Indonesia, and that English was my first language. Many people seemed to be caught off guard by my answer, and a friend later explained that they initially expected me to be either Asian-American (as there was a large Hmong population settled nearby) or an international student. I explained that I *was* an international student, to which they replied, '*but not really*'. It was then I realised that I was in a category of my own, '*neither here nor there*'; was this what it was meant to truly be a global citizen?

1.6 Contextual background

Over the past decade, globalisation has heavily influenced the development of educational policies and practice (Vertovec, 2001). The transnational nature of the economic, political, and cultural trends have inspired new conceptions of the goals and purposes of education – and by extension, the idea of the individual and society (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010). With goals that no longer exclusively cater to the national interest but extend to broader more global markets (OECD, 2014), the idea of 'Global citizenship' has steadily gained traction in the field of education, with curriculum and pedagogy being developed with the goal of producing 'cosmopolitan' global citizens as a central aim (Duckworth, Levy and Levy, 2005). Despite this idea of global citizenship being held as a waypoint for future generations, there seems to be uncertainty to how this might translate into practice. Conceptually, the idea of global citizenship aligns with the progressive and transnational trends of the economic and political spheres. Instilling intercultural sensitivity and the ability to navigate different worlds seems to pose as the logical first steps towards achieving a truly globalised society, however this movement is not without complications.

During the early years of its conception, the international school was famously quoted by Ward (1984) as being factories to produce the 'prototype citizens of the future'. It could be interpreted as Ward suggesting that these students or 'citizens of the future' are all inherently the same. While this idea is explored in further sections, it is clear that this may no longer be accurate. As demonstrated in several case studies (Tanu, 2015; Meyer, 2018; Cameron, 2003), individuals interact with their international school space very differently depending on factors such as their race, culture, nationality, and their socio-economic status. However, one of the marked characteristics of an international school is the transferability. This is achieved primarily through implementing

contemporary global education frameworks (such as GCE or Global Mindedness). Interestingly, many of these frameworks stem from Western cultures (IB, AP, GCSE) and are built on assumptions and values that may prioritise certain cultures and less relevant to others (Van Oord, 2013). This idea is explored in further sections and poses as an interesting challenge in the efforts to develop a better understanding of the globalising population.

1.7 Context of the Study

Historically, international schools were formed as a means to prepare students to reintegrate into their home country's school system (Blaney, 2000; Hager, 1978). This goal has more recently changed into preparing students for an internationalised future, equipping them with a global world view that focuses on intercultural understanding (Betts, 2003). The question now is: have curriculums and institutional cultures of international schools also evolved to reflect the changing national and cultural demographic of their student population? To explore this further, a clearer understanding of what an international school is must first be addressed.

In 2009, the *International Association of School Librarianship (IASL)* outlined the following set of criteria to define international schools:

- Students' education is transferable across international schools.
- There is a mobile population (more so than in state schools).
- There is a multinational and multilingual student body.
- Pupils follow an international curriculum.
- Schools are internationally accredited, for example by the Council of British International Schools (COBIS) or the Council of International Schools (CIS).
- Schools are non-selective.
- English is the main or bilingual language.

This is by no means an exhaustive list of tenets for an international school, but it does highlight themes that reoccur in other definitions, those being: *transferability*, *multinationalism*, *international curriculum*, and *English as the Medium of Instruction (EMI)*.

Due to the nature of common employment contracts in the international hub (Military, Non-military Government, Religious, Business), the student turnover rate at

international schools are generally quite high and the transferability aspect of the international curriculum is designed to compensate for this eventuality. However, there are also students who stay at an international school for much longer. Some even complete all twelve years of their formative education at the same international school, and given the moniker ‘lififers’ by our peers to reflect the fact that we had been attending the same school all our lives – something I experienced first-hand. Though at the time I had not made the connection to the more common usage of the term ‘lifer’, that refers to a person serving a prison life sentence. Personally, I never experienced any negative feedback about this aspect of my international school life. However, in Section 2.1, this term will resurface in a way that demonstrates how different the experiences of TCKs and international schools are across the world and even within the same school.

While an in-group formed out of the association with being expatriates, within this TCK in-group, each member also seems to be held responsible for representing their own country and culture. A metaphor for this would be like the international school having its own ‘mini United Nations’. The implication was that if a country was to be associated with something negative, the students who were associated with that country were also – at some level – held personally responsible. One example being a Pakistani friend of mine who attended my school in the early 2000s. As a Muslim girl who had just come of age, she had just begun wearing a hijab to school. However, following the 9/11 attacks, she made the decision with her parents to take off her hijab, despite Indonesia having the largest Muslim population in the world.

This could be due to many factors, one possibly being the small Muslim population within the international school itself, and the relatively large population of students with affiliations to the US. When asked why she decided to no longer wear her hijab, she claimed it made her feel different, and that was not necessarily a good thing for her. At the time, I did not see anything awry with this response. Upon reflecting on this many years later, I found these instances quite unsettling; that in a place where diversity and acceptance served as the pinnacle of the institution, there still seemed to be an inherent pressure to adapt to fit the image of an ‘international school kid’ or a TCK. Research has demonstrated that cultural disparity from the ‘international’ culture can also act as a disqualifier for someone to be considered a Third Culture Kid.

Originally this study was to take place on site at an international school in Jakarta, Indonesia. With the COVID-19 pandemic transpiring around the same time as this study was taking shape, the trajectory of my project changed considerably. With this, the context of the study also changed. Instead of interviewing current international school students within a similar general context of one international school, I had to seek out a virtual alternative which transcended the boundaries of just one international school within one country, with one curricula, and one institutional culture. This change meant that the context developed into being a range of international schools, across various timeframes, without any restrictions on age or place. This also meant that the definition of international schools was also left partially up to the participants to decide whether or not their school was 'international'. The institutional legitimacy of an international school will be expanded upon further in the literature review.

1.7 Structure of this thesis

In this chapter, I have introduced the concept of TCKs, cosmopolitanism, and contextualised the domain in which this thesis will explore. The terms that I use were clarified, and I narrated my own personal experiences with having an international school background and how this impacted my position as a researcher. In the next paragraphs, I will outline the focus of each ensuing chapter, briefly mentioning key ideas and theorists.

In chapter 2, I review the relevant literature starting with different interpretations of culture in section 2.1. In section 2.2, idealist terms of culture and high culture (Arnold, 1978) and then moving on to the universalistic view of culture and the progression from 'savage' to 'civilised'. The role of social interactions and the acquisition of cultural differences is also discussed, along with cultural differences and falling in between categories. Culture as a tool for exploitation and the exoticisation of the 'Other' is then discussed with ideas of strategic essentialism. The idea of international schools subscribing to 'western' values and cultures is also explored. Followed by the pitfalls of essentialising notions of culture. In section 2.3, biculturalism and multiculturalism is explored. The relationship between biracialism and biculturalism are discussed, followed by section 2.4 in which the concept of identity is explored. In section 2.5,

international schools and the curriculums of the IBO are explored. And in section 2.6, two case studies are examined.

In chapter 3, I explain the philosophical perspectives that inform my methodological choices, discussing the ontological nature of truth in my research and how I see it as a process of continuous creation and recreation by my participants (Bryman, 2008). Ontologically, I see reality as fluid and complex, which is in need for interpretation for the underlying meaning to be uncovered. I discuss the rationale for why qualitative methods were chosen over quantitative methods by exploring the advantages and disadvantages of each method with the context of my research. I outline my own methodology, which is underpinned by a constructivist and interpretive approach exploring the lived realities of participants qualitatively. The situation of conducting this research during the COVID-19 pandemic is discussed, along with a restructuring of the research questions and the framework for the data collection. The ethical considerations are then addressed, including the right to withdraw, informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity. This chapter concludes by discussing the research design, touching on narrative enquiry, the process in which the participants were recruited, and the method data was collected and analysed.

In chapter 4-8, I present the findings of the study. Chapter 4 addresses the curriculum and institutional culture of international schools, the 'Americanised' curriculum, as well as the performative acts of community service and multiculturalism. Chapter 5 looks at a sense of belonging through the participants' experiences with adaptability, the transition into the 'real world', discrimination, and their relationships with stability. Chapter 6 explores the idea of negotiating identity through experiences like self-introductions, hidden foreigner syndrome, encapsulated marginality, and the paradox of encapsulation. Chapter 7 discusses mental health of participants who attended international schools, focusing on the phenomenon of disenfranchised grief and the opinion of relationships. Finally, chapter 8 reports on the participants' relationship with home and the relationship with the idea of permanence, culminating in the impact of COVID-19 on participants and their route 'home'.

In chapter 9, the discussion and findings of the research are presented, revisiting theories that were examined in the literature review, along with the introduction of new

concepts and connections that became apparent in the final stages of this research. This chapter concludes with the wider implications for the findings of this study, leading to the conclusion in chapter 10, where the key findings are highlighted, and the research questions are re-examined with what has been discussed. This thesis then concludes with recommendations and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2. Literature review

Introduction

‘Culture’ has been an integral part of how people conceptualise the world, and yet, there is little consensus about what ‘culture’ actually means. The variations are so broad, for example, that Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) were able to compile a 164-item list comprising of the different definitions they had come across while critically reviewing the many concepts and interpretations of culture. Some argue that the pervasiveness of the term is what makes defining ‘culture’ so difficult (McCort and Malhotra, 1993). Apte (1994: 2001) frames the dilemma as follows: ‘Despite a century of efforts to define culture adequately, there was in the early 1990s no agreement among anthropologists regarding its nature’. This chapter will focus on some key past moments in the conceptualisation of the term ‘culture’ and highlight the factors that will help contextualise the ‘culture’ component of the TCK phenomena.

2.1 Different interpretations of culture

The difficulty in defining and understanding the concept of culture seems to stem from the different ways it was used in the nineteenth century. During this time, it was primarily used in one of three ways. First, in idealist terms as illustrated Arnold’s (1867) *Culture and Anarchy*, which viewed culture as something to strive for. Arnold’s notion of ‘high culture’ is sometimes interpreted as a mastery of a certain skill or knowledge base. This interpretation was criticised by some as being elitist, as it seems to only be accessible to an educated few. Interestingly, his original theory of culture was conceived to contest these very views. Arnold was very outspoken in his distaste for this elitist notion of culture, criticising proponents as only valuing culture as a ‘badge’ in which class can be distinguished 'from other people who have not got it' (Arnold, 1867: 90). Arnold argues instead for culture to be viewed as intellectual interest combined or oriented with the goal of social improvement.

Emerging around the same time was Tylor’s (1871) theory of culture which, as exemplified in *Primitive Culture* (1871), defined culture as 'that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and

habits acquired by man as a member of society' (Tylor, 1871: 1). From his universalistic view, he believed that all societies developed in the same way, and argued that human civilisation progressed in a universal manner beginning with the state of 'savage', progressing to 'barbarian' and culminating with 'civilised'.

Piller (2011) argues that the context in which Tylor's theory of culture was conceptualised coincided with a time where colonialism and globalisation was enabling increased migration, and with that, a growing awareness of the 'Other'. With the assumption that Western 'culture' was 'civilised', the foreign and different cultures constituted what was seen as 'savage'; and 'this new meaning of culture which emerged in the nineteenth century was only part of the justification of colonialism, it made colonialism as a civilising effort a moral obligation (Piller, 2011). Kipling (1899) best encapsulated this in his poem *'The White Man's Burden'*. This idea of overcoming barbarism can be seen as a foundation to the modern-day interpretation of the phrase 'becoming cultured' or 'to be cultured', which describes a person who is civilised and possessing positive traits such as etiquette, world views, and general mannerisms (Csajbok-Twerefou, 2010). This definition however can also be interpreted in a multitude of ways, depending on how an individual is situated in the world, their political beliefs, or the ideologies they subscribe to. This brings us to the third major theory of culture as proposed by Boas (1940).

Boas's (1940) ideology at the time was considered radical as it was contesting the then-popular notion of scientific racism. Through his work, he demonstrated that human behaviour was not predicated on race, and the differences in human behaviour could be attributed to cultural differences which were acquired through social interactions (Moore, 2009). Boas also rejected the notion of a cultural hierarchy, which saw societies on a spectrum ranging from most 'inferior' to the most 'superior' culture. As this notion came to be in a European context, the accepted ideal was that of the Western European culture (Moore, 2009). Consequently, how highly a society's culture ranked on the spectrum directly correlated to how closely it resembled the traits in Western European culture. The rise in ethnocentrism led Boas to popularise the ideology of cultural relativism, which promoted the idea that a culture's behaviours and beliefs could not be inferior or superior to any other culture's and should only be judged from within the culture itself (Boas, 1940). Boas's work then became the philosophical

underpinnings against ‘criticisms of American society as a melting pot in which differences were to be extinguished’ (Bennett, 2005: 67). These ideas will be revisited within the context of international schools in the section half of the literature review, where the notion of TCKs are explored with regards to the westernisation of the international school identity.

‘Culture’, inasmuch as it is represented in essentialist terms, refers to people according to their beliefs, values, religion, behaviours, and language. While ‘race’ also acts as a method of classifying people into groups, it has a very different criterion, relying on mostly physical characteristics. These two concepts are often conflated, as exemplified in a study by Bailey (2000) of Korean immigrant shopkeepers in Los Angeles and their interaction with African-American customers.

Bailey observed the manner the Korean storekeepers would tend their store, limiting their interactions to ‘three communicative activities – greeting, business transaction, closing’ (Piller, 2011: 6). The African-American customers initiated more ‘small talk’ (Piller, 2011), to which the Korean storekeepers would rarely reciprocate. When interviewed, these behavioural incongruences resulted in the African-American customers reporting feelings of neglect, and even interpreting racist attitudes from the Korean shopkeepers (Piller, 2011). On the other hand, the interviews with the Korean storekeepers revealed that the ‘small-talk’ was seen as an imposition and bad etiquette, attributing this behaviour to a lack of good education on the part of the African-American customers (Piller, 2011). In this instance, ‘culture’ is referred to somewhat synonymously with ethnicity and race, focusing on Korean ‘culture’ and African-American ‘culture’, which is a common modern usage of the term. This can be problematic as the idea of ‘Korean culture’ or ‘African-American culture’ suggests that all Koreans and African-Americans are homogenous in their behaviour and beliefs. This is a crucial point specifically for TCKs who may ethnically be Korean or African-American but not ‘culturally’ (in the essentialised definition) Korean or African-American.

It is not so much that ‘race’ and ‘culture’ are confused with one another but more so in how they are associated in the discourse of migration, citizenship, and belonging that is problematic. ‘Race’, ‘ethnicity’, and nationality are often also used interchangeably

with individuals being required to indicate their 'race' (Asian, American Indian, Black, Latino, or White) on census documents, presenting a problem for individuals who fall in-between categories; 'Latinos, for instance, can be White, Black, Asian, American Indian, or any combination thereof' (Betancourt and Lopez, 1993: 630). TCKs also represent a growing demographic of people who would fall in-between categories.

The previous example frames 'culture' as a rationale for oppressing or discriminating in the guise of civilising. This next section will explore 'culture' as a tool for exploitation and the exoticisation of the 'Other' in tourism which frames 'culture' as a national asset (du Cros, Bauer, and Song Rui, 2005). To clarify, the 'Other' is used in this instance to refer to subjugated cultures or groups. hooks (1992) explores the 'commodification of Otherness', looking at how race and ethnicity are positioned as a source of pleasure and consumption (hooks, 1992). She argues that the 'Other' is constructed in a caricaturised and exotic manner by the dominant group for the dominant group to consume as entertainment.

An example of this is with a hill-tribe called the Kayans, comprising of Burmese refugees. Initially, the Kayan 'long-necked women' who donned brass coils around their necks were discriminated against because of their appearances (Cole, Stroma, and Eriksson, 2010). After images of these 'long-necked women' reached the front pages of magazines, the process of exoticising the Kayan culture began. Soon the community and small businesses around the village in Thailand became dependent on the 'long-necked' Kayan women to serve as a lucrative tourist attraction (Parry, 2008). Similarly, the Kayan women have also become dependent on the tourists, earning commissions through the travel agencies or themselves charging under the table for visitation and photography sessions; resorting to performing exoticised versions of their culture and identity to survive. While the Kayan people are, to an extent, thriving in their circumstances, this is an example of strategic essentialism (Spivak, 1996) where cultural tourism is a 'beneficial' arrangement for all acting parties but is still deeply problematic with its roots in exploitation. This example illustrates the detriment of essentialising 'culture' and how 'culture', if conflated with ethnicity or 'race', can be used as a method of marginalisation and become a subject of exploitation.

This association of 'race' and 'culture' can have unforeseen consequences, such as with the case of a British couple of Sikh heritage who were denied the chance at adopting a Caucasian child in 2017 by their local council, Windsor and Maidenhead. It is important to note that the couple did not have a preference to adopt a Caucasian child, but that only Caucasian children were available for adoption. The idea of a Caucasian child being brought up by non-Caucasian parents is still a foreign and, to some, an uncomfortable notion. Whereas the practice of Caucasian parents adopting non-Caucasian children is celebrated as an act of charity, almost akin to a civilising mission which brings us back to Tyler's (1871) notion of civilising 'savage' cultures.

While the philosophy many international schools foster often include the teaching of intercultural and diverse worldviews, they have also been criticised for subscribing to Western values and understating the international perspective (Hacking, Blackmore, Bullock, Bunnell, Donnelly, and Martin, 2018). Some have argued that local 'cultures' are often integrated in international schools in a similar way the Kayan culture was sold to tourists, with 'staged authenticity'.

The non-essentialist view identifies 'culture' as a fluid concept, dependent on where the user is situated in the world, their viewpoint, political beliefs, and or the ideologies they are exposed to. Baumann's (1996) ethnographic work of the Southall suburb of London was a major contribution to this view, illustrating how the various uses of 'culture' and 'community' shift according to the context of the conversation, as does the membership to cultural groups. To this, Holliday (2012) contends that the essentialised notion of 'national culture' can then be attributed as a product of nationalism to promote national unity and pride. While this notion grants a sense of national security, it also reifies the idea of a 'national culture', enabling blanket statements to be made about other 'cultures'. Holliday also argues a similar process occurs within 'multicultural' societies, when governments socially construct a reified version of ethnic cultures. Some have argued as far as the concept of 'cosmopolitanism' and 'global citizenship' having agendas which favour Eurocentric worldviews and therefore are inherently biased towards non-western individuals. This notion will be explored in the next section while the term biculturalism, multiculturalism, and cosmopolitanism are unpacked.

2.2 Biculturalism and multiculturalism

A common interpretation of ‘biculturalism’ is when it ‘represents comfort and proficiency with both one’s heritage culture and the culture of the country or region in which one has settled’ (Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, and Szapocznik, 2010: 26). Benet-Martinez, Leu, Lee and Morris (2002) have taken this a step further, arguing that true biculturalism is the fusion of the two cultures, resulting in a new personalised culture. While literature on ‘biculturalism’ and ‘multiculturalism’ is able to provide valuable insight into the struggles bicultural individuals come across when trying to navigate multiple cultural worlds, there seems to be a tendency to fixate on the biracial or multiracial aspect of these individuals. In some research, the ‘bicultural’ identity is referred to almost interchangeably with the concept of a ‘biracial’ identity (Padilla, 2006; Gibbs and Moskowitz-Sweet, 1991). Many ‘bicultural’ individuals overlap with those who identify as ‘biracial’, but as discussed in Section 3.2, blurring the lines between ‘culture’ and ‘race’ can be problematic. This stance insinuates that ‘bicultural’ people must be ‘biracial’ but also does not acknowledge the existence of ‘biracial’ individuals who may not believe themselves to be ‘bicultural’. Moreover, it does not take into account those who view themselves as being ‘bicultural’ or ‘multicultural’ but are not necessarily ‘biracial’, which is a crucial point to consider with the notion of the TCK and individuals who are raised in intercultural settings.

2.3 Identity

A crucial and often complicated topic with TCKs is identity development, and how the constant change may impact this process. Erikson (1950) proposes in his model of psychosocial development stage that children often come across the difficult task of discovering their identity during their adolescence. It is during this stage of life that ‘society grants permission to the adolescent to play at adulthood, to try on roles, to experiment selves’ (Josselson, 1987: 14).

The struggle with TCKs and developing a strong sense of their own identity is often linked to their perceived role alignment to their parents’ employment or occupation (Meier, 2015). Especially with children who have ties to government or national organisations, TCKs regularly report feeling a sense of duty to represent not only themselves but also by extension their country or their parents (Meier, 2015).

Erikson also suggests that during this adolescence stage, fidelity is developed, which is a key component in the development of ones' identity (Erikson, 1950), and something that promotes long-term connections with others. Crucially, one of the things that can inhibit the development of fidelity is role confusion, which as discussed previously, is something that TCKs often experience to varying degrees. However, it is not possible to detach TCKs and the people they are surrounded and inevitably influenced by, as identity is not something that one is just inherently born with but rather is something that is developed in relation to others (Lacan, 1949). While Lacan (1949) is famous for his mirror metaphor in which he discusses how a child 'discovers' themselves and the mental representation of an 'I' is created, Lacan also 'stresses that identity is fundamentally gained in the gaze of the powerful' (Gingrich, 2004: 11). This theme will be explored in this thesis in relation to how the TCK identity is developed through the international school and the perception of 'internationalness'.

2.4 Foundational literature on 'Third Culture Kids'

Over the course of Useem's (1973) study, the meaning of the 'third culture' in TCKs changes from being 'behaviour patterns' to being a subculture that is shared by the expatriates (both children and adults). In this stage of her research she wrote the following:

[T]he broad outlines of all of these third cultures were more alike than the various 'native' cultures in which they were situated. The non-Western cultures gave local color, embellishments, artefacts, additional languages and uniqueness to those coming from the West – but altogether these various third cultures formed an ecumenical bridge between East and West (Useem, 1973: 122).

This description has been met with some criticism, citing a lack of consideration for those on the other side of the 'third culture' narrative. Calhoun (2008) argues that the manner in which privileged individuals are able to easily engage themselves in this 'third culture' means that the local (host) society is often relegated into a 'backdrop'. Goodman (1990) suggests that Useem's (1973) study on American TCKs has influenced subsequent research, with the assumption that the findings on American TCKs could be generalised to other TCKs. However, this has resulted in research on non-American TCKs to overlook factors such as ethnicity, class, race, and nationality (Tanu, 2015). As Schaetti notes, there is a lack of literature adequately addressing

‘issues of power and cultural dominance in international microcultures’ (2000: 74). As the notion of the TCK began to grow in popularity, so did the narrative of international nomads bonding, finding their sense of belonging, and transcending national boundaries. While this is a very positive construction of the notion of a TCK, this narrative ‘appears to have overshadowed the need to research the diversity of the target population’ (Tanu, 2015: 16). There was effort to rectify this, for example, Pollock and Van Reken’s (2009) definition of the TCK was altered due to the surveys and interviews they later conducted with TCK participants:

A Third Culture Kid (TCK) is a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents’ culture. The TCK builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture are assimilated into the TCK’s life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar background (Pollock and Van Reken, 2009: 13).

While this altered definition is slightly more accommodating to those who share a cross-cultural upbringing, the ‘TCK profile’ (Pollock and Van Reken, 2009), is more specific in their qualification of a TCK, citing the mobile upbringing as directly related to their parents’ career. They go into further detail, highlighting the ‘two realities’ that shape the TCK experience:

1. *Being raised in a genuinely cross-cultural world.* Instead of simply watching, studying, or analyzing other cultures, TCKs actually live in different cultural worlds as they travel back and forth between their passport and host cultures. Some TCKs who have gone through multiple moves or whose parents are in an intercultural marriage have interacted closely with four or more cultures.
2. *Being raised in a highly mobile world.* Mobility is normal in the third culture experience. Either the TCKs themselves, or those around them, are constantly coming or going. The people in their lives are always changing and the backdrop of physical surroundings may often fluctuate as well (Pollock and Van Reken, 2009:17).

It is interesting to note the phrasing Pollock and Van Reken’s use to define the TCK experience, particularly with adverbs such as ‘genuinely’ and ‘actually’ in the first clause. The implication that an individual must be living in a country other than their passport country excludes a population of local students who do attend international

schools and are exposed to the ‘third culture’, leaving them in a somewhat ‘in-between’ state. This appears to be a common and problematic theme in the international school communities, who ‘appear to share a global-orientation, which suggest notions of inclusivity, flexibility and boundless mobility ... [however] current literature pertaining to international schools rarely speaks of the role of the host country as a theme of focus’ (Meyer, 2015: 60). Allan (2002) identified and wrote critically about how international schools overlook locals. This sentiment is echoed by Tamatea (2008) and Jackson (2005) among others, however, the emphasis on the ‘local’ is usually based on curricular development and the role of the educational practitioner – not the TCKs specifically. Many international schools do make efforts to incorporate the local culture in their curriculum, but some, like Poore have criticised it as being a ‘superficial inclusion of the host culture’ (2005: 353).

Herder’s (1966) outdated, yet still prevalent, idea of *one place, one people, one language, and one culture* establishes some of the fears many TCKs eventually face upon repatriation (Triebel, 2015). In many cases, TCKs have far more than just one place, and for those have interacted with multiple ‘places’ or cultures due to their frequent moving, a common misconception is that they are ‘unattached’ – hence the titles such as ‘global nomads’ or ‘voyagers’ and ‘sojourners’, all of which allude to a sense of mobility and temporariness. Contrary to this belief, the literature reveals that TCKs do grow attachments to particular places; however, it is not so much the geographical location, but more so the experiences TCKs associate to the place. As Gieryn describes:

Place attachments result from accumulated biographical experiences: we associate places with the fulfilling, terrifying, traumatic, triumphant, secret events that happened to us personally there (2000, p.481).

Yet, arguably this is not a trait that is specific to TCKs, as Seamon explains, ‘place is not the physical environment separate from people associated with it but, rather, the indivisible, normally unnoticed phenomenon of person or people experiencing place’ (2014: 11-12). Nevertheless, there is still a tendency for TCKs to report a sense of ease and familiarity in places like airports (Triebel, 2015). To many it might seem quite strange to associate a sense of ease with a place as hectic and stressful as an airport, but

consider this: an airport is a place where nobody is truly at ‘home’ and nobody will stay for long – this is surprisingly similar to the lifestyle of a TCK, so it should come to no surprise that this is the place where they find themselves most ‘at home’. However, as Triebel (2015) questions, are these kind of places ‘valid’ to belong to?

Looking to Augé’s (1995) concept of ‘Non-Place’, the idea of places being valid and invalid are explored in relation to how much significance people place in various places. Places that provide stability and identity are deemed by Augé (1995) as ‘valid’, whereas places of transition and instability are referred to as ‘invalid’. These ‘invalid’ places are what he refers to as a ‘Non-Place’, a concept he coined to encapsulate the liminal places that are designed to work like a tunnel, where people pass through to connect to other places, but never stay long.

Some examples of ‘Non-Places’ include airports, hotels, or shopping centres, but most significantly, TCK or expatriate communities (Triebel, 2015). The reason many international schools advertise internationally recognised curriculums like the *International Baccalaureate* or emphasise their ability to espouse ‘intercultural’ competency in their students might be because there is the expectation that TCKs will eventually repatriate. This idea is quite prevalent in TCK literature, and whether it is unconsciously done so, it is written with the slight implication that ‘local’ students are not ‘genuine’ TCKs or Global Citizens. The usage of the term TCK has been used by international students and students who deviated from the ‘normal’ and typically settled childhood as a way of identifying themselves for years.

The label and the lifestyle has been explored to an extent in literature, however, how the institution that in a sense ‘creates’ the TCK/ Global Citizen is generally overlooked. That is not to say that the individuals are not the focus, but as Mamchur states, ‘Curriculum is the tool, the “stuff” of education. Through the curriculum students learn the skills, the attitudes, and the knowledge they need’ (1990: 634). While much of the research in this field has been situated in international schools, not many focus on the curricula and the subsequent institutional culture it fosters and how it influences the development of identity, sense of place or belonging amongst its’ students. One of the appeals of international schools lies in the aspect of transferability which can be attributed to the English-medium system and their ‘international’ curriculum.

2.5 International schools

The relationship between international schools and TCKs is one that is inevitably intertwined. The conceptualisation of TCKs arose from the unique context of international schools – this being the curricula, the organisation of the international school itself, the institutional culture, student population, and location. As I researched the relationship between international schools and TCKs, it soon became apparent that there would be some difficulty in isolating this relationship in the searches. For example with JSTOR, searching up *third culture kids* gives 66,849 results, however the results are not focused on only TCKs but rather includes articles that include any of the words separately. This produces articles that are related to *third culture kids* tangentially but often in a way that is not appropriate for my research topic. Searching up “third culture kids” in a more focused way leading to only articles that referred to TCKs in this way, but only produced 79 searches. “*International schools*” on the other hand led to 5,197 matches, but focusing that down by searching “*International schools*” AND “*third culture kids*” only led me to 20 articles and theses. Searching up *TCK* also came up with false leads as when I did my searches on Tandfonline, *TCK* brought me to 2,338 which was promising – however I quickly learned that *TCK* was more often used as an abbreviation for *technological content knowledge* and also in reference to TCK Solar rather than ‘third culture kids’. When researching about international school curriculums this also became a challenge to isolate the topics were relevant to my research. Searching up *international school curriculum* often led to results that included the internationalisation of curriculums of national schools, national school curriculums, and ways in which schools around the world are feeling the impact of globalisation and internationalisation.

Globalisation has without a doubt influenced many facets of society, and one of the sectors that has been affected is in education. As Coulby and Zembeta assert, ‘[e]ducational institutions themselves are part of the process of globalisation because of their central role in the development of the knowledge economy’ (Coulby and Zambeta, 2005: 1). There are still of course school curricula systems that resist the pull towards internationalisation and incorporating intercultural focuses into their curricula, but ‘it is clear that school-level education is becoming steadily internationalised in a number of ways. National education systems increasingly promote an internationalisation agenda,

sometimes with locally prescribed limitations' (Hayden, 2011: 216). The concept of an international school was first mentioned by Bereday (1964) where they estimated that there were approximately 50 international schools that existed around the world. This relatively small amount of international schools reflected the necessary educational needs of globally mobile diplomats, missionaries, volunteers, and politicians (Hayden, 2011).

While the exact origin, by which I mean the first recorded account, of an international school is still debated (Sylvester, 2002), the first few known international schools began operation in 1924 (Knight, 1999). These schools, as Hayden (2011) observes:

[W]ere founded largely as a means of catering for the children of expatriate diplomats and employees of transnational organisations who followed their parents' globally mobile professions around the world, and for whom education provided locally – perhaps because of language or a mismatch with university entrance requirements in the home country – was deemed unsuitable (2011: 214).

Over the years, however, this model of international school – which only served as a school away from school back home – began to develop into a more interculturally diverse model. While there are certainly still international schools that operate to cater towards specific national communities, in which Lallo and Resnik (2008) describe an Israeli international school in Paris as 'falafel à la baguette', in other words, an Israeli identity in French packaging. The majority of international schools are moving away from this model, and promoting a more inclusive and diverse ethos of student identity, for instance with schools that:

[V]iew the 'international' in their names as a guiding philosophy of their educational work ... guided by an ideology of tolerance, recognition of difference, curiosity and multiculturalism among students coming from a range of ethnic and national backgrounds. These schools forfeit assumptions of particular national, cultural or religious orientations' (Lallo and Resnik, 2008: 171).

International schools tend to use specific terminology to market the brand to their clientele as a way of establishing difference to other host nation/local schools. The

International Baccalaureate program is often a component of these campaigns, often promoting terminology such as ‘Education for those destined to be the world’s future leaders’ (Walker, 2000: 200). Or some of the following, taken directly from the International Baccalaureate website:

[IBO] aims to do more than other curricula by developing inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who are motivated to succeed. We strive to develop students who will build a better world through intercultural understanding and respect [...] we encourage students to develop independently of government and national systems, encourage students of all ages to consider both local and global contexts, [and] develop multilingual students (ibo.org, 2020).

Statements as such are suggestive of a correlation between later life success and the international school education, which can be problematic as access to international schools is often limited by discretionary income. This only furthers the ‘IB’ brand which Bunnell (2010) argues is a way of upholding the ‘uniqueness’ and exclusive status of international school community members. However, this outcome is inherently contradictory of the philosophy of IBO and international schools. The IB Diploma program is said ‘to produce and cultivate “global-mindedness”, “global citizenship” and “intercultural” learning environments”’ (Meyer, 2018: 66), these terms connote attributes of inclusivity, tolerance, mobility. None of which is compatible with the exclusive status international schools seem to utilise in order to survive as a business.

While there are sets of criteria aimed at defining what an international school is – like the one mentioned previously in the introduction by IASL (2009), there is still no definition of an ‘international school’ and an ‘international education’ that is universally accepted (Hayden and Thompson, 2000; Murphy, 2000; Sylvester, 2002). One of the reasons why there has been no consensus on these definitions is due to how open the title of ‘international school’ is for any school to implement (Murphy, 2000; Walker, 2004). As it stands, there is no criteria or accreditation that an institution must undergo to certify them as an ‘international school’. Following the acceleration of globalisation, the market demand for international schools has also increased exponentially over the past few decades, and the educational sector has expanded beyond the ‘traditional’ international schools to meet these demands. Which is why it is no surprise that

‘international schools are heterogenous in type and origin’ (Welton, 2001: 96). To understand the how the current phenomenon of international schools came to be, it is necessary to first trace the origins of international schools (despite there being clarity to what is accepted the true ‘first’ international school).

Hayden and Thompson (2011) assert that while there is a lack of consensus in a list of features amongst all international schools, most offer a curriculum that is different to that provided in the ‘host country’ (the country where the international school is located). Within the broad description of institutions that fall under the definition of international schools, Hayden and Thompson (2011: 4-5) also argue that there are three main subgroups:

- ‘Type A’ or ‘traditional’ international schools, established to cater to globally mobile expatriate families as a necessary alternative to local education systems.
- ‘Type B’ or ‘ideological’ international schools, established on an ideological basis, to promote and distil global peace through international understanding and cooperation.
- ‘Type C’ or ‘non-traditional’ international schools, established to cater to socio-economically advantaged ‘host country nationals’

‘Type A’ or ‘traditional’ international schools also usually have membership association to groups such as the European Council of International Schools (ECIS, 2015) which can serve as a way for schools to establish its legitimacy as an international school.

‘Type B’ or ‘ideological’ international schools are, as its name suggests, driven by ideological vision for global peace. As Hayden and Thompson, (2013: 6) describe:

[T]hey have been created specifically to bring young people together, based on an underpinning ideological arising from the belief that many of the problems faced by our world, and, in particular, those problems relating to violence, hatred and war, can be overcome – or at least alleviated – if young people are able to live and study together with those from different national and cultural backgrounds with a view to breaking down the barriers that so often arise through ignorance and prejudice.

Some famous examples of this ‘Type B’ international school include the United World Colleges, with 18 institutions across 4 continents (van Oord, 2010; uwc.org, 2022).

Emerging only in the late twentieth century are the ‘Type C’ or ‘non-traditional’

international schools (Hayden and Thompson, 2013). While ‘Type A’ and ‘Type B’ international schools are not explicitly against the enrolment of local nationals, there have been situations which it made it difficult (or even impossible) for local nationals to enrol. For instance, Thailand initially prohibited local nationals for enrolling in international schools but eventually this became deregulated (MacDonald, 2006). ‘Type C’ international schools seem to have cultivated a place in which wealthy local nationals could acquire the ‘international’ education as ‘such schools can be seen as a springboard to university entrance in, for instance, the UK or the US for those who perceive a Western education and fluency in English as a route to future success and prosperity in a globalized world’ (Hayden and Thompson, 2013: 7). This can be demonstrated by the following statistic presented by Brummitt and Keeling (2013: 29), ‘Today local children fill 80% of international school spaces, a complete reversal of 30 years ago when 80% were filled by expatriate children’.

While the emergence of ‘Type C’ international schools is comparatively new type of school, commercial companies (i.e., Global Education Management Systems [GEMS] Education Ltd.) have established and operated many of these types of schools, growing them into a lucrative business (Bunnell, Fertig, and James 2016). A sub-group of the ‘Type C’ international school are ‘satellite colleges’ (Bunnell, 2008), in which a well-established college or institution set up extensions of their schools abroad under the name ‘brand name’. Examples of this include the Repton School of Dubai, Shrewsbury College in Bangkok, and Brighton College in Abu Dhabi (Brummitt and Keeling, 2013). The concept behind these satellite colleges is driven by the reputation of the original schools, the assumption is that if they are under the same accreditation, the school will maintain the same quality of education within the satellite colleges. The same can also be said about international schools. The ‘international school’ label is in and of itself a brand that evokes a certain reputation and feeling about a school.

This brings us back to the topic of what it means for a school to establish itself as an ‘international school’. Some argue that providing a curriculum in English-medium that is different to that available in the host country is the identifying feature of international schools (Hayden and Thompson, 2013). Whereas others (e.g., Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2016) argue that this is not a sufficient enough criterion to distinguish international schools. Diversity is often also seen as a determining factor of

international schools, as Hayden and Thompson (2000: 5) assert, ‘diversity is not only an inherent feature of International Schools, but is also a crucial aspect of the process of international education’. Sylvester (1998) further argues that for a school to be a genuine international school, there must be at minimum 30-40 nationalities represented by the students. However, this principle can be problematic once schools adopt these figures and see the 30-40 range as a benchmark to be hit in order to gain legitimacy and recognition as an international school. This will come up later in the data and discussion where one student experienced the negative ramifications of this idea, where his complex, multi-national/cultural identity was essentially diminished to representing ‘Africa’ for the school.

2.6 International Mindedness

A large part of the international school experience also lends itself to the internationally recognised curriculum that is offered, the most renowned being the International Baccalaureate (IB). Along with this movement towards intercultural and international education, there is also increasing attention spent on the development and implementation of ‘International Mindedness’ (Hill, 2012). Within discussions around international education, International Mindedness has become a principal idea, and ‘yet providing a succinct definition of this concept, let alone an assessment of it, has proved to be a slippery proposition at best’ (Savvy and Stanfield, 2018: 181). The working definition always varies from person to person, or from organisations to institutions, though the general definition tend to promote similar ideas that are not necessarily contradictory to the other definitions. These definitions usually pay attention to the attitudes, values, worldviews, and behaviours of the students (Hill, 2012).

Generally speaking, International Mindedness is a multi-faceted concept that encapsulates a mindset that is characterised by an openminded nature that embraces knowledge and empathy about global issues, cultural differences, and crucially, fosters the critical and analytical thinking skills required to develop solutions for these issues (Hill, 2012). The social construct that is ‘International Mindedness’ is something that needs to be cultivated, and this is usually through international schools, or more specifically, the International Baccalaureate (IB) program.

The IB Diploma Programme is widely recognised as an influential component of international education (Hayden and McIntosh, 2018). As Hill (2012) argues, ‘it can be said that the product of a successful international education is international mindedness’ (246), and one of the most common ways this is perceived to be achieved is through the IB Diploma Programme and the completion of Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS) projects. The CAS is one of three mandatory modules that students must complete as part of their IB Diploma Programme. These CAS projects are meant to be informal and not academically focused, but rather should be dedicated to developing their International Mindedness through volunteer work, or activities which will broaden their empathy and understanding of their worldview (Hayden and McIntosh, 2018). While addressing global concerns with progressive emancipatory principles and critical thinking (Gardner-McTaggart, 2016; Doherty, 2009), IB international schools nevertheless operationalise and model a sort of implicit racism that is not cognisant and is uncritical of the privileges of whiteness (Gardner-McTaggart, 2021). As discussed in the previous section, international schools are often seen as a pipeline to universities in the UK and the US. Fluency in English is a major factor in this journey to international success, which is why international schools are taught in the medium of English. However, there exists a multitude of variations of English in the world, yet there is always an implicit understanding in the international school world that certain Englishes are favourable to learn and teach over others. These Englishes are more often than not attached to Western cultures. As Gardner-McTaggart maintains, ‘by turning to the policy of whiteness in international education, in this case, as manifest in international IB schools [...] policy makers there reinforce a “cover and systematic” ontology of whiteness and Anglo “Englishness” through a hegemonic understanding of what it is to be international’ (2021: 2).

International schools pride themselves on instilling higher-order critical thinking in its students for a better world (Doherty, 2009). However, the majority of those in power within these institutions to enact these visions of global-mindedness and criticality are white staff and leadership personnel. Because of their historical privilege, white persons may be unaware of their ‘white advantage’ and fail to consider the role their race plays on their interpretations and perceptions (Frankenberg, 1993; McIntosh, 2008). International schools often preach about the benefits of diversity, yet somehow the most prestigious international schools are still staffed primarily by white educators (Gardner-

McTaggart, 2021: 2). This seemingly hypocritical and also paradoxical ideology is rampant within the field of international schools and the IB ‘International Mindedness’ mission. This aspect of the IB Diploma Programme will re-emerge in the interviews and is explored further in the discussion section.

2.7 Third Culture ‘Kids’

As is the case with international schools, there is no complete consensus on what it means to be a ‘Third Culture Kid’. The definition often ranges from encompassing immigrants, cross-cultural individuals, to being incredibly specific (as with Pollock and van Reken’s outline). There are also many terms that are used interchangeably and overlap with ‘Third Culture Kid’, including ‘Cross-culture Kids’ (CCK), ‘Missionary Kids’ (MK), ‘Global Nomads’, ‘Adult Third Culture Kids’ (ATCK), and ‘Third Culture Individual’ (TCI) (Lyttle, Barker, and Cornwell, 2011; Carson, 2015; Abe, 2018).

In mainstream literature, the term ‘Third Culture Kids’ is favoured, as research in this area tends to focus on children of expatriates (Moore and Barker, 2021). While the term and label ‘TCK’ has the word ‘Kid’ in it, it is often used by the community members without restriction to age (i.e., adults still referred to and identified themselves as ‘Third Culture Kids’). The conceptual formulation of the ‘Third Culture Kid’ focuses on the intercultural exposure and experience during childhood and/or adolescence, and does not generally extend to adults who had intercultural experiences exclusively in their adulthood. For that reason, individuals who are no longer considered a ‘kid’ still use the term/label ‘Third Culture Kid’ or ‘Adult Third Culture Kid’ (ATCK) to identify themselves (Abe, 2018). To some, these labels have been embraced by the community as it is seen as their unique upbringing and identify getting global recognition.

However, as this thesis will explore, the TCK label and all its extensions/variations is still flawed in that it provides an identity label, but one that is still heavily essentialised and in many ways inherently discriminatory. Huang (2021) argues that many theorists (Amadasi and Holliday, 2018; Dervin, 2011; Holliday, 2000) view this essentialisation in a similar way to racism, with the attempt to ‘box’ people into preconceived groups too reductionist and not conducive to developing a better understanding of these individuals.

An alternative to the TCK labels would be the concept of ‘intercultural personhood’ as coined by Kim (2008: 366):

The dynamic and evolutionary concept of intercultural personhood is no less genuine than the familiar ways of being and relating. It points to a way of existence that strives to embrace and incorporate seemingly divergent cultural elements into something new and unique.

The conceptual formulation of Kim’s (2008) notion of ‘intercultural personhood’ focuses on this ‘self-other’ orientation, whereby the identity of the person is dependent on two key patterns of orientation: individuation and universalisation. Huang’s (2021) interpretation of intercultural personhood differentiates from Kim’s (2008) by not emphasising the ‘self-other’ orientation. Instead, the focus is on the holistic aspects of a person’s ‘self’ construction through the intercultural experiences (Huang, 2021). An example of this experience of ‘intercultural personhood’ can be found with Yoshikawa (1978) who describes his own experiences as such:

I am now able to look at both cultures with objectivity as well as subjectivity; I am able to move in both cultures, back and forth without any apparent conflict ... I think that something beyond the sum of each [cultural] identification took place, and that is became something akin to the concept of "synergy" - when one adds 1 and 1, one gets three, or a little more. This something extra is not culture-specific but something unique of its own, probably the emergence of a new attribute or a new self-awareness, born out of an awareness of the relative nature of values and of the universal aspect of human natures ... I really am not concerned whether others take me as a Japanese or an American; I can accept myself as I am. I feel I am much freer than ever before, not only in the cognitive domain (perceptions, thoughts, etc.), but also in the affective (feeling, attitudes, etc.) and behavioral domains' (Yoshikawa, 1978: 220).

In many ways, this description of intercultural personhood shares similarities with accounts of individuals who identify as TCKs. As I discuss later in the data chapters, many participants describe the moment where they discover the concept of TCKs as an enlightening moment where they finally feel free from the constraints of traditional labels. Initially, the TCK label may have served as this alternative option for those who felt stuck in between identities or misrepresented by the labels attached to them. However, as time has progressed and the perceptions of what it means to be an ‘international’ has developed, perhaps the TCK label has remained too stagnant in its

definition. For those who previously identified with the TCK label, or were unable to fulfil the many prerequisites to gain membership into the TCK community, the notion of ‘intercultural personhood’ may be exactly what is needed to fill in the gap.

2.8 Belonging

The concept of belonging is one that is ambiguous in its definition and ill-theorised. Often scholars have assumed that this notion of belonging was self-explanatory, leading to others frequently connecting it to the idea of identity, citizenship, or both (Antonsich, 2010). For example, Bhimji suggests that belonging ‘encompasses citizenship, nationhood, gender, ethnicity and emotional dimensions of status or attachment’ (2008: 414). In like manner, some authors also discuss ‘modes of belonging’ in reference to the countless variations of attachment to place, groups, cultures ... etc. (Sicakkan and Lithman, 2005); this attachment has also manifested in the concept of ‘differential belonging’ (Rowe, 2005).

There is also a distinction that is made, similar to one proposed by Fenster (2005), which distinguishes between belonging as personal and private sense of attachment (i.e., ‘sense of belonging’) and belonging as a ‘formal structure’ (e.g., official, public memberships). An example of this second type of ‘formal structure’ sense of belonging can be found with the notion of citizenship (Bauböck, 2005; Jones and Krzyzanowski, 2007; Krzyzanowski and Wodak, 2007). Antonsich (2010) similarly argues that belonging should be considered as both a person and intimate feeling, for instance, with the feeling of being ‘at home’ in a place (i.e., place-belongingness), as well as a discursive resource (i.e., the politics of belonging). This concept of belongingness, particularly as it pertains to the emotional feelings which are (or are not) attached to a place is one that constantly comes up in TCK discourse. Much of what is discussed about ‘place-belongingness’ refers to having a place which holds ‘home’ feelings, therefore, to ‘belong’ is the same as feeling ‘at home’ (Antonsich, 2010). However, with TCKs, their internationally mobile lifestyle often makes it difficult to establish ‘place-belongingness’ in the traditional sense. Of course, not all that discuss belongingness see the necessity of a physical geographical place to establish ‘home’, it can equally be a symbolic space of comfort and familiarity (hooks, 2009). Belonging

can be conceptualised in a multitude of ways, from a physical home (Walsh, 2006), to a local neighbourhood that establishes familiarity (Fenster, 2005; Mee, 2009), an island community (Mackenzie, 2004), or even a homeland (Ho, 2009; Westood and Phizacklea, 2000). It is not surprising then, given that the idea of belonging has strong associations with feeling at home in a place, that this concept is also expressed in a sense of rootedness (Morley, 2001). This concept is in direct contrast of another concept that is more commonly found amongst the TCK discussion: 'rootlessness' (van Reken and Pollock, 2010; Cason, 2018; McLachlan, 2005). This sense of 'rootlessness' is oftentimes attributed to the restlessness of a highly mobile upbringing of TCKs during their formative years, and plays a significant role in the development of a self-identity and a sense of belonging. As Probyn (1996) asserts, the question of 'Who am I?' cannot be isolated from the question 'Where do I belong?'

To understand what contributes to the feelings of 'place-belongingness', Antonsich (2010) outlines the five following factors: the auto-biographical, the relational, the cultural, the economic, and the legal. With the auto-biographical, this pertains to one's history, their past personal experiences, and memories that may be attached to a person or place (Dixon and Durrheim, 2004). The relational refers to personal and societal ties, for example with membership to groups. Cultural factors, such as language, is usually considered the most crucial factor to establishing 'place-belongingness', as it represents a way of constructing, interpreting, and conveying meaning (Buonfino and Thompson, 2007). Economic factors provide stability for the individual in creating 'place-belongingness', financial security contributes to this sense of safety in spaces. Legal factors can be seen as the 'formal structure of belonging' (Fenster, 2005). This refers to rights given by governing bodies, for instance citizenship and resident permits. These legal factors are essential in building feelings of security, and many regard it as a fundamental dimension of belonging (Alexander, 2008; Buonfino and Thompson, 2007; Loader, 2006). All these factors work together to construct a sense of safety, which is a vital element in developing 'place-belongingness'. If one of these factors are deficient, for example, a person lacks the legal right or citizenship to stay in a country where they feel 'place-belongingness', this can create a great amount of distress and disillusionment. In my study, participants who grew up away from their 'Passport country' and therefore identified their 'place-belongingness' with a country they did not hold citizenship or residency permits for, came across the difficulty of trying to visit

their ‘home’ during the COVID-19 pandemic. Understandably, it is a difficult situation to be in when they were met with hostile border security who did not recognise them as someone who belonged there. As Ignatieff puts it, ‘Where you belong is where you are safe, and where you are safe is where you belong’ (1994: 25). As TCKs, their ‘safe places’ are often put out of reach, or sometimes only exist in certain points of time in their life. Given that their upbringing is fairly mobile, TCKs seem to build a sense of ‘place-belongingness’ with the people they surround themselves with, rather than physical embodiments of places. The international school is also often referred to as a ‘place’ that TCKs feel the most safe and feel the most ‘place-belongingness’ to.

While the international school can be seen by many as a place they develop a sense of belongingness in, it is not as easy as attending an international school to achieve this ‘place-belongingness’. There already exists this association between TCKs and international schools, but as discussed previously (and will further discuss in later chapters), it is also not the case that all students who attend international schools are considered TCKs. This is problematic for those who fall in between these spaces, not quite feeling like they belong to their ‘Passport country’ and not quite aligning with the TCK space either. Focusing on American community colleges who are tackling the problem of high student dropout rates, Seidman (2005) found that the notion of ‘sense of belonging’ as crucial in the process of increasing student retention. Not only is motivation impacted by a lack of sense of belonging, but constant delegitimization of an individual’s identity and claim to a place has also contributes to high cases of depression and anxiety amongst TCKs (Carson, 2008). Empirical studies have also confirmed that in order for belongingness to be established, people need to feel they can express their own identities freely (Sporton and Valentine, 2007). Furthermore, they almost must feel like an integral part of the community they are in, and that their opinions are being valued (Ameli and Merali, 2004; Buonfino and Thompson, 2007). From this, we can ascertain that the role of political institutions in ‘granting’ a sense of belonging is not sufficient in shaping belongingness, it also relies on the society. Within society, however, there is the following problem:

[A]ny dominant ethnic group tends to fill the notion of belonging with a rhetoric of sameness, which clearly prevents any recognition of differences. Often, the “requisites” for one person to belong means that s/he has to assimilate to the

language, culture, values, behavior and religion of the dominant group (Antonisch, 2010: 650).

A similar phenomenon can be seen developing in the institutional culture within international schools. While not explicit in what they regard as ‘international’, there is a sense of ‘sameness’ that can be found amongst international schools that establishes it as an ‘international school’. Recognisable traits include English as a medium, a Westernised interpretation of ‘global-mindedness’ (Gardner-McTaggart, 2021), and predominantly staffed with white educators:

Rightly or wrongly, for as long as it remains the case that international schools are catering for globally mobile aspirational middle classes seeking an educational advantage for their children, it may well remain the case that overseas hire expatriates have an advantage over their often equally well-qualified and experienced host country counterparts (Hayden and Thompson, 2013: 12).

This is quite interesting, as international schools also simultaneously espouse a rhetoric of diversity and celebration of differences, while retaining a recognisable ‘brand’ so to speak. Establishing belongingness in such environments which seem to have contradicting values consequently becomes a complex matter, particularly for those who do not comfortably fall within the parameters of a ‘traditional TCK’.

2.9 Cultural Marginality

An inevitable consequence of living in an environment that is between two cultures or more is the experience of living in between cultures, but rarely in a truly balanced way; this phenomenon is often referred to as ‘cultural marginality’. Within cultural marginality, two terms are often brought up in the context of TCK experiences and belongingness: encapsulated marginality and constructive marginality (Bennett, 1993). Encapsulated marginality is described as feelings of alienation from the dominant culture(s) and isolation as a consequence of not being able to assimilate or develop a sense of belongingness within the current environment. On the other hand, constructive marginality is portrayed as an individual ‘who is able to construct context intentionally and consciously for the purpose of creating his or her own identity’ (Bennett, 1993: 113). The two terms can be understood in simpler terms as: encapsulated marginality =

culturally belonging nowhere; constructive marginality = culturally belonging everywhere.

While some have defined cultural marginalisation as the state in which a person becomes ‘peripheralized’ from the dominant culture of society (Hall, Steven, and Meleis, 1994). Others, like Choi (2001), argue that it is not as simple as that:

The cultural-societal perspective enable us to focus on an individual’s transition between two distinct cultural societies. Therefore, rather than looking at the concept as the condition of being ‘peripheralized’ within a society in relation to political, social, and economic inequities or deprivation, this view of the period of transition from one cultural society to another emphasizes the transitional process as well as its context (Choi, 2001: 197).

Cultural marginality can then be thought of as a process and a temporary state of being, with individuals initiating negotiation of behaviours, identities, values, and attitudes (Berry, 1995). Those who negotiate the process successfully can achieve psychological and cognitive growth, along with productive identity development (Choi, 2001; Guarnaccia and Lopez, 1998). Conversely, those who negotiate the process of cultural marginality unsuccessfully can experience ‘psychological degradation, withdrawal, and identity confusion, returning to cultural marginality’ (Choi, 2001: 202). The consequences of long-term cultural marginality may lead to acculturative stress, resulting in changes with personality, substance abuse, depression, and even suicidal ideation (Hovey and King, 1997; Park, 1928; Williams and Berry, 1991). When an individual is exposed to prolonged cultural marginality and continuously fails to negotiate a solution, they often experience encapsulated marginality, as discussed above. A ‘constructive marginal’ is an individual who is able to resolve the dilemma of cultural marginality by appropriately integrating choices from the cultures they are involved with, and able to navigate it with ease. These concepts will be explored in the discussion sections further with references to the context of the study and participants.

2.10 Hybridity, the Third Space, and Mimicry

In this next section, Bhabha’s (1994) theory of cultural difference, including concepts such as *hybridity*, *the Third Space*, and *Mimicry* (Bhabha, 1994; Bhabha 1996) will be

discussed briefly in relation to International School's idea of a 'neutral culture' and the 'traditional TCK' cultural identity traits. The term *hybridity* is used by Bhabha (1994) in this context to describe the outcome of the interaction between a coloniser and a colonised culture. Bhabha (1994) argues that in order for a culture to be shared, both the colonising and colonised culture must be mutually reliant, resulting in a culture that rejects the essentialist ideals of identity while recognising the multiplicities and pluralities of identity.

Hybridity was established by Bhabha (1994) as a counter to the colonial effort of reifying the colonised as a perpetual 'Other' (Said, 1978). This process, in which the colonised are being converted to the colonisers' identity, fails – and in its place, Bhabha (1994) describes the interlinking aspects of the colonisers' and the colonised identities as forming a new hybrid identity. This new hybrid identity, this *hybridity*, transcends the essentialised notion of a national and cultural entity and introduces the idea of 'in-between space'. Within the context of the international school and the TCK community, this idea of *hybridity* is one that is often evoked when discussing the interstitial culture that is created through the constant exposure to multiple cultures during the developing years. Though, interestingly, the postcolonial context in which Bhabha (1994) so deeply roots his ideas in, is not very often brought up in these discussions or even recognised as an fundamental aspect of his theories.

The Third Space is another of Bhabha's (1994) many theoretical concepts that occasionally makes appearances in the TCK context. Again, Bhabha (1994) situates his theory of Third Space within the context of postcolonialism, and by doing so is able to contextualise and provide an alternative perspective to the discourse of identity issues. Despite the 'space' in the term, the Third Space is not to be taken as a literal or geographical space to Bhabha:

It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensures that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized, and read anew (1994: 37).

Enunciation is described by Bhabha as the expression of culture or an 'utterance' that occurs in the Third Space. Culture to Bhabha (1994) is never pre-determined and

therefore must be expressed (uttered). The reason cultural differences are identifiable and recognisable is, he argues, through enunciation. Within the Third Space, culture does exist, however the so-called differences between cultures are no longer taxonomical in the sense that ‘home’, ‘race’, ‘origin’, or ‘ethnicity’ are fixed markers of identity (Bhabha, 1994; Appurudai, 2001). This permits the production of new kinds of cultural meaning, which can transcend the existing and rigid boundaries that have been established about culture and identity.

Mimicry describes the action of when a colonised ‘subject’ comes to ‘mimic’ their coloniser by means of adopting certain cultural traits, habits, values, and beliefs. However, a crucial understanding of this action is that the colonised are never able to effectively replicate the colonisers. The result of *mimicry* is rather closer to a parody of the colonisers, a mediocre copy, but never truly the same as the colonisers. This again forcibly places a group of people within the ‘*in-between*’, never quite their old cultural selves and never able to cross the threshold into the dominant cultural identity. All three of these concepts, *hybridity*, *the Third Space*, and *mimicry* will be explored in greater depth in the discussion chapters (Chapter 7.6).

2.11 TCK case studies

In the following section, two case studies will be outlined describing the lives of international school students in Germany and in Indonesia. Both explore the lives of TCKs describing similar narratives of how some ISKs are excluded from being TCKs. The conclusions from both studies will be juxtaposed in the conclusion of this section to identify the gap in the literature which will lead to Section 3.

2.11.1 Case study from Germany

With the history of international schools being set up for expatriate children, it is reasonable why most of the literature would focus on the expatriate community. However, in recent years, there has been a growing number of ‘local’ ISK, which presents a challenge to the already ambiguous TCK discourse; how do these ‘local’ international school students identify themselves? Do they qualify as being a TCK?

Meyer (2015) explores these sentiments in her case study of an international school community set in Germany, where she observed the boundaries and the restriction of mobility of local students. She explored ‘the role of the host nation for international school community members and the extent to which this membership allows for cross-cultural local mobility for both expatriate and host country nationals in attendance’ (Meyer, 2015: 60). She examined the TCK rhetoric that is associated with the notion of ‘being international’, while also addressing how one international school readily incorporated this notion as a marketing strategy. This notion was also extended further as a means for self-identification for the community within and surrounding the international school setting. The tensions between the ‘international’ and ‘local’ communities were explored by examining the theory and practice of the language used to label one another within the expatriate enclave.

The site of Meyer’s study was one international school located in the south of Germany. To maintain anonymity, the school was referred to under the pseudonym: ‘the International School of Southern Germany’ (or ‘ISSG’). An ethnographic approach was used, including participant-observation of the daily practices of ISSG including extracurricular activities out of school hours. Semi-structured interviews and conversations were also conducted with community members including parents, alumni, staff, faculty and administrators. The students of ISSG were randomly selected from the 11th grade (between the ages of 16-17) and interviewed in focus groups.

Meyer notes that many of the ISSG students are greatly affected by borders. Fechter (2007) extends this by alleging that expatriates ‘construct, maintain, and negotiate’ boundaries which reinforce differences that are founded on race, nationality or class. Furthermore, he argues that expatriate communities recognise these boundaries, and generally resist any kind of migration across these constructed boundaries. Meyer recognised this dynamic occurring within ISSG, with the presence of in-grouping and out-grouping based on nationality leading into perceived ‘internationality’. In accordance with Hernes (2004), Meyer notes that boundaries can be divided into three categories: physical boundaries, social boundaries, and mental boundaries. Social boundaries as between individuals, physical boundaries are described as being material, and mental boundaries as being ideas and beliefs that direct actions.

The social boundaries were explored when one focus group was asked about the term TCK, with only a few identifying it as a term they had heard before. When the term was explained, one student answered:

Well, I mean everyone, like most everyone here, easily more than half of our grade are TCKs. I mean you don't walk around promoting it ... it's just kind of like everyone is used to it because we're all surrounded by other Third Culture Kids ... someone's like, "I've lived in two places" and I'm like, "Well I've lived in like 5 places what's your point?" (June, 2014) (Meyer, 2015: 62).

Many of the students and the community surrounding ISSG seem to unanimously accept that some students are more or less 'international' than others. By declaring that more than half the grade are TCKs, this student's response implies that the other half of the ISSG students are not considered TCK at all. Furthermore, it would be interesting to see what this participant meant by their final remark 'Well I've lived in like 5 places what's your point?'. Does this mean that living in five places compared to two places marks a difference in being more or less 'international'? Or, referring back to Pollock and Van Reken's definition of a TCK, how to qualify as a 'genuine' TCK? Particularly in the context of ISSG, there seems to be a social hierarchy driven partially by cultural capital.

Meyer suggests that 'the cultural capital linked to such rhetoric [highlights] the presence of sub-divisions within the community based on nationality' (2015: 63). On the other hand, the German students of ISSG who were born and raised in Germany are referred to as 'Lifers'. While unofficial, the term is widely used amongst the international school community around the world, and carries with it a slightly negative connotation. In some ways, the term 'Lifer' is seen as an antithesis to the TCK, where one is rooted and fixed in one country, the other seems to be rootless, temporary, connected to multiple countries. While some of Meyer's respondents reasoned that the German ISSG students were not considered to be TCK due to their pre-existing status as a 'Lifer', not all of them agreed. One parent of a German ISSG argued that the two were not mutually exclusive labels. She was an alumnus of an international school in Germany and considered herself and her children to be TCK while also proclaiming herself to be a 'Lifer' and also expressed a sense of detachment from the local society. However, despite her labelling herself and her children as TCKs, Meyer notes that her

reflection indicated a level of restriction in her physical, social, and mental mobility which contradicts the TCK label and the values that come attached to it.

The physical boundaries of ISSG were first described by Meyer as being ‘located in an isolated geographical space ... (located in seclusion, and invisible from nearby roadways)’ (Meyer, 2015: 67). She also prefaces this with a quote by Allan, in which he remarks ‘the architecture and location of schools often reveal their original attitude to the community’ (Allan, 2002: 124). It explained that these physical boundaries of ISSG played a crucial role in exacerbating the mental boundaries felt by many German local students. A student explains in her interview that the long commute to and from ISSG makes it difficult to meet other local kids or befriend anybody outside of the school. Another student claims that her inability to befriend ‘local’ kids is due to her lacking linguistic, cultural, and social competences within German society. German ISSG student Antonia describes her membership to the international school automatically removes her from local German society, or in some way disqualifies her as being a local German. This phenomenon is reported throughout Meyer’s study, where the rhetoric used by ISSG (‘internationally mobile’, ‘global nomad’, ‘globe trotter’, ‘cultural chameleon’, ‘internationally aware’, ‘intercultural’, ‘international’, ‘globally minded’) appears to manifest in the opposite: with physical, social, and mental boundaries that limit the students.

This disconnect between the ISSG students and the local German community seems telling of the attitude the school has towards their host country. While international and intercultural exchanges are encouraged amongst ISSG students, the limited opportunities to interact with locals suggests that it is a very particular kind of exchange and interaction that is endorsed by ISSG. According to Meyer, this is noteworthy as ISSG is populated by a very specific socioeconomic class, along with many other international schools across Europe. By this, Meyer is alluding to the fact that international school communities are comprised of expatriates or locals who are usually wealthier than the general population, and therefore tend to also hold positions of power. For this reason, it is important to consider the wider implications of devaluing local interactions for the sake of establishing international ones. As seen in Meyer’s interviews with the ISSG students, there already exists a social hierarchy based predominantly on cultural capital. German ISSG students are devalued for their lack of

cultural variety, and unique or multicultural students are celebrated as being more ‘worldly’ and culturally experienced. While Meyer does address some implications of being a local international student, it would be valuable to explore this at greater length.

2.11.2 Case study from Indonesia

Tanu (2008) proposed that TCKs should be viewed as ‘transnational youth’ in order to move beyond the limitations of the current methodology and the Euro-American-centric nature of the TCK field of study. She used an anthropological approach, methodological cosmopolitanism, and postcolonial critique in order to gain a contextualised understanding of how young people experience their international mobility. The fieldwork was conducted over the course of one year in 2009 at an international school in Jakarta, Indonesia (The International School or ‘TIS’ for short). Participants were mainly comprised of high school students between grades 9 to 12. In-depth interviews were conducted with over 140 participants including students, parents, staff affiliated with TIS as well as alumni of other international schools outside of Indonesia).

Tanu (2008) suggests that the cosmopolitan practices and engagement with the ‘Other’ within the international school context are diverse and situational, but also inherently linked to relations of power. Exactly what constitutes ‘cosmopolitan practices’ is contingent upon what is defined as ‘international’. She proposes that TIS’s ideology of being ‘international’ plays a crucial role in reinforcing both national and transnational class structures, claiming that the process of becoming ‘international’ ‘is mutually constitutive with becoming ‘western’ or ‘Asian’. Each of these processes represent ways or practising cosmopolitanism that emerges out of socio-cultural inequalities’ (Tanu, 2008: iii). As with many other international schools, the core beliefs of TIS include the fostering of compassion, inclusivity in the face of difference, and cultural competence. However, in a similar argument to Meyer (2015), Tanu points out the contradictory nature of what the school hopes to achieve in theory (generating ‘international’ students) is not entirely congruent with what occurs in practice. Tanu (2008) proposes that the Eurocentric form of cosmopolitanism has a great impact upon the social relations she observed within the TIS community. Subsequently, she argues, the

characteristics of being ‘international’ is having the ability to speak English, maintaining boundaries with the locals, and being ‘western’.

Much like what Meyer (2015) uncovered in her study of ISSG students, not all TIS students were considered TCKs. Tanu (2008) begins with her example of a student named Anne-Sophie Bolon, who was French by nationality, born in Australia, previously resided in Indonesia, currently resided in Venezuela, and spoke English with an American accent. Anne-Sophie Bolon was, Tanu argues, the ‘quintessential TCK’. Another student named Dae Sik also grew up outside his ‘passport country’ and attended an international school, much like Anne-Sophie Bolon, however Dae Sik was not considered to be a TCK by their fellow TCK and international school peers. This inconsistency led to Tanu questioning the applicability of the term TCK as an analytical concept, citing the Euro-American centrality of the term as one of the reasons that made it irreconcilable with the entire TCK or transnational population. By employing a postcolonial lens to the experiences of the transnational youth of TIS, Tanu was able to analyse the ways in which class, ‘race’, and gender overlapped to create the multifaceted hierarchies that emerge in environments like TIS.

Furthermore, she argues that these many facets of cosmopolitanism are rooted within structures of power. One of Tanu’s central arguments is that TIS’s (and many other international schools) idea of being ‘international’ adopts a Euro-American centric interpretation of cosmopolitanism. Much of the literature and rhetoric surrounding TCKs has a tendency to promote the idea that transnational spaces are neutral. Put more simply, there is an assumption that if you take a TCK from Australia and another TCK from Nigeria, their experiences would be more similar than different, and in essence, they were both just ‘cosmopolitans’. Tanu (2008) rejects this sentiment, arguing that the dominant cultures of international schools can often be overlooked as a determining factor of success in life in the transnational space. Citing Allan’s (2004) example of two students attending an international school in Japan; a student from Texas found it very easy to fit in, whereas a student from Taiwan struggled with integrating much more. In TIS, the dominating culture was North American. As an alumnus of TIS, Tanu used her own experience to situate herself and other ‘locals’ in the discourse of ‘international cosmopolitans’. Tanu explained a sense of disconnect when she saw her school peers bringing in American snacks like brownies, while her mother made sushi

for her to pack for lunch. This made her feel 'like a second generation Asian immigrant in a western industrialized country' (Tanu, 2008: 45). She claims that the literature on TCKs tend to focus on cultural dissonance that TCKs experience upon repatriation, but her experience led her to believe that many experienced dissonance while attending international schools.

Over the course of two semesters, Tanu 'hung out' with TIS students during and out of school hours. At times she followed a particular student around for an entire day, observing their interactions, while they provided insight into their friendship circles and the social cliques. During these observations, Tanu found that some students would rarely interact with one another. The Indonesian group was unexpectedly guarded with Tanu, which she attributes to them not needing her as a 'cultural broker' as they relied more on economic capital to establish and maintain status in TIS's social hierarchy. Interestingly, Tanu found that the dominant English-speaking groups were the most difficult to approach.

With the ethnographic interviews, Tanu utilised an open interview method, asking her participants to tell their 'story' starting from where *they* believe it begins. Interviews were usually one hour, with minimal interference on Tanu's part. The objective of these interviews was to give the students a platform to tell their story, giving them the control to include what they deemed to be important for Tanu to know about them. While analysing these interviews, Tanu noticed that data saturation for some groups were reached far more quickly than with others. While the narratives the white American students shared were interesting on an individual level, they seemed to be thematically familiar with many of the key themes having been already covered in pre-existing. Comparatively, the Asian students and mixed heritage students offered new insight into a largely overlooked group within the TCK discourse. This brings us back to the nature of literature surrounding TCK having a largely Euro- and American-centric bias. The problem with assuming that transnational spaces are neutral, as some literature claim, is with the erasure of those who are negatively affected by the uneven relations of power that Euro- and American-centrism creates.

An element of hypocrisy Tanu outlines in her study is this ideology of neutral space and cosmopolitanism, where she observed some students and staff members of TIS working

as self-appointed gatekeepers in deciding who is considered to be international, TCK, or cosmopolitan. For instance, several respondents stated that the Koreans were ‘not *really* TCKs’ (Tanu, 2008: 79), because they only hung out with other Korean students. Socialising with those from the same ethnic group and communicating in the same (non-English) language was taken as a sign of their inability or unwillingness to practice cosmopolitan behaviour. Crucially, this preconception was not applied to the European or American student body. She claimed that if an American student only mingled with other American students and only spoke English with one another, it was not taken to be ‘non-cosmopolitan’ behaviour. This perhaps provides the compelling evidence to support Tanu’s argument that TIS (and many other international schools) are Euro-American-Centric and the nature of transnational spaces are not neutral.

Tanu’s research contributed to the literature by situating the experiences of ‘transnational’ youth in their socio-historical context. By using the anthropological approach, she was able to examine the impact of class structures on transnational youth in their pursuit of cosmopolitan capital. From this, Tanu was able to examine how transnational youth negotiate their social boundaries, and how these boundaries are constructed and changed. While this yields very exciting and new information into a sub-group of transnationals that was historically overlooked, there is still much to be explored in this direction. It is clear from both Meyer’s (2015) study with ISSG and Tanu’s (2008) study with TIS that students do not automatically become ‘international’ by virtue of their international school education. There are elements involved that seem to hinder some students from being considered a ‘true’ TCK or a genuine transnational or cosmopolitan. Exactly what these elements might be is still somewhat unclear.

This process of negotiating with a TCK identity was explored briefly by Tanu (2013) where she remarks:

[The TCK] is better understood as an emotionally powerful insider (emic) construct that narrates identity and belonging for people with a transnational upbringing in the same way that “Italy” or “Indonesia” represent geographical and emotional homelands, but are insufficient as analytical constructs (Tanu, 2013: 14).

In other words, for those who lack a specific nation or geographical place to ‘root’ their identity, the TCK qualities and space paradoxically becomes their ‘nationality’ and their liminal homeland. However, if TCK is to be seen as analogous to ‘Italy’ or ‘Indonesia’ as Tanu (2013) claims, there are also further implications to consider when grouping these concepts together. As previously discussed in earlier chapters, the idea of a ‘culture’, be it ‘Italian culture’ or ‘Indonesian culture’ exists under the assumption that these cultures have some level of coherence. These essentialist notions play a fundamental part in how people make sense of the world around us, but neglect those who exist outside the essentialist parameters. The same can be said for the use of a ‘TCK culture’ as an analytical construct. And while Tanu (2013) argues that there is too much focus on defining ‘what is TCK’, this comes at the expense of thinking about what the term is actually comprised of: the TCKs as individuals. It would be worth re-examining the TCK and ISKs in Indonesia particularly with consideration to the new standards set in 2015 by the Ministry of Education. One of the major changes include the banning of all international schools in the country to include ‘international’ in their school name.

Both Tanu (2015) and Meyer (2015) have touched upon the two types of boundaries that ISKs come across, physical and mental boundaries. Physical boundaries pertain to the international school as a structure and location, in Germany the school was built far away from the local population while in Indonesia, the school enforced itself with thick bomb walls. As discussed, this has caused a rift between the ISK population and the local population in both scenarios, despite the IB and CAS programmes being designed to foster intercultural understanding. Mental boundaries refer to the labels used within the school by students, faculty members, and the institution itself. I am interested in the practice of a UN Day (United Nations) where each student is encouraged to dress in their national costume and walk their country’s flag in a showcase, and how this plays into the development of a ISK’s cultural identity.

During the time Tanu (2015) conducted her research at TIS, students were still labelled with their country/countries of origin in the yearbook, I am curious as to whether this practice has changed, and if so, what caused it to change? Tanu (2015) also contends that the TCK label is a product of Euro- American-centrism, citing how Korean student population were not considered TCK due to the fact that they communicated in Korean.

However, in Meyers' (2015) study, some European ISKs were still not considered to be TCK, despite also being English-speakers, resulting in some discrepancy in Tanu's (2015) theory. The linking themes from both studies is this idea of mobility. Those who did not possess a legal culture that was different to their geographical culture were not considered to be TCK in either study.

Literature surrounding TCKs has generally supported the idea of international school spaces being neutral with much of the surrounding rhetoric celebrating this idea of interconnectedness and kinship amongst the TCK community. However, with so much emphasis placed on neutrality, the pervasive power structures within the international school communities are often overlooked, along with the marginalised populations within these communities. Certain populations within the international school have been singled out as being not international or TCK enough to be considered 'cosmopolitan', but how exactly is this being measured and by whom? The TCK label seems to hold cultural capital within the community of expats, but what are the real-life implications of how this label is being used?

My interest is in discovering the impact of these labels on international youth and explore the extent to which the institutional culture and labels employed by international schools and the surrounding community impacts identity development of international school students. By interrogating the idea of TCKs and the labels associated with it (cosmopolitanism, international, intercultural), I hope to gain a deeper understanding of how these conditions were set for international school students to fulfil. Moreover, I will explore the powers at play within international schools that propel these ideologies, and how this version of 'international' and 'cosmopolitan' might create a knock-on effect and influence the public perception on what it means to be a globalised citizen. In the next section, I will outline the research questions I have come up with and the methodology that I have selected to answer these questions.

Chapter 3. Methodology

Introduction

This section will outline the research methodology and design of the research, how they are guided by the research questions, as well as issues relating to the COVID-19 pandemic and how this affected the trajectory of the study. The first section will explain the decisions I made about the ontological and epistemological perspectives and how this led to establishing my research paradigm. Then, I detail the development of

research questions that guided this study as well as the evolution of these questions as the circumstances of my study changed alongside a global pandemic. After which I discuss the research design and the rationales for the methods used for participant selection, data collection, data analysis, concluding with ethical considerations and limitations.

3.1 Philosophical and methodological underpinnings

To properly explain the nature of my research, I will first outline the philosophical perspectives that informed my methodological choices. I will then discuss the research paradigm, followed by a justification for qualitative methods and my stance on phenomenological research methods.

3.1.1 Philosophical perspectives

As any discussion involving methodology, I will begin with the fundamentals: paradigms, ontology, and epistemology. As a researcher, it is first necessary for me to be able to understand and articulate my beliefs about the structure of reality. Equally as important is my ability to express how I will go about attaining this knowledge. These two elements combined form my research paradigm – but what is a paradigm to begin with? As with most things discussed so far, there is no single definition. Over time and with frequent usage in different fields, the definition has morphed in various ways, with even the originator of the term, Kuhn, using it in over 20 different ways (Richards, 2003). However, there is a general consensus on how it is predominantly used which can be defined with the following:

A paradigm may be viewed as a set of basic beliefs (or metaphysics) that deals with ultimates or first principles. It represents a world view that defines, for its holder, the nature of the ‘world’, the individual’s place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts, as, for example, cosmologies and theologies do. The beliefs are basic in the sense that they must be accepted simply on faith (however well argued); there is no way to establish their ultimate truthfulness (Guba and Lincoln, 1994: 107).

Richards (2003) argues that the comparison with cosmologies and theologies is significant in understanding the conduct of researchers when it comes to engaging with people with opposing or different paradigms. It is, as he describes, a ‘waste [of] an awful lot of valuable energy on fruitless attempts to convert the unconvertible’

(Richards, 2003: 33). The best way of in a sense ‘justifying’ your paradigm is by displaying its worth in your research. Understandably, those who work within the same paradigms will share similar beliefs and values, different to those in other paradigms. This also means, those working in other paradigms ‘will see and interpret the world in different ways’ (Richards, 2003: 32). As a researcher, how we see and interpret the world directly influences the decisions we make in data collection/generation, methods of analysis, and overall conduct of the research. Therefore, it is important to clarify what beliefs are underpinning my research. These next sections will outline how I understand the components that informed my methodological choices.

Ontology refers to the nature and structure of reality (Crotty, 1998); it is concerned with addressing the question ‘*What is reality?*’. At the ontological level, there is what is considered to be a split in beliefs: ‘a belief that there is a social realm waiting to be uncovered by the social researcher and which exists externally to actors and on the other hand a domain that is in a continuous process of creation and recreation by its participants’ (Bryman, 2008: 13). In simpler terms: ‘*Is there a truth waiting to be discovered?*’ Or, ‘*Are there multiple ‘truths’ that is the outcome of multiple realities?*’ (Hanks, 2013: 61).

Epistemology on the other hand, examines how one could go about explaining reality. If we were to put it into questions, ontology would be addressing ‘*What is reality?*’ whereas with epistemology it would be concerned with exploring ‘*How can I know reality?*’ or in other words, ‘how we know what we know’ (Crotty, 1998: 8). With epistemology there are two main perspectives; Firstly, that knowledge can be measured and tested with the use of the correct tools. Secondly, the belief that reality is fluid and complex, needing interpretation (and perhaps collaboration) for the underlying meaning to be discovered (Crotty, 1998; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Hanks, 2013).

With this brief summary, the ontological and epistemological perspectives seem to have clear pairings that each correspond to logically. However, as Richards (2003) notes, these perspectives may not be as clear cut with every researcher. As with how people can hold conflicting attitudes and beliefs, the same can be with a researcher who may hold conflicting epistemological and ontological perspectives.

3.1.2 Research paradigm

The nature of my research is constructivist/interpretive, which will be focusing on the lived realities of my participants and therefore is best explored qualitatively. By ‘constructivism’, I do not mean what is sometimes referred to as Piagetian learning theory (Hua, 2015). In this research, I am referring to constructivism as a paradigm which Hua argues ‘stands for a school of thought competing with the positivist paradigm in that it regards the person as actively engaged in the creation of their own world’ (2015: 12). Positivism generally operates on the assumption that there is a single truth or reality, and seeks to find it through quantifiable data. With Positivism, (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison 2007: 19) note that ‘the more effort, it seems, that researchers put into their scientific experimentation in the laboratory by restricting, simplifying and controlling variables, the more likely they are to end up with a pruned, synthetic version of the whole, a constructed play of puppets in a restricted environment’ While there are certainly many advantages to this method of research, I believe the rigid nature of positivism ‘which attempts to measure and define cultures as solid, fixed, separate geographical blocks which confine the behavior of the people who live within them’ (Holliday, 2015: 23) would ultimately hinder the type of rich data I hope to generate with my participants.

Another clarification about the combination of constructivism and interpretivism; some see it as two separate paradigms, whereas others, like Holliday, have merged the two in something he refers to as an interpretive constructivist approach. The strengths of an interpretive constructivist approach are in its appreciation of ‘the uncertain, subjective and constructed nature of culture’ (Holliday, 2015: 24). This ‘uncertain’ and ‘subjective’ nature of culture forms the backbone of my research, but also presents as a challenge to the methodology.

Ontologically, because my research is structured around the interpretive/constructivist approach, there is no single reality or truth. In an ideal world, I would be able to identify and separate my participants into distinct groups according to nationality or culture, but with my particular research focus this can be problematic and perhaps even impossible. While the labels are somewhat unavoidable when discussing intercultural

communication and education, I would like to clarify that I do not necessarily agree with these terms (for example, TCK) and understand that a nuanced view needs to be taken when tackling these issues. However, for these reasons, I have decided to approach the participants in my study as individuals in categories of their own making. In line with an interpretive constructivism paradigm, I would like to give my participants a platform where they can create their own reality in which they are perceived the way they wish to be perceived. From this I can interpret and discover the underlying meaning of the international identity, and the underlying issues that may come with the upbringing and experience.

3.1.3 Qualitative and quantitative methods

Educational inquiry involves elements that are simultaneously particular and universal, concrete and abstract, or specific and general, suggesting dualisms in constructing knowledge are meaningless because educational phenomena and our knowledge about them entail both qualitative and quantitative dimensions.

(Hartas, 2010: 27)

The debate between quantitative and qualitative research methods which has been playing itself out over the last decade is far from over. Within the realm of educational research, the proliferation of qualitative methods has only spurred the controversy and polarisation between the two camps, leading to more scrutinization about the standards for the design and conduct of research.

In the traditional view of research methodology, social sciences are considered the same as natural sciences, with similar objectives in the discovery of natural and universal laws that dictate individual and social behaviour (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). Qualitative methods are often used to help establish correlations between variables and outcomes, using controlled experiments to generate data which can be used to extrapolate the 'truth'. The advantage of using quantitative data which has been rigorously collected and appropriated analysed is in its reliability (ACAPS, 2012). Reliability in quantitative research can be outlined by the following: 'dependability, consistency and replicability over time, over instruments and over groups of respondents. It is concerned with precision and accuracy' (Cohen *et al.*, 2007: 146). The strengths of quantitative research can also be weaknesses, particularly when dealing strictly with quantitative

data. Many important characteristics (e.g., identity, perceptions, feelings) are often lost in the analysis, as many of these factors cannot be meaningfully reduced to numbers without some reference to the context it is being extracted from (Dudwick, Kuehnast, Jones, and Woolock, 2006). Another, and perhaps, the most fundamental flaw of positivism (which is generally aligned with the quantitative approach) is its claim to certainty. As Crotty asserts, ‘articulating scientific knowledge is one thing; claiming that scientific knowledge is utterly objective and that only scientific knowledge is valid, certain and accurate is another’ (2003: 29)

The interpretative view of research methodology, whilst sharing the same objectives of trying to explain human behaviour:

[E]mphasizes how people differ from inanimate natural phenomena and, indeed, from each other. These contending views – and also their corresponding reflections in education research – stem in the first instance from different conceptions of social reality and of individual and social behaviour (Cohen et al., 2001: 7).

Where the reliability in quantitative research was discussed, some (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Winter, 2000; Stenbacka, 2001) have contested the suitability of the term in qualitative research. Some suggestions for an alternative term are *credibility*, *neutrality*, *confirmability*, *dependability*, *consistency*, *applicability*, *trustworthiness*, and in particular, *dependability* (Cohen et al., 2003: 148). The qualitative research method often follows a nonlinear research path, emphasizing the detailed examination of natural human accounts.

As my research is fundamentally about understanding how international school people negotiated their identity, sense of belonging, and place, it heavily relies on first-hand accounts of these individuals recounting their lived experiences. The research questions, which will be discussed below in section 3.6, can be condensed into two overarching central themes, one which explores the relationship between the institution and the individual, and another which investigates the relationship between participants and their TCK peers. In both the role of perception plays a critical role in developing a deeper understanding of what is being researched. The nature of qualitative research ‘seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning’ (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011: 8), and is able to give participants a platform in

which their experiences and perceptions of the world can be represented in a more nuanced way. Rather than seeking to find numbers or statistics to generalise an experience, this research looks to explore the intricacies of the human experience, and I believe the qualitative approach facilitates this endeavour.

3.1.4 Phenomenology

With phenomenology, the human experience of the world is considered a valid interpretation of the world (Van Manen, 1990). As a result, the detached nature of scientific empirical research is considered to be too uninvolved and inadequate at understanding the nuances of the human experience. The phenomena that is being studied is neither quantified nor described in terms of established reality, but rather, it is an understanding of how participants make meaning of their everyday world that is the objective.

Phenomenological research varies from other types of qualitative research in that it seeks to comprehend the essence of a phenomena through the eyes of those who have lived through it (Christensen, Johnstone, and Turner, 2010). The focus of this sort of research is thus not just on the participants or on the world they live in, but the relationship between the two (Merriam, 2007). Phenomenologically speaking, the objective is to reveal the essence of the phenomenon that is being studied. To do this, specific techniques are utilised such as bracketing and imaginative variation.

Phenomenology is concerned with the descriptive and analytical experience of a phenomena as described by individuals in their natural world or their 'lifeworld' (Creswell, 2013). The rich and detailed descriptions of the phenomenon being studied is a defining characteristic of phenomenological research. The focus should be on the descriptions the participants give of their experience, and not on any preconceived notions about the phenomenon. The phenomenological reduction method aids the researcher in this by allowing them to have an open mind and be receptive to the participants descriptions (Moustakas, 1994). Imaginative variation is the methodological step that comes after bracketing and reduction. Through the process of imaginative variation, researchers can identify structural themes which were produced during the phenomenological reduction phase.

While phenomenology may be traced back to the works of Kant (1781) and Hegel (1807), Husserl (1962) is often regarded as the modern founder of phenomenology in the twentieth century (Vandenberg, 1997). However, there were also different philosophical approaches to phenomenology that were developed after Husserl founded transcendental phenomenology; most prominently, Heidegger's (1962) hermeneutic phenomenology, and existential phenomenology by Merleau-Ponty (1962) (though this section will focus on the first two). While the philosophical positions of these three phenomenological methods differ, they all adhere to four key phenomenological concepts: description, reduction, imaginative variation, and essences (Moustakas, 1994). The next section will briefly explore the philosophical underpinnings of phenomenology, and its evolution as a methodology.

Husserl rejected the belief that human consciousness and the world existed independently, and therefore could not be viewed as or studied as isolated things (Husserl, 2001). The reduction process, by which Husserl introduced the techniques of bracketing or *epoché*, intended to ensure that the researcher (or philosopher) could view the phenomena without the interferences of pre-existing prejudices. Husserl also considered intentionality and the notion of essences to be central concepts that underpinned transcendental phenomenology. Intentionality being the researcher's conscious intent or motivation driving them to study a phenomenon. With every experience, Husserl also believed there to be the existence of *noema* and *noesis*, representing the objective experience and the subjective experience respectively. To conduct phenomenological research, both the *noema* and the *noesis* must be considered to truly understand the experiences being described. Only by considering both can the underlying essences of a phenomenon be uncovered.

As a pupil under Husserl, Heidegger's own view on phenomenology was greatly influenced by the Husserlian method. However, Heidegger would go on to develop his own approach which differed in the way he believed phenomenological research should be conducted and called it 'fundamental ontology' at its core. Where Husserl was a firm believer in the practice of bracketing, Heidegger (1962) did not believe that it was possible to be completely objective while conducting phenomenological research, opposing the neo-Cartesian importance on subjectivity Husserl held. Another way in

which the two phenomenological research approaches differ is in the focus of the research itself, Husserl focuses on taking a descriptive approach with transcendental phenomenology, while Heidegger's hermeneutics assumes an interpretive element. Employed as a research method, hermeneutic phenomenology can provide the opportunity to give voice to the participants and to their experiences. If this study was more solely concerned with the participants' descriptions of the phenomenon, then existential phenomenology would have been the right choice in terms of a phenomenological method. However, this study is not only interested in the participants' descriptions but also their interpretations of the phenomenon being studied, which is why hermeneutic phenomenology was employed.

3.1.5 Researcher positionality

In the previous section I discussed the notion of objectivity in phenomenological research, and why I adopted Heidegger's (1962) positionality on hermeneutic phenomenology as a research methodology. With hermeneutic phenomenology, there is an element of the researcher's positionality and active participation that rejects Husserl's (1962) assertion that bracketing is fundamental in phenomenology. In this section, I will explain my positionality and background as a researcher in relation to my study.

In a departure from Husserl's (1962) transcendental phenomenology and the positivist epistemological idea that the researcher should employ bracketing or remain impartial and objective, conducting insider research is becoming increasingly prevalent. Insider research is usually characterised as a study of a community or organisational system one is a part of (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007). Cunliffe and Karunanayake (2013) also describe insider research as the perceived proximity of researchers to their research participants, which encompasses everything from group membership, identity, or belonging to spaces.

Like my research participants, my cultural and educational background is not very straightforward. My grandparents from both sides of the family are originally from China but emigrated to Thailand where my parents were born. Both my parents were raised in Thailand but also attended university abroad in the US to finish their higher

education. I was born in Indonesia (where my family had moved for my Dad's work) and lived there for 17 years until I graduated high school. I attended an international school in Jakarta for all my formative years so English became my first language (though I spent many years having to prove this to universities and prospective employers). Culturally I felt like I was a mix between Thai, American, Chinese, and British, though I never felt like I had the right to full membership in any of these groups.

While I was attending international school, I had never come across the term TCK and only discovered it when another international school student whom I met in university introduced me to the sub-group. For a long time I identified with the TCK identity, and while I may not necessarily agree with the TCK label anymore, it has played a critical role in my journey as a researcher in this field. My interest in exploring other international school students' experiences with identity, sense of belonging, and place are in part due to my own curiosities about my own identity, sense of belonging, and place. The critiques of insider research often cite that the proximity to the research participants results in 'subjective involvement – a deterrent to objective perception and analysis' (Aguiler, 1981: 15). Therefore, to properly conduct my research as an inside researcher, a high degree of reflexivity is required. In practice, this meant that I had to take a step back during the process of generating my research questions, my methodological protocol, the data analysis to reflect on my motivations and my position as a researcher (Corlett and Mavin, 2018).

3.2 Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 global pandemic has changed the way we do many things, with the safety and wellbeing of everybody being of utmost importance. Inevitably, the pandemic also impacted the way I planned to conduct my research. In this section, I detail how this changed the trajectory of my method of data collection, as well as the evolution my research questions went through during this process.

3.2.1 Research during a global pandemic

In the early stages of my research development, the project I had initially proposed was to take place in Jakarta, Indonesia (where my international school Alma Mater is

located). The connections had already been established with the institution with a working timeframe, with plans to conduct interviews, group interviews, and school-wide observation over the course of a month. Following the upgrade which was carried out on 14th of January 2020, the outbreak of COVID-19 was beginning to spread throughout East and South-East Asia, prompting me to make the difficult decision of postponing my trip to Indonesia for data collection. At the time, it was not known what the exact ramification of COVID-19 would be, nor the extent it would inhibit my conduct as a researcher.

Since I was unable to travel, I decided to recruit participants from the University of Leeds own Third Culture Kid Society. The TCK Society was relatively new (established only last year) but had approximately 30 members, approximately half of which were self-identified 'TCKs'. However, as the situation developed, and university students were sent home (sometimes even out of the country) and the UK went into lockdown in March 2020, reaching out to these participants became a challenge. Since lockdown also overlapped with the conclusion of the school year, the TCK Society committee was also experiencing a change in leadership and committee members (or a lack thereof), leading me to decide it was no longer the most viable option for participant recruitment.

With the state of the pandemic at the time, everything had to be moved to online platforms, so the next logical step for my research project was to adapt to these circumstances. I posted several advertisements and notices on various internet platforms (Facebook, Reddit, Instagram) that had 'TCK' themed content or spaces with the details of my study and invited those who were interested to e-mail me or comment on the post (see Appendix 3). The response was very positive and I believe, while my research project is not how I initially envisaged it to be, the unexpected transformation my research had to undergo has overall been for the better. I was able to develop research questions that explored perspectives beyond the in situ of one international school which I believe deepened my understanding of the phenomenon I wanted to explore. This did mean, however, that my research questions that I had initially established for my earlier plans had gone through various changes throughout the process.

3.2.2 Participants

The aim of quantitative research is to obtain a sample that is representative enough of a population that it makes the results of the study generalisable to that population. On the other hand, qualitative research is not so much motivated by the generalisability of the results as it is concerned with developing insight into a specific phenomenon. This distinction is what influenced the decision to go with purposive sampling. The aim of my study was to explore the impact of the international school experience, which required my participants to have substantial knowledge and first-hand experience with this type of upbringing. As such, the sampling and recruitment process had to reflect this kind of requirement. Purposive sampling in this way ‘best enable[s] the researcher to explore the research questions in depth’ (Matthews and Ross, 2010: 154), with people who are knowledgeable in that area (Cohen *et al.*, 2007: 115).

As previously discussed, the participants were initially planned to be current students at an international school in Jakarta, Indonesia. These plans were changed due to COVID-19, so the following plan was to recruit from the University of Leeds’s Third Culture Kid Society. As the TCK society was very inclusive and open to all members, regardless of their schooling or their background, the participants I had planned to involve in the research were to have completed at least one year of their formal school year at an international school – preferably one of their final four years of high school. Participants who had their international school experience at an earlier stage in their lives would not have been excluded, however, it may have been more difficult for the participant to recall and discuss their experiences. I had also planned to do both individual interviews and focus groups with these participants. However, as the pandemic progressed, I adapted this plan for something that was more feasible with the circumstances under the government and university safety guidelines.

To recruit participants, I posted on various online platforms that catered to TCKs (Facebook, Reddit, and Instagram) with a brief description of my research, what is to be expected of participants, and contact details for those who wanted to express their interest (see Appendix 3). In my description of the recruitment for my research I included the following passage:

Is anybody interested in taking part in a PhD study on Third culture kids and identity? I am conducting a study on Third Culture Kids and the international school experience, focusing on curriculum and how this affects identity.

I'm looking for people to share their perspectives on their schools' culture and how this influenced their social integration post-graduation. Your contribution will help develop a better understanding of the impact of internationalised education on individuals and the move towards global citizenship.

I was deliberate in including both the terms 'Third culture kids' and 'international school' as I was interested in interviewing individuals who identified with being a TCK, those who identified with having an international school experience, and those who identified with both. In retrospect, I would have made it more explicit that individuals did not have to self-identify as a TCK to participate in my research, as I had two prospective participants ask if it was okay for them to participate despite not knowing if they were considered to be a TCK. These participants were reassured that their participation was very welcomed and that the TCK label was used only as a matter of convenience to access a community that is often difficult to identify.

The responses from Facebook and Instagram were not very successful as most of the participants that expressed interest were from the Reddit TCK forum, with only one reaching out through Facebook. The reddit forum was particularly successful in the recruitment process as there was an active page dedicated to TCKs that I was able to access. In the TCK forum, many of the posts comprised of people seeking other TCKs in similar areas to form meetups groups and articles about problems or situations TCKs could relate to. As for the number of participants involved, there does not seem to be a prescriptive number with qualitative research; as Patton reasons, '[s]ample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what's at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources' (2002: 244). With regards to how many participants I decided to opt for, over 90% of the early participants who expressed interest in participating in the research were self-identifying TCKs who were very heavily involved in the TCK community. I gave it as much time as I could (approximately 1.5 months) to see if I could get a more diverse participant pool, with participants who were not TCK-identifying or were not sure about this identity. With this in mind, my study initially moved ahead with 15

participants who had provided a signed consent form, with 4 dropping out or no longer responding to invites for an interview date, and 11 completing their interviews in total.

3.2.3 Evolution of research questions and framework

As I had previously discussed, the circumstances of the global pandemic played a very prominent role in the evolution of my research questions. But, as Creswell (2007) notes, qualitative research questions – particularly early iterations – are tentative and rarely stay the same throughout the process. Researchers should ‘[e]xpect the research questions to evolve and change during the study in a manner consistent with the assumptions of an emerging design (Creswell, 2007: 131). When I was beginning to draft my first batch of research questions, my project had already shifted topics from the manifestation of self-identity in children of South East Asian countries to identities and experiences of Third Culture Kids. And while I believed I had a central question in mind, this did not exactly translate in the way I structured my research questions in September 2019 as follows:

1. *What defines the lived experiences of non-Western students who enter an international school?*
2. *In what ways do the described experiences of non-Western students integrating into an international school mirror the described experiences of the traditional ‘TCKs’ integrating into an international school?*
3. *How is a ‘TCK’ identified by those within the international school community?*
4. *How do non-Western students in international schools define their own identity?*

These were my first attempts at trying to ground my ideas into workable research questions. It is clear that my interests were focused around this idea of ‘non-Western students’ in the international school context, but upon further reading and discussions with my supervisors, I was able to take a step back and reassess research questions. In an attempt to distinguish the difference between participant demographics, I tried to incorporate the factor of English-speaking capability.

Table 1. Proposed Participant Criteria

In hindsight, it's clear to see what was wrong with this table. To begin with, the term 'Western' and 'Non-Western' was already problematic and over-simplified to be a viable way to distinguish participants. Particularly with the demographic I was intending to study, to recruit on the basis on who is considered 'Westernised' I would have had to decide by virtue of their passport country. This was something I was not comfortable with; given the topic of my research, to claim that I wanted to learn and understand about a group of people who felt boxed in by their nationality/culture/passport, only to box them into a label again felt contradictory and fundamentally wrong. A similar argument could be had for the terms 'Native English Speakers' (NES), 'Non-Native English Speakers' (NNES), and 'Third Culture Kids'

Western NES (Native English-speaking) TCK Male	Western NES (Native English-speaking) TCK Female
Western NNES (Non-native English-speaking) TCK Male	Western NNES (Non-native English-speaking) TCK Female
Non-Western NES TCK Male	Non-Western NNES TCK Female
Non-Western NES TCK Male	Non-Western NNES TCK Female

(TCK). The NES vs NNES is a predominant issue in the English Teaching community, the issue becoming more problematic due to the confused way in which English(es) are distributed across the world.

When discussing the English language, particularly within the context of Language Teaching, only two have been consistently considered in terms of standards and codification: British English and American English. These two varieties are often classed as the main 'native varieties' and are seen as the standard from which other varieties have been modelled after/from. But not all agree with this statement.

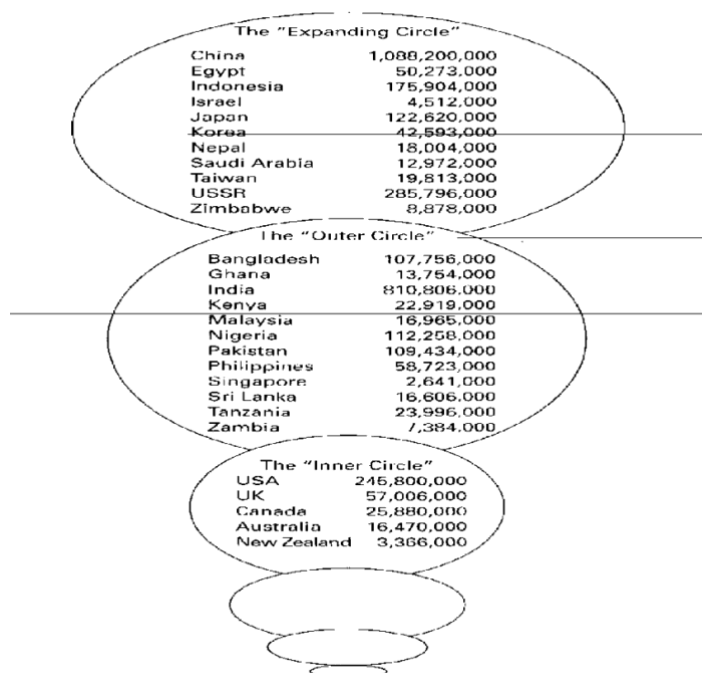
Geeraerts (2003) argues that there are two basic models of the standardisation debate: a *rationalist* one and a *romantic* one. The rationalist model he describes as the following:

The most conspicuous feature is probably the generality of standard languages [...] They are *geographically* general, in the sense that they overarch the more restricted areas of application of dialects. Further, they are *socially* general because they constitute a common language that is not the property of a single social group but that is available to all. Finally, they are *thematically* universal in the sense that they are equipped to deal with any semantic domain or any linguistic function (2003: 5, original emphasis).

In this model, drawing on Prator (1968) and Quirk (1990), the standard languages act as a neutral medium, with the belief that it should remain monolithic (unchanging with the standards being maintained to achieve international intelligibility). It also serves as an instrument for participation and emancipation to ‘ensure that men and women from all walks of life and from all corners of the nation can communicate freely’ (Geeraerts, 2003: 5).

Conversely, the romantic model considers the claim for participation and emancipation with the standardisation of languages to be fundamentally incompatible. By virtue of setting the so-called ‘standard’, the languages themselves become an instrument of exclusion and oppression (Geeraerts, 2003). One only needs to re-examine the rationalist model’s claim of geographical neutrality to see that it is not an accurate depiction of the context. By every indication, these geographical points of where the ‘standard Englishes’ originated (e.g. England and North America) are also places that are considered economic, cultural, and/or political powerhouses. Pakir asserts ‘we have to accept the inevitable “pluricentricity” of English, rather than carrying on with the tradition that there can only be a duo-centricity (vis-à-vis the British or American centres of linguistic hegemony’ (1997: 172). As a proponent of the romantic model, supporters of the World Englishes framework (Kachru, 1986; Modiano, 2001; Canagarajah, 2005) believe that as English has undergone such profound change as it became more widespread, ownership of the English language should no longer be exclusive to its ‘native speakers’.

Kachru (1992) also attempted to describe the spread of English in terms of three concentric circles in 'The Three-circle Model of World Englishes' as seen in the diagram below.

Figure 1. *The Three-circle Model of World Englishes* (Kachru, 1992)

The model has since been heavily criticised (even by Kachru himself) for being oversimplified. Due to the rapid growth of English, in addition to the rapid globalisation and subsequent mass migration, people are no longer bound by national borders. Many 'native' English speakers are abroad living in countries that are not considered native English speaking and vice versa. This leads to why the use of 'NES' and 'NNES' labels in my research was not a viable option. According to Davies (1991), the most common criteria for 'native speakerhood' is birth right – that is to say, individuals born in English-speaking countries will be considered 'native English speakers'. However, as Medgyes argues, 'the trouble with this is that birth does not always determine language identity' (1990: 430); following this with an example of a boy who is born in the United States but is adopted by Austrian parents and moves to Austria at the age of one. Another issue with this line of thinking is with the uncertainty of geographical entities; i.e., which countries are considered to be English-speaking? Those in the 'Inner Circle' are, but what about the countries that lie in the 'Outer Circle'? The discussion about this is often centred upon individuals from 'NES' countries going to 'NNES' countries. However, rarely is it discussed in the context of TCKs and highly mobile individuals. While a person may move to a country that is not considered to be 'Native English Speaking', the international expat community (referred to as an international/expat 'bubble') may, and oftentimes, is operationally English-

speaking. This ‘bubble’, which generally encompasses the international school and the surrounding neighbourhood sometimes is described as a country in and of itself.

Leading us back to the individuals who inhabit this ‘bubble’: the Third Culture Kids.

Initially I was also very hesitant to use the label/term ‘TCK’ as through my readings I found it to be rather essentialised and almost exclusive in a negative sense. This is why my research questions were altered in a way that reflected this unease, which resulted with this:

1. To what extent is the ‘Third Culture Kid’ label conducive to an understanding of a student population at an international school?
 - a. What factors are involved in the labelling of a ‘TCK’?
2. What are the experiences of students integrating into an international school environment in Jakarta, Indonesia?
3. How do the discourses around migration and internationalisation frame these individuals within the international school environment?
4. How do these experiences mirror the described experiences of the ‘traditional TCKs’ integrating into an international school?

There is – to an extent – a general question being formed in this set of questions, however, the sub-questions were still a bit unfocused and the relationship to the main question is still vague. Over Christmas, I kept these questions in mind and tried to develop them further, but ended up submitting these to the Upgrade panel with not much alteration. During the Upgrade itself, I was challenged with many difficult questions, some which left some lingering doubt particularly concerning the focus of my research questions. But after having some guidance from my supervisors, I was able to first rethink my research questions and reorganise them in a way that finally made sense to me. These are the research questions:

1. *In what ways does the institutional culture and curriculum of an international school affect notions of identity, belonging, and place?*
 - a. To what extent are set values being promoted through formal curriculum offered at international schools?

- b. How do the discourses around culture, migration, and internationalisation frame students in international schools?
 - c. How does English as a medium of instruction impact the students studying at international schools?
2. *How do students at international schools perceive themselves (and others)?*
- a. What were the lived experiences of these individuals when they were in international schools?
 - b. To what extent do these individuals experience a confused cultural identity?
 - c. Have how they identify changed after leaving the international school space?
 - d. What factors are involved with their perception of ‘home’?

The research questions are now split into two overarching central questions which tackle the two central themes that drive my research:

1. What was the relationship between the institution and the individual?
2. What was the relationship between highly mobile individuals and other highly mobile individuals, and how did they perceive themselves?

After gathering the data, completing the analysis, and compiling the findings I found that my research questions did not fully align with everything that I had uncovered throughout my research. The overall aims of my research questions were more ambitious than I was able to achieve within the limitations of my study. My findings that I researched were valuable, however, the research questions needed to be adjusted to represent the findings more appropriately. The initial set of research questions that I used during my data collection is implicative of the international school being more involved in the research, particularly with RQ 1a. *To what extent are set values being promoted through formal curriculum offered at international schools?* This implies that I was involving the international school authorities and even the providers of international school curriculums in my research – which was not the case. To rectify this, I changed the wording of the question, eliminating ‘promoted through formal curriculum’ and included the subjectivity of experience in how individuals felt about these set values. With RQ 1b. the choice of the word ‘discourses’ also implies that I carried out discourse analysis, which was not the case. I remedied this by changing the

word ‘discourses’ to ‘notions’ as that more accurately depicts what my question was intending to research. I also restructured RQ 1c. to address what my research findings showed, as the previous iteration of RQ 1c. implies that my research attempted to look at all aspects of the impact of English as a medium of instruction. For RQ 2b. and RQ 2c. I decided to omit them from my final set of research questions as I felt they were not addressed in the findings. With RQ 2b. in particular, I believe that this question: *To what extent do these individuals experience a confused cultural identity?* This could have been phrased differently, as it implies that a confused cultural identity is something that the participants would experience to an extent. It could also be combined with RQ 2c. *Have how they identify changed after leaving the international school space?* This question would allow participants the place to include any experience of a confused cultural identity if they had any to speak of. Below is the revised set of research questions:

1. ***In what ways does the institutional culture and curriculum of an international school affect notions of identity, belonging, and place?***
 - a. To what extent do individuals feel that set values are being promoted in formal curriculum offered at international schools?
 - b. How do the notions of culture, migration, and internationalisation frame students in international schools?
 - c. What role does English as a medium of instruction play in regard to developing an identity, sense of belonging, and place?
2. ***How do students at international schools perceive themselves (and others)?***
 - a. What were the lived experiences of these individuals when they were in international schools?
 - b. Have how they identify changed after leaving the international school space?

3.3 Interviewing

Interviewing provides a way of generating empirical data about the social world by asking people to talk about their lives. In this respect, interviews are special forms of conversation. While these conversations may vary from highly structured, standardized, quantitatively oriented survey interviews, to semi-

formal guided conversations and free-flowing informational exchanges, all interviews are interactional (Holstein and Gubrium, 1997).

In this section I outline the two types of interviewing I employed, beginning with the an explanation of active interviewing, followed by the justification for the use of both active interviewing and semi-structured interviewing.

3.3.1 Active interviewing

In keeping with the constructivist/interpretivist school of thought, my approach to interviewing is guided by Holstein and Gubrium's (1997) philosophy of active interviewing. The most significant difference between the active interview approach and the more traditional approach to interviewing is the role of the interviewers and the interviewees. With the traditional approach, interviewers are often cautioned to maintain impartiality and minimise any extraneous input so that the responses (i.e., the data) can remain unbiased and as genuine as possible. For example, under skills required of interviewers Watson writes that it important interviewers 'speak effectively and persuasively, but not too much [...] maintain neutrality, keeping personal biases and beliefs outside the interview (1997: 8). In this sense, the respondents are viewed as being epistemologically passive (Holstein and Gubrium, 1997), and not an active participant or producer of knowledge. This manner of interviewing is more aligned with Husserl's (2001) transcendental phenomenology, where the participants are viewed almost as vessels of information in which the researchers are tasked to excavate and uncover.

In contrast, the active interview approach allows for a more conversational style of interview which does not dictate one as being the 'vessel of knowledge' and the other as being the 'excavator'. Instead, the objective of active interviewing is not to coax a preferred response, but rather facilitate dialogue which is naturally interactive. As my study is more in line with Heidegger's (1962) hermeneutic phenomenology, the aim of my study is to develop a deeper understanding of my participants' experience, and this not only relies on their descriptions of their experiences but also their interpretations of the phenomenon being studied. My role as an active interviewer is to facilitate an interactive dialogue with my participants, and cooperate with them to negotiate meaning. Furthermore, my identity as an insider researcher plays a critical role in how I

can most effectively conduct my interviews, as Holstein and Gubrium assert, ‘the mere identity of the researcher primed respondents’ stories, positioning respondents in relation to how they might’ (1995: 41). My personal background and experience with an international school education and relationship with the TCK label enables me to build rapport with the participants, which in turn establishes a space in which the participants will feel comfortable with discussing sensitive topics they might otherwise feel uncomfortable talking with to an ‘outsider’ (Hathaway and Atkinson, 2005).

As Holstein and Gubrium affirm, ‘[r]espondents are not so much repositories of knowledge – treasuries of information awaiting excavation, so to speak – as they are constructors of knowledge in collaboration with interviews’ (1997: 14). Overall, what principally deviates from active interviewing from traditional interviewing is the conceptualisation of the roles taken up during interviews. Rather than see the interview as a one-directional process of information, active interviewing sees it as a more fluid and bidirectional discussion; where meaning, perceptions, and experiences can be exchanged and formed to develop a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

3.3.2 Semi-structured interviewing

As the name suggests, semi-structured interviewing can be seen as a middle ground between unstructured and structured interviewing practices. While the aim of my study is not necessarily to seek out predetermined answers from my participants, I am guided by my research questions which seek to develop my understanding of a phenomenon. As such, some structure is needed to help facilitate the active interview to ensure that I can probe participants for more information or introduce new lines of inquiry to the discussion. I decided against using structured interviews as that would conflict with the constructivist/interpretivist research paradigm that was adopted for my study. With the structured interview approach, the interview protocol would have a list of predefined questions that would be delivered in the same order to every participant without much deviation. This standardisation is seen to minimise the bias and influence of the interviewer, and functions more like a survey than an interview (Fontana and Frey, 2005). While this approach has these strengths, I decided against using structured

questions as it would fragment the interview in a way that would be counterintuitive to my research paradigm.

Unstructured interviews are more complex with regards to how they are defined and administered. Fundamentally, unstructured interviews are interviews in which there are no categories predetermined, and fully rely on social interaction between the researcher and the participant (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, and Alexander, 1990). Patton (2002) links unstructured interviews with ethnographic research, describing it as a natural continuation of this kind of fieldwork. Research that employs unstructured interviews approach their participants with no expectations or predetermined questions about the phenomenon under investigation, which does not fit my research paradigm or the aims of my study. Ultimately, semi-structured interviewing offers the right degree of focus and flexibility to enable the discussion to proceed in a natural and professional way. In the instances a topic has been exhausted, and clarified, the predetermined interview questions can be used to introduce new, yet relevant topics the participant may wish to develop further. Participants may also not know what to talk about and feel pressured to provide answers that the interviewer is looking for. The semi-structured questions offers participants some guidance in the phenomenon being studied, without limiting them in what they can discuss.

3.4 Data collection

3.4.1 Data collection process

While the initial plan was to conduct focus groups to encourage participants to share and interact with their experiential information involving their international school upbringing. However, as the pandemic progressed and everything was moved online, the participants who were recruited were now from all over the world and therefore operating in different time zones. This made the organisation of focus groups much less feasible as each participant had other life commitments which made planning online focus groups more difficult. The decision was therefore made to go forward with the solo interviews online. In this section, I will go through the sampling strategy and interview protocol employed in this study, the data collection timeline, and some issues with the interviewing process encountered.

3.4.2 Interview protocol

All interviews were carried out online via videotelephone applications such as Skype, Zoom, and Microsoft Teams. The date and time of the interviews were primarily catered to the participants schedules to ensure that they were comfortable and would not feel rushed. The interviews were opened with a polite greeting and some small talk to make them feel welcomed and relaxed. This step was as much to put the participants at ease as it was to put myself at ease, and generally set the tone for the interview so that it is as constructive as it is enjoyable. As interviewer and a researcher, it is important to 'establish rapport so that participants are comfortable disclosing information, and reciprocate by giving back to people being studied' (Creswell and Miller, 2000: 128). As a former international school student, I was in a position where my participants and I already had a lot of common ground, which I feel streamlined the process of establishing rapport.

To indicate the transition from small-talk to the beginning of the interview, I asked each participant if they felt ready to proceed. At this stage I also asked each participant to confirm that they have read through the information sheet and have signed the consent form. Following this, I asked if they had any concerns or reservations about anything relating to the interview or the study in general, which I would clarify if any came up. I would also let them know that the audio for the interview was going to be recorded and transcribed, and let them know orally that they could withdraw their participation and information at any time during the interview and up to one week after the interview concluded.

Once they confirmed this, I briefly introduced myself, giving my full name, my current occupation, a summary of my background, and a run through of my experiences at an international school. Given that it was an active interview, I welcomed participants to ask any questions they had about me or my background, and would talk about my experiences in as much detail as they wanted. Then I would ask my participants to introduce themselves in any way they felt comfortable. Most at this stage were uncertain about how much detail to go into, so I reassured them they could give a brief run through and so I could have a rough framework to work off, and then we could explore their experiences with more depth afterwards. They were also reminded that

their identities would be protected under pseudonyms and their schools would also be given different acronyms.

During the interview, I encouraged my participants to do whatever made them feel more at ease, whether that be getting a snack or a drink as I informed them the interview would last approximately one hour. On one occasion, a participant had not realised they had double-booked the appointment, and requested for the interview to be cut short at around the 40 minute mark which was granted without any further question. They then followed up via e-mail to inform me they would be happy to continue the interview at a later time, which was scheduled a week later for a short 15 minute long wrap up of the previous interview.

As the interviews were semi-structured, I wanted my participants to feel that they were able to discuss anything they felt was important about their experiences. However, I also used a written guide that reminded me about the information I wanted to gather about my participants. This guide comprised of these following questions:

- Full name, including nicknames?
- Age?
- Place of birth?
- Places lived?
- Places they feel/felt most comfortable?
- Places they feel/felt most uncomfortable?
- What kind of schools were attended?
- What was the curriculum like?
- School culture?
- Languages spoken?
- Languages spoken with/by parents?
- What stood out to them most during their experiences?
- What were the biggest challenges, if any?
- What was their current occupation?
- What were their future aspirations? Plans?

The questions were not always followed in this order, but the interviews naturally followed the pattern which the participants felt most comfortable with. Some liked to begin with their current place of residence and their adult occupations and work backwards, whereas others preferred to start from their birth and talk about their experiences chronologically.

There was a natural end to all the other interviews, where the topics under discussion seemed to be exhausted, or we had run through the same experiences again. At this point, most if not all the semi-structured questions were raised at some point, and clarifying questions would have been asked. Towards the end of the interviews, each participant was also asked if they wished to add anything, or give any final concluding thoughts. To conclude the interviews, I thanked them for their time and the interesting discussion orally, which I also reiterated in an e-mail follow-up. I also asked if they would be willing to participate in the follow up interview in a month's time to have a short 15 minute long interview to revisit themes and ideas that arise during the transcription phase.

3.4.3 Issues with interviewing

Aside from the one participant who, as previously discussed, had double-booked the interview appointment, there were also some other issues that came up with the interviews. One of the main struggles that I encountered were participants who seemed reticent in their responses, or shy about being interviewed. Steps ensuring that the participant felt most at ease were taken by having the participant talk about more factual events in their upbringing before delving into the emotional and psychological aspects of their experiences (Legard, Keegan, and Ward, 2003).

Rapport was also built by 'showing interest and attention and giving plenty of positive reinforcement by maintaining eye contact, nodding and smiling encouragement [...] stressing that the researcher is interested in everything they have to say, even if it is something the interviewee has not thought about before' (Legard *et al.*, 2003: 164). Early on during the transcription phase, I became apprehensive about some of the participants responses being too brief or not giving me the depth I had hoped for, despite doing everything I could to encourage them to elaborate or go into further detail.

However, after voicing these concerns to my supervisors, I was able to recognise that the perceived lack of ‘depth’ from some of my participants responses was an illusion of my own bias as to what ‘valuable’ data looked like. After I was able to take a step back and re-evaluate this mindset, I was able to engage with the data with a more opened mind, and uncover a more nuanced understanding of my participants.

3.4.4 Transcription

In this section I will discuss the difficulties faced during the process of transcription and the views that informed my decision making regarding how I handled the transcriptions. The process of transcribing entails a translation (Slembrouck, 2007) or a change of state from sound/talk to text (Duranti, 2007). Transcription is often argued as a process which is interpretive and is only representational of what occurs during talk (e.g., nonverbal actions, murmurs, pauses, relationships ...etc.) (Bucholtz, 2000). The process also takes into consideration ‘who is representing whom, in what ways, for what purpose, and with what outcome; and how analysts position themselves and their participants in their representations of form, content, and action’ (Green, Franquiz, and Dixon, 1997: 173). This is why it is crucial to employ a reflexive transcription practice. In these next sections I will go through some general issues to do with transcriptions and outline my thought process behind my decision-making.

As a researcher, I clung onto this belief that I could produce transcripts that were free from my influence. Very quickly I realised this was a naïve perspective to take, as Bucholtz (2000) maintains:

All transcripts take sides, enabling certain interpretations, advancing particular interests, favoring specific speakers, and so on. The choices made in transcription link the transcript to the context in which it is intended to be read. [...]As long as we seek a transcription practice that is independent of its own history rather than looking closely at how transcripts operate politically, we will perpetuate the erroneous belief that an objective transcription is possible (Bucholtz, 2000: 1440).

The process of transcribing my interviews was not as straightforward as I had first thought, even very small decisions such as deciding how to transcribe filler words (the *umms* and the *hmms*) were choices that had to be made (Kvale, 1996). While these choices were sometimes made due to practicality, they also were linked to the biases and theoretical positions I hold as a researcher (Jaffe, 2007). Within quantitative

research, there are many prescriptive ways to reduce the effect of biases that are not really applicable to qualitative research. With qualitative work, these ‘biases’ held by participants and researchers (e.g., human emotions, perspectives, experiences) are the same elements that enrich our findings and are inextricably tied to the process in which we gather data. Subjectivity and researcher bias are consequently not particularly viewed as a problematic thing that needs to be eradicated. Rather, the researchers only need to explicitly disclose their biases and aspects of their theoretical positions to ‘bring [their] preconceived beliefs into the dialogue’ (Harry, Sturges, and Klingner, 2005: 7).

Even before I had completed conducting all the interviews, I began familiarising myself with the recordings by listening to them over and over. For the very first time re-listening, I would just listen without any intent on taking notes or looking for anything to see if anything would stand out on its own. After that, I would listen to it again, this time only making brief notes, quickly jotting down ideas or phrases that I could use to build a picture of my interviewees’ story with. Finally, once I had these rough notes and I felt familiar enough with the recording, only then did I start embarking on the task of transcribing. I did some research on the methods people in my field used to transcribe, such as using an application that could automatically translate audio-to-text.

For this method, I found that the time it took to correct the mistakes the AI in the application made (such as small mistakes in utterances or words) took much longer and was more tedious than just transcribing by myself from the audio. As for using a professional transcriber, while this may have saved me some time initially, I feel like, as with researchers, transcribers must also hold some sort of personal bias. Their decisions on how to write up the transcripts may be guided by what a ‘good’ transcript looks like and this idea has historically subscribed to the notion of written correctness (Tilley and Powick, 2002). However, the main reason I decided against a professional transcriber is due to the advice of my supervisors and fellow research students who, having already gone through their struggles with transcripts, enlightened me to the fact that data analysis began with the process of transcribing. To forego transcribing myself would have only prolonged the work I would need to put into understanding my interviews. As Richards (2003) explains:

If you listen to the tape you've made, your first reaction will be, 'Nothing's happening'. In my experience, this is always the case when someone new to analysis listens to a tape for the first time - and it can be very disheartening. It's only natural to think that there really is nothing there and to want to give up, but you should resist the temptation because there's a very simple rule that applies to this sort of analysis: the more you listen, the more you hear (Richards, 2003: 181).

While I had already set the task to listen to the audio tapes repeatedly, doing so with the intent of transcribing shifted my focus to another level. Since I did not use any transcription system (such as ones with a foot pedal to dictate the pause/play function), the process of transcribing was quite slow. It also took me some time to decide how I wanted to present my transcripts, the implications of this decision also impacted how long the transcription process would take. There was still the decision of whether to transcribe using eye dialect (e.g., transcribe words misspelled but as they are pronounced) or to use standard orthography (Roberts, 1997).

As Richards (2003) asserts: 'Tidying up a transcript, I would argue, is methodologically indefensible, but this still leaves the problem of how much detail to include [...] what matters is that we think carefully about our transcription' (201). From what I have read, misunderstandings can occur as a product of both standard orthography and eye dialect. Fortunately for my research, the majority of my interview participants attended an international school. An outcome of this detail is all of them spoke English with an accent that was either standard 'American' or standard 'British', or as some of them lovingly referred to as the 'International School English' accent. This made the decision less difficult as 'eye dialect' was then not so different from standard orthography that it would make the transcript difficult to read and impede analysis. This is why I decided to not change or edit the original utterances, choosing to include grammatical mistakes, stutters, and pauses made by the speaker.

The transcripts were reviewed over with the recordings multiple times to ensure I was not misunderstanding and misrepresenting what had been said during the recordings. As I proceeded with the transcriptions, I also referred back to the notes I took during the initial stages of listening to the recordings to help form an idea around how I would structure the data chunks I would later analyse. The contextualisation of the data was also an important aspect of presenting the transcripts.

With 11 interviewees, all of them having internationally mobile histories, the number of countries, languages, and places quickly became increasingly difficult to keep track of. To help clarify the data, I used the ‘Top and tail’ method as suggested by Silverman (2014):

This means writing a sentence of two before every extract to contextualise it in your argument. This way your readers will know what to look for while they read it. Follow that up with a more detailed analysis of the extract in terms of the single point you are using to make it (Silverman, 2014: 550).

This method allowed me to identify the major points being made in the extracts, and form meaningful connections or juxtapositions with other extracts around specific topics.

3.5 Data analysis

This section will introduce how the data was analysed, looking at the tools and methods used, and the framework that guided the analysis. A rationale for why a CAQDAS (computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software) NVivo Plus 12/12.6 will be discussed, followed by a justification for the use of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

3.5.1 NVivo Plus 12/12.6

Considering the nature of data collected with qualitative analysis, one of the main obstacles is translating raw data into findings. While I was transcribing, I would occasionally take down notes in a journal whenever something stood out to me. However, these notes were not very organised as my focus was on finishing the transcriptions of the audio files. The use of NVivo Plus 12 was beneficial in my study due to many reasons, the first and foremost being providing this system of organisation my handwritten notes lacked. The ability to code emerging themes facilitated thematic analysis and the discovery of overarching themes. Furthermore, the nodes and cases system allowed for efficient retrieval of data (Bezeley, 2007). It is sometimes easy to

be overwhelmed by the sheer amount of data that is being analysed, and CAQDAS can be an effective tool in easing this process. However, as Elliot (2008: 2858) argues, 'It is also easy to be drawn into the data in a way which means you do not have an overview of what is going on. Taking a step back from the software and conceptualising your codes in an important step'. For that reason, I also implemented a variety of other strategies to analyse the data that did not depend on CAQDAS.

3.5.2 Thematic analysis

One of the unique advantages of thematic analysis is that it is not tethered to any epistemological or theoretical perspective, which makes it a very flexible method of conducting data analysis (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). Considering the exploratory nature of my study, thematic analysis was a useful method for me to examine the different perspectives (Braun and Clarke, 2006), and helped guide me on how to effectively use NVivo to analyse the data. Being able to view the perspectives of my participants in terms of what is similar and what is dissimilar helped organise and generate meaningful insight. As Braun and Clarke argue, 'TA can be used to identify patterns within and across data in relation to participants' lived experience, views and perspectives, and behavior and practices; 'experiential' research which seeks to understand what participants' think, feel, and do' (2017: 297).

Owing to the flexible nature of thematic analysis, there are many ways to approach it (i.e., Alhojailan, 2012; Boyatzis, 1998; Guest, McQueen, and Namey, 2012; Javadi and Zarea, 2016). In this study, I followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework (see Table 1 below) to guide my thematic analysis not only because it offered a reflexive approach to handling the data, but also because it offered the most guidance in terms of usability (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017).

Table 2. Braun and Clarke's (2006: 87) Phases of thematic analysis

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data:	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes:	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

While the flexibility of thematic analysis is one of its strengths, it can also lead to incoherence and lack of consistency when it comes to developing themes (Holloway and Todres, 2003). Applying and making epistemological positioning clear can increase consistency and cohesion (Holloway and Todres, 2003). As explained earlier in this methodology chapter, the epistemological perspective I take on this research is a constructivist/interpretivist approach which is characterised by the belief in multiple truths and realities of people's experiences (Merriam, 2009). What is said by participants needs to be interpreted, and this is not accomplished by simply produced by chunking similar themes together, as that is just summarising the data and not truly analysing the data (Braun and Clarke, 2007). This is what Braun and Clarke describe as being semantic themes and latent themes, semantic themes '...within the explicit or surface meanings of the data and the analyst are not looking for anything beyond what a participant has said or what has been written' (2007: 84). Latent themes on the other hand '...starts to identify or examine the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations – and ideologies – that are theorised as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data' (2007: 84). In the next section I detail how I carried out the analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework of thematic analysis.

3.5.3 Analysis procedure

Phase 1 – Familiarising myself with the data

Before I began transcribing, I familiarised myself with the data by listening to the interviews a few times through. The first time through I purposefully did not make any notes and focused on just listening (as this was usually a few weeks after the interview was conducted). In the second round listening, I began to make short notes of things that stood out to me:

The third time listening through was when I began transcribing the data. I decided to transcribe my data verbatim as Halcomb and Davidson argue:

In research underpinned by theoretical frameworks such as phenomenology, grounded theory, feminism, and ethnography, closeness between researchers and the text is critical to the research design and philosophical tenets of the methodology. Therefore, a verbatim record of the interview is clearly beneficial in facilitating data analysis by bringing researchers closer to their data (2006: 40).

The inclusion of nonverbal behaviour has also been cited as key to promoting reliability and validity in collecting qualitative data (MacLean, Meyer, and Estable, 2004; Wengraf, 2001). I believe that transcribing the interview data verbatim allowed me to best preserve the meanings behind my participants' responses. With verbatim transcription, the disadvantage is in the time and cost in carrying out the process. For instance, Britten (1995) approximated that it would take 6-7 hours of transcription for every hour of taped interview which corresponded to my experience. While it was a time-consuming decision to transcribe the interview data verbatim, I think it was a necessary step in maintaining the richness of the data.

Phase 2 – Generating initial codes

After the interview data had been transcribed, the next step was to transfer the interview data into NVivo 12 so I could begin generating initial codes. I adopted an inductive approach that was data-driven, and generated codes that I believed would most accurately represent the ideas and meaning being communicated by participants (Braun and Clarke, 2019). My overall approach to coding was to look for 'repeated patterns of meaning' (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 86), however this process was split between semantic coding and latent coding (Braun and Clarke, 2012).

Semantic coding is defined by Braun and Clarke (2012) as descriptive data, or ‘surface level’ information that only codes the descriptions given by participants, without any attempt to interpret the data or look for underlying meaning. In my study, I generated the semantic codes of an interview first before going back to generate the latent codes as I felt that gave me a better understanding of the context and the descriptive level of the data. Once the semantic codes were in place, I examined the interview data again to identify hidden meanings behind responses. As each interview was coded separately and often on different days, similar descriptions and responses were sometimes categorised under different codes. Thus, it was crucial at this stage to organise the codes so that the data would be represented more clearly. An example of how these were coded in NVivo can be seen in Appendix 7.

Phase 3 – Searching for themes

In this step, I re-focused on the broader picture, and looked for themes through the codes I had generated in the previous phase. As Braun and Clarke (2012) argue, themes do not just ‘emerge’ from data, [i]nstead themes are constructed by the researcher through analysing, combining, and comparing, and even graphically mapping how codes relate to one another’ (Kiger and Varpio, 2020: 6). With thematic analysis, the role of the researcher is not to passively report the data but rather must actively interpret the data in order to generate meaning. The frequency of a certain code is significant in determining which patterns are most relevant for addressing certain research questions. However, there were also some codes that did not appear as frequently (or even more than once) but still were important and meaningful in addressing the research question (Braun and Clarke, 2012). During this stage, it is also encouraged by Braun and Clarke (2006) to use thematic maps to visualise the connections and relationships between themes and subthemes. With NVivo, it is possible for the program to generate these maps, however I found this to be too overwhelming as there were too many nodes and codes the program was trying to collate. Drawing these mind-maps by hand proved more useful to me as it gave me more versatility and control; an example of one of these thematic mind-maps can be found in Appendix 6.

Phase 4 and 5 – Reviewing themes, defining, and naming themes

Within the scope of this study I had been coding everything I found ‘interesting’, as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), which were all then merged to produce a variety

of themes and sub-themes. In these two phases, I had to re-evaluate whether themes could be combined and condensed, or removed altogether as the themes now had to be relevant to the research questions. Maguire and Delahunt proposed these questions to keep in mind when trying to organise the themes:

- Do the themes make sense?
- Does the data support the themes?
- Am I trying to fit too much into a theme?
- If themes overlap, are they really separate themes?
- Are there themes within themes (subthemes)?
- Are there other themes within the data?

(Maguire and Delahunt, 2017: 3358)

In my experience I found that I often tried to fit too many things into a theme, which made it feel incoherent and disorganised when it came to producing the report. While some codes made sense to me at the time, when I began reviewing how I grouped some of the codes to produce themes, it was clear that the codes were not similar enough to belong to the same theme or sub-theme. There were also instances in which the themes I produced were not distinct enough from one another, which caused the themes to feel disjointed and confusing.

To remedy this, I created new themes that would better encapsulate the displaced codes which I felt were still important to represent the data and address the research questions. In some cases, themes were also discarded entirely as Clarke and Braun explain, this is just part of the process, and eventually ‘codes (and themes) will inevitably be discarded, because they do not fit the developing analytic narrative’ (2014: 6627). I also found myself returning to these phases even after I was in the final stage; the process of reviewing and defining themes continued as I developed the themes into meaningful data in the report.

Phase 6 – Producing the report

Once I felt like I had reviewed and defined the themes to a point where I was able to start writing up the final report, I had to begin selecting themes that I believed would contribute meaningfully to answering my research questions. Guest *et al.*, (2012) propose that at this stage, researchers should demonstrate the connections between the

dialogue and each theme to increase dependability. NVivo was particularly useful in this phase, as I was able to go back and see what excerpts from the interviews I had coded, and what themes these codes corresponded to. The purpose of this step is to write the theme analysis in a way that is convincing to the reader that the quality of my analysis has merit and validity (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Some argue that the final step in producing a thematic analysis report is to complete member checking to fully establish credibility (Guest *et al.*, 2012). I decided against member checking as in their reflexive approach to thematic analysis, Braun and Clarke (2006) have voiced their hesitation about the practice of member checking and do not view it as a beneficial practice, and certainly not fundamental step in establishing credibility. In the next section I will explore the participants' experiences with the curriculum and institutional culture of international schools.

3.6 Ethical considerations and concerns

As this study involved human participants and required me to record interviews on electronic devices, I needed the approval of an ethical committee to ensure that I could proceed. I filled in an application for a proportionate (light touch) ethical review and was granted ethical approval by the Research ethics Committee for the Faculties of Business, Environment and Social Sciences (AREA FREC). The ethics reference code is AREA 19-097.

3.6.1 Right to withdraw and informed consent

While this study was not centred on particularly sensitive subjects, I did have parameters on hand to address any issues should they have arisen during the interviews. The first measure was to ensure that all participation was completely voluntary.

The participants were informed of how the data would be recorded, the purpose of the research, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time up to one week after their interviews (see Appendix 1). They were briefed on the conduct of the interviews, asked for permission to be recorded, and given answers to any queries they may have (Tuckman, 1972). The participants were recruited on an entirely voluntary basis, and reached through the online platforms (Facebook and Reddit primarily). The participants

were briefed on what they were expected to do, the time commitments, the possibility for further participation in an active semi-structured interview, let known that they would be recorded, and given a general outline of how the data would used - this was primarily through the informed consent form (See Appendix 4). If they had any further questions, I let them know that I would be happy to answer and clarify in person or through e-mail should they wish to reach out in that way. If further action was needed, I did have the contact details of local support contacts (of where the participant is currently stationed) and Wellbeing services on hand.

3.6.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

The data gathered was kept on my password-protected computer which will be strictly confidential and will only be used for research purposes. Data was also stored on a password-protected area of the university hard-drive and will be deleted as soon as the project is completed. All participants was anonymised and given pseudonyms for the research project. This is, however, a difficult task as Raffe, Bundell, and Bibby (1989) has argued, sometimes it is near impossible to assure total anonymity when individuals can be identified with unique characteristics. In the case of students at an international school, it is very possible that participants will be identifiable based on where they grew up, where they went to school, or even what languages they can speak. There is also an additional issue of what pseudonym will be given to each participant. It is one thing to change a stereotypically 'common' name to another common name, but it is more difficult when addressing persons who have ethically or culturally unique names. The international school was also be referred to under a pseudonym.

Participant Biography Chart

Freddie	<p>Freddie is a Caucasian male, his passport country is the U.K. He was born in Hong Kong and lived there until the end of 2007. Attended an international primary school and one year of secondary school in Hong Kong. He later moved to Yokohama, Tokyo where he repeated a year and attended High School in Japan. In 2016, he left Japan and moved to the U.K. for university. Identifies as a 'Third Culture Kid'.</p>
Theresa	<p>Theresa is a Caucasian female, her passport country is the U.S.A. She was born in Texas where she stayed for some years before moving to Louisiana. When she was nine years old, she moved to the Netherlands where she attended an international school between the ages of 9 and 18. She moved back to Texas for university and settled in Oklahoma, U.S.A. Identifies as a 'Third Culture Kid'.</p>
Gabriel	<p>Gabriel is a biracial (Black and Caucasian) male, his passport countries are Belgium and Denmark. He was born in Belgium to a Moroccan mother and a Danish father and stayed in Belgium until he was 14 years old. He moved to Luxembourg where he attended an international school until he graduated high school. Afterwards he spent seven months in Denmark before moving to the U.K. for university. Was unsure if he can identify himself as a 'Third Culture Kid' but is inclined to identify as one.</p>
Ben	<p>Ben is a Caucasian male, his passport country is the U.S.A. He was born in Moscow, Russia where he stayed until he was five years old. He later moved to Budapest, Hungary where he stayed for four years at an international school. Then he moved to another international school in Madrid, Spain where he also stayed for another four years. After graduating he moved to Seattle, Washington for university, where he is currently a third-year student. Identifies as a 'Third Culture Kid'.</p>

Clara	<p>Clara is a Caucasian female, her passport countries are the U.S.A. and the U.K. Both her parents are Caucasian British (her father has dual-American citizenship from his first marriage to a U.S. national). Clara moved to the U.S.A. and attended five different international schools. She moved to the U.K. and attended a non-international secondary school. Then moved to France and attended a small religious international school. Moved to Nigeria and attended a compound international school. Moved to Houston, Texas and attended an international school. Moved to Paris, France. Moved to The U.K. and attended a local sixth form. Stayed in the U.K. to attend university and continued to stay after graduating. She intends to settle in the U.K. Clara identifies as a 'Third Culture Kid'.</p>
Amari	<p>Amari is a Caucasian female, her passport country is the U.S.A. She was born in San Francisco and attended a small public elementary school there before moving to an inner city urban public middle school. She then moved to Beijing, China for 7th and 8th grade. Moved to Mumbai, India for 9th and 10th grade. Moved to Moscow, Russia for 11th and 12th grade. Then moved to the U.S. for college and went 'home' to Russia (where her younger sister and parents still lived) for two years to visit. She identifies as a 'Third Culture Kid'.</p>
Vincent	<p>Vincent is a biracial (Asian and Caucasian) male, her passport country is the U.S.A. She was born to a Chinese American mother and a Caucasian American father (both New York natives). He moved to Indonesia and attended a Christian international school that catered towards missionary families where he stayed until he was six years old. Then he moved to Manila, Philippines and attended an international school there. When he was in 11th grade, he spent a semester abroad in the U.S. in a low-income public High School. After graduating from high school he moved to Texas, U.S. for university. Now he is in Taiwan teaching at an international school as a high school maths teacher. He identifies as a 'Third Culture Kid'.</p>

Mark	<p>Mark is a Caucasian male, his passport country is the U.S.A. He was born in Texas and lived on various U.S. Air Force bases throughout the U.S. He attended approximately 12 different schools throughout his life and has moved houses 41 times. While he was a high school student, he moved to the Philippines and attended an international school there. He later returned to the U.S. as an adult where he is now settled. Identifies as ‘Accultural’.</p>
Jason	<p>Jason is an Asian male, his passport country is Indonesia. He was born in Jakarta, Indonesia where he lived until age 11. He attended a school that had a dual curriculum system that followed the national curriculum that also embedded an international curriculum stream. When he was 15 years old, he moved to Singapore where he attended an international school that was mostly attended by Singaporean nationals. He identifies as a ‘Global Citizen’.</p>
Maya	<p>Maya is a Caucasian female, her passport country is the U.S.A. She grew up in San Francisco before moving to Beijing, China where she attended a small international school for two years. She then moved to Mumbai, India where she attended an American international school for two years. Then moved to Moscow, Russia for four years where she attended an international ‘Anglo American’ school. She returned to the U.S. for university and she is currently living there with her boyfriend.</p>
Kelsey	<p>Kelsey is a Caucasian female, her passport country is the U.S.A. She was born to a Caucasian American mother and a Turkish father. She moved to Tokyo, Japan, where she attended two different international schools over the span of six years. She then moved to London and attended a non-international boarding school (but did not board). Then she moved to Doha, Qatar where she attended an American international school for three years. After graduating high school, she moved to the U.S. for a year to re-gain residency in order to qualify for in-state college tuition. She was then employed at a desk job for a few years before transitioning into international outreach and admissions for a university. She now travels frequently throughout Asia for her work. Maya identifies as a ‘Third Culture Kid’.</p>

Chapter 4. The curriculum and institutional culture of international schools

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the roles and impacts of international school curriculums and institutional culture on the development of three concepts: identity, belonging, and place. In the data analysis chapters, I generated codes from the data through thematic analysis. These codes ranged from things that I found interesting or confusing, to concepts that were directly related to the research questions of this study. From these codes, I tried to group them into broader ideas, using methods such as mind maps and moving them around post it notes to visualise the themes. The process of searching for the themes that I would then discuss in this section was an iterative process where I moved codes around constantly, trying to make sense of which theme it belonged to, or if it belonged in the discussion at all. The sub-themes were separated into overarching themes that I found to be the most relevant to discussing the data and addressing the research questions, these being: the curriculum and institutional culture; a sense of belonging and negotiating identities; mental health experiences and the locality of place.

In this chapter, I present the findings of the study that addresses the curriculum and the institutional culture of international schools. I review participants' experiences on the 'Americanised' curriculum and the performative acts of community service as well as performative acts of multiculturalism.

4.1 The 'Americanised' curriculum and English as a medium of instruction

The curriculum of an international school is something that is often highlighted (or marketed) as one of the most valuable attributes of these types of schools. There are various definitions for the term 'curriculum', and when interviewing I was purposely vague about defining it in my own terms as I wanted to know what my participants would qualify as a 'curriculum'. One of the things participants would begin with, was a reference to the International Baccalaureate program (referred to most commonly as

‘The IB’) or the Primary Years Program (‘PYP’). Vincent, who was born to a Chinese American mother and a Caucasian American father, spent most of his childhood in Indonesia and the Philippines and now lives in Hong Kong working at an international school. During his time at the international schools, he admitted that he was not keenly aware of the curriculum as it was just another facet of his schooling experience. However, after graduating from the international school and finishing his teacher training at university in the United States, he described a pivoting point in his outlook on the curriculum:

VINCENT: Well there’s the IB, of course, which is standard and I think I also did PYP. And what can I say about it? It was *brutal* ((*laughs*)) it-yeah, I mean it was great don't get me wrong I learned a lot *a lot* and I remember studying so much way more than for college. But now that I’m a teacher at an actual international school it’s kind of hard not to see that it’s like you know a bit ((*pause*)) a bit skewed

NETTA: In what sense?

VINCENT: Just like, like I’m not saying it’s a *bad* system, it’s actually quite good if you compare it to other systems and curriculums and all but it’s *super* European centric, maybe even like American centric is a better explanation like what we learned in history for instance, or in Maths since I teach Maths now we were using like quarters and cents and nickels and dimes instead of Hong Kong dollars. Like I know it’s a weird thing to nit-pick over but why American dollars, why not even Japanese yen, or anything else? I actually did change it in one of my worksheets because I got super worked up over it ((*laughs*)) but I shouldn’t have to!

From Vincent’s response, it is clear that he is frustrated both by not being able to recognise how American-centric his education was sooner but also by how little had changed between the time of him leaving as a student and returning as an educator. Many international schools around the world market themselves as being progressive and world-minded. However it is increasingly evident that many of these traits are based on traditionally western models of education, with some going so far as to being

‘transplanted national schools’ (e.g., an American school just situated in a foreign country).

Amari, on the other hand, described her experience with the curriculum as more inclusive in terms of teaching about China but claimed it was still lacking in terms of the development between the international school community and the local community it was situated in:

AMARI: we learned a lot about China when we were living in China but actually I didn’t learn a lot about India or Russia when I was there, but when I went to school in China we did learn a lot about China, which was cool, um, yeah they were really into community there and there was a really strong sense of community building

NETTA: do you mean with the local community?

AMARI: oh, no I mean with the international community, ((*laughs*)) oh but we did take some school trips to like local areas to learn about the culture and all later.

Despite learning a lot about China, and still visiting back two years after graduating, Amari described her relationship with the local community and culture as being weak and undeveloped. She could only speak a little Mandarin, which she claimed made her feel more connected to the country, but the international school did not play a role in her learning it, she had just decided to learn it on her own. The school also did not incorporate much of the local culture beyond a single ‘cultural’ day to celebrate Chinese New Year where she learnt how to roll dumplings. In India and Russia this connection to the local culture was even more poorly developed, drawing parallels with Vincent’s experience with the curriculum feeling more like something you would learn in an American school:

AMARI: ...the teacher was American, a lot of my classmates were also American, I mean I guess there were a few Chinese and Koreans and some Europeans but the point is we all were speaking English-American English anyways even the British ones and we

were learning like ‘American’ history even if they weren’t explicitly saying it like that right? Like it was called Global History or some sh*t like that but I knew it the teacher knew it we all knew it was basically just 95% American history and like 5% ‘other’ ((*laughs*)).

English as a medium of instruction is often the standard for international schools around the world, but it is interesting to see how it is not just any English that is acceptable, but there seems to be a hierarchy. From Vincent and Amari’s examples, it is clear that this influence is pervasive throughout the international school, affecting the curriculum, the teachers, the student population, which inevitably also influences the culture that is shaped within the school. What is unclear is which way these factors are influencing one another. Is it because the curriculum is similar to an American education that it is attracting American students, or is it the large American student body that influences the school to tailor its curriculum?

Additionally, many of the international schools the participants discussed relied on American English as their standard for the medium of instruction. Only two examples, Freddie and Clara, who are British nationals, attended international schools that were explicitly ‘British’ international schools, experienced a different standard of English being used. In all other cases, if the international school was not explicit in their title (e.g., American School of X, Australian International School X...etc.) the English that was used as standardised practice was American English. It is an outdated view to hold some variants of English in higher regard than others, but it is still a factor that influences many to send their children to international schools in the hopes that they may attain a ‘prestigious’ accent (with American and British being the two most popular). Jason experienced this first hand, also described his frustrations with the curriculum at his school in Singapore:

JASON: okay so get this right even though Singapore speaks English as a common language it’s still not like considered a ‘perfect’ English right? Like in our school, a lot of the students were Singaporean, and many of them spoke English fluently just fine, but the thing

is right they spoke Singlish, do you know what this is? You heard of this right?

NETTA: You mean Singaporean English right?

JASON: Correct. So it's like a slang, no actually I think some people now I think I read more recently that is is actually considered a real dialect but the issue the school has is it's not the *standard* dialect. If the *gwallou* teachers heard you speaking Singlish they'd tell you to speak correctly which is a bit wrong isn't it?

Jason's initial description of 'Singlish' as a slang which he quickly corrected to being a dialect reflected his deeper understanding of the politics surrounding linguistics. He referred to the idea of a 'perfect' English with finger quotations which he paired with an exaggerated eye-roll, expressing the same frustrations many so-called 'non-native English Speakers' (I use scare quotes here as I also find this term to be problematic) encounter throughout their academic and professional careers. This is consistent with what Tanu (2015) observed in her study at an international school in Jakarta, where the Korean students would be seen by the other students and staff members as being 'not as international' as their peers because they communicated so much in Korean with one another.

Mark, who attended an international school that was tailored towards military personnel, found his experience to be mostly positive in terms of community service, though he did still claim some feelings of discomfort and struggled with this idea of being a 'saviour'. Being considerably older than the other participants, Mark's upbringing was notably different to the others. Firstly, coming from a military background, the majority of Mark's upbringing was spent within his Passport Country, moving around different stations throughout the United States of America, only moving once to the Philippines for the concluding years of his high school career. Secondly, due to his older age, he had attended the international school more than 50 years ago, whereas many of the participants had only graduated high school within the last 10 years. This marked difference in timeframe offered a very unique outlook on how things had changed over the years (and how some things had not changed very much at all). As with the instance of curriculum:

...in the Philippines, we attended an international school that was attached to the [military] base it was also affiliated to a church there where some of the local Filipina girls and boys would come into our lessons and sit in to learn English ((*pause*)) many of them already spoke English quite well but ((*shrug*)) I guess we were teaching them our English and they all said they'd like to come to America, America *woo* cheeseburgers and all that ((*laughs*)) we'd all just laugh and have a fun time ... I say girl and boys but actually the girls I remember them being quite a lot older, many of them were nurses the boys too I guess but they were already these college educated young uh adults and here I was a young stupid how old was I? Like sixteen year old trying to teach them how to say '*spectacular*', definitely made me feel like a big man then but uh now that I've you know, done my years reading and researching, completed a psychology degree this and that, makes me feel a bit *hmm* a bit strange...

The use of the term '*our English*' suggests that either he or the leader of the program he was participating in was trying to correct their English (despite Philippines being a bilingual country). Though it is important to note the context of when this was taking place: English has been established in the Philippines now for around 30 years but when Mark was there teaching English it was over half a decade ago. Much has changed, and perhaps it is partly due to the efforts of Mark and his peers partaking in small cultural and linguistic exchanges such as this. However, not much has changed with regards to the sphere of influence English has on the international school circuits.

English as the language of instruction for international schools came up quite often in reference to the curriculum. The standardisation was not only the language but also the specific dialect with the participants reporting that their schools favoured American English most frequently followed closely by British or a combination of the two. While the decision to use English only as their language of instruction is a decision that is often defended as a method of maintaining the transferability between international schools, it seems this is also a factor that estranges the students from the host countries. There also seems to be an unequal expectation for different students who come from different backgrounds, as Jason explained:

Our school had like not that many *gwailou* like *bule* you know right? At least full ones, but I remember one guy in my class, Scottish guy I won't say his name or anything but like come on he spoke with such a strong Scottish accent I could barely understand him you know? Hardly anyone can right but but even more funny, when he spoke in Singlish like he say 'lah' or 'can ma' or is speaking a bit of Mandarin suddenly he is like super cool and the teachers just ignore it because he is just trying to fit in or whatever or are impressed, that's a double standard? That felt unfair really.

Jason's use of '*gweilo*' is referring to a common slang used by Cantonese to refer to westerners. It has a history of being racially pejorative but has, as some people argued, become a more neutral term to refer to expats (more commonly Caucasian expats, as the term translates to '*ghostly man*'). He also follows up with the term '*bule*' as he knew I had also grown up in Indonesia and may have been more familiar with this term, which holds a similar definition to '*gweilo*'.

By 'full ones' he was clarifying that the guy he was talking about was not of mixed ethnicity, which was fairly common to see in international schools. In Jason's international school in Singapore, the main demographic was made up of Singaporean of Chinese descent. His school was an example of a different type of international school that was quickly gaining popularity amongst the wealthy locals; though some would argue that it was not diverse enough to qualify as an international school at all. This was something that quite evidently troubled Jason who, in the early stages of recruiting for participants, expressed that he wasn't even sure he could claim himself to be a TCK or that he had attended an international school. In the end, he said he felt most comfortable with the term 'Global Citizen' as it did not hold the same connotations as TCK had with international schools. In a way, he explains that distancing himself from the sub-group made him feel more authentic in his identity as his own personal TCK experience and the international school community was not as welcoming and positive as he had read others as being.

4.2 The role of teachers

All of the participants reported that the majority of their international school staff (teachers) were nationals of Anglophone countries, with many supporting staff members (i.e., secretaries, or assistant teachers) being nationals of the host country. Generally, the only teaching roles that were fulfilled by nationals of non-Anglophone countries were language teachers. While the lack of teacher diversity in international schools is still a contentious issue in the sphere of international education, none of the participants addressed this as an issue in their experience. Instead, emphasis was placed on the quality of teachers the participants encountered and how this varied vastly according to geographical location of their schools, as Amari explained:

I feel like at all the schools I went to I had like either a really really good teacher or a really really bad teacher and honestly I had a lot of bad ones where I was.

Amari described her experience as being very polarised, and subject to the host country's perceived desirability by prospective teachers. Broadly speaking, positions in international schools are highly sought after by teachers, however, some countries are more in demand than others. International schools that are situated in countries that can offer similar or a higher quality of life than what a prospective teacher is used to, for instance, is often cited as a reason for whether or not a country is a desirable teaching location. Desirability in this case translates into the level of competitiveness for the positions:

It's a kind of intense situation because it's like the US embassy and British Embassy fund [the school], but it's in Russia. So it's like, there's tension there already. Um, but yeah, so that school, the teachers were not amazing. Because not a lot of international teachers want to go to Moscow. That's not like a favourable location. So I did find that I had some pretty bad teachers at the school, which was kind of weird.

Despite her school being funded by the US and British Embassy, Amari described her international school in Moscow as being negatively influenced by the local culture. She described the difficulties she encountered in trying to set up a feminist society within

her school with the help of her sister and was frustrated by how hard the faculty pushed back at their attempts. While the local faculty voiced their concerns, Amari and Maya claimed the international teachers – specifically their male teachers – were the ones who had the most objection to them setting up the feminist society. Maya felt very strongly that this was due to the low standards the school had for recruiting teachers:

MAYA: There's a lot of people who, who go to teach abroad for like maybe not the best reasons and like aren't great teachers and also Moscow, they were struggling *so* hard to get teachers, so it was basically like anyone they could get because no one wanted to move there, you know, so it's kind of the shit of the bond magnet, the magnet school for teachers that were rejected from all the other international schools...

NETTA: could you elaborate on what you mean by 'aren't great'?

MAYA: Hm a bit predatory, very misogynistic and homophobic I'd say ... I've always wondered like how people who go to American schools like how because it obviously happens everywhere, but I've always wondered just myself like if there's more of those in international schools in places like these, I don't know, I only know my experience ...

The way Maya described her male teachers as being 'predatory', 'misogynistic', and 'homophobic' are all attributes that are incompatible with the traditionally accepted values espoused by international schools. She surmised that it was because the teachers had these traits that made them undesirable candidates for more prestigious international schools, and therefore they had to 'settle' for international schools that were also undesirable.

4.3 Performative acts of community service and salvation complex

An integral component of the International Baccalaureate Diploma program is CAS, which stands for 'Creativity, Action, Service' and serves as one of the three elements a student must complete to achieve the IB Diploma. Students are able to decide whether they want to complete three separate tasks, with each one targeting a different topic, or

combine them into one single project. The program seems to share similarities with the linguistic exchange Mark described (see previous section) in that the mentality behind the acts of community service stem from a place of privilege and is concerned with performing community service for the less fortunate. This has resulted in six of the participants who dealt with CAS developing an uneasy feeling about the experience, with some describing it as a ‘saviour complex’. The International Baccalaureate Organisation claims the purpose of CAS is to provide a ‘counterbalance’ to the academic rigour of the IB program (IBO, 2020), but the participants generally reported it as being ‘another’ stressful task to check off the list. Some, like Clara, found that it was very artificial:

...everybody was building houses and stuff. Like that was the go-to thing to do because you could clear all three things in one go, it’s action because you’re building a house, it’s service because it’s building the house for the needy, and it’s creativity because I painted a flower on the side ((*laughs*)) it’s awful! I mean, it’s great but it’s kind of weird! Right? I’m seriously concerned for the integrity of that house! Like you get a high school kid who has never laid a brick in her entire life to help brick up an entire house ((*laughs*)) it was not stable let me tell you that...

Clara, like many, felt very conflicted with her CAS project. The experience itself was ‘great’, it was a hands-on activity that took her out of her mundane school schedule, but the aftermath and reflection away from the field trip itself left her feeling ‘weird’. This response was not unusual amongst the participants, as seven reported feeling guilty that they were complicit in an activity that at the time made them feel like humanitarians only later to realise it was more for show, and somewhat problematic.

Some recognised it as being problematic early on, such as Kelsey who had not personally partaken in the house building projects. To her, the activity her peers were planning felt a bit superficial:

KELSEY: I didn’t personally build a house, that’s the trend isn’t it? Did you build one?

NETTA: we painted a school and set up a hydro-garden ((*laughs*))

KELSEY: Ooh a hydro-garden that is fancy ((*laughs*)) that might *actually* be useful! I'm not even sure what I did it was quite a long time ago now, but I can tell you what a lot of my friends did build houses. Actually maybe not houses but they definitely built something, it was either a school or a community centre but I'm pretty sure they just tore it down and just rebuilt it because it was not a great building but there was a great photo of it on the school site for a while!

Kelsey's response 'that might *actually* be useful!' was said in a light-hearted yet somewhat cynical manner, which is further expressed when she explained how the houses her friends built were useless in the end. This attitude towards community service channelled through the CAS projects denotes a sense of hypocrisy seven of the participants felt about the international school. Not only in curriculum, but also in their institutional culture. The hypocrisy of a school that is fixated on creating humanitarians but their humanitarian work is building wobbly houses. A school that is built on the pillars of promoting diversity and inclusivity, but penalises students for not speaking the 'right kind of English'.

While seven felt this way towards the CAS project and the community service aspect international schools tend to push onto their students, not everybody found it to be a negative thing. Freddie enjoyed his experience helping out the local community he was still cognizant of the performative aspect of his trip. He recalled a trip they took to Cambodia during his time in Hong Kong and, almost sheepishly, reflected that it was a bit hypocritical. I asked him what he meant by this, and he explained that while Hong Kong was quite a developed country, the streets were still rampant with homeless people, and people struggling on a day to day basis, but they basically had just stepped over these people to take a flight to another even *poorer* country just to 'learn' about another country's poverty.

FREDDIE: I wasn't someone who's service-minded anyway so my creativity would have been creative really. We had an interesting partnership with this organisation in Cambodia, things where you know you pick out some money from rich people in international

schools but it's also kind of a trip to see where they live and it's kind of helping them build schools. The trip was quite fun! I'll give it that, but yeah it's a bit depressing to come back and see the same thing on the streets of the country you're living in but we're just kind of like conditioned to turn a head, a blind head eye? Yeah so I was very concerned when I left, I thought it was kind of I don't know ((*sighs*)) I recognised that the surface of it was more of raising the money and giving the money

However, he did find it quite 'eye-opening', despite it being somewhat tailored towards foreigners. He described the experience as being a bit 'over the top' but explains that it did not detract from his learning experience and felt that it was better than doing nothing at all.

4.4 Performative multiculturalism

The international school model tends to be structured around diversity, more specifically, the cultivation of interdependence and cooperation across the many nation-states and cultural backgrounds the student body and staff represented. To gauge how they perceived their international school, I asked how my participants would describe their school to someone who knew nothing about international schools. From the responses, it appeared that while many of the schools did have a multicultural and multilingual student body, the 'feel' of the school was generally most similar to an American school. For instance with Amari, who described her school in Beijing and compared it to her school in Chicago:

AMARI: It wasn't super different to be honest, like I was much younger, but I think the differences were really minor between the two schools ((*pauses*)) yeah you know, like I just had a uniform in Beijing, not a big deal, but most of my teachers were American anyways, if you just took my school in the States and *plop* implanted it in China. But like probably some uh private school in a wealthy middle-class suburb is more accurate.

Curiously while Amari had (see first section of 4.2 Curriculum) affirmed that her school in Beijing was the most engaged in terms of learning about local cultures and customs, this was omitted in this description of the same international school. This suggests that while her school in Beijing had done the most to incorporate the host culture into the curriculum, it was not enough to distinguish it with a curriculum that could be found in the U.S.

Freddie, who had experience with the curriculum in the UK (but not the US) described his high school in Tokyo in a similar manner:

FREDDIE: it was a bit different to like, say college here (in the UK) yeah, I say it's pretty much "The American experience"...

Freddie's use of the term 'The American experience' alludes to the phrase 'The American Dream', which has been, and continues to be, the national ethos of the United States. The essence of the term derives almost entirely from the media and how the media has portrayed this 'The American Dream' to be. Similarly, nine participants describe their international school as being most similar to 'The American experience' but are cognisant that their impression of the American school experience is mostly built on the media representation of what this is:

GABRIEL: I guess it'd be closest to an American school ((*pause*)) yeah, okay well to be fair I've never been to an American school, maybe like a stereotypical school like if you just turn on some random American show about teens and like take a look at the way they talk and the structure of lockers and sports teams and stuff, I'd say that's probably closest

There is an important reference to the American school system as a point of comparison for the international school that reoccurs throughout the participants' responses, despite eight not having personal experience attending a school in the U.S. at all. Many of the comparisons alluded to the representation of 'American high schools' in popular media such as television shows or movies. It is no surprise that American media has made its way around the world and gained a huge amount of success and popularity amongst the

international audience, but it is interesting to see that it has dominated the international school space as well.

In a similar vein, while some of the schools the participants attended abroad were labelled as ‘The American school of XX’ or ‘XX American School’ they still maintained their image of being an international school by virtue of their diverse and multinational student body. This seems to suggest that there is a relationship between the notion of ‘internationalism’ and western educational values, and that it impacts the institutional culture of international schools in a significant way. While the fact that an international school may provide an education similar to a ‘U.S. education’ is seen by many parents as being a reason why they *would* want to send their children to one, international schools themselves seem to want to distance themselves from this image.

This section is titled ‘performative multiculturalism’ to explore this phenomenon, and is named as reference to ‘performative activism’ which in simpler terms can be explained as a kind of surface-level activism. Whether an act of ‘activism’ is ‘performative’ relies on the motivations behind the actions, and is usually performative if the act increases ones’ social capital. Performative multiculturalism can be seen as very similar in that it is often considered ‘performative’ if the outcome is focused on attaining or maintaining social capital or in this case, the image of the school. One example of this is the ‘U.N. Day’ event or ‘United Nations Day’.

Theresa talked about how she had never heard of a ‘U.N. Day’ until she moved to the Netherlands at age 9:

THERESA: like it was about halfway through the year already when it came up and I was already kind of settled somewhat and you know young kids, I was 9 or 10, I just bounced back pretty fast. I just accepted weird new things like *wow!* So exciting, what’s this? Oh cool okay. And U.N. Day was one of those things that was just like cool, awesome food and cool outfits from around the world. I just wore an American flag on my shirt and I think our booth sold hotdogs though ((*laughs*))

The topic of 'U.N. Day' usually came up during discussion about what they thought made international schools 'international'. Clara described her experience in Nigeria:

- CLARA: so of course there's U.N. Day *((laughs))*
- NETTA: could you explain what U.N. Day is? To someone that might not be familiar with it?
- CLARA: of course right! Okay so, in my school, the one in Nigeria though they're all quite similar to be honest, it was this one day where everyone would just dress up in their national outfits like traditional dress and the Moms would be involved in setting up booths and cooking their cultural foods ... the Indian booth for instance always had like what's it called the temporary tattoo stuff
- NETTA: henna?
- CLARA: right and then you basically 'travel the world' and eat the foods and get to see all the pretty outfits, that's essentially U.N. Day ... plus classes were cancelled that day so even more exciting *((laughs))*

In Singapore, Jason explained that even though his school was predominantly made up of Singaporean and Chinese students, they still held a U.N. Day, with teachers who were from other countries (mainly the U.S., the U.K., and Canada) stepping in where mothers or students would in other international schools:

- JASON: yeah so since my school didn't have many uh, how to say this, 'white' students, it was a bit of struggle for U.N. Day since a lot of us would just be Asian so our heritage, the outfits, our food would all be hmm pretty similar you know? So our teachers then, since about 95% of the staff were from the U.S and Canada and British they would enlist a few students sorry Singaporean students to help set up their booths and they would wear like the British flag on their shirt or something yeah so it was a unique experience and I think it is a struggle during those kind of days because we are kind of faced with the reality that our school is

not a true multinational student body, it was like trinational at best ((*pause*)) but, since we had teachers who could represent and reproduce these American and Canadian or Australian cultures, that's how the school seems to have rationalised calling itself an international school which I feel now, as someone who is quite involved in this field, seems to be a bit of a false identity situation for them.

On the other hand, Theresa's experience with her U.N. Day in the Netherlands was more positive, with a greater emphasis on learning about the different cultures from the students themselves:

THERESA: ...it was all cultural immersion. So each classroom became a different country, and everyone belonged to that nationality helped create booths and brought in food, and had like history and references and things about what it's like to live in that country. And then each country had like this big dance or any kind of performance would do that in front of the whole school, this was something that was definitely not happening here [in the U.S.]

But while the majority of the experiences of U.N. Day were positive, some also described the tradition as being very 'surface-level':

MAYA: yeah it was great and all, like what kind of kid doesn't love food and fun cultural activities right? But it's just one day out of the year where we celebrate other cultures and traditions and languages but the next day it's basically back to normal and we're all just back to being Americanised again which I know is rich coming from an American ((*laughs*)) and like, it's just the 'fun' stuff of cultures like the food, I just, I don't know ... I think it's great that there's a day to celebrate diversity and all and I would *never* say get rid of it but it shouldn't just be one day in the

year but maybe it's worth reworking a bit to incorporate more of it in the year!

There is a lot of reference to 'celebration' and 'fun' with a huge focus on cuisine as a method of exposing the students to other cultures, though four, like Maya, criticise it for not educating them more about these cultures past what is considered 'desirable'. This can be seen as a means of cultural appropriation, something that has gained a considerable amount of traction throughout popular media in recent years. Through the adoption of the 'fun' and palatable elements of a culture and ignoring the problematic history or irrelevant elements, this can be disadvantaging to minority cultures.

As with Gabriel, who described his U.N. Day as a fun experience but 'performative' at best in terms of connecting with the cultures:

GABRIEL: ...like so I'm half Moroccan, my Mom's from Morocco, so for U.N. Day, the school was trying to find people to represent different I don't know like diversity groups, and we had this one other black guy in my school who was from Kenya and they just grouped us together and we represented the 'Africa' ((*laughs*)) neither me or the guy had ever lived in Africa but whatever, I think we made like sandwiches or something not even African but it was just like we were uh let's say...enabling the school to *tick* a box they really wanted to include. Like it's performative, you know? They just wanted us to help the other students connect with our African heritage but *we* didn't even really connect with it so it was just a whole thing...

Gabriel's experience is eye-opening in how his international school handled multiculturalism. It is clear that his school valued multiculturalism tremendously, going so far as to push their students to essentially play a 'role' to fulfil a cultural gap in their student body. He later explains his reference to 'ticking a box' is alluding to some promotional content in which he and the other student was represented on a pie-chart as 'African' students. This is not uncommon to see on websites of international schools,

many feature a page with pie-chart breakdowns to show the demographic of the school in an effort to demonstrate or prove that their school was indeed very ‘diverse’ and ‘international’.

Despite having experienced this, Gabriel had no ill feelings towards the school for trying to culturally profile him for U.N. Day. He explained that while the methods were a bit questionable, the intent was well-meaning, and it was not necessarily the school’s fault that they lacked a more diverse student body. A bigger issue, he argued, was why there were so few POC (People of Colour) in the first place. This is an issue that came up a few times with other participants who also noticed the lack of POC representation in their international schools. To clarify, while POC is a term that is generally inclusive of anyone who isn’t ‘white’, the participants who used this term were referring specifically to black students. Though this undoubtedly plays a role in how the institutional culture of international schools are shaped, it is still unclear why black students (and by extension, their families) are being excluded from the international school space.

4.5 Hierarchy and bullying

The instance of bullying is present in international schools, despite it representing a bit differently than how it would in more typical school settings. With international schools, the assumption is that because the school is diverse, the community is more open-minded and less likely to partake in the exclusion of groups of people or individuals because they are different. Gabriel explained that compared to what he knew about other schools that were not international, the instance of bullying was quite low or non-existent:

GABRIEL: I don’t think it really happened, I mean it happens obviously, but I don’t think it was like a major problem. I mean like I don’t know if this is like a correlation or anything, but it’s, I realise ... this was early high school as well as elementary with younger kids but from my experience the Belgian kids they seemed a bit more like kind of higher in the hierarchy, it was just traditional, like I guess other schools would have their jocks up there and the

band geeks like at the bottom but in my experience this was the normal.

In context, Gabriel was speaking about his international school in Belgium, so the Belgian kids who were high up in the hierarchy were considered to be the 'local' kids. Though it is interesting to note that Gabriel did not consider this as bullying, but just an accepted form of the status quo.

In contrast, Amari described the hierarchy within her school as the main source of bullying and used the terms interchangeably:

AMARI: There was a lot of bullying at school, there was like a weird environment. There was a lot of like hierarchy at that school.

When asked about what she meant by a 'weird environment' she described a tension amongst the students where some students of certain backgrounds were considered to be better than other students with different backgrounds. Similar to how Gabriel described the Belgian students as being higher up on the social hierarchy, Amari explained that the 'local' students at her school were always the most popular. There was also a correlation between local students being affluent, as these are generally the students who could afford the high tuition fees without the financial support from companies or governments (as these tend to sponsor the children of their employees to attend international schools). The instance of local wealthy students of international schools is a reoccurring trend amongst the participants, along with their high place in the social hierarchy:

GABRIEL: A lot of them were a lot more wealthy, *a lot*, than kind of the rest of us I guess. I guess they like felt ... it's strange, because it's an international school but it seemed like the local kids almost felt like they, it's a generalisation or an assumption, but it felt like they had more of a right to be there. I guess I felt like they kind of ironically 'belonged' there more than everyone else, even though it's an international school but I guess it's because they're actually connected to that country that nationality ...

His explanation of why the Belgian kids held a higher status began with him stating facts about their wealth, but mid-way slowly morphed into a justification for why they deserved to feel like they belonged there more. Although he expressed that they ‘ironically belonged’ there, in the same sentence he also stated ‘I guess it’s because they’re actually connected to that country’. In saying so, it seems he is indicating that he does not feel as connected to that country and therefore does not deserve to feel like he belonged there as much as the local kids.

While it is true that students in international schools seem less likely to be singled out for being a minority, the main form of bullying takes the form of a social hierarchy that is somewhat dependent on nationality and identity. The formation of the social hierarchy is also highly dependent on where the school is situated as that is what dictates who the local students will be. For instance, in her international school in Mumbai, Maya explained that the caste system (despite it being officially abolished in 1950), was still a pervasive force in her school:

...the social dynamics were really messed up. Like, there was bullying, I also felt there was resentment between like, races and there’s also class, like they’re you know in India there’s a caste system and people talked about it like the students are, ‘*Oh, I’m a Brahmin you’re not a Brahmin*’, like you’re not like high caste. ‘*You’re the warrior caste or the second one, like you’re inferior*’. Like, that was a thing people would talk about.

She also explained that there was tension between the Indian students at this school and the white students. Her background as a US Embassy kid afforded her some social capital but not enough to gain access to the ‘popular’ crowd which came down to two factors; socio-economic standing and of time spent in the country:

So I’m an US Embassy kid, so I’m the lowest class at an international school basically. And how I see it is like diplomats, even though you’re white, you have a certain social capital, but it’s like, you’re the least wealthy. And then there’s kids who parents worked for corporations and then there are like, millionaire children, local children who are like the kind of rulers of the school

in a way, because they've been there their whole life as opposed to kids who are just passing through for just two years at a time, which I always was, so socially it was quite a difficult experience...

The connection Maya made between being white and having a certain social capital suggests that this was a reoccurring circumstance throughout her experiences in international schools. Her and Gabriel both made similar comments about their roles in the international schools being somewhat temporary (despite their stays being between 2-3 years). To them, this amount of time was negligible in terms of staking claim to feeling like they belonged there. Maya specifically described it as 'just passing through', which further cements her status as a temporary visitor at her international school. The importance that is placed on time spent in a certain place is a significant aspect in many of the responses given by the participants. It plays a huge role in why seven claim they are unable to feel like they belong anywhere, and paradoxically, they simultaneously claim they belong most at an international school. The next chapter will move onto participants' sense of belonging, the transition between the international school and university, and 'real world' discrimination.

Chapter 5. A sense of belonging and negotiating identity

Introduction

The findings so far have discussed the themes that correlated to the time in which the participants' spent in international schools, helping to contextualise the institutional culture and curriculum that they were exposed to. This next section focuses on the transition stage which follows and explores the emergence of belongingness in which the participants described their experiences with seeking acceptance and membership beyond the international school.

5.1 Development of adaptability skills

Students with globally mobile upbringings are often perceived as being flexible and independent, and to an extent, this does seem to hold true. Generally, the literature present TCKs as naturals at negotiating with change (Ittel and Sisler, 2012; Pollock and van Reken, 2009), however the responses seemed to indicate that this was a matter of individual personality. Participants who described themselves as an 'outgoing person' (particularly when friend-making was used as a measure) were more likely to adapt more quickly than those who were more reserved and nervous about befriending new people. Four felt stressed about big life changes but had trained themselves to adapt because they feared the repercussions of what could happen if they failed to do so. In this respect, three participants alluded to a 'sink or swim' mentality when it came to adapting to new situations and described their reaction as a survival mechanism. As Clara succinctly put it:

You know you just kind of did it, I guess we're just designed to adapt quickly and survive because you're always being thrown into the deep end and at the end of the day you either sink or swim.

It is important to note that Clara was crediting the international school for her ability to adapt quickly. She believed that it was a combination of the schooling and the environment that she grew up with that fostered her ability to conform to new environments and she believed this was true for many of her peers as well. Her

personality, she explained, was quite the opposite of a fast-paced ‘chameleon’ that she had read about other TCKs, she would rather have stability and liked to seek out things that would remain constant in her life. Considering her choice of the phrase, ‘thrown into the deep end’, it is clear she found the experience of being uprooted and moving to new places disorienting. While she claims her ability to cope with these changes improved slightly as she got older, her experience with the moves were still overwhelmingly negative:

I hated it, it was always so traumatising. It got less traumatising as I got a bit older but it always felt like I was being punished since I was losing my home, my like place, my friends, and sometimes even my pets!

Clara’s description, particularly her drawing comparison to being punished by the loss of her belongings, her place, and her relationships emphasises the fact that her experiences with adapting and coping with change was a result of desensitisation. The fact that it only got ‘less traumatising’ and never became a positive experience only reinforces this. Similarly, Theresa shared her own negative experiences with dealing with her parents breaking the news to her that they would be moving countries:

I was devastated, I can’t tell you. I had a boyfriend, and at that age it’s literally like feels life-ending! I didn’t talk to my mom for a week after they told me, it felt so unfair but you just were taught to move along with it.

Theresa’s and Clara’s responses alluded to age being a major factor in what influenced their experience. The fact that it only got ‘less traumatising’ is evident of the fact that this ease of adaptability is not always the reality of these children, and while it does get easier the older they get (or the longer they are exposed to these kind of experiences), they are not desensitised to the distress that comes with international moves. And as Theresa claimed: ‘you were just taught to move along with it’, a reoccurring mentality that seems to pervade many aspects of the international experience. Three participants also pointed out that this idea of ‘going beyond your comfort zone’ and doing things ‘for the greater good’ was a common ethos that the international schools promoted. But as discussed previously with Gabriel’s experience of being pressured to embody the ‘African’ identity so that the school could achieve (on paper) a more diverse student

body, this can manifest in very problematic ways. Theresa also indicated that this pressure to accept and move along came from her parents, which put extra strain on their already unstable relationship. Both of her parents worked which meant they were away on business trips abroad frequently and were often absent from her everyday life, so she felt she did not have a very strong support system to fall back on during these troubling times. For this reason, she had relied primarily on her friendships and romantic relationships to form her support system and moving meant that she would be losing those. It had not been easy for her to form these relationships and her main anxiety came from having to start over. The aptitude of friendship forming became a reoccurring theme, and those who struggled with this also felt unease with adapting to new environments. People who were adept at forming friendships, however, thrived in these situations. Kelsey, for instance, said her experiences were always like beginning a new exciting chapter in her life:

It was kind of exciting like researching the new school the new country and stuff, getting new clothes to fit the climate and learning the new language! I never had trouble making friends so I was just excited to be making more, and it's a nice challenge learning how to fit in again.

And Ben, who similarly described himself as having 'extrovert-like' qualities, likened it to being forced to start a game over from the beginning:

I can see how a lot of people found it difficult, my brother really struggled, but I kind of liked rising to the challenge but I know that's just like my personality y'know? I like meeting new people, making more friends, the more the merrier. I just love finding challenges in my life to overcome so I think that's just me living my best life (*laughs*).

With both these participants, the emphasis was on their enjoyment of meeting new people and embracing new challenges. Both also described new things as exciting things that they could learn about and in a sense accomplish, for instance with Kelsey it is with language and with Ben it was with making more friends. It seems the drive to accomplish these goals overshadowed the negative aspects of the move; Ben described it as similar to 'having blinders on [...] like what horses wear to stay focused':

When I have a new thing to do, everything else just falls away to the wayside you know? I'm just so focused and excited, I can't feel sad, maybe just for a bit I'll be a little sad, but I don't really have time to be sad, and there's nothing to come from being sad and depressed about it so yeah I just get excited instead.

However, the way Ben explained being sad as being a fruitless endeavour suggests that his reaction to being excited about a move is a coping mechanism for him. His response is somewhat conflicting, on the one hand, he explained that he was so excited that he did not have the capacity to feel sad. But in the next sentence, he seemed to backtrack a bit and explained that it was because he could not do anything about feeling sad that he chose to focus on being excited. When I asked him how he learnt how to do this, he explained that while it was partially due to his personality of being a 'go-getter', it was also due to some of his favourite teachers:

NETTA: Where do you think this kind of response comes from? You said earlier on that your personality was a bit extroverted, do you think it was from that or ...?

BEN: Hmm, yeah to an extent for sure. But if we go back to like my younger days I remember one of my favourite teachers we used to call him Mr B, he was just such a big personality and so like easy-going always making people laugh. He really influenced me, I wanted to be just like him, and I think I was really at an impressionable age at the time so I just like took in his personality and I think he really tried to nurture his students to be like confident and go-getters, one of his phrases was 'You don't need to like it, you just need to do it' (*laughs*).

This phrase 'You don't need to like it, you just need to do it' is very reminiscent of Theresa's experience with being told 'you just need to move along with it'. The parallels of these phrases are interesting as Ben and Theresa reacted to them in very different ways. For Ben, the phrase was empowering, and something that helped motivate him to adapt. In Theresa's case, the phrase was more like an imposition, but still motivated her to adapt. From these responses, a major factor in how they were able

to develop adaptability was from external pressures. These usually took the form of parental or pastoral figure in their lives (e.g., parents and teachers), and how they reacted to these pressures came down to their individual personality type. However, there was also one participant who reported that he felt that the pressure to adapt came from himself. Freddie claimed that unlike his peers, who seemed to adapt easily to new environments, he had to consciously train himself to do it through practiced exercises:

I know when I was twelve I didn't know my way around here, I knew how to get from the car park to the store but I didn't know what the hell it was. So, every time I've gone back when I lived in Japan I pushed myself further. I thought okay, I'm going to explore and discover a couple places on my way around and kind of worked out where things were. It's not really a comfortable feeling but I feel more alive, more comfortable talking to people, I'm more comfortable interacting with the world.

This demonstrates that parents and teachers (and by extension, the institutional culture of international schools) are not the only influences on a students' ability to adapt. For some, like Freddie, the primary motivator is to find attachment to place and feelings of belonging that come with being able to navigate new places comfortably. The standardised institutional culture at many international schools seems to aim at providing a sense of stability, a stable 'place' that students can adapt to more easily. The teachers also seem to encourage students to embrace these changes boldly, however, it seems that with some participants this caused them to repress feelings of unhappiness that were associated with these life-changing events. In many instances, these participants described their international moves as traumatic and like dealing with the end of relationships, and grieved for them accordingly. These participants reported feeling more stable and at peace in their current place, with prospects of settling down and living a more stationary lifestyle, or as Clara phrased 'putting her roots down'. Whereas the participants who responded more positively to international moves seemed to struggle staying in one place:

NETTA: What are your plans like after you graduate from uni, do you think you'll want to stay in Seattle?

BEN: Not if I can help it (*laughs*) I mean it's great don't get me wrong, but I'm already itching you know? With COVID right now I've never felt the need to leave more than I do right now!

Ben also reported that he struggled with maintaining meaningful relationships outside of his international school, he clarified that while he was able to make friends easily, his friendships now in his university were more superficial. The friendships he would focus most of his energy in maintaining would be the friends he made during his time in international schools, and this added to his sense of wanting to leave and be elsewhere. He wanted to leave places he found boring, and he explained what made places boring was how long he was spending there. That was why he was studying International Business, with the hopes of finding a job that would allow him to constantly travel the world. Kelsey also worked in a career that enabled her to travel, though did not deliberately go and search for one with this criterion in mind:

Honestly, it was just luck. I was working a pretty average job in an office, doing some pretty boring clerical stuff and it was really hard on me mentally I didn't feel like myself, my personality was totally phony and then the opportunity appeared to apply for this international recruitment gig at this university and I was like why not. And I was hesitant about it since it was totally different do my job then, but the moment the recruiter said something like 'Oh, it's a bit tough, you'll be required to travel frequently and be away for weeks at a time' I was in, I was like where do I sign up? It just clicked.

For Kelsey, the realisation that she was happier on the move also came with the fact that she felt like her identity was disingenuous. She explained that she had to put on a persona that was more cohesive with her peers and this was mentally draining for her. The reason for why she felt that she needed to do this was to maintain the peace and earn the acceptance from her social circles. When she had come out initially with her global background, she was told that it was snobby, and this discouraged her from sharing more about her international school experiences.

These examples demonstrate that there are various ways in which globally mobile individuals will adapt to big life changes and this does affect how they deal with settling down later in life. Generally speaking, the aim of developing adaptability, from the

perspective of international schools, is to allow their students to establish a sense of belonging more quickly and to cause as little disruption to their education as possible. However, while this may succeed in the context of international schools, as we can see from some of the responses above, this can often manifest in undesirable ways. What seems to be affected most is an individuals' sense of belonging and consequently the perception of their identity. In teaching students in international schools to adapt quickly to the environment surrounding them, they are often found in the circumstances where they need to change some aspect about their identity to find acceptance and belonging. When they are no longer in a context that is unique (such as an international school) they sometimes feel lost and react by trying to integrate (but feel like they are being a phony, like Kelsey) or they feel disconnected and feel the need to leave (like Ben). For people like Theresa and Clara, who associated negative feelings with the constant moves, they reacted by grounding themselves to something they felt could represent stability in their lives. For Theresa and Clara, they found this in their significant others, who were both people who had spent their whole lives in the same country and the same city.

5.2 The role of club membership on belonging

As discussed previously, the structure of international schools around the world tends to be similar to enable transferability between international schools. This is due to the relatively quick turnover rates of the student body. It is a disorienting experience to change schools, and more so when it is also a different country, culture, language that a student needs to adapt to. But this becomes a norm for students at international schools, with some finding ways to ground themselves against the constant changes surrounding them. One of these ways manifests in the membership to sports societies and clubs. To provide some context, the participants and I were discussing identifiers of the international school experience. Aside from the curriculum which highlighted the IB and AP formats, and the 'Americanised' style of schooling, six of the respondents discussed the sports culture at their international schools as being an important aspect of the international school experience.

While participation was not mandatory in any of the international schools the participants attended, most reported that they were a member of at least one club or

society. The unique aspect to these clubs and societies was that they were able to travel internationally to attend competitions or showcases, which Amari only discovered was unusual when talking about her experiences to a friend who had not attended an international school:

I was talking to one about like sports culture and international schools, and like how you travel to different countries ... apparently it's very strange like I didn't find it so until I was talking to one of my US friends who just gave me a weird look and said the furthest she had travelled was to the next state and that was only for serious state level competitions.

Amari indicated that while she wasn't particularly good at soccer or volleyball, she was able to travel abroad with her team for both sports. Some of her best memories, she explained, came from these experiences with her teams. The best part, however, was that she was able to maintain her sense of belonging in these teams:

NETTA: Can you explain to me a bit more about what you mean by 'maintaining your place'?

AMARI: Yeah of course! So you know how we move so often like from school to school, it can be a bit *blargh* and you can feel a bit out of place. It's totally normal I know to feel like alone and out of place in a new school, but if you're on a team, it's like you can get instant friends for one and two, it just helped remind me to keep afloat and not lose myself. Like I was always an attacker for soccer, always no matter which school I moved to I would just find myself in that same position. It was something I was comfortable with and confident in

NETTA: So it made you feel safe to play that position?

AMARI: Yeah! It was just something I knew in a sea of things I didn't know, so it gave me a bit of peace knowing I wouldn't make a fool of myself!

Amari's response emphasised a sense of consistency as her main method of dealing with change. It is not unusual to try and find things that are familiar in a situation where

everything is new, but as Amari explained, it was clear that it was more significant to her than this. In her response, she conflated the maintenance of her place (in the soccer/volleyball team) with the idea of not losing herself:

NETTA: Just going back a bit, you mentioned keeping grounded and not losing yourself? Can you talk a bit more about that?

AMARI: So like it's like when you enter a new school you can reinvent yourself right? Like how am I going to present myself this time? But honestly, I felt like I never really got that choice. When I came in, it's like my identity was being reshuffled and the others were going to tell me who I was...

In addition to maintaining her place, she felt like she did not have a choice in what her identity was going to be in this new social context. This loss of control over identity is similar to what Gabriel experienced with being asked to represent the 'African' demographic at his international school. Amari explained that starting at a new school afforded her with the luxury of being the exciting 'new' kid, but she also had to respect that status quo, and this was a confusing thing to navigate sometimes. It was very easy to develop a bad public reputation, so having a place on the soccer team felt like a safety net for her. It seems clear that the institutional culture that is found at each international school often dictates how a student will develop their personality and identity as they are being directly influenced by what is the norm and what is generally accepted. In trying to find belonging in these places, four participants reported that they had to give up or adopt certain characteristics to achieve acceptance which makes maintaining something that is always constant a priority for their identity. Having club membership is therefore commonly used as method of maintaining stability. The experience of travelling with clubs and societies is also used as a method of bonding with other international school students beyond the scope of international schools, as Vincent explained:

Meeting someone who could relate to travelling abroad for interscholastic at college was such an 'A-ha!' moment for me. It was just so nice to be able to talk with someone else who could relate to it and not be judged because it sounded like I wanted to show off.

Half of the participants described feeling connected with other students they encountered at university or in later life when they could relate to these experiences. From the responses, it is clear that the experience with clubs and societies can provide a unified kind of experience across different international schools. Another important factor that surfaced in discussions about this topic was the fear of being judged and perceived as arrogant. The majority of participants reported feelings of discomfort with revealing details about their international school life because they feared the outcome of being excluded from their peers.

The membership to clubs and societies not only provided a way of maintaining stability within moves between international schools, but it was also used as a way of identifying and connecting with other international schoolers who shared similar experiences. Beyond the international school, however, these experiences with travelling for interscholastic activities were generally not well-received by the non-international social spheres. It proved to alienate those who had divulged specifics about their experiences and consequently motivated them to conceal this aspect of their lives moving forward.

5.3 Envy of stability

The topic of stability is a very interesting one, as it reoccurred quite frequently amongst the responses but in various different ways. For instance, some of the participants viewed stability in the sense of it being boring and something to escape from. Others found stability in escapism and grew accustomed to being in unstable environments as they found it exciting. Having said that, the majority of the participants demonstrated some level of envy for those who had stability in their lives. As Clara shared:

I find myself forgetting sometimes and then out of the blue he'll say something, or we'll pass by a building like childhood hang out spot or something and it'll just hit me like a weird pang of sadness and jealousy, it doesn't ever last long though ...

Her boyfriend had spent his entire life in the same city where they had met at university and after graduating, they continued living there. She found herself being frustrated about the physical disconnect between her childhood places and where she was now;

and this was magnified by the contrast between her and her boyfriend's experiences. While she envied his experiences, she also found appeal in the stability and sense of security he represented. As for the future, she had no desire to move and was even discussing the possibility of settling down there for good.

Some found discomfort with the prospect of settling down, though accepted it was an eventuality they would have to accept. Freddie described how he came to grips with living the stationary lifestyle with the analogy of setting anchors in his life. In the earlier stages of his transition out of the international school and into university in the United Kingdom, he claimed it was one of the most difficult times in his life. His mental health deteriorated quite rapidly as he felt more isolated in his new environment, and for years he was unable to reconcile his identities, resulting in him feeling lost. Eventually he was able to find a way to cope:

I usually call Hong Kong as my anchor. Well, I think the only reason I started to kind of be able to settle down in the UK was because I went, 'Okay, this is my starting point to kind of being a place in a world where I'm comfortable'.

Freddie discovered that his issue was concentrated on this idea of permanence and being stuck. Even though he admitted that realistically he would probably settle in the UK permanently, he still found this difficult to accept until he reoriented his perspective. In seeing Hong Kong as his anchor, he was able to see himself as still being a visitor in the UK and that made him more at ease. This process of coping was not unusual as six of the participants found themselves unable to reverse the mentality they had grown accustomed to during their globally mobile upbringing. As with each move, many of them were encouraged to embrace change and excitedly anticipate future changes. This resulted in a 'cross-wiring' as Gabriel explained, where the expectations he was trained to have did not meet the reality he was living in, and this directly impacted the ability to feel like he belonged anywhere:

When you're constantly told your place is everywhere but the reality of it is more like an in-between or really nowhere.

Gabriel's explanation of his reality failing to meet his expectations raises a very interesting point about the prevalence of paradoxes within the institutional culture of

international schools. This has already been raised by some participants with the idea of ‘international’ really being American, and the practice of suppressing ‘non-standard’ English. Yet on the other hand, pressuring students like Gabriel to embrace ethnic identities they felt alienated for just to fulfil diversity quotas. Four participants felt like their schools experienced a constant struggle to maintain this sense of ‘internationalness’ and this struggle also impacted their students’ conception of what it means to be international.

Belonging everywhere is often regarded as a maxim of the international school community, with titles such as ‘Global Citizen’ and ‘Third Culture Kid’ being some of the more well-known groups. However, the establishment of these labels and how they maintain their group identities (and dictate group membership) can also be rather problematic. Despite these reservations, seven of the participants still found solace in identifying as a TCK or a Global Nomad, describing it as being more accurate than identifying as their passport country. Though while they transitioned from international schools into the ‘real world’, not many of the participants actually used this label in their self-introductions as they felt it was not pragmatic.

5.4. Transitioning from international schools to the ‘real world’

The lack of guidance and not knowing what to anticipate emerged as one of the key reasons why six of the participants reported having such a difficult time adjusting. Out of all the participants, only one reported that they had any experience with an ‘exit seminar’. Theresa explained that while she appreciated the sentiment, she wished it was more practical:

It was alright, like the senior class was put into an assembly and we were told about how different and exciting university life would be and how we would be around different kinds of people, but it didn’t really portray the reality of it very well, like it glossed over the culture shock and definitely didn’t mention anything about the mental health aspects...

While the exit seminar was advertised to the students as being a preparation for university life and the world beyond the international school, the focus seemed to be on the exciting and positive aspects of this transition. Theresa described the energy of that

exit seminar as being super amped up, staged like a concert, even equipped with small confetti canons. Her first experiences moving to the USA for university was still exciting, but she claimed the disappointment crept over her slowly as she tried to adjust to her new surroundings and then suddenly became overwhelming:

At first it was like I was still hyped you know? Like I always visited during summer, so it wasn't like a new place I was unfamiliar with, I spoke the language I knew the culture kind of, but in a way it also kind of was a place I was unfamiliar with ... it wasn't until I was trying to make new college friends that it like hit me, like I don't know this place, I don't know the slang, what's cool, I'm only going off a construction of a place I built in my head from like 2 months of summer each year, it was just a fantasy.

She described it feeling like she was failing at something she had spent her whole life preparing for, and was especially surprised that she was dealing with culture shock so poorly. Like the fantasy world that she had built of the USA in her head, she had also built up an expectation of what her college experience would be like. The heavy emphasis the exit seminar had placed on the positive and exciting aspects of transitioning influenced this greatly. In the end, Theresa claimed that she probably would have fared better if she had not elected to attend that seminar, as the high expectations and hype created by it made the contrast between her actual experience all the more disappointing.

This feeling of disappointment Theresa experienced was a common experience amongst the participants who were moving out of the international school 'bubble'. Nine of the participants found themselves repatriating back to their 'passport countries' for university, whereas two others (particularly those from non-English speaking countries) travelled abroad for university. The responses were rather mixed as to who had the most difficult experience with adjusting, with the only consensus being: no one found it 'easy'.

5.5 Experiences with repatriating

Like Theresa, those who were repatriating for university found it to be disappointing that there was a such a big disconnect between reality and fantasy. As Maya described:

There's a certain jadedness that came with moving back to America where I thought it was like this exciting place and then I was kind of disappointed and feeling overwhelmed and dealing with reverse culture shock in the the sense that like, I thought it would be comfortable but really it did feel so like an alien place, kind of in the ways that other countries I've been to did but with an added underlying anxiety of the fact that this is supposed to feel like home and this was supposed to be the final destination and it ended up feeling like (*laughs*) the 'Final Destination' instead!

Maya's reference to the 'Final Destination' was about a supernatural horror film franchise in which the protagonists spend the duration of the films attempting to cheat death, which most do up until the end of the movies, but they eventually succumb to their fates. While the comparison had been in jest, the quintessence of the sentiment seems to be an accurate representation of what many of the participants feel when repatriating: that they are running in a futile attempt from something inevitable. Four regarded the inevitability of settling down in their passport countries as a conclusion to a journey they were not ready to end, and felt that their identities were in jeopardy, as Amari explained:

It was really difficult, it still is honestly, I feel like I had up to that point been socialised very much in the International School backback community which I believe is like it's own culture. And going back home, it felt like I was being asked to trade that in for a normal American identity...

Curiously, while many of the participants maintained that their international schools were structured to be very 'American', this did not seem to alleviate the culture shock they experienced when they travelled to a real school in the USA. This might be due the difference in experience of high schools and universities, but the responses seem to allude to the fact that their perception of an 'American' education is constructed through what they absorbed through the media. So again, this idea of fantasy and reality surfaces as a root of an issue: when there is an irreconcilable difference between what is expected and what actually happens.

This idea also reoccurs from a different perspective, with how these internationally mobile students are being perceived by their monocultural peers. Referring back to the

chart created by Pollock and Van Reken (2009), there are four general categories this can fall into, and these all correlate to the notion of expectation versus reality:

Figure 2. The PolVan Cultural Identity Model

The PolVan Cultural Identity Model
Cultural Identity in Relationship to Surrounding Culture

Foreigner Look <i>different</i> Think <i>different</i>	Hidden Immigrant Look alike Think <i>different</i>
Adopted Look <i>different</i> Think alike	Mirror Look alike Think alike

(Pollock and Van Reken, 1996)

With the ‘foreigner’ and ‘mirror’ categories, the expectations meet reality, as foreigners who look different are expected to think and be culturally different. Likewise, ‘Mirrors’ are people who look similar and are expected to be culturally similar. For this reason, internationally mobile individuals tend to fall in the ‘Hidden Immigrant’ or ‘Adopted’ categories, but this again depends on how similar we take the ‘Americanised’ culture of international schools to be with the actual institutional cultures of schools in the USA.

5.6 Discrimination

Jason indicated that his Indonesian identity was like a buffer for him that he used like a shield when he entered university in Ireland:

I am obviously Asian, like I look Indonesian, so it was already expected that I would be like ... different let’s say. There is that expectation for me. For my uh like white like British or Irish friends from school, they struggled to prove that

they were different because there was a different kind of expectation for them, because they looked the same...

However, this expectation also worked against Jason, as he explained because he looked international, he was grouped with the other international students at his university.

This also came with prejudices Jason had to deal with:

Like in my school there was a large Chinese population, and so I mean I'm Chinese-Indonesian, we were just the same in the eyes of like the other students and uh the faculty. Some people were just so surprised I could speak English which is already (*exasperated laugh*) y'know? Like it was microaggressions, plainly speaking. I don't want to sugar coat it, but it was rough being treated in that way as well, much harder than just being mistaken for being British y'know?

Jason's emphasis on discrimination due to his race reflects a somewhat overlooked area of research surrounding the globally mobile population. In his interview, he expressed a lot of frustration about this and felt like his experiences were often dismissed or omitted because it did not fall into the more common TCK narratives. He regularly discussed his experience in comparison to what he referred to as the 'traditional TCK experience' because for a long time this was all he had to inform him about this part of his identity. An aspect of the traditional TCK experience he could not really relate to was this difficulty with self-introductions. It was not that he did not find self-introductions to be complicated, rather it was that people were never interested in it beyond him saying he was from Indonesia or 'kind of' from Singapore too.

Jason also indicated that his school was actively deterring their students from speaking the local variant of English called 'Singlish'. While there was no official penalisation for using it, students would get verbal warnings and scolded in front of their peers:

Say like if someone would answer in class in improper English, Singlish, whatever, they would be told like to redo it or just *tsked* at. If a teacher walks by you during breaks and we're just chatting and they hear us [speaking in Singlish] they would tell us not to speak 'like that'.

He and many of his peers felt frustrated by this, but at the same time, accepted it as something that was beyond their control. Some of his peers even saw it as a positive thing:

Some just happily accept it right? They saw it as like kind of wearing braces or something to correct their form their way of speaking because having so called proper English is quite profitable it makes you a stronger applicant in many ways.

By 'many ways', Jason was referring to access to higher education and employability. He mentioned the struggle of having to prove that his English was at a functional level for university and the standardised tests that he had to take were rather unforgiving with accents:

My TOEFL score was very weird, I scored near perfect on everything except speaking. I didn't even use as they say *incorrect* English but I can't help that I have a slight accent [...] like okay I can understand taking a few point off for that, but my speaking score was so low it made my overall fall so much that's unreasonable...

He expressed his frustration at being brought up in a curriculum that trained him to rely on English as his main language only to be challenged at every step beyond the international school (and also within it). Some universities he had applied to even offered him an acceptance but only with the condition that he attend a pre-sessional course, which he found to be a bit insulting. He recognised that it was sometimes not a personal call made by an individual but rather an institutional regulation made on the basis of his nationality and international student status. However, this made him feel even more hopeless in his situation and took quite a big toll on his self-esteem:

At the time I began to start thinking like wait is my English really that bad seriously? I always thought it was a big part of my identity a part of who I am, but maybe it's not I don't know?

In retrospect, he claimed his expectations for those universities at the time were a bit unreasonable. That is, to expect an institution that only dealt with a relatively small population of international students to be more open-minded about English variations

when his international school still struggled with this concept. Nonetheless, these encounters in which his language and fluency continued to trouble him throughout his university experience

5.7 Self-introductions

The act of producing self-introductions emerged as a common theme amongst all the participants and played an influential role in their transition into higher education. With the fluctuating student body population in international schools, all the participants were reasonably well-practiced with introducing themselves to new people. However, these were usually other international school students, or at the very least, people who were familiar with this concept of a globally mobile population. The self-introduction to people who were unfamiliar with this world proved to be quite stressful, as Ben explained:

I don't really talk about that. Yeah, it's like a weird phenomenon that happens. It's like, they almost kind of despise you. They some people have said like, it makes them sound almost snobby. And like, people take it as you're trying to be a snob or like trying to brag about your experiences.

Like ten others, Ben experienced a negative reaction to his self-introductions, and responded by shying away from sharing more details about their lives. Amari described her experiences with introducing herself like walking on eggshells and feeling like she was just on the edge of making a mistake:

They're the one who usually ask so it's like I feel like I didn't make a mistake. But it was kind of like I know exactly like I honestly feel like when someone asks me and I answer I feel like I did something wrong I just was honest like you know like I was just honest...

It is clear that self-introductions were a challenging obstacle for many of the participants, and part of that challenge was dealing with the fact that for others, this was a simple task that was quite straightforward. As Ben explained:

BEN: It's hard because you see other people and it's like nothing to them, you ask them where they're from, boom, an answer, next

guy, boom again, then it's me and what? Panic, sweatiness, and no good answers (*laughs*).

NETTA: Can you explain what you mean by 'good answers'?

BEN: Like ... y'know, a neat, tidy answer. Ohio or like Tampa. Not, oh well, I was born here but I'm not really from there, and then I grew up here but I don't know if I'd consider myself *from* there, like that... it's confusing, it makes people uncomfortable (*laughs*).

Ben's attitude towards this idea of a 'good answer' is reflective of the challenges many globally mobile individuals face. The struggle to fit in and fulfil expectations is a struggle that is quite universal but with the participants, this seemed to be a very pronounced issue that they encountered. Ben explained that since these kinds of introductions were not as well-known yet, it caught a lot of people off guard. This led to, as he explained earlier, to him being called a 'snob'. This term surfaces various times throughout the participant responses, usually in correlation to the discussion of self-introductions. As Theresa explained:

One of my friends at college actually was the first to call me out on it, I think one day she just cut me in the middle of me explaining about something in the Netherlands and she was like 'okay we get it, you lived in the Netherlands, stop being such a Euro snob' or something! I don't quite remember but she was laughing about it so I just laughed as well, but I just remember being quite shook.

She explained that because her friend had said it in such a joking way, in the moment it did not bother her as much and everyone else had just laughed along with her. It was not until that moment that Theresa noticed her friend did not like hearing about her experiences, and the realisation saddened her greatly. But even after she had time to reflect on how her friend reacted, she never confronted her because she was worried that it would ruin the mood of her friend group. At the time, maintaining her friendship group was more important to her than reasserting her self-identity. Theresa expressed that she wished her younger self was not so weak, and how she felt this decision to prioritise others instead of herself had lasting impacts on her to this day:

... especially when you're at that age. You're still figuring yourself out, and it kind of sucks to think about what kind of person I could have been if I was just around more supportive people... but when enough people tell you you're being snobby because of this or that, you start to believe that it's true and it's a hard mentality to shake, you feel like you lose control of that aspect of your life.

Loss of control is a sentiment that five of the participants felt played an influential role in how they approached self-introductions. Ben described a moment where he was introduced to a group of people through another person and felt like he had to do damage control:

As a TCK, like you realise how important it is to like, make the first impression and to like, be in control of your identity. Because that's like everything. Like, once that's gone, it's over. And I didn't have a chance to like set myself up, right? It was like, 'Oh, is this a kid from like Spain?' So everyone thinks I'm gonna be like, some Latino guy, me, like, I'm not, I'm just this white kid.

This led to Ben having to explain to a group of strangers that he was not actually from Spain but had spent some years living there. The encounter was not entirely negative as the people took it well, but it left Ben feeling somewhat embarrassed and out of control. He felt like he owed an explanation to everyone and had even apologised for the miscommunication between his friend and the new people. Many of the other participants also shared their negative experiences with introducing themselves to new people. Clara described instances where many people made the negative assumptions about her:

There was definitely a lot of negativity, when it came to certain schools, when you described your life there was a lot of negative reactions. Like, oh, OK, you've lived in foreign countries. Oh, kind of like this automatic assumption that you were kind of some rich b*tch, that was entitled, you know?

The assumption that those who could afford to live abroad were affluent and entitled also arose often when the participants discussed their experiences with talking about their upbringing, along with the term 'snobby', as Amari described:

I feel like sometimes it's a very negative reaction, like people find me snobby.

And with Freddie, who explained that he always felt like he was inconveniencing others with his lengthy self-introductions. He felt that others found it rude:

FREDDIE: ...in the UK people kind of give you the whole story, but when you give them the whole story it seems like you're being rude.

NETTA: What made you think others found it rude?

FREDDIE: Oh you know like (*rolls eyes*) or (*sighs deeply*) or like a snide remark like 'Oooh rich boy!' but even like ... you can tell like right, when someone is genuinely interested or if someone is just politely saying 'wow that is *so* interesting'.

From the what the participants said, it is clear that their attitudes towards introducing themselves was heavily fixated on this idea of not wanting to inconvenience others or make others feel uncomfortable. This feeling was so prevalent that ten of the participants talked about having contingency plans for their self introductions. As Amari described:

Yeah, so I have them in my head, so if they kind of expect a one word answer and it was kind of like not ready for a sit down talk about my life experiences I kind of say oh I was born in San Francisco. And if they want more, I say I grew up abroad. But then sometimes I can't help myself and that's when I would say, yeah, but that's also not entirely accurate and then it would just fall apart (*laughs*).

Her sister Maya also talked about the premade self-introductions, which they had used whilst growing up:

We used to give people the whole spiel y'know? I remember when we were younger, eventually me and my sister used to have a note on our phone that gave answers to all the questions people would always ask us, so it'd be like where are you from, and then we'd have an answer. What was your favourite country? We would have an answer. And we used to like, give it to people like in ninth grade or tenth grade, and it was usually like my parents' friends, or like my aunts and uncles who asked me all these questions and we were just like, we don't have time, you don't have time, and you don't really care...

Both Maya and Amari made references to not wanting to inconvenience others with their introductions, fearing that it would be a ‘sit down talk’ or being a ‘whole spiel’. This is consistent with what other participants also described their discomfort surrounding self-introductions. In Maya’s response, she pointed out that she and her sister had not always had these feelings about self-introductions. Replacing ‘the whole spiel’ came as a reaction to how their self-introductions were received by their parents’ friends and extended family members, and became a learned behaviour they continue to abide by. Using premade responses and tailored self-introductions were something they grew accustomed to doing. More importantly, it was something that they both saw as a benefit to others, but this also seems to come at a detriment to themselves emotionally. The use of shortened versions of self-introductions were quite common with the participants, but as Vincent described:

...like putting on a mask, not only that, but also having to pick which mask, which was the right mask for this person at this time? What does this person want? I’d try to give them that.

As someone who was biracial, Vincent described himself as very adept at codeswitching as he did it regularly at home with his family and extended family. However, with self-introductions, he felt it was different to codeswitching as he explained:

Like the Chinese side of me, it’s still a part of me, I just pronounce it more when I’m talking to like my aunties on that side of the family, bring it out on Chinese New Year for some *Ang Pao* you know? (*laughs*) And with my American side it’s just like yeah whatever, it’s pretty normal but a little more rowdy. But there’s this weird thing that happens like when I’m in Asia I’m like the white boy and then when I’m in Amerca it’s like ‘oh you’re *so* Asian’ and I just it just rubs me the wrong way. I get it comes with the territory of a *hafu* though...

Even as somebody who was raised in a bicultural household, it is interesting to note how Vincent frames the cultures he interacts with. With his Chinese side, he describes it with a very specific situation, giving the example of a Lunar New Year tradition of receiving *Ang Pao* (red envelopes) that are traditionally filled with money and given to younger unwed family members by older relatives. When he referred to his American side, he used the term ‘pretty normal’. Throughout the interview, Vincent was very

outspoken about how Americanised his international school and acknowledged that it still impacted his perception of the international education system; his perception of his American side may be reflective of this. While he describes the experience of having stereotypes imposed upon him, he appeared to be resigned to this being an inevitability for him. He also described a time in university when he hated his Chinese side, which he explained was provoked by other people highlighting his Asian heritage:

I can't say it wasn't bullying ...hmm ... it was kind of like bullying. F*ck it, it was bullying, like people I would consider my friends would call me *chink* or *Chinaman* and I would just laugh it off and say something worse back.

Similar to Theresa's experience, the people that Vincent described as bullying him most were those who he considered closest to at the time. While Theresa did not confront her friend about calling her a 'Euro snob' because she was afraid of ruining her relationships, Vincent did try to talk to his friend, though it did not resolve the issue. As Vincent explained:

I did eventually call him out on it, like I was just done at that point y'know? But he just laughed it off, and when I told him I was like actually really pissed, he started to act all sincere and tried to say he didn't mean any of it and he hadn't said anything racist or that he couldn't be racist since he was Black ... so I was just done.

In his responses, he also described his friends and acquaintances alternating in the ways they would perceive him and this would impact how they would phrase their insults. Due to his background of growing up abroad and attending an international school, they viewed him as being affluent, and at many times called him a 'snob'. But at the same time, because he grew up in Indonesia, they would talk about how dirty the country was, or asked if he had running water in his house. These instances consequently made him reject his Asian identity for the majority of his time at university.

While it took Vincent a long time to grow past these experiences, he has since reembraced his identity and returned to working at an international school in Taiwan. The use of practiced and tailored self-introductions was a popular type of coping mechanism amongst the participants, but another method of coping was to seek out

those who were similar to them. Some had taken to moving to more diverse environments like big metropolitan cities, or even electing to return to international schools as teachers or faculty members like Vincent had done.

5.8 Hidden foreigner syndrome

Nine of the participants who were involved in this study were individuals who held American or British citizenship and admitted that they outwardly presented as ‘American’ or ‘British’. This was an unprompted admission from the participants, but eight of them felt the need to clarify that they were aware that this afforded them some kind of privilege and influenced their reintegration into American and British universities. However, this also led into the discussion of belonging and the idea of being a hidden foreigner. For instance, with Freddie who described his initial experiences with coming to the UK for university:

I really thought it would be okay, like I’m pretty flexible I think I can hold my own with those kinds of situations. I’m already British like that was my personality at school, but when I finally came it was just a whole different situation.

At his international school he described himself as presenting as very ‘British’, and it was accepted amongst his peers that he was the British guy. He explained that it was like that with most of his friends as well, some of them were mixed ethnicities but usually they would pick one and accentuate it so that they could be the authority for that culture or country. When he finally came to the UK for university, Freddie explained this identity he had made for himself suddenly changed:

It was weird like I did a 180 or 360 whichever y’know just total turn around, suddenly I wasn’t the British guy and I just clung onto the fact that I never lived here, I didn’t grow up here, I tried to make friends that were other internationals because I felt more connected to them.

Freddie was not the only one to notice this, some of the other participants also noted this strange pivot in their identity during the transition away from the international school.

Clara, who was also a British national, found her transition back to the UK for university difficult in terms with reconciling her two identities:

On the one hand like I am painfully British (*laughs*) like that is something I never lost, but at the same time, I just lack so many of the things that I should know. Like when my uni friends would mention Wotsits and I'm like what on earth is a Wotsits, and they would explain and I would be like ... a Cheeto? It's so minuscule but it's those kinds of things that just build up over time and it just adds up and reminds me like ah, I don't *really* belong here.

On the whole, it is usually the small differences in social and behavioural norms that the participants talked about the most. All of the participants experienced culture shock when leaving the international school, but never any severe cases where they were completely entering a new culture completely unaware. They all entered the new context with expectations that they would be able to assimilate fairly well, and for most of the participants, this was about repatriating to their passport countries. However, it is the prospect of this new destination being the final destination that heightened their expectations and made the culture shock more devastating. Like Maya, who recounted her experiences as she repatriated back to the USA:

Like when I went on my gap year and moved back to the States, it was actually like, a really really maybe hardest time in my life like I felt that I everything crumbled, and I no longer knew who I was and looking back I'm like, of course that happened. But in the moment it was like, Oh you just move back to America and this is your home, you know? Like this is normal, but it was really hard, because there was nothing to kind of root myself to. All of my friends were all over the world it was like I was being spread thin ...

Interestingly, Maya also claimed earlier on that it did not take her and her sister that long to transition back, and talked at length about the US diplomatic influence on the American international school kids:

It didn't take them very long to like transition back when they went to America and they just, you know, the Embassy tries really hard to keep their people Americanized like they don't let you stay in one place for more than six years, because they and it's literally because they want you to stay American like they don't want you to like that country better than being American, and so they literally make you move like which is ...

Initially it may seem like Maya was contradicting herself, but as she later clarified, she meant that while she had a very difficult time transitioning and adjusting to American life, it did not take her as long as those who were not repatriating (especially to the USA). From the responses, it seems that most of the participants who were US nationals did not take very long to transition whereas the other participants (2 British nationals, 1 Indonesian national, and 1 Danish national) all struggled more with the transition. It is noteworthy that all these participants who were non-US nationals all attended university in the UK (2 repatriating and 2 going abroad as international students).

5.9 Comfort in diverse environments

Despite the rhetoric surrounding Global Nomads often alluding to them being ‘Citizens of the World’ and being able to adapt wherever they may find themselves to be, the participants’ responses suggest that it is more nuanced a process than just adapting at random to new environments. There is usually intent in deciding where to move for school or for a job, and the main factor is the element of diversity. 11 of the participants grew up in large cities, as international schools tend to be located in major cities or expatriate hubs. As Freddie explained:

I grew up in like the second largest city with 14 million, and that was normal for me, I felt quite comfortable ...

Similarly, Amari described how growing up in big cities enabled her to easily navigate other big cities:

Because we lived in these like massive cities ... like compared to seeing how my other friends travel, like they were really overwhelmed and I was just like yep, easy, I know how to navigate this.

When it came to selecting universities to attend, this played a major factor for many of the participants. Ben elected to only place universities in big metropolitan cities on his short-list of places he would apply to:

NETTA: What was the criteria for that? Like how did you decide a city was metropolitan enough for you? To put on that list.

BEN: Well, research (*laughs*) I asked around, I looked up a lot of places, and it's just like a vibe I guess? It's like, you know if a place is metropolitan, it's kind of like how you know someone's TCK.

Jason had a similar process to Ben when deciding where to go to school in the UK, and specifically used supermarkets as his gauge:

Asian supermarkets. There needs to be at least one – two is better, but if there is not one within the city centre, I would not go.

This was not entirely due to his diet; he explained that because he was Asian himself, the presence of an Asian supermarkets meant there was more likelihood that there was a big enough Asian population in the area, and this made him feel safer. Vincent also shared this sentiment, and discussed how he wished his school counsellor had included areas that would not be as suitable for international school students:

Like, just the whole middle of the States, *avoid (laughs)* I wish someone told me to like just look at East Coast and West Coast and ignore the bible belt, because let me tell you, the racism is shocking there!

Now as an educator at an international school, Vincent claimed if his students ever asked him for his honest opinion, that is what he would say. Having previously discussed how his close friends had racially bullied him at university, he believed it was because the university was not very diverse:

The majority of the students, like 90% of the students were from in-state, with like the I don't know, 9% being from the next state over y'know? It was like that so ... diverse? I don't think so. Progressive? No no...

Most of the participants reported that they picked a university that was in a major city because they felt like this would provide them a similar cultural experience as an international school. In the cases where this was not taken into consideration, as with

Vincent, the experience was often enshrouded with regret and discussed with a reflective stance, as Clara explained:

I can't say I 100% regret it because I did meet my boyfriend here and I've made loads of really nice people, but if I could go back and maybe tell like an alternative timeline version of myself I'd say like something like 'go to London' (*laughs*).

While Clara overall had a good experience at university, she said that objectively she just felt like it was luck. She had met a good group of friends as well as her boyfriend at her school and this helped significantly with her transition and easing into life in the UK. If she were to give advice to younger TCKs, she said:

Pick a big city. Any, most big city would do I think, yeah.

She explained that a big city would probably attract more people like her so it would increase the chances of befriending people and settling in. In the beginning when she was new to the area where she was attending university, she described being quite lonely and not finding a group of friends until nearly the end of her first year. Something she believes came down to three things. One: the city where her university was located in was a very small, 'sleepy' city. Two: the university itself was not a big university and did not have a large student population. And three: it was not a very prestigious university. This is the first time university prestige was mentioned explicitly as a factor for attracting Global Nomads to certain schools, but it was often implied when participants talked about which areas and cities they looked at. For example, Ben claimed that even the name of universities was something he could use to gauge whether he wanted to research further into the university or not:

NETTA: Just by the name? How, do you mind giving an example?

BEN: Like say, you see Green Mountain State College or something random that doesn't spark any kind of recognition. But like if you see University of like 'Big City Name' then I would be a little more sure of it.

NETTA: Like the flagship campus?

- BEN: Yeah more or less! But there's always a few schools near each other and there's always like the good one and then the one that's not as well known...
- NETTA: What do you mean by 'good one'?
- BEN: Just like general standards of teaching, connections, mindsets...

Here, Ben did not identify a big city as a preference, but also a university that was well-known. Though he did not explicitly state that the prestige of the university would be an appealing factor for other Global Nomads, he did make the inference that the 'good schools' would attract individuals who shared similar mindsets and values to him. An environment that would be progressive and open-minded was a big factor for Ben's decision, and he believed that more prestigious schools would attract more individuals who shared these views. This was a common belief held by many of the participants who sought environments that would mimic certain aspects they grew accustomed to in international schools.

However, not all the participants adopted this mindset. Theresa purposely picked a university that would not be similar to what she experienced in her international school, explaining that she was searching for her roots and wanted something that could provide more stability:

I remember deciding between two big schools in Texas, and one of them is a very liberal much more international a bigger diverse, more diverse group of individuals and then there was a real very country, very Texas when you think of the stereotype of Texas, um, and I did intentionally choose that one because I felt like there was some more stability and a little bit more calm version and like this Texan identity that I technically met and fit but didn't really know what that meant. Whereas University of Texas Austin is known for being a very like eclectic cultural city and would have some really great opportunities for friends from all over. But something felt less stable about it I guess and then I wanted to try and find my roots.

Theresa actively sought to assimilate with her passport culture as she believed it would lead to her establishing more constancy in her life; something she had always coveted. However, despite taking the steps to position herself in an environment she believed would cultivate her so called 'roots', she still gravitated towards people who could

emphasise with her multicultural background, befriending students who had multicultural backgrounds themselves:

So it was a very conservative school, it was very challenging and very surprising. And I still like it very much. I lived in halls in a diverse dorm and automatically locked myself in with a pretty diverse range of individuals, a lot of, like, not your typical Americans. So four of my roommates were from India, but they came over as babies, and a few other internationals who came for high school and college. And so I definitely went to a conservative like typical American types of school and then found my little group of people who were more internationally minded.

Being immersed in a conservative school in Texas helped her fulfil her desire to connect more with her passport country and establish roots, whilst her international friend group was able to help her ground her international identity. Given that Theresa earlier also detailed how she was bullied by someone in her close friend group for discussing her international upbringing, it is interesting that she also described her repatriation as a generally positive experience. While she did not explicitly say that the friend who had bullied her was a local student, from Theresa's description it can be inferred that the student was not an international student.

The way in which Theresa formed her sense of belonging by maintaining membership to two different types of friendship groups was uncommon amongst the participants. She described being able to 'culturally code switch' between these groups she was member to, and perhaps this is what she meant when she described her unwillingness to confront her bully who singled her out for her international upbringing. In this way, Theresa claimed she was able to reconcile her Texan and International senses of belonging without having to make significant sacrifices to either side – though occasionally her responses do contradict one another. For example, she claimed to be happy with the arrangement of splitting her time and identity between her friend groups which she labelled as her 'Texan friends' and 'International friends'. However, she also described the process of culturally code switching as feeling 'stuffy' and 'fraudulent', especially with regards to her 'Texan friends' group.

5.10 Encapsulated marginality

During discussions about belonging, the theme of marginality emerged from the participants responses frequently in two variants: the idea of an ‘encapsulated marginality’ and a ‘constructive marginality’. These concepts can be understood as how multicultural identities may develop (Bennett, 1993). Encapsulated marginality can be understood as feeling alienated from mainstream culture(s) and isolated as a result of not being able to develop a sense of belonging within the new environment. Participants often described this in terms of feeling isolated by their unique circumstances, and as discussed previously, some were even bullied into excluding this aspect of their identity. In four of the participants’ experiences, the departure from the international school served as the catalyst for encapsulated marginality. As Freddie recounted his experience with repatriating to the UK:

For Freshers, you know, I was so excited to be meeting new people, and I’d tell them about how I grew up abroad in Hong Kong and Japan, and then someone said to me something like isn’t that cultural appropriation, or but you’re just White or British [...] I was so offended (*laughs*) but also kind of angry.

Up until this encounter, Freddie had always considered himself to be British and a mix of the cultures he grew up in. He would often say his hometown was in Hong Kong, but this interaction followed by more similar encounters which caused him to withdraw from his university peers and subsequently isolate himself. The unsympathetic response his peers had for his cultural identity led to him unable to form any meaningful relationships in his new environment for the first two years of his university career, and he claimed contributed greatly to his depression. As a reaction to these kinds of encounters, Freddie claimed he felt his identity shift away from being British:

...subconsciously I think, I think I pulled back from my British side, like I started to not want to be associated with just being British anymore. My accent always had a bit of an Aussie-ish-ness to it and I think it came out a bit more just enough to make people hesitate...

This kind of reaction was not uncommon with the other participants, as four described a kind of ‘identity rebound’ phenomenon where they began developing a stronger bond to the host societies they grew up in than their own passport countries’. As Freddie

explained, his identity during his international school days were strongly associated with his British identity. It grew to be part of his persona and a key component in his cultural identity; significantly, he also explained that he entertained it because it made him feel unique in a place where everybody already came from unique backgrounds:

I guess it made me feel special, y'know? Like look, everybody at these kind of schools have something, like we got some people who've lived in five, ten countries, children of royalty, diplomats, millionaires whatever, you just kind of have to settle for what makes you you and for me that was being British, I guess there weren't that many British in my schools relatively speaking I guess...

It is clear from Freddie's rationale that his primary motivation for fixating onto a British identity was to find something that made him distinctive in his community. Moving to the UK where he would effectively lose what made him distinctive is what drove him to present more with his international background as that was something that could maintain his individuality. Other participants emphasised that not belonging to their passport country was part of their identity, as Maya elaborated:

I wasn't one of them and I didn't really want to be, but some people really can't see past what I look like or sound like.

As someone who outwardly presented as an white American, Maya struggled with trying to prove her internationality, and like others, came across people who reacted negatively to her trying to share this part of her identity. In college, she described how long she took to join a classical Indian dance society, which she explained was due to fear of being accused of cultural appropriation:

I'm like super aware all the time about it, like I'm always trying to check myself, and I know I'm not doing it, but still I'm always on my toes about what other people are thinking of like y'know, white girl in Indian dance class, I'm basically the only white girl there [...] no one has actually come forward and said anything to me specifically but like they'll say something about this white kid who joined Japanese taiko drumming y'know?

This incident illustrates the challenge of belonging for those who do not fit the stereotypical framework of certain cultures and societies, which is reflective of the reality of what TCKs and Global Nomads commonly face. The manner in which others

around Maya had talked about a ‘white kid’ joining a society for traditional Japanese drumming, heavily implied that the ‘white kid’ was wrong for doing so. However, Maya surmised that they had only brought up this incident to passive aggressively indicate that Maya was also in the wrong for joining the Indian dance society. The result of this incident was Maya dropping out of the society in the following year as she felt too anxious to continue. For her, the enjoyment of being able to reconnect with a culture she grew up in no longer outweighed the anxiety and pressure she was receiving for participating in something that was not ‘for’ her.

For four of the participants, the fear of being mistaken for a local was conflated with the potential of having their cultural identity and uniqueness erased. However, there was also the fear of being construed as a fraud or a snob that was constantly conflicting with the desire to be true to their identity. This caused some of the participants to take on certain attributes that could distinguish them from their passport country peers, such as Freddie accentuating his Australian accent when he moved to the UK, and Maya participating in traditional Indian dance. The phenomenon of reconnecting and re-establishing their identities with the local cultures of their host countries was fairly frequent amongst the participants. This being said, four of these participants also claimed that they did not especially connect with the local people or societies while they attended their respective international schools. Some even went so far as to describe how their schools physically segregated them from the local societies and had just accepted that they were from different worlds:

NETTA: When you say physically, what do you mean by that? Like security personnel?

VINCENT: Well, yes that too, but I was talking more about like big f*ck off partitions y’know? Like - like this school [the local school] was right next to ours, we could look down from the science modules and see into the other schools basketball court y’know? But there was no way we could talk to them unless we met like *way* outside school.

Vincent described how even the students themselves also made efforts to keep away from the local students, with the example of parties:

For like clubbing for instance we had the rich kids, usually the seniors or sophomores who rent out a whole nightclub and would only sell tickets to our school or the British international school, or the Aussie one ... you get the drift... locals would be like turned away at the door.

This was not uncommon, especially when the disparity between the host country and western standards of living were significant. In Vincent's example, his international school was situated in Indonesia, where there is a very substantial wealth gap between the richest and the poorest populations. In cases like Theresa's, who attended an international school in the Netherlands, her situation was slightly different. She explained that while the school did not explicitly encourage intermingling with the students from local Dutch schools, they would occasionally socialise at events like friendly basketball games or house parties:

The vibe was pretty chill, like the international school wasn't considered the *elite* so it wasn't like other international schools where if you had money you'd send your kids to one, we were kind of dispersed I think the Dutch are a little more calm in that sense with their education and equality so yeah, it was fairly common to meet others from the local schools it wasn't like a big deal.

What is significant is that she pointed out her school was not considered the norm for international schools, especially those that were situated in nations that were still developing. Theresa explained that because there was not such an extreme wealth gap between the international school students and the local Dutch students, that socialising between them was not taboo as they were considered more or less 'equal'.

Interestingly, Theresa also did not experience a significant 'identity rebound' like other participants had, and was one of the few who felt she had successfully balanced her identity between her American aspect and her International/Dutch aspect. For other participants, this balance was not as easily achievable.

5.11 Paradox of encapsulation

Six participants reported that repatriating was the main catalyst for encapsulated marginality. There was also a strong sentiment that their feelings of alienation in their passport country were due to the fact that they were more closely connected to their host

country - despite the reality that many of them were not able to make genuine connections with the host population or have many interactions with the local cultures. In simpler terms, six participants began to feel like they did not belong in their passport country and started to revert their identity to align more with the culture of their international school's host country. This is how Amari explained her experience with this:

I hadn't felt the need to not be American before or as intensely until I was here [in the US] indefinitely. I wanted how I felt on the inside to reflect how I looked on the outside so I didn't always have to be annoying and find a time and place to correct people when they make assumptions about me!

She began to make more international friends who were from the countries she lived in. Amari was also unsure whether she was doing this subconsciously or purposely seeking out people who could understand her, which made her question if she was doing something problematic. All she wanted was to maintain her connection to her host country and culture. However, when she talked about her upbringing in Beijing, Mumbai, and Moscow, the focus was mainly on what went on within the international school, and not so much on her experience with the host country. When the host country was brought up, it was usually with reference to the influence of the host country that *negatively* impacted her experience at school, for instance with her attempting to establish the feminist society in Moscow. Amari cited the host country's conservative views as a hindrance to her establishing her society and claimed that it was against the principles of an international school:

AMARI: I don't know if things have changed there by now but when it came to anything even remotely related to like things that should just be a given at international schools like, women's rights, gender equality, LGBTQ, race, it was always like tense and weird.

NETTA: Why do you think your school had such a difficulty with it? You mentioned before that you thought the location attracted bad teachers, is that related?

AMARI: Yeah yeah for sure it's related but I think it was also the political, socio-political, is that the right, yeah I think it was like the pressure from the country ... government ... I mean Russia isn't exactly the poster boy for progressiveness y'know?

Indeed, the manner in which Amari distinguished the international school's culture from the host country's culture was not uncommon in the participants' responses. In many instances, the 'culture' of the international school was held in higher esteem than the respective host countries, especially if the host country was considered by the participant to be a 'developing' country.

The expatriate community tied to international schools was also given as a reason for why some of the participants were not able to make lasting connections with the host country. Most of the activities were conducted within the confines of their international schools, and many of the students lived within the confines of a designated area for expatriates' families. The term that came up most often for this was the 'expatriate bubble'. As Vincent described it:

Physically we were in Jakarta right? But like in reality, we were in like an expatriate bubble within Jakarta, and in that bubble, like there were traces of Indonesian culture but it was diluted, we could move freely, speak freely, girls could wear like spaghetti straps without being like harassed and stuff.

The reference made about girls wearing spaghetti straps is significant as it highlighted a stark difference between what would be culturally acceptable within international schools versus Indonesian society. Vincent further elaborated that, as predominantly Islamic country, Indonesia was known to be very conservative, particularly when it came to women's' attire in public. Many girls would don a headscarf, or a hijab, when out in public and dress very conservatively. Vincent used the example of spaghetti straps (a vest top with thin straps) to illustrate the difference between these cultures and how the expatriate bubble they lived in was not only for comfort but also for the safety of those who lived within it. Though, he did also address the negative impact of being confined to the expatriate bubble:

Because we didn't really have to use the language [Indonesian] a lot of us didn't bother really learning it aside from like insults between students like for jokes or for ordering food and stuff. I think because of that I wasn't able to really interact with the culture well ...

Much like the physical boundaries between the international school and its' surrounding area, language was also a means of maintaining distance to the local culture. Vincent described how living in the expatriate bubble meant he was able to get by with just English, with many of the shops near and around the international school employing staff that could speak basic English to cater to this demographic. However, his lack of ability to speak Indonesian limited the depth of his interactions with the local culture:

I could navigate pretty easily like with [local] school staff, asking my driver to pick me up, buying food from the local vendors I'd be able to ask them how they are and joke around like that, but anything deeper than that nah, which is a shame really! I could have so easily picked it up then.

Vincent explained his regret for not learning the language while he was young because he was much better at acquiring languages at the time. He was able to learn more Spanish than Indonesian, which he attributed to the curriculum and the value he placed on the language at the time:

Spanish was going to be useful to me, or so I thought, I haven't actually used it much since then, but Indonesian ... like since I wasn't even using it while I was there why would I bother y'know? There wasn't a lot of motivation coming from anywhere.

The lack of motivation and value placed on the local language resulted in Vincent not being able to use Indonesian to form any meaningful connections with the locals he came into contact with on a daily basis. Despite this, he still found himself possessing strong emotional attachment to Jakarta, or at least the experiences he made whilst living in the expatriate bubble within Jakarta:

I still find myself sometimes saying like 'go home to' Jakarta even though none of my friends are no longer there, my family's long gone ...

This is somewhat contrary to what other participants have described about their conceptualisation of 'home'. Most described people, family or friends, as provoking their 'home feelings'. 'Home feelings' being the emotions that are evoked when people think about a physical home (at least what some participants imagine it to be like). As Clara described:

It's like the warm fuzzy feeling, it's comforting, it's safe, I'm going a lot on what I see on mostly Christmas movies here (*laughs*) that's kind of what I mean by home feelings.

It was also common for seven participants to mention movies and the media (primarily from the US) as a point of reference for how life would be like when they either moved there or repatriated for university. Relying on these portrayals of life in the US had altered their expectations to a point where they felt like they were not experiencing what they had spent a long time fantasizing about. As Kelsey explained:

It was kind of a cold bucket of water (*laughs*) like fantasy just whoosh. American life from afar is just so much better than American life actually.

The severe mismatch in expectations and reality seemed to play a critical role in what kind of experience people had with paradoxical encapsulation (Cason, 2015) when moving to the US after graduating from an international school. Vincent explained that since he was under the impression that the culture his international school was operating in was an American culture, he expected a smooth transition into his school in the U.S. This, however, was not the case. Vincent found himself culturally set apart from his passport peers and found himself struggling to decide between wanting to integrate or be alienated:

Vincent: I think it was like, like walking into an exam and studying for the wrong test so I was kind of taken aback at the get go. Like I felt foreign, super foreign.

Netta: How do you mean? Do you have any examples you can give?

Vincent: (*sighs*) I remember like, being shocked at some people's behaviour, just how they would talk about other people especially foreigners and what they thought about other countries, for

instance Africa being like all mud huts, they thought Indonesia was all mud huts to be honest. Or like that Africa is a country.

He highlighted the cultural gap and lack of knowledge about things beyond the U.S. as being the main reasons why he felt hesitant to fully integrate with his passport peers. Vincent also felt uncomfortable about the moral boundaries that were crossed around him as he was subject to harassment on the basis of his biracial identity on multiple occasions. He felt that his international school fostered a more progressive and politically correct moral code and entering a space where these values were not upheld made him uneasy. It also made it difficult to voice his beliefs for fear of being made ridiculed, called sensitive, and further alienated. This sentiment was shared by six other participants as well, and was often coupled with the fear of being called 'snobby', as Amari explained:

I was lucky I had a pretty good group of friends and my school was pretty liberal but there were still times where people would just say things I was just not on board with and when I would call people out on it people would be like, 'oh get off your high horse' y'know? Or 'c'mon you know we're only joking we weren't serious'...

It is significant that Amari chose the word 'good' to describe this friend group who shared similar views as her. Like Vincent, Amari also attributed much of how her political and moral views were formed to the education she received at her international schools. The issues she found to be most contentious amongst her friendship group at university were predominantly centred upon misogynistic jokes that would come up in conversation. Interestingly, Amari had also discussed previously about how difficult it was for her to set up the feminist society in her international school at Moscow, citing the influence of the host country's politics as a cause. However, Amari had previously attended two other international schools in two other countries, so perhaps she had already developed these views prior to moving to Moscow.

Like nine of the participants, Amari reported that she had strongly identified with her passport country while she was abroad, particularly when she encountered situations that challenged her liberal views. She explained this was because in her head, the U.S. was the land that was founded on the principles of freedom, as Amari described:

The land of the free y'know? Every time I had to hear something about like caste systems in India or the barely existent women or LGBT rights in Moscow I just felt like proud to be American y'know? Like I could escape to the States [...] but now I'm just like welp that was a pipe dream! (*laughs*)

Once finally moving to the U.S., Amari struggled greatly with being a hidden immigrant; she looked like, as she termed 'your basic white girl', yet inside felt culturally different from most of her passport peers. This was the basis of mental health struggles four of the participants shared about their experiences with repatriating to the U.S. or the U.K. In the next section I will discuss the mental health experiences of participants, and their relationship to places.

Chapter 6. Mental health experiences and locality of place

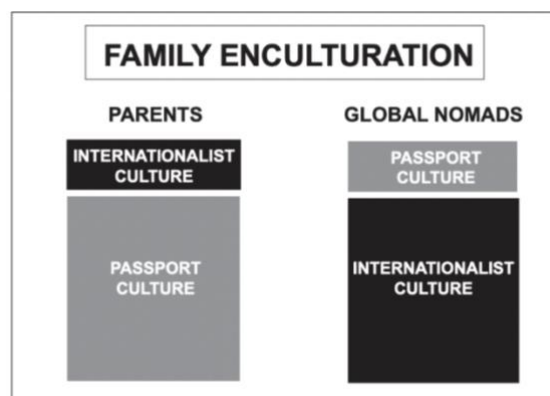
Introduction

Most TCKs are characterised by their mobile upbringing which leads to a majority of them living in a state of perpetual transition. Uprooting every few years is a norm for many TCKs, and with it, the experience of loss ranging from people, homes, pets, belongings, or all the above. While some participants described their moves as a positive experience, there was a consensus in that the handling of grief around the subject of their moves were largely dismissed or mishandled. Four of the participants attributed this unresolved grief as a source of the mental health struggles they later encountered as adults. Other factors that were discussed included the inability to establish peer-group conformity which led to an identity crisis, feeling trapped, as well as struggling to cultivate and maintain relationships.

6.1 Disenfranchised grief

Experiencing big moves were a norm for most of the participants, with the only constant fixtures in their lives being their nuclear family. Parents were often cited as their only support system they could reach out to since they were experiencing the move as well. However, the experience of moving as an adult versus a child is wholly different, particularly if the adults were not raised as TCKs themselves and had already established a strong cultural identity with their passport culture. As this chart attempts to illustrate, TCKs often identify more strongly with an Internationalist culture:

Figure 3. Family Enculturation (Eakin, 1998: 20)



As with many aspects of the TCK and international school community, this chart relies heavily on the essentialised notion of ‘culture’. The idea that there is an ‘internationalist culture’ and a culture that can be anchored to a passport is suggestive of the fact that culture is a solid notion that can be drawn with lines and borders. That is not the stance I take with this study, however, I believe it is still important to understand why charts like these are being created in the first place. The purpose of charts like these, as with the TCK label, is to represent in simple terms a very complicated and nuanced idea. The chart essentially represents the idea that the parents of global nomads tend to have a very different upbringing to their global nomad children, and this difference is often rooted by their experiences with culture(s). For instance, this could also be expressed with labels like ‘monocultural’ and ‘multicultural’. It is also important to note that as children, TCKs are often still in the process of negotiating their cultural identities, and four participants noted that moves were a traumatising event. The international moves were sometimes overwhelming in particular when their family support system was unable to empathise with the situation.

None of the participants had parents who were TCKs, and while they were usually experienced travellers themselves, they often lacked the knowledge in how to deal with children who were brought up in an internationally mobile environment. Ben explained that this was partially due to TCKs being a relatively new phenomenon, but notably also that TCKs themselves may not want to raise their children to be TCKs as well:

I know like they’ve [international schools] have been around for a while, but it’s still like relatively new-ish in terms of like the standardised structure and culture that we see in a lot of [international] schools nowadays [...] you have to think like it’s quite a small population of people to begin with, and granted some of those who graduate from these schools might not want to raise their own kids the same way...

The participants who were hesitant about raising their children in international schools abroad explained it would mostly be due to fear of their children having to encounter

the same difficulties with identity and mental health struggles they were dealing with currently.

Four participants also pinpoint international moves as being the most traumatic experiences for them as children, with a few describing feeling coerced to not express certain negative emotions. Clara even talked about a time when she had hit a low point before a move, and her parents had banned her from saying the word 'hate':

I remember just at one point whinging everyday saying how much I hated that we had to leave, or that I hated where we were going stuff like that, I was probably doing my parents' heads in to be honest and at some point, they were just like 'Right! You're grown now stop using the word 'hate' for everything, it is now a *banned* word!'.

Notably Clara was 12 at the time, which for many is still considerably young. Despite her age, there was an expectation from her parents to act more mature when dealing with difficult changes. Her parents also demonstrated frustration and disappointment when she acted out against these expectations, which in itself acted as an incentive for Clara to stop expressing her grief. As she got older, she described being better at dealing with her emotions and became more private about grief, even to her parents. Significantly, while she attributes this change in demeanour as partially due to her being more experienced with moves and losses, she also made the following observation:

I think it's something we all learned, not sure if it was like the international school or the U.S. Embassy, probably a mixture of both to be honest, but we're really taught, like really pushed to be self-reliant and to focus on progress and triumphing through hardship stuff like that...

Amongst the participant responses, there was a reoccurring focus on this aspect of success and the international school ethos of adapting and overcoming challenges. This also extended to the ways in which their parents handled international moves and how they presented the prospect of changing schools and countries to their children. In many cases, the emphasis was often placed on the positive and exciting aspects of the move which subsequently made it difficult for participants to properly speak up or

process their losses. When participants demonstrated pessimistic views or emotions about the move, parents would employ other strategies which came under one of the following:

- Bribery
- Emphasising the substitutability of relationships
(saying you'll make new friends)
- Dismissing feelings/ being called overdramatic

6.1.1 Bribery

Participants found that one of the most common tactic parents would use to compensate for their children's unhappiness about moves was bribery. Often an expensive gadget or a promise of a bigger room were used to entice the participants to cooperate with the move, as Freddie recalled:

Since the moves were usually around three years four years I would always get a new Blackberry or iPhone since that's usually the lifespan of one of those anyways and I usually felt bad after if I moaned about it [moving] since like I'd already accepted a really expensive thing y'know? That was like how they were making it up to me...

In Freddie's case, he felt that complaining or showing signs of grief about the move after accepting the gifts from his parents would make him seem ungrateful and spoiled. He also voiced his own guilt and fear about making his parents feel like they had failed him:

I didn't want them to think they weren't doing enough ... like I couldn't be here living such a lush lifestyle because of them and then turning around saying they were doing a shit job...

The situation he described was a complicated balance of trying to please his parents whilst grappling with his own grief, with the former taking precedence. Oftentimes the act of bribery was not made maliciously under duress but were more commonly granted

as a way for parents to ‘make it up to’ their children. As someone who moved more than five times during her childhood, Clara was well-versed with this:

NETTA: How do you think your parents handled you handling the moves?

CLARA: I know they felt bad about how often we were moving like bless them but they did try really hard to make it up to me, and I’m sure I was quite annoying for them to deal with, especially at the start.

NETTA: At the start you mean like when you first started to do moves?

CLARA: Yeah like regular big international moves.

NETTA: And how do you mean by they ‘made it up to you’?

CLARA: Oh just like new gadgets, new pets, new clothes, but in my head when we’re buying these things I’m just like already miles ahead thinking well, when I move again I won’t be able to bring my dog or wear these clothes so don’t get *too* attached.

The practice of acquiring and losing things was so constant with Clara that she began to find it difficult to form attachments. This also extended to how she formed attachments to people:

I found it quite challenging to let people in, because I was probably moving in a year or two anyways, and even if I didn’t move, chances are the people I wanted to befriend were also probably moving soon. I think this improved slightly when I got older, and visits could be arranged more easily, but I do think this kind of mentality of not wanting to get attached too easily did follow me into later life...

The routine separation from her friends, home, and surroundings continued to influence Clara in what she looked for in her life and in her relationships. Her experiences with constant loss of friendships and relationships made her value stability in her partners. Despite living a relatively settled life now with her long-term boyfriend, Clara still struggles with not automatically associating loss or thinking about future losses when acquiring new things or meeting new people. This perhaps is another unintentional

side effect of using bribery to deal with moves, along with guilt that arises with receiving gifts that hinders the process of grieving effectively.

6.1.2 Emphasising the substitutability of relationships

Another tactic that was reported to be used often when trying to help children come to terms with moving was emphasising the prospect of new friends. Naturally this also downplayed the significance of friendships and relationships that they would be leaving behind. Some participants found this to be patronising, for instance with Freddie's case:

I was leaving a girlfriend behind in Hong Kong, I was absolutely wrecked about it, I remember my parents saying I was young and it wasn't the end of the world and like we wouldn't have worked out anyways and something like I would find somebody new but I found that quite insulting...

It is interesting that when dealing with moves, participants were often expected to act like adults and have the emotional maturity of one, whilst like in Freddie's case, they were not afforded the same privileges as adults and the importance of relationships were downplayed. Not legitimising the loss of friendships resulted in many of the participants made to feel like they were overreacting, and in some cases, they were openly told off for being 'overdramatic'. Ben, as somebody who described himself as being fairly adept at making new friends, shared his insight on this:

BEN: I do remember my parents telling me to stop being overdramatic at one point, I don't know how old I was, still young. I think it was early on when we were moving to Budapest and I really had a good group of friends there we were really tight and I really didn't want to lose it [...] they really praised how good I was at making friends and were really insistent that I could make more easily, but I don't think they really understood why I was upset...

NETTA: That you were upset about losing your friends?

BEN: Yeah! Like I think they thought I was upset that I was losing friends not that I was upset I would be losing *these* friends y'know?

In Ben's case, his parents also emphasised the exciting aspects of making new friends and to an extent, Ben shared his parents' enthusiasm. However, he also demonstrated uncertainty about whether it was his parents' influence that made him so enthusiastic about making friends, specifically that they were 'hying him up':

I think my parents, they're both in business, so they really went at it from that standpoint like they would package the move like they were selling it to me and they would really hype me up for it [...] when I moved to Seattle without my (*laughs*) let's call them my 'hype squad', I felt much less motivated to make new friends...

He described that while he was still able to make friends quite easily at his university in Seattle, these friendships were mostly superficial and not very lasting. Him losing motivation to make new friends once being apart from his parents came to a surprise to him, as he felt it was an integral part of his personality. However, the links he made between the loss of his 'hype squad' and his motivation to make new friends suggests that his parents played a critical role in his shift in behaviour. He was no longer in a situation where he wanted, or felt like he needed, to gratify his parents and demonstrate that their efforts of lessening the grief of loss accrued during the move was successful.

6.1.3 Dismissal of feelings

Notably while the previous elements focused on the role parents played in the disenfranchisement of grief, dismissal of feelings occurred even amongst peers and friends. These were often people who embodied indifferent attitudes about grief and perpetuated this mentality that focused on success, not loss.

Participants also reported that because their feelings were dismissed by peers who they expected would empathise with their situation, there was even a sense of shame and feelings of failure when they could not match the fortitude of their peers:

- FREDDIE: Some people just really made me feel like shit, like they really did not help with adjusting at all, I don't know, they maybe had good intentions but yeah
- NETTA: What did they do or say exactly, can you remember any instances?
- FREDDIE: Saying things like 'it's normal, we all go through it, stop making a big deal out of it, you'll get over it' or just really holding it over you that they've lived in way more places than you and they were well-adjusted, the insinuation is just that you're weak or inadequate in some way.

Freddie highlighted an innate competitiveness he observed in the international schools he attended, which he described as:

[A] constant drive to one-up others and play the hierarchy system.

Which was achieved by flaunting monetary wealth, societal status, and, or cultural capital. He explained that cultural capital was gained through experiences with living in different countries (e.g., the more countries a person has lived in = the more culturally superior they were = the more cultural capital they had). This correlation was noticed by six of the participants at their international schools, and for the most part it was just accepted as a natural outcome of an internationally mobile student body, as Clara explained:

It was just normal you know to be curious about where they [new students] had been before, since we always got new batches each year. Then we could like compare and see if we have any mutuals, which we almost always did [...] it was natural to just have a bit of respect for people who had moved and been to a lot of international schools because we all know how tough it can be, I guess.

Relating back to what Clara said earlier about the international school and the U.S. Embassy fostering ideas of progress and triumphing through hardships, it is clear that many international school students also highly value a cosmopolitan disposition. This is manifested through the valuation of 'cultural capital', which in and of itself is a very

essentialised and problematic process of equating one country to one culture. Some participants found this mentality as very off-putting, and as someone who witnessed many of his peers partaking in this behaviour, Ben described it as ‘cringy’:

It’s just embarrassing, I would get like second-hand embarrassment from people who act like that. I just don’t understand the importance people were giving to living in more countries, like so what? It’s just a superiority complex some have [...] I think it’s an identity for a lot of people too, since it’s all they have left to cling onto, which is a bit sad in a way, kind of like white nationalism in the states right? Like to maintain the in-group out-group kind of thing ...

For a community that claims to be very cosmopolitan and united under an amalgamated ‘third culture’, it seems to be somewhat contradictory to equate an individual who is ‘more cultured’ (lived in more countries) as more cosmopolitan, or more of a third culture kid than others.

6.2 Locating ‘home’

When the topic of ‘home’ was addressed, the responses were varied from some claiming to have strong attachments to the country they spent the most time in, others asserting they belonged everywhere, to a few despairing over a lack of home entirely.

6.2.1 Host country as ‘home’

Some participants formed strong attachments to their host country, primarily the one they spent the longest time living in or finished school in. There was a sense of longing that ten participants described about going back ‘home’ and processing a loss of that home was difficult. In some cases, coping mechanisms that flipped the narrative were used to help ease the transition, as Freddie described:

I did go home [to Hong Kong] quite often, especially during first year when I was really struggling mentally with uni and stuff, it became quite hard to cope without knowing when I could go home next [...] I really struggled until one year I think in the tail end of my second year something just clicked and I, like, recognised that

Hong Kong was like my anchor and this [the UK] wasn't my home and I was just a visitor here, then it became easier to accept the situation...

While Freddie had always held sentimental feelings about Hong Kong even after moving to Japan to complete High School, it was not until he moved to the UK to attend university that these feelings were affirmed as a sense of homesickness:

It wasn't as bad when I was in Japan, maybe since we were still super close [geographically] and I was able to visit more frequently, like I could just go on the weekend y'know? Now that it's like half a world away I don't know... it was hard to accept, my mental health just nosedived, and I was getting homesick for the first time in my life and feeling so many mixed emotions.

For many, this sense of homesickness was a foreign and uncomfortable sensation, especially when it came unexpectedly. As with Amari, who had always held high expectations of repatriating back to the U.S., and was hopeful of discovering more about her roots and identity:

It was super weird, I didn't find what I was looking for per se, I'm not even sure what I was looking for to be honest. I was just expecting like a great *a-ha!* moment where I would finally find my home but all I felt, especially in my freshmen-sophomore-ish years was just like homesick, like I wanna go home I don't want to be here.

Amari explained that her anxiety was probably heightened because she felt guilty and disappointed that she did not feel at home in a place where she was supposed to feel most at home. There was also a sense of feeling stuck and having no option but to accept it, which she likened it to having buyer's remorse:

Honestly ((*laughs*)) I don't know if you can relate to this but like it felt like when you buy something really really expensive and feeling really excited to get it and then when you finally receive it you just like ugh I hate it but can't return it!

She found that the more she forced the idea of this being her home, the more her mental health suffered. Like Freddie, it was only once she began distancing herself from the idea of the U.S. being her ‘home’ that she was able to feel more at ease. In this part of the interview, we had discussed how she was finally comfortable with the idea of living in the States permanently (or at least did not have any foreseeable plans to move abroad):

NETTA: When would you say was the turning point?

AMARI: Hmm ... ((*laughs*)) good question! I’m not sure actually, I don’t really think it was just a single moment but ... gradually yeah, I started to understand or accept is a better word I think, that I’m like never probably going to feel like I *truly* belong or come from here [the U.S.] and that’s okay! My home-home is elsewhere, and this is home for now...

‘Elsewhere’ she described as being a mixture of the host countries she lived in, however, she admits that her appreciation for these countries might be a case of ‘the grass is always greener on the other side kind of thing’. When she was in Mumbai, Moscow, and Beijing she was always thinking about the U.S. and in a sense, romanticising what her life would be like if she was a ‘normal kid’. Upon repatriating and not having these expectations fulfilled, she began to experience cultural jet-lag and encapsulated marginality which led to her developing social anxiety. She also became homesick for countries she admittedly did not know very well, in the sense that she had not made any effort to learn the languages or get involved with the locals, customs, or traditions beyond the scope of what the international school would bring in as part of cultural exchange exhibitions.

As discussed previously, (see 5.11 Paradox of Encapsulation), six of the participants described a sense of attachment to a host country, despite not having formed meaningful attachments to the country itself. This can be seen as a coping mechanism for those, like Freddie and Amari, seem to find peace in affirming their home is elsewhere, a place they can visit again in the future. Though for some, it is not as simple as flying back to their host country to cure their homesickness. For Vincent, he felt that a crucial component was missing from the places he called ‘home’:

I did go home yeah, once, but it was such a strange experience. Like, don't get me wrong, I was pretty happy to be back, the school was almost exactly the same, but not many of the teachers were left, all the people I knew had graduated, even the cafeteria food had changed, it wasn't the place I remembered, so I haven't gone back since.

This sense of disappointment was felt, at least at some degree, by most of the participants who had gone back to visit, especially long after they had left. How Vincent described what made his visit strange is very indicative of the role people played in how he conceptualised his idea of 'home'. Ben described his visit back 'home' with this analogy:

It was like revisiting a house you used to live in, but all the people you lived there with are gone, all the pictures, furniture, everything that made it like the home you lived in is just stripped away so basically the bare bone foundations of the house you used to live in, that's kind of what it feels like right? A bit empty.

Having said this, both Vincent and Ben still designated these countries as their 'homes' in their explanation of what they felt was lacking in their visits 'home'. More so than the country itself, it seems that what six participants developed homesickness for was the atmosphere created by people they were around. Specifically, people in international schools and the institutional culture that operated separately from the culture of the host country.

6.2.2 Feeling at home in international schools

For the majority of the participants, the international school was often depicted as being a place they could no longer reach, existing only in a moment of time, and consequently made their homesickness feel like a fruitless endeavour. Some of the participants described their experiences at the international school as being wholly different to the country it was residing in, with two remarking that it was a different world entirely. Despite most expressing that they enjoyed their time at an international school, three also reflected on these experiences with a sense of detachment or sadness at having left

this world and not being able to return to it. As with Theresa who was American born and had lived in Texas and Louisiana until she was nine years old before moving to the Netherlands. She described her upbringing abroad with mixed emotions:

I feel sad thinking about it really ((*laughs*)) the experience is like nothing I've ever had again, like, there is nothing I could compare it to in the real world and I say real world because my time at school really felt surreal, it was amazing really.

Another respondent, Ben, who was largely very vocal about the positive attributes of his international school experience similarly described how he felt hesitant to reflect on it as it stirred up sad memories:

It always felt like one big continuous community, even other international schools, it's just in a different place you know? ((*pause*)) And even now, when I go back to any of these places, even though I choose not to speak with my friends like that often just because it would make me too sad to think back to those times. It's just a different world entirely.

Maya, who grew up in the San Francisco before moving abroad and living in Beijing, Mumbai, and Russia described her time in international schools from a perspective of a young girl newly entering teenagerhood and was suddenly finding her freedom challenged:

In Bombay it was hard because we couldn't do anything outside for fun. Like in Beijing, it was easy to just be an expat like it was fun and it was safe and free. But in Bombay ((*pause*)) suddenly it's like I was being sexually harassed on the street, you know, and just like, if you're a woman, you can do stuff but only in safe places like the country clubs on the weekend. It just felt like a separate world or place that was safe from the outside, kind of weird but normal at the same time.

Despite Ben and other respondents implying in their responses that international schools were inherently the same 'just in different [geographical] places', Maya's varied

experiences in her freedom as a woman in different international schools within various countries seems to suggest something different. Maya was also not alone in feeling this way. Clara, who spent time in international schools in England, Nigeria, Texas, and Paris, talked about how her time in Nigeria as being the ‘toughest’:

... although I say ‘toughest’ it’s not like it was actually tough, though I guess you’d have to think relatively to people and like, it was still a pretty cush lifestyle don’t get me wrong but it was much more restricted ... compared to Paris which was super liberal at least in the international school, but Nigeria you couldn’t really go around on your own if you were like obviously a foreigner which I obviously am, especially as a girl too ...

This is a trend amongst the responses, particularly when the international school is situated in a less ‘developed’ country (some participants described these countries as being ‘Third World Countries’ with some overlapping this definition with countries that have more ‘conservative’ world views). It highlights a difficult balancing act that many international schools struggle with: how to coexist with the host country with respect to the local cultures while maintaining this traditional model of a liberal, ‘international’ space - though this is a complicated idea in and of itself.

While the experiences varied in this sense, the unified use of the terms ‘real world’, ‘surreal’, ‘different world’, and ‘separate world’ to describe their experiences abroad is evident of something that is inherently different about international schools beyond the fact that they are situated in a foreign country. There is also a sense of yearning for a place that is no longer accessible to them that greatly influenced the development of many participants’ sense of belonging, or lack thereof.

6.2.3 Having no place to call home

While some of the participants found peace in locating their homes in the host countries they grew up in, others found it difficult to find any place to call home. There is a sense of self-reproach in claiming a culture or country one has no official ties to (birth right, passport, or residential rights being some examples given). Kelsey for instance,

explained that she was constantly worried about being labelled as a ‘*weeaboo*’ if she talked about her experience with Japanese culture:

...I was mortified when I first found out about *weeaboos*, I was like am I one? Do other people see me as one? Oh my god, I have to be careful with overstepping with that part of my cultural background...

‘*Weeaboo*’ is a derogatory slang term that is often used to describe individuals who are obsessed with Japanese popular culture, such as *manga* or *anime* (Japanese comic or graphic novels, and animations respectively). The term ‘*Weeaboo*’ has been noted to be used consecutively with *wapanese*, which stands for *Wannabe Japanese*’ (Lacuesta, 2020: 6) and collectively describes someone who exhibits obnoxious, ignorant, and often immature behaviour towards Japanese culture. There is a difference between a ‘*weeaboo*’ and someone who simply appreciates Japanese culture, but this distinction is often overlooked. This caused Kelsey to feel put off by the prospect of being perceived as a ‘*weeaboo*’, to the extent of being guarded about sharing this part of her upbringing, despite her living the longest in Japan during her childhood. She did feel some attachment to the other countries she lived in, but having to repress a major part of her cultural identity left her feeling displaced:

Is it sad or a bit tone deaf to say I feel a bit homeless in that sense? Like I don’t feel like I can claim anywhere as my home, or anywhere I can claim my home I don’t particularly feel *is* my home?

It is clear Kelsey still struggled with allowing herself to grieve the loss of a home, something she claimed as being a ‘first world problem’. She even criticised herself as being ‘tone deaf’ for equating her situation to actual homelessness and felt shame about raising it as an issue when we discussed the downsides of being a TCK. This shame seems to stem from the values she was taught in her international school, and again links back to this failure to rise to the challenges and overcome difficulties:

It’s supposed to be one of the perks of being an international school kid. Like I think we’re raised to be some kind of globe-trotting I don’t know what’s able to thrive in all kinds of situations, adaptable, be like our parents and continue the

legacy ... it's – it's a lot of live up to, and not as easy as they make it to be [...] feels like we're not supposed to want to have a place, like roots will only tie you down or slow you down ...

For Kelsey, her inability to find a place to call her home seems to stem from an internalisation of what people have come to expect from her which seems to conflict with what she wants. Her identifying with Japanese culture was at odds with what her non-TCK peers expected her to be, resulting in her distancing herself from everything related to Japan, excluding it from possibly being what she could call 'home'. The yearning she had for a physical home also conflicted with the mentality she believed a TCK was brought up to embody, which made her feel like a failure and affected her ability to form attachments to places even as an adult. While she later found freedom in her work that allowed her to frequently travel, she still found it difficult to see her home in the U.S. more than just a 'base' that she returned to. Her work, in a sense, was like a scouting mission for a place that she could eventually call home:

I'm hoping that one day I just go somewhere and just feel it, y'know? It happened to one of my co-workers actually, she's not a TCK though, she's originally from Michigan but never felt quite at home there. When we went to Vietnam for one of our recruitment conventions, she just fell in love with it, and just recently she's made a move there with her husband and she's much happier for it! I'm hoping that'll be me some day! *((laughs))*

During the interviews, the concept of 'home' emerged often but was, for the most part, ambiguously defined as the participants did not know themselves what it was that they were looking for. Like Kelsey, some of the participants just held hope that one day they would stumble upon a place that could feel like home, such as Jason who described his ongoing search for his:

Since I have never felt a sense of belonging, in either of my homes ... so, to me, I always search for a third one...

For Kelsey and Jason, the urge to wander seems to be spurred by a desire to locate a place to call home. When they spoke of settling in their passport country indefinitely,

there was feeling of not wanting to give up the pursuit of finding a place they could truly belong. Their wanderlust seems to be a product of optimism that believed somewhere there was a place they could call home, they just had not found it yet.

On the other hand, there were also those who relished the rootlessness their TCK lifestyle afforded them. For these individuals, the detachment from places gave them freedom to be a 'Global Citizen'; and in this sense, allowed them to explore the rest of their 'home' by continuing with their high mobile lifestyle. Ben reflected this about his thoughts on 'home':

What I would say is I've never felt shackled to anywhere, like I know I talked about how I missed my old home in Spain and I do have some sentimental attachments to like Moscow and stuff but I don't feel like I could settle in either of the places, or the States for that matter. Like it's not something I think about daily, I think if anything I'm thinking about where I can go next, like where haven't I been? Where can I be? That's where I want to go.

'Shackled' was a very interesting word choice to describe being settled, but seems to capture Ben's sentiments on finding a place to call home accurately. While I have established that for TCKs the concept of 'home' is nebulous, Ben seemed uninterested in defining one for himself, especially one that would exist in a physical sense. Much like how TCKs sometimes find the chaotic and transitional nature of airports soothing, Ben's desire to travel may stem from his comfort in liminal environments that he grew accustomed to in his time at international schools.

I don't think of myself as American or Russian or Spanish, I'm not even just a mixture of those three and I don't really belong to any of those places either, I'm just like *me* ((*laughs*)) and I'm just doing my best, doing my thing being kind of in-between identities and places. That's who I am and I'm mostly content with that.

Ben described this mindset as being something he grew to embrace after many years of trying and failing to find a place to call home in the 'traditional' sense. He described his journey similarly to how his reality and expectations of the U.S. were mismatched,

which led to disappointment. The error, he reasoned, was that his expectations were built upon Hollywood depictions of ‘home’, which were severely mismatched with what he could experience as a TCK. It was also an error to assume that TCKs would instinctively be able to embrace this ‘elite vagabond’ identity, as while Ben now fully embraced and celebrate this part of his identity, as he explained:

It was a long process, with a lot of self-hatred and hatred directed at the wrong people, and still somewhat an ongoing process.

As much as the mobile lifestyle is glamorised, even those who seem to have embraced this part of their identity struggled with letting go of the concept of ‘home’. Even with Ben, who was the most supportive of the mobile lifestyle and upbringings amongst the participants, hesitated with his claims: such as being ‘mostly content’ with belong to a liminal place and describing his journey to accepting this ambiguous identity as an ‘ongoing process’.

6.3 The idea of permanence and attachment

The topic of permanence and attachment was raised in 6.1.1. Bribery when Clara recounted how her parents would bribe her with new items before each move. To recount, Clara described her association with receiving new pets, buying new gadgets and buying new clothes with the immediate loss of her old pets, gadgets, and clothes. This made her also grow the mindset of not getting too attached to anything (see section 6.1.1).

She became so accustomed to losing the things she acquired that she developed a preventative mindset and avoided growing emotional attachment to these things and places. This also extended to people, which hindered her ability to form and maintain friendships and relationships without professional guidance, as Clara explained:

It first kind of manifested as anxiety, an anxiety disorder, which I thought was just a normal thing everyone experienced ... but it got to a point where it was becoming quite debilitating, especially with like regards to maintaining friends, like it became hard for me to let my friends be my friends, or to let my boyfriend be there and not think like oh everyone’s going to leave me in a year or two so

what is even the point ... so yeah, it wasn't until he [her boyfriend] pointed out that no, this was *not* normal and I should really see somebody to talk about it which I now do and it was life-changing ...

The assumption that Clara held about her fellow TCKs prevented her from seeking help when she first needed it. It obscured the fact that she was suffering from an issue entirely, and she placed the blame on the perception that was built around TCKs:

It's just like again, with the expectation that we [TCKs] are just able to withstand so much and overcome so much without a lot being said about a lot of us who do struggle, and want things like a home, or things that just like defy the image and expectations of a TCK? Like being tough, successful expats diplomats whatever *((laughs))* I just want a home with a little garden and a dog, I *want* to have worldly attachments! It's just a different aspiration that just doesn't align with the kind of upbringing I had, I guess.

Clara also voiced frustration that her ambitions were often looked down upon by other members of the TCK community. She felt that while it was not done deliberately or even personally towards her, when TCKs exhibited prejudiced views towards non-TCK lifestyles, especially to people who had only grown up in the same country, or city, her aspirations often felt belittled:

Why is it wrong to want something different? Not everybody is made to endure this kind of lifestyle, I didn't have a choice and obviously it wasn't for me, why does it have to feel like I've failed as a TCK? The community can be a bit toxic in that way.

While Clara's experience with liminality during her upbringing strengthened her desire to form attachments and establish permanent fixtures in her life, for others this kind of upbringing affected them in a different way. For instance, with Ben, there was a sense of resentment in how he described the prospect of settling into a new place:

Honestly, like, if I could, I would just fly back to my old house in Spain and I would just like live there for a week. And I think I would get enough like all of that out of my system, you know, and just like, pretend to like live there this entire time. It's funny, I never decorate like, it's actually because I hated it so much. I like I refuse to give it the satisfaction of being decorated. Like it's so perverse, but I was like, no, I'm not gonna put up the same posters and things that I had in my old room. Yeah, because if I do that, it's gonna like give this like the new meaning of hope.

While he acknowledged that this behaviour was somewhat self-detrimental, he could not help but cohere to this mindset, and noted that it was the only thing that felt like it gave him back a bit of control over his life. Particularly with how he would emotionally react to moving; if he never put up the posters, he would never have to take them down when the time came to move. Moving, to Ben, was an inevitability. To prevent potential losses he would experience when the inevitable came, he prevented himself from forming these attachments and instead formed an attachment to the feeling of liminality.

6.4 The importance of having a home

It was commonly accepted amongst the participants that people and the relationships formed with these people are what they conceptualised their 'home' to be. When the participants talked about visiting 'home', this often meant they were visiting wherever their family were and occasionally where most of their friends were currently living. However, this did not mean having a physical home was disregarded or something that was not desired by the participants. Seven participants spoke of a longing for a physical home they could 'return to' and depend on being there indefinitely, as Clara described:

It would just be lovely to have like a childhood home to go back to, I mean I had one, emphasis on *had* ((*laughs*)) it's no longer there, at least not the way I remembered it and it no longer belongs to me ...like I literally think someone else is living there.

Echoing these sentiments, Maya described how she lacked this place of security in her life:

Having a home that feels like home somewhere you can like go to like I wish I had that like I really wish I had that. And like, you know, maybe a kid should have that ... I think about that a lot.

As one of the only participants who truly felt like he had established his home in a physical place, Mark shared another perspective:

As someone who has lived in so many, countless, homes, at some point you lose count, this one I'm living in right now is the longest I've lived anywhere and I can't tell you how good it feels to just have somewhere that's mine, it feels safe, my children, my grandchildren can visit me here, they can find me right here and while I'll never lose the itchiness I feel in my feet, I can just go travel for a bit but I can still come home. It's the best of both worlds in my honest opinion.

Constructing a home as a base which he could return to was something that five of the participants seemed to be working towards, or like Mark, had already accomplished. Clara, who expressed her desire to settle down permanently in the U.K., was more interested in becoming better acquainted with her passport country, so travelling was not important for her. For the rest of the participants, travelling always remained a high priority, for a multitude of reasons. Some were still in the search of establishing a home, others returning to a home-like place, a few were just travelling to indulge their wanderlust, or to continue living in the liminal space. These were the most common reasons given.

Perhaps the most unique perspective was given by Jason, who defined his place in the world by challenging the traditional views of countries and borders:

Do you know the song that goes like 'He's got the whole world, in his hands'? That's how I kind of envision home, it's a bit difficult to explain, how can I explain it? Like I said, I consider myself a 'Global Citizen', or in other words, a 'Citizen of the World'. If you see the world as a country you're a citizen of,

then it doesn't matter if I make a home in say Indonesia, or Singapore, or the U.K., that's just like saying I have a home in a city within a country...

He reasoned that if place and home was already a constructed idea, there was no reason he was not able to reconstruct them to make sense to his circumstances.

6.5 Connecting with 'non-places'

The geographical component seems to lose significance when the participants discussed how they formed attachments to places. As discussed, the participants seemed to accept that people were more important than physical places, and that places were only a receptacle for the people and the memories they created. Interestingly, there was a consensus that despite the unique geographical and sociocultural contexts of each international school, there were still enough commonalities across the board that if they met others who had attended international schools, it would be analogous to people meeting others of the same 'culture'. The international school itself was also depicted as being a country in and of itself, which is consistent with how the participants described it as like existing within an 'expat bubble'. After discussing at length about how she did not feel like she was from anywhere in particular, Amari explained:

I sometimes feel like the place where I'm from is an international school [...] When I went into an international school I knew how to act, you know, and I knew what's going on and like I just felt comfortable like, like if I were to choose a location that felt the most like home it would be inside of an international school. I like honestly, if I were to describe it I feel like the international school is like a country on its own, its own country...

However, this was a country that had no physical landscapes or a permanent geographical place. The concept of the international school as its own country also existed in a liminal space, as some participants pointed out when they had gone back to visit their actual international schools. Amari's explanation was in past tense, indicating that she no longer felt like she would feel at home if she were to revisit her old international schools now. She did, however, state this about meeting someone who went to an international school:

When I do meet people who went to international schools as well it's like meeting somebody from your home country, as backwards as that sounds, after I've gone on and on about not feeling like I have one ((*laughs*)). But yeah, I think that's what it feels like, I can empathise with the same kind of struggles and talk about the same things we went through, it's really nice.

Vincent:

I've met quite a few TCKs post-international school and I can say, we're more or less the same ((*laughs*)) it's weird how that happens, I'm sure there's a reason like institutionalised Americanism or something like that but I can joke quite easily and there aren't any cultural incompatibilities at all, so far anyways...

Freddie believed that while the place where he felt he belonged did not exist in a static place geographically, he knew where he could find it:

Like I went back and I was like no, there's a place in the world where you fit in, our people might not be from a country but it's a cultural bubble that exists in many capital cities all over the world'.

6.6 The impact of COVID-19 and place

The interviews were conducted at the height of the COVID-19 global pandemic where international travel was becoming increasingly complicated and, in many cases, impossible altogether. While the main objective of these moves to lock down countries and flights were to keep countries and its citizens safe, this did not account for the fact that many people had families living in countries in which they had no legal or residential rights to 'return' to. Vincent, who was living in Hong Kong at the time of the outbreak, was unable to visit his parents who were living in Indonesia. His mother had contracted COVID-19 and his father was elderly so he wanted to be there to support the both of them but border policies and hotel quarantine made that difficult:

It just didn't make sense, I would have to quarantine at a hotel for I think two weeks and by then my Mom would have already recovered from COVID. I

wanted to be there right away and there was no instance for it to be possible, I'm not even sure I would even be allowed to legally enter, because it would have been considered me visiting as a tourist...

Being considered a tourist even after growing up in that country was something Vincent still found to be frustrating but seemed to be the crux of matter for many who had similar international upbringings. While the concept of home was still something they were still in the process of figuring out, the closest home in the traditional sense was usually the countries they grew up in outside their passport countries. This was something many of them were aware of, but during the pandemic, this became a stark reality. Freddie who had managed his rootlessness with constructing Hong Kong as his home found it distressing to not be able to return:

So far it's been not good to say the least, I've been struggling quite often with it especially with the UK going into lockdown *again* it doesn't seem like we'll pull out of this anytime soon, never mind the money and time [in quarantine] but I think I literally like they would not let me in. I mean it's shit for everyone I understand that but I just feel that it's so unfair that I can't go back, like I don't have any rights in that, and with what's going on in Hong Kong right now, every time I think of it my heart just aches.

Mark who had established his home in the U.S. with his wife described how he was unable to meet his grandchild who was born in the U.A.E where his daughter was currently based:

We were able to gather all the necessary documents you know to certify that yes I have relations I have my daughter in Abu Dhabi and she and her husband are legal residents there, she's just had a child we had to get birth certificates notarised and sent over [...] it was just a whole debacle and at the end, we weren't able to go because the U.A.E wasn't accepting tourists and he [his grandson] was too young to fly here.

For three participants, the restrictions of the global pandemic highlighted the bureaucratic and legal boundaries of identity. While their international school

upbringing may have fostered a multicultural and multinational sense of belonging, many organisational bodies still fail to recognise this attachment. In the following chapter, I will move on to the discussion where I explore the meaning and significance of the findings that were previously discussed in chapter 5 to 8.

Chapter 7. Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of Third Culture Kids with regards to how the institutional culture and curriculum of their international schools affected their notions of identity, belonging, and place. In the previous chapter, the data was thematically analysed to identify, analyse, and report repeating patterns in the responses (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This chapter will delve into the meanings and significance of the themes identified, as well as situate these within the existing research.

Much of the research surrounding TCKs tends to focus on the nomadic lifestyle of children in international schools, and how their upbringing moving from country to country affects their ability to ‘repatriate’ back to their passport countries. As research into TCK as a sub-group was first beginning to develop, the emphasis was often on the positive aspects of growing up in a multicultural environment, and how this could nurture international-mindedness, which in turn was interpreted – and presented as – ‘cosmopolitanism’ and linked to elitism in children of Expats. Significantly, the subject of TCK research then was more often applicable to only TCKs with U.S. affiliations. TCKs who did not fit this narrative were unrecognised, and in some cases, outright invalidated and delegitimised. In more recent research, the pivot in exploring TCKs with non-English-speaking ‘Passport Countries’ has allowed for deeper understanding in a marginalised sub-group of children with international school upbringings. However, the importance of the international school in the development of these ideas is sometimes overlooked.

7.1 Mismatch of expectations and experience

A central theme that I identified was in the mismatch of expectations and experience, which seemed to be the root cause of many of the negative aspects in forming a sense of identity, belonging, and place as a TCK. These expectations are built upon pre-existing notions of what it means to be a Third Culture Kid, which is built upon the ideas of what it means to be ‘international’, an ‘Expatriate’, or ‘Cosmopolitan’. Within the context

of international schools, the participants of my research suggested that these ideas subscribed heavily to the idea of Americanisms and to a lesser extent, 'Westernism'. Significantly, the curriculum of the international schools and the institutional culture established within were also identified as the reasons why participants felt they experienced such a disparity between their expectations and their experiences beyond the international school.

The development of adaptability skills for instance can be seen as example of something that was instilled into many TCKs with the expectation that it will be a valuable life skill, but has also been shown to have dysfunctional effects to the individual. One recurring example can be seen with the maintenance of friendships and relationships. Literature surrounding TCKs present them as naturals at negotiating change. Iyall-Smith and Levey (2008) for instance, place Global Nomads and TCKs as the 'prototype citizens' that are better equipped to communicate and mediate in different environments.

This is highlighted as a skillset that is becoming more crucial in working cultures that must consider different backgrounds and styles of communication. Accordingly, international schools value this skillset and seem to promote it heavily through their various channels, most notably through their websites, to attract new students and families (i.e., clients). Hence there was a sense of pressure felt by the participants that there was an image of what it meant to be an 'international school kid' to uphold; for example (see 7.1.3. where Kelsey discusses the legacy of Expat life and her difficulties rising to the challenges of moving). Certain characteristics were emphasised and upheld as the hallmarks of being a TCK, one being the ability to adapt easily and often to changing environments and people.

In my findings, participants often distanced themselves from people they thought would not stay around. This became a coping mechanism that some adopted, and feel it is now inhibiting their ability to make friends and maintain lasting relationships. This aligns with the way in which Choi and Luke (2011) described how TCKs developed distinctive expectations and patterns in the formation and maintenance of their friendships and relationships, understanding these as being related to their high degree of mobility. As a result, the TCKs in their study experienced a strong sense of

restlessness and desire for stimulation across different aspects of their lives including, but not exclusive to, friendships. To an extent, the results of my findings corroborate this statement, but with the caveat that it exposes a problematic perception afflicting the TCK community: the universality of experience. In some studies where the findings point to TCKs as being naturals at negotiating change and others describing the continuous hardships encountered with adapting to new environments, it is difficult to consolidate the findings of the TCK literature to present a clear picture of how TCKs truly handle change. As this idea of normalcy within TCK research has been culturally and socially constructed, it is important to also consider whether this is a productive approach to gaining an understanding of TCKs.

This generalisation seems to play a major part in why many feel they are not an accomplished or a successful Global Nomad or TCK as they do not fit the perception of what it is to be a ‘cultural chameleon’. With my findings, some participants truly felt they embodied this spirit of cultural adaptability, whereas other participants reported a sense of duty or pressure they felt from their families, friends, and the international school to uphold this perception. Four participants felt that they struggled exceptionally hard with adapting to new environments, with their own misconception being that they were alone in this struggle as no one was willing to concede, as it was a sign of ‘failure’. Failure, that is, to fulfil and preserve their competencies as a member of the international school community. It is clear from the findings that all the international school students were aware, on some level, that there was an expectation for them to react to change adeptly and without struggle.

7.2 The westernised ‘international’ curriculum

The curriculum of an international school is purportedly designed to enrich students by exposing them to different cultures, religions, ethnic groups, and languages, though these elements are not equally utilised in everyday life at an international school (Hayden and Wong, 2006; Bunnell, Fertig and James, 2016). Participants of my study found that these elements were often symbolic, and their interactions with different or local cultures were simulated to present a sense of multiculturalism. This was explored in section 4.5 ‘Performative Multiculturalism’ where Kelsey discusses the hypocrisy of building wobbly houses for humanitarian work, and Gabriel talks about being pressured

into becoming a student representation of ‘Africa’ as a half-Danish, half-Moroccan student. For the most part, the institutional culture seemed to align with whichever standardised English was being utilised in the international school (e.g., international schools that integrated ‘Australian’, ‘British’, or ‘American’ into their titles would subscribe to a more ‘Australian’, ‘British’, or ‘American’ culture respectively). Interestingly, if the international school omitted a country affiliation altogether (e.g., [local country] international school), the institutional culture was generally ‘Americanised’. This serves as the foundation of the institutional culture that the international school functions within, seemingly curating bits from the outside cultures with the purpose of exposing students to these cultures but only under controlled circumstances.

The International Baccalaureate programme, which is offered in most international schools, structures many of the curricula around this notion of ‘international mindedness’. Tarc (2009), Gunesch (2007), as well as the IB themselves (2013a) often attributed this ‘international mindedness’ as the reason TCKs are able to embrace multiple cultural identities and traverse between different cultural spheres while developing a sense of belonging in each. Another claim made by the IBO (2017) stated that international mindedness has the potential to bridge cultures by fostering the ‘willingness to see beyond immediate situations and boundaries [which] is essential, as globalization and emerging technologies continue to blur traditional distinctions between the local, national and international’ (IBO, 2017: 2). The ambition of this mission statement, compared with the execution of ‘international mindedness’ values in international schools left six of my participants remarking the experience as being artificial. As Paris (2003: 235) asserts: ‘each culture that chooses to run with the IB DP [Diploma Programme] potentially relinquishes its values and practices of education in exchange for those of the western world’. Supporting what the participants in my study felt that the institutional culture of their schools was heavily subscribing to an Americanised system rather a truly ‘international’ system.

Additionally, Sriprakash, Singh, and Qi (2015: 2) also criticised IB’s focus on instilling its students with knowledge content and values that would develop their ‘Western cultural capital’. However there was a prevalence of participants in my study (the

majority being U.S. Passport holders), that reported a sense of disillusion about the international school, (particularly upon leaving). My study highlights the significance of expectations ‘TCKs’ had for life beyond the international school and their actual lived experience, focusing on the disparities between the two. Six felt disenfranchised by the international school after leaving as they reflected and were able to critically analyse the system they were a part of from a different perspective. They recognised that the cultural diversity they experienced was curated for them by the international school, however they could not dismiss the value they gained from these experiences. The IB Organisation also note that ‘international-mindedness is a philosophy students will carry with them through the rest of their lives’ (IB, 2015: 6). While many aspects of the international school curriculum (and IB DP) were not as authentic as the participants had hoped it to be, perhaps their ability to be cognizant of these shortcomings is testimony to the fact that it has succeeded in a way.

7.3 The relationship between language, power, and identity

7.3.1 Hierarchies of English

Continuing with this trend of inconsistencies between expectations and reality is the juxtaposition of international schools celebrating diversity whilst also actively repressing diversity through language. Looking at what the IBO published in their branded material, this is their stance on language:

An IB education further enhances the development of international-mindedness through multilingualism. All IB programmes require the students to study, or study in, more than one language because we believe that communicating in more than one language provides excellent opportunities to develop intercultural understanding and respect. It helps the students to appreciate that his or her own language, culture and worldview is just one of many (IBO, 2017: 3).

Only two participants in my study had ties to languages other than English that were used at home. Significantly, both participants also reported a link between their experience of an identity crisis and how languages, other than a ‘standardised’ English, were perceived. With one participant who spoke Indonesian at home with his parents, and ‘Singlish’ with his classmates, he claimed his international school actively discouraged any deviation from the standardised English of that school which was

either Received Pronunciation (RP) or General American (GA). He also noted that in his school, the students who were from English-speaking countries were given more leniency when they spoke Singlish, claiming that they were almost celebrated for exploring other languages beyond their mother tongue. They were actively encouraged to engage with the local dialect, while the participant was not, the only difference being their race and their perceived English competence.

The disparity of treatment between these two student groups is indicative of a problem within the institutional culture. This perception of diversity and worldliness within international schools has always been tethered to this idea of transferability between schools and access to universities in the English-speaking world. A key component of this transferability is the English language, more specifically the exclusive use of English as a medium of instruction. It is sometimes used as a method of maintaining elite standing amongst other schools within the country it is situated in and, as participants described, it was often a 'selling point' for families who could afford it and did not already have access to the international school through their employment contracts.

While the justification often given is that the English language use is enforced to maintain transferability between international schools, it is the fact particular types of English are presumed to be the 'correct' English to be used as a medium of instruction that is problematic. For students who are generally from English-speaking families and countries, this does not affect them as much with regards to their future and their identity. For students who are not from traditionally English-speaking backgrounds, this arguably influences them far more greatly as many aspects of their identity, relationships, and future are tied to language. Some, as demonstrated in my study, adopted English as their main language and were not able to communicate fluently in their 'mother tongue', which in turn limited their prospects in their passport countries. Students are even encouraged by their families to pursue education and settlement abroad in English-speaking countries as this is also tied to the perception of success and attaining a 'non-accented' English is paramount to this aspiration. Another aspect of this linguistic imperialism can also be seen in the practice of recruiting staff, with many teachers (with the exception of foreign language teachers) being hired from what Kachru (1992) would describe as 'Inner Circle' countries, which are considered the

sociolinguistic and traditional bases of the English language. Support staff (i.e. secretaries, assistant teachers, janitorial) were mostly hired from local populations, which is not on its own problematic, however the issue is the inherent exclusion of locals being considered for core instructor and managerial roles.

Teachers are a model of language and can play a critical role in the language development of both native and non-native speakers. With international schools primarily recruiting ‘native’ English-speakers as teachers, this seems to have the effect of alienating ‘non-native’ English-speaking students from their heritage language and culture. Not only this, but participants in my study also described how this affected the development of their self-esteem; by alienating their heritage language for most of their life, they found themselves also rejecting the cultural identity attached to that language, and also distancing themselves from their mother who also spoke that language. Another participant also found themselves between languages, having not satisfied the benchmarks of being a ‘native speaker’ in either English or their heritage language; leaving them not only culturally homeless but also a linguistic outcast wherever they went.

7.3.2 Habitus and language

Though what has been discussed so far has emphasised the use of English as a measure of ‘TCK-ness’ or ‘Internationality’, there is far more that needs to be unpacked to gain a deeper understanding of how these ideologies came to be. It cannot be denied that English operates as a global Lingua Franca (Seidlhofer, 2005), in other words, English is commonly accepted and used in international capacities as a bridging language. This section will explore how the English language (or as I will explore, very specific forms of English) went on to become such an integral part of the ‘International’ identity and habitus (Bourdieu, 1990).

The international school has a developed culture, insofar as there are practices, customs, and social behaviours that are regarded as ‘international’ collectively by the community. In the literature review, the relationship between the international school experience and the label ‘TCK’ was explored, where it was noted that whilst most ‘TCKs’ had at least some of their education in an international school, not all international school students

were considered ‘TCKs’. Tanu (2015) found in her study that many students with Korean heritage at her international school site in Indonesia were not considered to be ‘international’ by the other students. Even the teachers interviewed admitted that they viewed these ‘Korean’ students as being less ‘international’. The rationale given was that they spoke Korean more readily than English, and this isolated them from the rest of the international school community.

In a similar way, Jason also struggled with meeting the expectations of the international school with regards to how he communicated with his peers. He argued that there was an unfair standard of what ‘international’ was, and this was being imposed on the students differently depending on their perceived heritage and English capabilities. For students who were considered ‘native’ English-speakers, dabbling in non-standard English or local languages and dialects was seen by peers and staff as culturally enriching. Whereas Jason, who was an Indonesian national, and consequently not perceived as a ‘native’ English-speaker, was reprimanded for using Singlish with his peers.

This disparity of experiences in international schools between ‘native’ and ‘non-native’ English-speaking students is indicative of a distorted embodiment of the ‘international’ habitus. The habitus, which Bourdieu defines as ‘society written into the body, into the biological individual’ (1990: 63), is essentially the way in which an individual embodies the ‘culture’ of a particular social group. An important aspect of the ‘international’ culture seems to be the utilisation of the English language, which in and of itself can be justifiable if it is serving the role of achieving transferability, which is often promoted by international schools. What is problematic is the judgement of what is accepted as ‘English’.

Accent bias has existed as part of an enduring ‘hierarchy of accents’ in the UK for many years (Levon, Sharma, Watt, and Perry, 2020). As with other cognitive biases that humans have, accents can also influence how we perceive others, and vice versa. Within the context of the UK, the discussion often revolves around Received Pronunciation (‘RP’ English). On occasion, RP has also been referred to as ‘BBC English’, though BBC has sought to distance this association due to the controversial nature of the phrase ‘*Received Pronunciation*’ (Miller, 1971). There are many that

critique the suitability of the term 'received' (Wells, 1982; Jenkins, 2000), arguing that the implication of one dialect being 'received', means that others are being not 'received' (i.e., understood). Evidently, this accent bias is also pervasive within the international school community. Though the implications of accent discrimination within the international school is slightly different with regards to how students are affected.

With the accent bias in the UK, individuals who speak with regional dialects are often discriminated against by having their character and reputation discredited. This can be in the form of their competence, trustworthiness, or general character being questioned (Levon, *et al.* 2020). With international school students and TCKs, the accent discrimination tends to influence how (or even if) they are viewed as a TCK or being 'international'. While this may not seem like a very significant consequence, the implication is clear from my findings that for many this notion of being a TCK and being 'international' is a very integral part of their identity.

Their sense of belonging, place, and identity have all been shaped immensely by their association with being part of the third space and by being an 'international' person. Disqualifying individuals from being considered 'international' by virtue of their 'accented' English is one of the many paradoxes that encapsulates the notion of TCKs. This also emphasises the value international schools and communities seem to place on anglicised traits and cultural processes. Despite discrimination on the basis of race being openly taboo (as well as outlawed), language and speech features, such as accents, are not widely recognised as targets of prejudice (Lippi-Green, 1997). In this way, what Jason experienced with his teachers reprimanding his way of speaking English was not outwardly seen as a racial discrimination against him. Jason claimed he did not believe his teachers meant him any harm, but that they genuinely believed that they were correcting his English like they would if he had made a mistake in a mathematical equation. Meaning that Jason's 'Singlish' was not even considered an inferior form of English, but rather a flawed form of a 'proper' English. While the act was not with ill intent, it did negatively impact Jason's experience and the development of his identity. It also exposes a more insidious problem within the international school with regards to how English is being utilised for and against students.

The intents of Jason's teachers are significant as it informs us of the conceptual environment in which they were formed. If we are to believe that his teacher's intentions were not malicious, it indicates that there is an established attitude and belief about English that is problematic and is contributing to a vicious cycle of marginalising English users with certain linguistic backgrounds within the international school community. This implication also extends beyond the international school community, as it directly affects how the public views 'international' or 'globalised' individuals as well. The habitus of TCKs have been established by the reproduction of studies and research focused on the stereotypical TCK (i.e., TCKs from Anglophonic Passport Countries). Consequently, charts like The PolVan Cultural Identity Model (Pollock and van Reken, 1996) as referenced in Chapter 5, are often the standard when referring to or describing the challenges of repatriation a TCK may experience.

The PolVan Cultural Identity Model outlines the four outcomes a TCK can experience upon repatriation, the most discussed with regards to TCK being the 'Hidden Immigrant' category. This describes a TCK who remains similar in outward appearance to their Passport Country peers but hold values, beliefs, and behaviours that are different to them. The insinuation being that citizens of each country has a discernible outward appearance in which an individual can either look 'alike' or 'different' to. This, in and of itself, is a problematic principle to build a model on, especially with the task of developing a better understanding of the TCK subgroup. The overly simplistic way of categorising individuals by how they presented outwardly perhaps made more sense in the past when countries were apparently homogenous with regards to race, though this is no longer the case in 2022 (although arguably the same could be said in 2009 when the PolVan Cultural Identity Model was initially created). To 'look alike' in the USA, for instance, no longer holds the same meaning as it did in the past.

Despite the problems with the model, there is still some use for it in TCK research, and it remains a popular point of reference with regards to TCKs and the difficulties with repatriation. While overly simplistic, it does attempt to express a dilemma that many TCKs experience at some point in their lives. The most common category that TCKs in literature empathise with is the 'Hidden Immigrant'. Upon repatriating back to their Passport Country, they struggle with being misconceived as being a 'Mirror' as they are not outwardly distinguishable from their Passport Country peers. This dilemma is

established as a fundamental cause of many identity crises experienced by the participants in my study, and will be explored in a later section at length. However, the focus in my thesis now is on the TCKs who do not repatriate and are essentially stuck in the liminal space.

7.4 The impact of place on the ‘international’ experience

Place plays a very important role in the understanding of the ‘international’ experience. In this sense, place does not only present as a physical, or geographical entity but also is experienced metaphysically. This section explores all of these versions of ‘place’, starting with the physical and geographical expressions of place, and then moving onto more theoretical ideas such as liminal space.

7.4.1 Boundaries based on proximity to ideals

One way the international schools seemed to exert control over these exchanges was through the construction of boundaries. Hernes (2004) describes these through the systems of three boundaries: physical boundaries, social boundaries, and mental boundaries. The descriptions given by the participants of my study aligned with Meyer’s (2015) portrayal of the international school in Germany she surveyed as being geographically exclusionary and sending an elitist message to the public.

In Meyer’s context, the international school was built in a secluded area and hidden from the main roads. This meant that students would have to travel quite far to visit the nearby city, and therefore discouraged them making frequent trips out. In my study, these physical boundaries were not as pertinent as the social and mental boundaries the international school exerted over their students. The distance was reported to be greater in places that were seen as having more differences to the ideologies commonly accepted in the United Kingdom or the United States of America (depending on which ‘culture’ the international school subscribed to). This seems to be done with the intention of preserving the integrity of values the international school embodies (i.e., the ‘Westernised’ values) (Gardener-McTaggart, 2021).

With liberal ideologies, in the instance an international school was situated in a country that is considered more conservative than what is socio-politically accepted in Anglophonic countries, the international school seemed to create a greater distance between their students and the local population. These measures were described by participants as the geographic location of the school (that it was isolated from the city or the general public) and the architectural features (high fences and rigorous security measures such as electronic gates). In the case of Theresa, who attended an international school in the Netherlands, where the culture and customs were seen as equal or more liberal than Anglophonic countries like the U.S. or the U.K., this distance was lessened. She remarked that the local interactions were not discouraged by her school and the school building itself was ordinary, in that it could have been easily mistaken for a regular Dutch school. While a key attribute of many international schools is this idea of fostering intercultural understanding amongst students, there is a trend towards international mindedness being concomitant to 'western' values.

7.4.2 The liminal space

There is the argument made by Triebel (2015) that TCKs belong to the liminal space, as they are often in a transient phase, and never in a permanent anthropological arrangement (Triebel, 2015). However, there is a difference in experience between choosing to belong to a liminal space and having no choice but to be in the liminal space. The majority of participants in my study did not experience this accent bias first hand (as many were from American or British Passport Countries), but at times did feel like their 'internationalness' was being challenged or scrutinised (see 6.4 Encapsulated Marginality). In these cases, they often elected to distance themselves from their Passport Country, and either establish their identity more so with the Host Country they grew up in, or with the liminal space. This was with participants who were considered 'Hidden Immigrants' according to the PolVan Chart Cultural Identity Model (Pollock and van Reken, 1996). For those who did not repatriate after graduating international school, the experience was again very different. To begin, most TCKs choose to attend universities in English-speaking countries. This can be considered as a direct by-product of the international school exclusively using English as a medium of instruction (there are some controversial exceptions of international schools also integrating French as a medium of instruction, however this will not be the focus of this discussion). As

such, many TCKs who are from non-English speaking Passport Countries find themselves moving to English-speaking countries for multiple reasons. These reasons range from a perceived superiority of higher education in English-speaking countries to not having any options in their Passport Country due to lack of fluency in their heritage language.

On the one hand, most of the participants who repatriated fell into one of the two categories: the 'Hidden Immigrant' or 'Mirror'. In the early stages of repatriation, all the participants identified with being a 'Hidden Immigrant', and this was evidenced in section 6.5. Rebound Belonging. Many felt a strong sense of alienation with their Passport Country and began experiencing 'Rebound belonging', whereby they were developing (or rediscovering) their connection and sense of belonging to their host country. As these TCKs settled into their Passport countries, they either remained a 'Hidden Immigrant' or transitioned into a 'Mirror'. Those who remained a 'Hidden Immigrant' fortified this by leaning into the TCK identity, this was done by building a friend group that was primarily comprised of international students (not to be confused with TCKs or internationally-schooled students), learning (or relearning) the host country language, or participating in culturally familiar activities (see Section 6.4). TCKs who transitioned into being a 'Mirror' in my study expressed that they were more accepted in their Passport Country, and this sense of belonging was the primary reason for assimilation.

On the other hand, participants who did not repatriate and instead went abroad (in the case of my study, the US), were met with a different challenge. As with nearly all universities worldwide, there is usually a distinction made between home students and international students, even if it is to distinguish different tuition fees and visa requirements. Like international schools, universities have also been known to advertise their diverse student population, and it is done similarly to entice more international students to attend their universities. However, this necessitates the use of essentialised views of nationality, whereby international students are labelled as their corresponding Passport Country. For TCKs who are not repatriating, they are often grouped with international students indiscriminately. This in and of itself is not an issue, as these TCKs are technically international students. An argument can even be made for 'Hidden Immigrant' TCKs to be also considered an international student,

though this may be more difficult conceptually to accept. What is problematic is that TCKs who are not repatriating and are abroad for university are not considered to be ‘Cosmopolitan’ in the way TCKs who repatriate are.

7.4.3 Identity and proximity to places

Cottrell (1999) asserts that TCKs are interested in international issues, a finding supported in these results as well. The interests in international issues include staying informed about the countries they lived in, international news, and learning about the diversity of people and their experience – however, it is when these interests are usually formed that is intriguing. From the results, interest in the host country is developed more strongly once they moved away from it. As Fail, Thompson, and Walke (2004) discuss, TCKs typically exhibit certain behavioural patterns when establishing their sense of identity(ies). Their study also found that many TCKs were able to adjust their memories subconsciously to identify more strongly with a country of their choosing. In like manner, participants in my study also reported this feeling of rebound loyalty to their host countries, which were either weak or non-existent when they were living in that country. As they moved away from the host country, either back to the passport country or abroad to pursue higher education, they developed a very strong sense of attachment to their host countries.

Much of what has been discussed in this chapter has been linked to this theme of expectations, be it the expectations of the participants had about their experiences, or even in a more conceptual way with the expectations built around labels such as ‘TCK’ or ‘International’. While expectations undoubtedly play a critical role in nearly every aspect of life, it is also important to recognise the implications of expectations that are harmful if they are not constantly evolving to suit changing contexts. Looking at the history of international schools, many originated from the expatriate communities, such as employees of multinational organisations and their children (Hayden and Thompson, 2008). The establishment of these international schools were a result of a perceived gap in the market for suitable education, and a central reason was the language incompatibilities for when they eventually repatriated.

The growing forces of globalisation has also increased the demand for English in the labour markets and subsequently strengthened demand for English-medium schools. While this may explain the enduring dominance of English in international schools, the perceived superiority of these Westernised education systems can be seen as the foundation for the problematic perspectives that continue to exist in the international school spheres. As mentioned previously, among literature and within the TCK community itself there exists an idea of what a 'traditional' TCK is. This idea encapsulates everything from how TCKs are qualified, to certain traits, and even how they appear on a superficial level. Many of the participants interviewed in my study viewed themselves as a 'traditional' TCK, but this was often revealed to be the root of many mental and emotional strains experienced in their lives.

Described as a feeling like there was always an expectation looming over them, participants Clara and Amari for instance, always struggled with repatriating to the USA. Like other participants, they were always acutely aware of the racial and ethnic parameters of their international identity but still struggled with adjusting to the expectations of having a smooth transition back into their supposed 'homeland'. There was a shared sentiment of guilt from participants who were supposedly 'traditional' TCKs as they all seemed to recognise that their international school education benefited them considerably. Though this manifested in some participants as a sense of failure, as they felt pressured to seamlessly transition back into their Passport Country. They recognised that the international school was Westernised, and many participants mentioned US schools as a point of reference when they described their experiences to those who were unfamiliar with the concept of international schools. This was apparent in the interviews, where participants were often cognizant of their perceived advantages, which ranged from their international school education, their upbringing, and even what they could 'pass for' in terms of their race, language, or cultural identity. Alongside this, however, was the inverse: participants also felt discriminated for these aspects of their identity, to the point where using evasive tactics for self-introductions became a shared experience amongst the interviewees.

7.5 Cultural marginality

This was one of the reoccurring incidences that came up frequently with participants, alongside the transitional stage between the international school and entry into university, which served as a catalyst for the identity crises experienced by participants. With those who have an international school upbringing, it is inevitable that there is some experience with cultural marginality. Within cultural marginality, the two terms commonly used to describe TCK experiences with belonging are ‘encapsulated marginality’ and ‘constructive marginality’ (Bennett, 1993). Encapsulated marginality can be understood as the feeling of isolation caused by one’s uniqueness. It is often used to describe the feeling TCKs experience during their repatriation and their aversion to becoming a ‘Hidden Immigrant’ (Pollock and van Reken, 2015) as they see this as them losing their uniqueness. The responses in my study support this idea to an extent, as participants described their experiences with rebound belonging to countries and cultures they grew up in as a way of distancing themselves from their Passport Country peers. This may be understood as a way of maintaining their unique quality of their identities. In literature this behaviour is sometimes framed as a negative consequence of an international upbringing, and is often discussed in the context of reverse culture shock where people feel disconnected from the maintain culture. For instance, Schaetti (1996) who expanded on Bennett’s (1993) work on encapsulated marginality, describes this marginality as an isolation that is undesired and is detrimental to the individual, however, the responses in my study suggest otherwise.

While most of the participants in my study experienced some form of (reverse) culture shock, the participants in my study perceived their marginality (their ‘TCK’ identity) to be a positive trait. The difficulties they encountered with their marginality were not being able to obtain validation from their Passport Country peers, and most of them sought to maintain their marginality by seeking friend groups that would support and sustain this (for instance with international or multicultural friend groups). This can also explain why so many TCKs relate to Pollock and van Reken’s (2015) conceptualisation of the ‘Hidden Foreigner’ syndrome. The isolation experienced was somewhat necessary to maintain their ‘unique’ identity. Most of the participants in my study who grappled with this marginality were not having difficulty overcoming this marginality and not being able to successfully integrate into society. In fact, those who

did want to integrate into their Passport Countries and essentially 'blend in' were able to do so quite effectively (for instance, with Theresa who grew up in the Netherlands and repatriated to the USA).

Marginality was not seen as a thing to overcome or get rid of, it was a matter of how to maintain it in a way that was not seen as 'pretentious' or 'snobby'. In this sense, participants seemed to choose to belong to the liminal space, where they were able to identify with this sense of ambiguity. This allowed them the freedom from their Passport Countries which were preventing them from expressing their cultural identities, with many opting to identify with non-traditional labels such as 'TCK' or 'Global Nomad' - though it is arguable that these labels are also problematic. Nevertheless, for the participants in my study that did feel a sense of peace with the 'TCK' or 'Global Nomad' label, this was able to bring them closer to achieving constructive marginality. As Killguss (2008) describes it, constructive marginality is the knowledge on how to conduct oneself appropriately in various cultural traditions, alongside the ability to maintain feelings of home in each. This closely aligns to what participants in my study conceptualised the 'ideal' TCK to be: an individual who encompasses all the positive traits of the 'international' without the inhibitions that can develop as a result of this kind of liminal upbringing.

Despite the many flaws of the TCK label, which participants acknowledged, the label still prevails to this day and does not show any indication of phasing out of circulation. In fact, as internationally-minded and English-educated workers become more desirable, international schools have experienced an unprecedented growth. Accordingly, there has also been an increase in individuals with an international school upbringing who seek to find others who they are able to connect to and identify with (for instance, the University of Leeds has an established TCK society). As discussed in the findings, this self-exploration usually developed during the transition phase. This was when participants felt they were most at a loss about their identity. They were not able to consolidate their expectations for their future beyond the international school and their experiences, and were unhappy with the identity options they were presented with (i.e., to be a 'Hidden Foreigner', 'Mirror', 'Adopted', or 'Foreign' according to Pollock and van Reken, 2015 for instance). Thus, the TCK label became a way of transcending these essentialised categories, that subscribed to a very narrow and

problematic view on ethnicity and cultural identity. While this has provided, in a sense, a path to freedom for some TCKs with regards to how they are able to express their cultural identity, there is still one major flaw with this label. Contrary to the ideology that the TCK identity is founded upon, it is not as inclusive as one is led to believe.

7.6 Situating the findings in Bhabha's postcolonial perspectives

7.6.1 Hybridity

To put into perspective how this impacts certain sub-groups within the TCK community, Bhabha's theory of cultural difference, such as concepts of *hybridity*, *the Third Space*, and *Mimicry* (Bhabha, 1994; Bhabha, 1996) can be used to help explain and contextualise the complexities of this issue. The term hybridity is used in post-colonial discussions to describe the transcultural form that emerges through the interaction of coloniser and colonised cultures. Hybridity is a term coined by Bhabha (1994) to describe the formation of culture and identity in the context of colonial hostility and unfairness. It is the result of the colonisers' and colonised's culturally ingrained interaction. In order to build a shared culture, he claims that colonisers and colonised are mutually reliant. Thus, hybridity is the result of the interdependence and mutual formation of coloniser and colonised subjectivity. Such hybridity, according to Bhabha, celebrates the multiplicities and pluralities of identity while rejecting essentialist interpretations of identity.

Hybridity is developed by Bhabha (1994) as a deconstruction of the colonial effort of essentialising and categorising the colonised as a constant 'Other' (Said, 1978).

It is the process by which the colonial governing authority attempts to convert the colonised (the Other's) identity into a single universal framework. However, it fails to do so. In its place, something that is both familiar and new is produced. According to Bhabha, the intertwining of aspects of the coloniser and colonised creates a new hybrid identity. Any essentialist cultural identity's validity and authenticity are discarded.

Hybridity transcends the notion of national or cultural polarisation, and introduces the advantages of the 'in-between space'. In this sense, Bhabha asserts that hybridity 'is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity which manifests the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination' (1994:

159). Hybridity then can be interpreted as a form of resistance against the colonised. However, despite the ‘hybrid’ in the term, Bhabha’s hybridity should not be misunderstood as being fusion of two cultures; doing so would only be subscribing to the very essentialist views Bhabha’s work tries to overcome. Bhabha (1994) argues that all societies, cultures, groups are in a continual process of hybridisation. Moreover, cultures do not exist in a vacuum, and consequently they should be viewed as temporal phenomena that interact with one another. Throughout time, everything included in the very nuanced umbrella term of ‘culture’ is subject to negotiation and change, which occurs in what Bhabha (1994) calls ‘The Third Space’.

7.6.2 The Third Space

The Third Space is another one of Bhabha’s many theoretical concepts that is elusive to define and is constantly being interpreted and reinterpreted by various people in differing fields.

As Bhabha argues, the Third Space is where culture and its representation has no ‘primordial unity or fixity’ (1994: 54). Within the Third Space, it should not be possible to pinpoint where the first, second, or any number of cultures collide or to who has ownership over what. Bhabha (1994) theorises that this space should be a true space of liminal existence, where a new culture is born without the historical identity of a culture having any significant impact on it. As such, the concept of the Third Space has considerable implication and potential for the construction of a shared identity. Particularly in contexts where factors like culture, race, beliefs, and values are sharing a space and constantly colliding and contradicting one another - for instance, in international schools.

From these definitions, the Third Space can be seen as what the international school aspires to become, and arguably in some cases, already presents itself to be. Even with the term ‘Third Culture Kid’ where Useem and Useem (1967) first described the notion of a ‘third culture’, or an ‘interstitial culture’, there is an implication that this ‘third culture’ is a space where diversity is equally weighted. In other words, the ‘third culture’ is where highly mobile or ISE individuals can exist in a culturally neutral space. However, as the findings of my study have demonstrated, this is not the reality with

international schools. In many instances, participants in my study described their international schools as being ‘Americanised’, ‘Westernised’, or even ‘just like an American high school’.

Despite the point of reference for American or Western schools being mainly through the media, this is still indicative of the international school failing to effectively implement a true ‘Third Space’ (Bhabha, 1994). Not only are the cultural markers within the school evidently Americanised and Westernised, it is also true that these cultures are considerably more dominant than the other cultures that exist within the Third Space of the international school. To maintain the façade of being a culturally neutral and diverse space, the international school seems to employ tactics which the participants in my study deemed as ‘performative’. These instances of ‘performative multiculturalism’ were under the guise of celebrating diversity and were often not seen negatively by participants as they saw it as a fun and educational experience. However, most of the participants also recognised that this was a commodification of cultures, in order to maintain the ‘international-ness’ of their schools.

7.6.3 Mimicry ‘almost the same, but not quite’

Comparative and cross-cultural experts have been attempting to profile and measure national cultures ever since Hofstede (1980) first introduced the cultural dimension theory. His six-dimensions model enables cultures to be reduced to numbers and compared in terms of ‘distances’ (Kostova, 1999). The conversion of ‘cultural differences’ into institutional distances subscribes to a world view that problematically legitimises the idea of ‘developed’ and ‘developing’ and ‘undeveloped’ cultures. The belief that it is simpler and more cost effective to move management styles, people, and capital between cultures that are similar to one another maintains this perceived hierarchy between the developed and developing nations. This can also explain why English has been so widely adopted as the Lingua Franca of educational and operational domains. International schools have defended the convention of using English as a medium of instruction by explaining the transferability aspect of conforming to just one language.

This is justifiable in theory, but in practice there are more complications when taking into consideration people who are not willing or able to conform to these English standards. Furthermore, it is not just English that is set as a standard within international schools, but a whole set of Western habits that individuals who are ISE are pressured to meet. Those who are not considered ‘traditional TCKs’ in my study felt compelled to prove their ‘international-ness’, ‘TCK-ness’, or ‘Cosmopolitan-ness’, and resigned to actions that can be perceived as ‘mimicry’. Mimicry, according to Bhabha, is a colonial tactic aiming not only to modify the behaviour of the colonised, but also reconstructing their identities (Bhabha, 1994). The belief colonial superpowers held about their own cultural superiority became an institutional and historical justification of their rule over colonies. It also became the impetus for colonisers to force their colonised subjects to emulate (mimic) Western habitus. A similar justification exists within and around international schools. English, for instance, is used as a medium of instruction because it is the Lingua Franca of commerce, business, science, medicine, and even diplomacy. Western (Euro-American) values, cultures, and customs are viewed as more civilised, and therefore, become the basis of ‘international’ values and world views.

This understanding explains why participants who were perceived to be ‘traditional TCKs’ were afforded more benefits from their ISE upbringing, whereas participants who were not perceived to be ‘traditional TCKs’ experienced more limitations with regards to their cultural identity and mobility within society. As it exists now, the Third Culture Space of international schools seems to be tailored to create and maintain ‘traditional TCKs’. The cross-cultural experience allows these ‘traditional TCKs’ to delve into a variety of cultural spheres, and experiment with how they wish to be perceived by others. They are uniquely equipped with the choice of belonging to the TCK identity, their Passport Country identity, and even a Liminal identity. On the other hand, non-traditional TCKs are not presented with as many options, with most aligning with a Liminal identity due to a lack of options. In the pursuit of achieving the TCK identity, many must forfeit their Passport Country identity, and in failing to receive recognition as a TCK, are obliged to take on a Liminal identity. This encapsulates Bhabha’s (1994) notion of mimicry, where subjects who are compelled to mimic their cultural superiors fail to achieve true cohesion, caught in a constant state of ‘almost the same but not quite’.

7.7 Inequality by visibility

The findings of my study align with Tanu's (2013) observation in an international school where only certain peer groups were acknowledged by teachers and students as being TCKs. In her study, a key concept was the practice of cosmopolitan engagement, the most recognisable being the use of English. Peer groups that did not converse with one another in English were perceived as being less 'international' and not a true TCK. In my study, there was a significant link between English usage and perceived 'international'-ness. However, only teachers were observed as being the ones using English to make this judgement (as Jason experienced with the penalisation of his usage of Singlish). This brings us back to the matter of the inequality of treatment Jason faced in his international school.

As an ethnically Indonesian student, he felt that his Western peers were not penalised in the same way as he was for the usage of Singlish. Jason reported being perceived as deviating from traditional TCK discourse, whereas his American or British peers were viewed as practicing traditional TCK discourse for virtually the same thing. It is clear that the institutional culture of international schools is heavily influenced by Westernised worldviews and practices (Tanu, 2013; Poonoosamy, 2018). By recognising certain student groups over others as 'international' or 'TCKs', the staff of Jason's international school had inadvertently exercised symbolic power (Bourdieu and Thompson, 1991). This contradicted the ideology his school promoted about being 'international', and about upholding a deracialised and open view of the world. Herein lies the paradox of international schools, the 'international' and 'cosmopolitan' practices rely on the visibility of diversity, however, the same visible and observable diversity is also dismissed as being not 'international' or 'cosmopolitan' enough.

7.8 Addressing the TCK label

In this section I revisit the TCK label and address the problematic underpinnings of who it represents and what it means for those who are excluded from the label. I then discuss the move beyond the TCK label.

7.8.1 Problematising the 'TCK' identity

While the stance of this research so far has scrutinised the usage of the term 'TCK', it would be remiss to disregard the significance this term has on the international school community. This study was advertised to potential participants as a study on 'TCK' and their experiences with an intercultural upbringing. Even the two participants who were hesitant about whether they would be considered (or even consider themselves) 'TCK', found themselves interested in the study because the label offered them a base in which they could relate their experiences to. In the interviews, none of the participants were aware of the term 'TCK' when they were attending international schools, which always led to the discussion of the '*aha!*' moment where they discovered there was a term to describe their unique identity. This is an experience that affirms what is found in many other TCK related studies, such by the likes of Fail (2002), McCaig (2002), van Reken (1995), and Seaman (1996). As Zilber describes, 'this moment of revelation led to a feeling of excitement, validation, and liberation upon learning that they belonged to an identifiable group with a name' (2009: 23). Regardless of how the participants would later feel about the label, the discovery of the 'TCK' term always served as one of the main pivotal moments on their journeys for self-concept.

To truly understand the problems underlying the 'TCK' label, it is crucial to take a step back and examine the role labels serve to begin with. Labels serve a variety of purposes, this can range from enabling experiences such as self-concept, countering ambiguity of identity, to even just finding a community. The bonds within communities are often formed and maintained through labels and beliefs that are adhered to identities. Labels that are well-defined and are broadly disseminated help streamline the process of understanding and saves people from having to explain their identities from a zero-knowledge starting point each time. These were the grounds for which the 'TCK' label was created for; to in essence give a group of individuals who were 'culturally homeless' (Vivero and Jenkins, 1999) an identity and culture where they could find a community. Within this 'TCK' community, there seems to be an expectation that all members are like-experienced and therefore like-minded (Useem and Cottrell, 1996). While the term is going through more of a definitional evolution, the original purpose was arguably suited for 'TCKs' with American roots, and early research reflected this,

focusing on difficulties of ‘TCKs’ repatriating back to America. For instance Useem and Cottrell’s remark about Adult Third Culture Kids:

ATCKs are adaptable and relate easily to a diversity of people [...] Most establish relationships easily in new situations and have hobbies or interests that help connect them to people wherever they go [...] the majority claim they can establish relationships easily [...] ATCKs feel different but not isolated and most feel that America is the best place for them to be living and that they are more appreciative of this country than most Americans precisely because they have lived abroad (Useem and Cottrell, 1996: 26-27)

This is not to detract from the value the ‘TCK’ label has garnered over the years to developing this community, however, as with all things that progress, it needs to be scrutinised and renegotiated to maintain relevance towards the demographic it claims to represent. Ward predicted in 1984 that growing up in diverse cultural worlds would become normalised, and that ‘TCKs’ could be considered as prototype citizens of the world (Ward, 1984). As we move closer to this reality, the traditional ‘TCKs’ which stem from military, corporate, missionary, or diplomatic families, should no longer widely be considered the core ‘TCK’ archetypes. Van Reken (2006) has since argued for TCKs to be considered a subset of a larger group: ‘Cross-Cultural Kids’ or ‘CCKs’ for short. However, even with this expansion of the ‘TCK’ paradigm, there is still an urge to pigeonhole these individuals into categories such as ‘chameleons’, ‘screamers’, or ‘wallflowers’ (Pollock and van Reken, 2009). The claim is that cultural chameleons are ‘TCKs’ who try to make their visible layers of themselves appear and act like those around them, despite how they may feel on the inside. Screamers apparently adopt an extreme form of attitude, dress, or behaviour that lets others know that they are not the same as the people around them. And wallflowers – which many TCK researchers argue is the most common form of reaction during repatriation (Schaetti, 2000) – withdraw or hold off on expressing their cultural selves until they understand what their cultural environment is like.

However, these categories share the same shortcomings as the PolVan Cultural Identity Model (1996) discussed previously. They are overly simplified, again with a focus on ‘visible layers’ of culture, insinuating that culture can be something that is seen and recognised as a physical trait of somebody. Despite its flaws, it is understandable why TCK researchers often try to create these boxes and categories through their research.

Their research is centred upon people who often find themselves ‘box-less’ and in-between categories, so it is as if a new one is created for them, then these individuals would be able to finally find a box or category they could belong to.

This is precisely the reason why the ‘TCK’ identity and label has endured for so long in spite of the many flaws and problematic elements within it. Participants in my study also described using the ‘TCK’ as an escape from a lack of an anthropological place (Augé, 1995) or home. They viewed the international school as a country in and of itself, and the so-called ‘Third Culture’ that is formed within the international school can be considered as the ‘TCK’ culture. This becomes problematic however, as it is arguable that the international school curriculum and the institutional culture heavily subscribes to a Euro-American centric world view – and this in turn informs and influences the ‘TCK’ identity. The ramifications of this being many non-traditional ‘TCKs’ are not being perceived, and indeed not perceiving themselves, to be ‘TCKs’ at all.

7.8.2 Moving beyond ‘TCK’

As discussed previously, the various shortcomings of the ‘TCK’ label were enough to merit careful attention and reconsideration. Many researchers within this field have developed different concepts in the attempt to move away from the ‘TCK’ label and explore various other avenues in which the individuals who were drawn to the ‘TCK’ label may also associate themselves with.

The ideas of encapsulated marginality and constructive marginality are two fundamental concepts that are often used to describe the ‘TCK’ experience, particularly during the repatriation stages. However, these two concepts are often examined as encapsulated marginality (culturally belonging nowhere) being the negative outcome of the ‘TCK’ experience, and constructive marginality (culturally belonging everywhere) being the positive outcome. However, there are also other concepts which take a different perspective to the idea of not belonging anywhere, such as NationILism (Grote, 2015). With NationILism, Grote (2015) argues that the phenomenon of feeling nation-less is something that can be celebrated and should be recognised as a standalone concept. As he describes, it is ‘the action of attributing no value or sense of belonging to a nation or

territory’, and further claims that there is ‘a sense of pride in a belonging tied with nation-less-ness’ (Grote, 2015: 112-113). Although the participants in my research did not necessarily describe their identity and sense of belonging as ‘nation-less-ness’, there was a strong case for belonging to the ‘liminal-space’.

Liminality is an ambiguous area, but it was often discussed by participants in my study as a space or place that existed in the ‘in-between’ (Beech, 2010). The liminal process itself is often described as the transitional stage, from one metaphysical or psychological state to another. The liminal space can also be thought of as another way the ‘Third Culture’ with ‘TCKs’ manifest and contributes to the creation and reconstruction of the identity and sense of belonging of a ‘TCK’. For a ‘TCK’, liminality can represent a multitude of experiences. For some, cultural liminality – similar to encapsulated marginality – describes a feeling of belonging ‘neither here nor there’ (Schaetti and Ramsey, 1999). ‘TCKs’ who relate to liminality in this way often do not feel culturally bound to any culture or nationality, which can lead to disconnect and the development of feelings of cultural homelessness.

On the other hand, Moore (2012) found that ‘TCKs’ who were able to leverage this sense of liminal rootlessness were able to thrive in cross-cultural encounters as they felt free of the restrictions a culture or nationality would impose upon them – which is reminiscent of constructive marginality. There was a demonstrated link between the participants in my study who perceived themselves to be resilient (for instance, adaptable to change) and feeling drawn to the liminal identity. Those in turn who did not see themselves as being ‘resilient’, described their experiences with the constant disruptions to their upbringing as a continuous struggle against all that surrounded themselves along with all that they grappled with internally.

In many of these instances, participants experienced what Cameron (2003) would describe as stages of unresolved grief. ‘TCKs’ who were taught to process these transitions were able to develop what the media often credits ‘TCKs’ as having, a ‘remarkable resilience’, or traits like a ‘cultural chameleon’. Of all the participants, only Vincent reported having an exit-seminar which helped him prepare for what to expect outside the international school lifestyle; though even this he reported as not adequate in supporting him through his transition process. As a bicultural and biracial

‘TCK’, Vincent felt like he was put in a situation where the options that had been promoted to him throughout his upbringing at the international school were deceptive. The cosmopolitan lifestyle where he would be able to live freely to express his ‘TCK’ cultural identity was not realised during his time at university. In fact, Vincent spent the first three years of his university career in the USA trying to suppress his Asian cultural identity, crucially this was both his mother’s (who was ethnically and culturally Chinese) and his host country’s culture (which was Indonesian). During this time, he expressed frustration at being stuck in the liminal space, and grappling with cultural identity confusion.

Jason, who was originally from Indonesia, experienced a different kind of suppression while attending university in the UK. As somebody who was ethnically Chinese, he claimed that his identity was immediately locked in place the moment he had applied to university under his Passport Country, which was Indonesia. His identity was cemented first and foremost as an international student, which is not to be mistaken or used interchangeably with an international school student (though as Jason would explain, this request often went unheeded). The cosmopolitan identity and the ‘TCK’ identity felt out of reach to him, and Jason felt as if the only option was to remain in the in-between – to belong to the liminal space.

Here it is necessary to clarify that while all the participants went on to attend university in the UK or the USA, the majority of the participants officially ‘repatriated’. While much of this thesis is positioned against categorising individuals within countries or nationalities, it would be remiss to disregard the implication of Passport Countries and the advantages (and disadvantages) of repatriation versus moving abroad for university. The first question that one might ask is why did all the participants (and many other graduates of international schools) opt to attend universities in the UK or the US?

There is of course no single one answer to this question, however, from the participants responses that there was always a prevailing belief that universities in those countries were superior and where they should be aiming for. University fairs, for instance, were also a factor in which universities would be advertised within the schools – with most, if not all, coming from English-speaking countries. TCKs who held passports from non-English speaking countries also felt that attending universities in the UK or the USA

were expected of them, and that they also lacked any choices to attend elsewhere. This brings us to an interesting aspect that was uncovered about liminality and TCKs in my study: the inequality of agency.

It is no doubt that participants who repatriated to the US or the UK struggled with feelings of not belonging and pressures to conform to their 'homeland'. However, through the responses it was clear that they were still given the freedom to resist and adjust their identity to alter how others perceived them. For instance, some participants opted to build friendship groups that were primarily international students, or join Indian dance societies, or Japanese Taiko drum groups. It is not to say that they had an easy time incorporating or expressing their cultural identities, but they were still largely perceived as 'cosmopolitan', and these so-called cultural interests only added to their apparent 'worldliness' – Maya for instance was called 'cultured' on the many occasions she talked about her cultural interests.

On the other hand, there was also backlash by some peers who saw this aspect of their cultural identity (and specifically their international upbringing) as 'snobby'. Though given this reoccurring term, this seemed to be targeted more so at the idea of an affluent upbringing and international lifestyle than it was at the cultural aspects of their experience. At the same time, participants who did not repatriate and elected to go abroad for university felt like they were not given an option at all to express their cultural identity. They were often lumped into the 'international' group within university, where they felt obligated to adhere to their 'Passport Country' (and therefore, culture). Though some participants did not feel connected to this identity, which left them feeling like an imposter, in-between, and, or culturally homeless.

Here we can clearly see that there is a divergence of experiences with regards to the liminal identity. Some 'traditional TCKs' who repatriate chose, out of their own volition, to belong to the liminal space. That is, they embraced their cultural rootlessness as an expression of their identity. Whereas those who are not 'traditional TCKs' often found themselves without options and already fixed into the liminal identity, even during their time at their international schools.

7.9 International school cosmopolitanisms

There were various markers of cosmopolitanism within the international school, one of the most overt being the use of language. Some might make the case for English being the marker of cultural capital within the international school, for instance, Tanu asserts that 'speaking English is conflated with being international at TIS, and how high status is accorded to the ability to speak English' (Tanu, 2014: 85). While I agree with Tanu's assessment, I argue that it not only English that is being used as a measure of cosmopolitanism or internationalism, but that there are more obscured, and multifaceted factors involved. Not only is fluency in English the basic minimum that is expected of students in international schools, but also a certain type of English. As Jason described his experiences with Singlish in his international school, it is clear that a Euro-American centric accent is what is desirable.

Furthermore, those who are so-called 'fluent' in this type of English are granted even more cultural capital if they are able (and willing) to speak local languages. Significantly, students who were not perceived as 'fluent' in English were chastised for their interests in local languages, such as with Jason. This demonstrates a very problematic issue within the international school, and exposes how the cosmopolitanism that is prevalent within these institutions seem to have emerged from socio-cultural inequalities. As Clifford states, 'what matters politically is who deploys nationality or transnationality, authenticity or hybridity against whom, with what relative power' (1997: 10). There was a general sense of cognizance amongst the participants in my study about the inherent contradiction of the international school's ideology of what is 'international'.

This is the paradox of international schools relying on visible and observable diversity to uphold their 'international' and cosmopolitan image, whilst at the same time, feeling the need to correct students for having the same visible and observable diverse traits they claim to value. In an environment where the world is progressing towards a society where so-called 'cosmopolitans' are becoming more prevalent and a sought after by employers, it merits careful attention to how institutions like international schools are establishing what it means to be cosmopolitan – as this not only affects how the

students perceive themselves, but it also sets precedence for how cosmopolitans are being recognised and qualified.

In response to the challenges of globalisation, the concept of cosmopolitanism has resurfaced in the last two decades, across many disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, political science, and philosophy, to name a few (e.g., Appiah, 2006; Archibugi, 2008; Beck, 2006; Brennan, 1997; Delanty, 2009; and Inglis and Delanty, 2010). As a result, cosmopolitanism has evolved into a multi-layered phenomenon that has manifested itself within several social spheres, encapsulating the social, cultural, political, and moral (Vertovec and Cohen, 2002).

The word 'cosmopolitan' itself can be broken into 'cosmos' and 'polis', meaning 'order' and 'city/citizen' respectively. Strand (2010) describes the term to mean a citizen of an orderly world. The Kantian version of cosmopolitanism is largely oriented around striving towards a global 'Common Good' by means of moral, political, economical, and educational means. Throughout history, this notion of cosmopolitanism was set against the prevalent ideas of hate and war as a peaceful alternative, with the one goal in mind: the betterment of society. However, the question remains what it is that is considered a step towards betterment? What is the ideal that we are all striving towards? As Nussbaum describes cosmopolitanism:

Class, rank, status, national origin and location, and even gender are treated ... as secondary and morally irrelevant attributes. The first form of moral affiliation for the citizen should be her affiliation with rational humanity; and this, above all, should define the purposes of her conduct (1997: 29).

However, we have seen that this is not how cosmopolitanism operates within the international school. The positionality and the cultural background of an individual can heavily influence the process of developing the cosmopolitan identity, and the international school curriculum and the institutional culture play an active and integral role in this process. As Harvey argues (2000: 525), when the cosmopolitan ideals are applied to local contexts, the universal principles that guide and inform these concepts are more susceptible to '...operate as an intensely discriminatory code masquerading as the universal good'.

Chapter 8. Conclusion

8.1 Thesis summary

This thesis began as an attempt to gain a deeper understanding about TCKs who had similar experiences with an international school upbringing as me. It then developed into an exploration of the impact of the international school itself, leading to an interrogation of the label TCK itself, the usage in context, and the impact on those who are not qualified or perceived to be TCK. My research most importantly provided participants a platform in which they could voice their experiences negotiating and conceptualising their identity and sense of belonging.

Chapter 1 introduced this topic area and phenomenon I was interested in investigating, along with my personal motivation to conduct research about this area specifically. In chapter 2, the literature review was conducted in which I researched the main scopes my research would be involved with; this included topics such as culture, identity, multiculturalism, international schools, globalised identity, and cosmopolitanism. After this, I identified the gaps in the literature which then guided the conceptualisation of my research questions in chapter 3, which were as follows:

1. *In what ways does the institutional culture and curriculum of an international school affect notions of identity, belonging, and place?*
 - a. To what extent do individuals feel that set values are being promoted in formal curriculum offered at international schools?
 - b. How do the notions around culture, migration, and internationalisation frame students in international schools?
 - c. What role does English as a medium of instruction play in regard to developing an identity, sense of belonging, and place?
2. *How do students at international schools perceive themselves (and others)?*
 - a. What were the lived experiences of these individuals when they were in international schools?
 - b. Have how they identify changed after leaving the international school space?

The research questions were separated into two overarching questions that tackled the two central themes that propelled my research, which was 1) the relationship between

the institution (the international school) and the participant. And 2) the relationship between the participant (who had highly mobile upbringings) and themselves or other highly mobile individuals (i.e., other TCKs, global citizens, cosmopolitans ... etc.). Given that the research had to be conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, I had to be very flexible to accommodate a safe data-collection process. As the pandemic was progressing very rapidly, I had to anticipate that interviews that were scheduled for certain dates and times were not always going to proceed as planned. I understood that participating in this study was not the number one priority for my participants, and they had other life matters to take care of.

In chapter 4, the curriculum and institutional culture of international schools as experienced by my participants was explored. The 'Americanised' aspect of the international school curriculum was explored, along with the performative multiculturalism and acts of community service. In chapter 5, the participants' sense of belonging and process of negotiating identity was examined, focusing on the transition process away from the international school, and difficulties faced with introducing themselves to new people. In chapter 6, the mental health struggles and locality of place was investigated, which also linked to the impact of COVID-19 on participants' sense of 'home'.

The reoccurring themes were then analysed in chapter 7, where I presented the discussion of my findings and connect them to theoretical concepts such as habitus, liminality, hybridity, the Third Space, and mimicry. This final chapter concludes my thesis in summarising the key points, the major findings and contributions, implications of the research, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and suggestions for future research.

8.2 Limitations

Overall, the study was designed and conducted in a manner with the intention of reducing personal bias as much as possible. Given that my background as somebody who has a background in international schools and once identified as a TCK, this line was something that I had to be continuously cognisant of. My motivations as a researcher were driven by my personal interest in understanding others with similar

upbringings and background to me, and while I did not purposefully intend to, my personal views and interviewing decisions shaped the interaction between me and my participants. Acknowledging my role and impact as a researcher is another crucial step in understanding the outcome of my research, and '[e]mbracing a reflexive view necessarily questions a linear cause and effect relationship' (Mann, 2016: 15). As my interviewing protocol was semi-structured (see Chapter 3.4.2) the direction of the questions I posed to the participants often depended on what topics they found most meaningful. How those topics developed was also influenced by how I responded to what the participants were saying. As an insider researcher who was familiar with topics surrounding 'TCK' and international school culture, the way I broached questions or probed for further comments from participants may have indirectly shaped the outcome of the interviews. Two participants were very forward with asking me what I wanted out of their interviews and queried what type of themes I was interested in discussing. It was not that they wanted to know what type of answers to give which would be the 'correct' answers, but I believe they felt a bit lost with what to discuss, as the topic was open, and they were not used to having a platform to talk about their experiences so freely. As a researcher who shared many similar experiences to the participants, even my nodding and agreeing with their responses may have swayed the direction of the discussion. My enthusiastic reactions may have encouraged them to talk at greater length about a certain topic, which I may have mistaken as their own personal interest in the subject, whereas they interpreted it as my interest in that topic. The goal was to reach an under-represented group of individuals and provide a safe platform for them to express their opinions and experiences freely. While I believe I accomplished this to an extent, I do also recognise that my role as a researcher, and particularly my background as it pertains to the subject matter, did influence the interview environment greatly.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the trajectory of the research was undoubtedly one of the biggest limitations that this research had to overcome, though this has already been discussed during the research methodology section and will continue later in the final reflections. This change from in-person interviews on-site at an international school led to the second limitation which was the method of participant recruitment. As the notion of an international school kid is relatively obscure, it was not easy to access this group of people without also relying on the more mainstream

‘counterpart’ which was the TCK sub-group. Advertising my research then relied on pages that catered to TCK pages and groups on online platforms (i.e., Facebook, Reddit, and Instagram). While the advertisement for participants was not explicitly recruiting ‘TCKs’, it inevitably resulted in many participants who self-identified as a TCK expressing interest in my research. Many of whom would arguably ‘fit’ in the traditional ‘TCK’ model (Pollock and van Reken, 2008), for instance, 7 were US passport holders, 2 were UK passport holders, and only 2 were passport holders from other countries. The latter 2 passport holders from other countries were also the only two who were unsure whether they would ‘count’ as a TCK and expressed hesitation in participating in my research. That, in and of itself, is indicative that there were quite some limitations in terms of how the participants were recruited. For the purposes of this study, and within the time constraints, I think this way of participant recruitment was an effectual method. With the experiences I gained during this research study, I would try to reach out to participants through networking instead. Considering my background in international schools, I would try to reach out to international schools and ask if they would be willing to advertise my study to students or graduates of their schools. I would also look for online forums that did not necessarily cater to TCKs but for international school affiliates, for example, on Facebook there is a page dedicated to teachers at international schools. Reaching out to them could also provide access to individuals who have had international school experiences or know somebody who has, and would like to participate in research involving these experiences.

8.3 Major findings and contributions

This study aimed to investigate the ways in which the international school influenced the development of participants’ notions of identity, belonging, and place. I will use the TCK label as a starting point, as this study was essentially built around this notion. Much of the literature that I found surrounding transnational youth or internationally schooled people come under the umbrella term of TCK. It became a constant challenge to describe this specific group of individuals as they did not necessarily all share the experience of attending an international school abroad (for instance with local students). The ‘Third’ in ‘Third Culture Kid’ was seen by some as a benchmark for whether a person could justify identifying as a TCK, and the findings in my study suggest that this

idea was upheld by not only by the teachers and staff at international schools, but also with the students themselves.

This leads me to the second major finding and addresses RQ 1a: *To what extent do individuals feel that set values are being promoted through formal curriculum offered at international schools?* Where the international school was deconstructed through the lenses of my participants. In doing so, I was able to uncover ideological inconsistencies between the international school curriculum (for instance, the IB Programme, and specifically CAS projects) and their conceived ideology of international mindedness. Participants demonstrated a general sense of cognizance about the inherent contradictions of the international school's 'international' ideology. The IB Programme's CAS projects and references to building wobbly houses as acts of community service were affirmed by participants as being performative and designed only to benefit the students and not those in-need.

United Nations Day or Multicultural Day in which students were able to express their national or cultural heritage was also identified by participants as being a performative feature of the international school curriculum. A common phenomenon amongst international school students (and TCKs) is that they struggle with culturally identifying with their passport countries or identifying exclusively with any country or culture. Hence why participants felt that while these cultural days were an enjoyable experience, there was an inherent inconsistency with the ideology of 'international' and the essentialising nature of being relegated to the country of your passport. For instance, with the participant who had a Mother from Morocco, when he was asked to represent Africa for his UN Day despite never having lived there and being culturally raised in Denmark and identifying as a Dane. The international schools' reliance on visible and observable diversity to uphold the 'international' image was a common experience among participants. At the same time, however, these same international schools were invalidating and 'correcting' students for expressing the very same visible and observable diversities they claim to value.

This consolidates my third finding which is that participants were able to recognise and be cognizant of the ideological inconsistencies and inequalities in their educational upbringing. Demonstrating that perhaps that the international school has accomplished

what it set out to do: educate students to become self-aware, culturally empathetic, and critical thinkers. While the institutional culture and curriculum of international schools appear to subscribe more to western values, participants are at least aware of this fact. To an extent, they also appear to admonish the practice of predominantly promoting these values in international schools, especially in the cases where non-western values (and behaviours) are discouraged as a consequence. For instance, to answer RQ 1c. *What role does English as a medium of instruction play in regard to developing an identity, sense of belonging, and place?:* with English as a medium of instruction, this seemed to impact participants who were perceived to not be native English speakers. As a visible Asian minority speaking a variation of English (local Singlish) was seen as not practicing international values, whereas Caucasian students in the same school speaking Singlish was seen as promoting internationalism and cosmopolitan practices. Both students were not Singaporean, or identified Singlish as their main language, yet one was perceived to be acting like a TCK and another was not. The only difference here is the perceived race of the students.

There was a propensity for this inequality to be linked to culture and ‘race’, and it all relates back to the perception of what a traditional TCK behaves like and looks like. It would be remiss to disregard the American and Euro-centric origins of the TCK term, as it also offers some insight into why and how this perception of a traditional TCK came about. There of course needed to be a starting point in which the idea of a TCK needed to be conceived to fulfil a gap, or a lack of a name for a community. Over the years, the TCK definition has changed in some ways to be more accommodating to a wider community. However, the findings in my study indicate that these changes have not been enough, and there are still widespread misconceptions, and exclusivity with the TCK label. The unequal treatment of international school kids were shown to have long-lasting impacts on the identity, sense of belonging, and place with some participants. For example, the participants in my study who were not from Europe or America were very hesitant to even reach out to participate in my study; they cited the ‘TCK’ in my description as being what created the uncertainty. These participants felt unsure if they even qualified as being TCK or having the relevant experiences to contribute in my study.

This brings me to my final finding, which is that there is not enough support for or awareness about international school attendees. While the support is growing in a sense with universities establishing societies like the TCK society at the University of Leeds, there also needs to be more support for these people in the form of guidance. The findings in my study demonstrate that the majority of mental health struggles stemmed from a lack of preparedness felt by participants in transitioning from the international school environment to the world outside this TCK community. This relates to RQ 1b. *How do the notions around culture, migration, and internationalisation frame students in international schools?* The notions around culture, migration, and internationalisation have for the most part framed the students at international school as being culturally intuitive, well-travelled, cosmopolitans. While this may seem like a harmless or even favourable stereotype, it also proved to be detrimental to participants' experiences with developing and maintaining new relationships outside the international school.

RQ 2a. and 2b. are also all addressed within this section. My findings indicated that all my participants experienced some level of a confused cultural identity, and this was also a cause of anxiety, depression, and other mental health struggles experienced after leaving the international school space. Given that many of the participants spent a majority of their developing years in the international school space, most expressed shock, even cultural and reverse cultural shock when they left. The international school space was considered a norm, and many struggled with the reality of having to enter a different type of norm; for instance, living in very monocultural spaces or attending schools where the majority were not TCKs or internationally schooled. Self-introductions was pinpointed as a very significant and difficult thing to navigate, as this would be when participants felt most judged, confused, and delegitimised in their cultural identity.

Part of the issue is also with the lack of awareness surrounding the TCK subgroup and international school attendees. As previously mentioned, the notions of culture, migration, and internationalisation already frames international school kids as being culturally intuitive, well-travelled, cosmopolitans. However, with these attributes, also comes the negative stereotypes that can be associated with ideas of being well-travelled or being cosmopolitan. 'Snobby' was a reoccurring feature amongst the responses in

my study, which was followed by passive aggressive bullying (on the topic of wealth and privilege) by peers and people participants considered to be their friends. Therefore, the findings in my study indicate that there is a lack of awareness about international school attendees, as well as a lack of support and guidance for these individuals during the transition between the international school space and outside of it.

8.4 Research implications

The research implications that can be extrapolated my study are twofold; the first focuses on practices that can improve the international school experience with regards to the development of identity, belonging, and place. The second addresses the wider implications of the findings and examines how a problematic ideology surrounding internationalisation can negatively affect the development of an increasingly globalised society.

8.4.1 Implications for international school policy

As discussed in the previous section which outlined the major findings and contributions, the lack of institutional guidance and support was identified and discussed by many of my participants. Only one participant was given an ‘exit seminar’, and this primarily focused on the positive aspects of university life and life beyond the international school. Generally if the topic of TCKs were brought up in this domain it was in a optimistic and affirmative prospect. However, this resulted in participants feeling extremely unprepared for the harsh reality of life outside the international school space. One of the challenges was dealing with disenfranchised grief, alongside stark mismatch in expectations and reality.

Participants felt that they were unequipped to deal with unconventional struggles such as introducing themselves, or developing their cultural identities alongside their general identities. Integration was seen as only a possibility when the international facets of participants’ identities were downplayed or hidden entirely. To help with this transition stage, it is crucial for international schools to incorporate an exit seminar before students leave that addresses the difficulties they may encounter as someone with an

international school background. The first step would be in creating more awareness about their unique upbringing. This could be done by bringing ex-international school students in who have experienced first-hand what the transition stage is like, and what struggles they may come across. Most importantly, this could offer opportunities for students to open a dialogue about negotiating cultural identities and develop their ability and confidence to communicate these ideas to those who are outside the international school space.

The most harmful idea participants held was that they were alone in their struggles, whether it be to communicate their identity, find their place, or feel like they belonged anywhere. Establishing an exit seminar is one step in circumventing this from happening. However, as these struggles often surface after they leave the international school space, there also needs to be more long-term guidance and support available to international school students.

8.4.2 Implications for the future of a globalised society

While the international school often promotes a deracialised and culturally ‘neutral’ ideology, it is important that international schools acknowledge that this reality has not been entirely achieved. It is by upholding this ideology and ignoring the structural and racial inequalities that these inequalities can perpetually exist.

Crucially, these structural and racial inequalities do not exist in a vacuum; there are implications of these perceptions that affect society on a wider scale. The world is rapidly progressing towards a future where so-called cosmopolitans and global citizens are becoming more prevalent; eventually this may even become a norm. For this reason, it is imperative we pay attention to how institutions like international schools are establishing what it means to be ‘international’. Seeing as it not only impacts the way international school students perceive themselves, but also sets a precedent for how cosmopolitans and global citizens are recognised and qualified in the future.

If the structural and racial inequalities within international schools and the discourses that frame TCKs continue without careful attention and reconsideration, the future of

our globalised society is in danger of arriving with a built-in disposition for discrimination.

8.5 Suggestions for future research

This research was conducted during a time when the COVID-19 global pandemic was actively progressing, so the impact and experiences of each participant differed greatly depending on where and when they were being interviewed. Future research could focus on the effects of the COVID-19 global pandemic more explicitly, looking at the policies that restrict travel, for instance with citizenship, and how this affects the development of cultural identity. The relationship between the individual and a state is something that is touched upon in my study, however, many participants did not struggle with this as some had repatriated back to their passport countries, and others had passports that allowed them freedom to travel to places they wanted to be.

On a similar point, research could also be expanded to include sub-groups of the international school population. This could include individuals who hold passports for traditionally non-English speaking countries, or non-western countries. It is clear from the findings in my study that English played a very pivotal role in the establishment and maintenance of the international identity of an international school. Therefore, it would be interesting to conduct research similar to this study but in other languages, so that it could be more accessible to those who feel more comfortable expressing themselves in a language other than English.

Perceptions also played a very important role in this study, mostly from the view of how participants perceived themselves, their schools, and how they believed they were perceived by others. Further research could explore this further and investigate the perceptions of individuals who do not have an international school upbringing but interact with people who did have an international school background. This could establish another perspective on the phenomenon of international school kids and deepen our overall understanding this group of individuals.

8.6 Final reflections

When this thesis began over three years ago it was during a time where I thought I knew who I was, not only as a 'TCK', but also as a researcher, and the world was not yet coping with the COVID-19 pandemic. I had a very clear vision of how I was going to conduct this research, with plans of travelling to Indonesia and revisiting the international school I was brought up in to collect my primary data. I had already arranged interviews with participants in the international school at the location and was e-mailing weekly with the Head of school at the time when news broke of COVID-19 first emerging in the UK. It then very rapidly accelerated into a global pandemic, with countries locking down and restricting entry or exit between borders overnight. The plan to travel to Indonesia quickly became unfeasible, and I just as quickly had to redesign my methodology so that I could still proceed and collect meaningful data for my thesis (with the hopes that the borders open up by summer in a few months) – little did I know, the pandemic would still be ongoing nearly two and a half years later. My participants were no longer current students in an international school in Jakarta, but were former students of international schools from around the world, and I believe this became a distinguishing feature that carried this thesis to completion. By having participants with experience both in and out of the international school, I was able to gain a much wider breadth of experience without having to sacrifice the depth of the data. As I had to recruit online, I was also able to interview and interact with a broader range of ages, which helped develop my understanding of how the TCK label had evolved over the years (and even decades). This thesis has challenged me in many ways, both as a researcher, and how I negotiate my own identity, sense of belonging, and ideas of place.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Information sheet for participants

School of Education



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Information Sheet for Participants

Invitation to take part in a research project: International School:
A Phenomenological Study of the Transnational Identity and Experience

Dear Participant,

You are being invited to take part in a PhD research project aimed at exploring the experiences of an intercultural education. It is structured as an exploration of how the institutional culture and curriculum of international schools affect notions of identity, belonging, and place. The study seeks to understand the experiences of individuals who grow up in the 'Third Culture Kid' world and how this label has impacted your experiences and the development of your identity.

Participation is completely voluntary and should you decide to take part in the project, this will involve an interview through an online Video-Voice Calling platform such as Skype, Zoom, or Teams. The interview is aimed to be between 30 - 40 minutes and may include a shorter follow up call.

Each interview will be audio recorded (with your permission). All the information produced and recorded will be kept strictly confidential and used solely for research purposes. The information you provide will be anonymised and you will be given a pseudonym. Data will also be stored on a password-protected area of a university hard-drive and will be deleted from all devices as soon as the project is completed.

There are no foreseeable disadvantages or risks in participating in this research project. And while I cannot promise any immediate benefits for those participating in this project, it is my hope that this work will contribute to a wider understanding of people like you, and hopefully help you reflect on your own unique experiences.

Researcher and PhD Student: Netta Chalermpanupap (University of Leeds, UK)

Supervisors: Dr Judith Hanks and Dr Haynes Collins (University of Leeds, UK)

For more information, please contact the researcher at ednch@leeds.ac.uk

Appendix 2: Ethical approval letter

Dear Netta

AREA 19-097 Amendment April 2020 - A Phenomenological Study of the Transnational Identity and Experience of Former International School Attendees

NB: All approvals/comments are subject to compliance with current University of Leeds and UK Government advice regarding the Covid-19 pandemic.

I am pleased to inform you that the above research ethics application has been reviewed by the AREA/FREC Committee and on behalf of the Chair, I can confirm a favourable ethical opinion based on the documentation received at date of this email.

Please retain this email as evidence of approval in your study file.

Please notify the committee if you intend to make any amendments to the original research as submitted and approved to date. This includes recruitment methodology; all changes must receive ethical approval prior to implementation. Please see <https://leeds365.sharepoint.com/sites/ResearchandInnovationService/SitePages/Amendments.aspx> or contact the Research Ethics Administrator for further information researchethics@leeds.ac.uk if required.

Ethics approval does not infer you have the right of access to any member of staff or student or documents and the premises of the University of Leeds. Nor does it imply any right of access to the premises of any other organisation, including clinical areas. The committee takes no responsibility for you gaining access to staff, students and/or premises prior to, during or following your research activities.

Please note: You are expected to keep a record of all your approved documentation, as well as documents such as sample consent forms, risk assessments and other documents relating to the study. This should be kept in your study file, which should be readily available for audit purposes. You will be given a two week notice period if your project is to be audited.

It is our policy to remind everyone that it is your responsibility to comply with Health and Safety, Data Protection and any other legal and/or professional guidelines there may be.

I hope the study goes well.

Best wishes
Kaye

On behalf of Dr.Matthew Davis, Chair, AREA Faculty Research Ethics Committee

Appendix 3: Recruitment post for online platforms (Facebook, Reddit, Instagram)

PhD Study on Third Culture Kids

Is anybody interested in taking part in a PhD study on Third culture kids and identity? I am conducting a study on Third Culture Kids and the international school experience, focusing on curriculum and how this affects identity.

I'm looking for people to share their perspectives on their schools' culture and how this influenced their social integration post-graduation. Your contribution will help develop a better understanding of the impact of internationalised education on individuals and the move towards global citizenship.

Participation would be in the form of an interview (over Skype, Zoom, or any online video-voice call platform of your choosing), typically lasting just 30 minutes.

If this interests you or if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to comment to direct message me! You can also email me at ednch@leeds.ac.uk and I can send you more information on the project.

Looking forward to hearing from you!

Netta

Appendix 4: Consent form

School of Education



Consent Form

Consent to take part in the PhD project: International Schools: A Phenomenological Study of the Transnational Identity and Experience

Please underline Yes or No

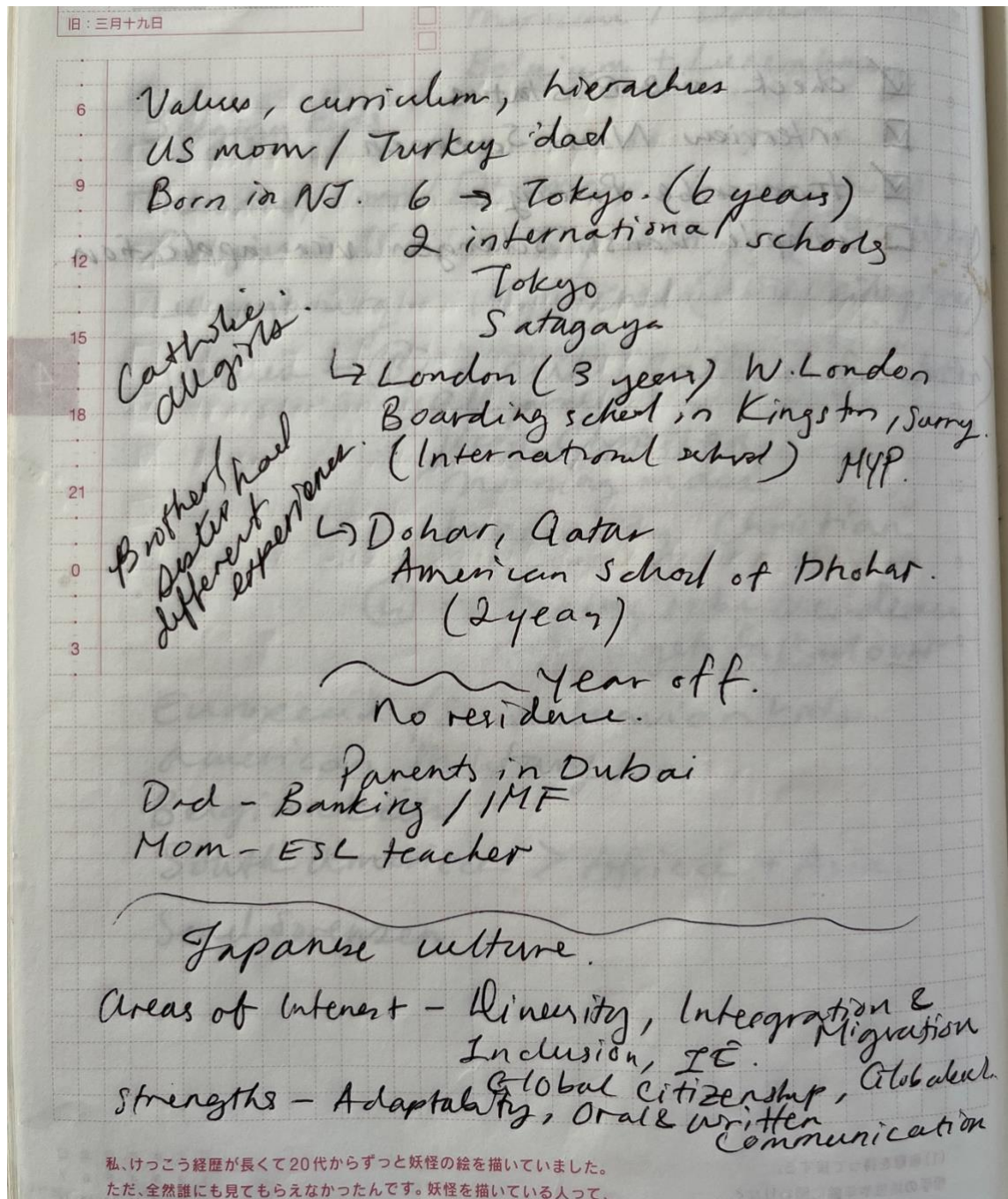
I confirm that I have read and understood everything on the information sheet provided to explain the research project.	Yes/No
I have been given the opportunity to ask any questions about the project.	Yes/No
I understand that my involvement in the project is completely <u>voluntary</u> and I am free to withdraw from the project 1 week after the final interview without having to provide a reason and without having any negative consequences.	Yes/No
I understand that if I am uncomfortable answering any questions or discussing any topic that I am free to decline.	Yes/No
I understand that by participating in the interviews that I am giving consent for the information to be used for the study.	Yes/No
I understand that I will not be identified by name in the research materials and will not be identifiable in the report. I understand that my information will be kept confidential and will only be looked at by the researcher and the supervisors of the project.	Yes/No
I agree to take part in the solo interview	Yes/No

Name of participant:

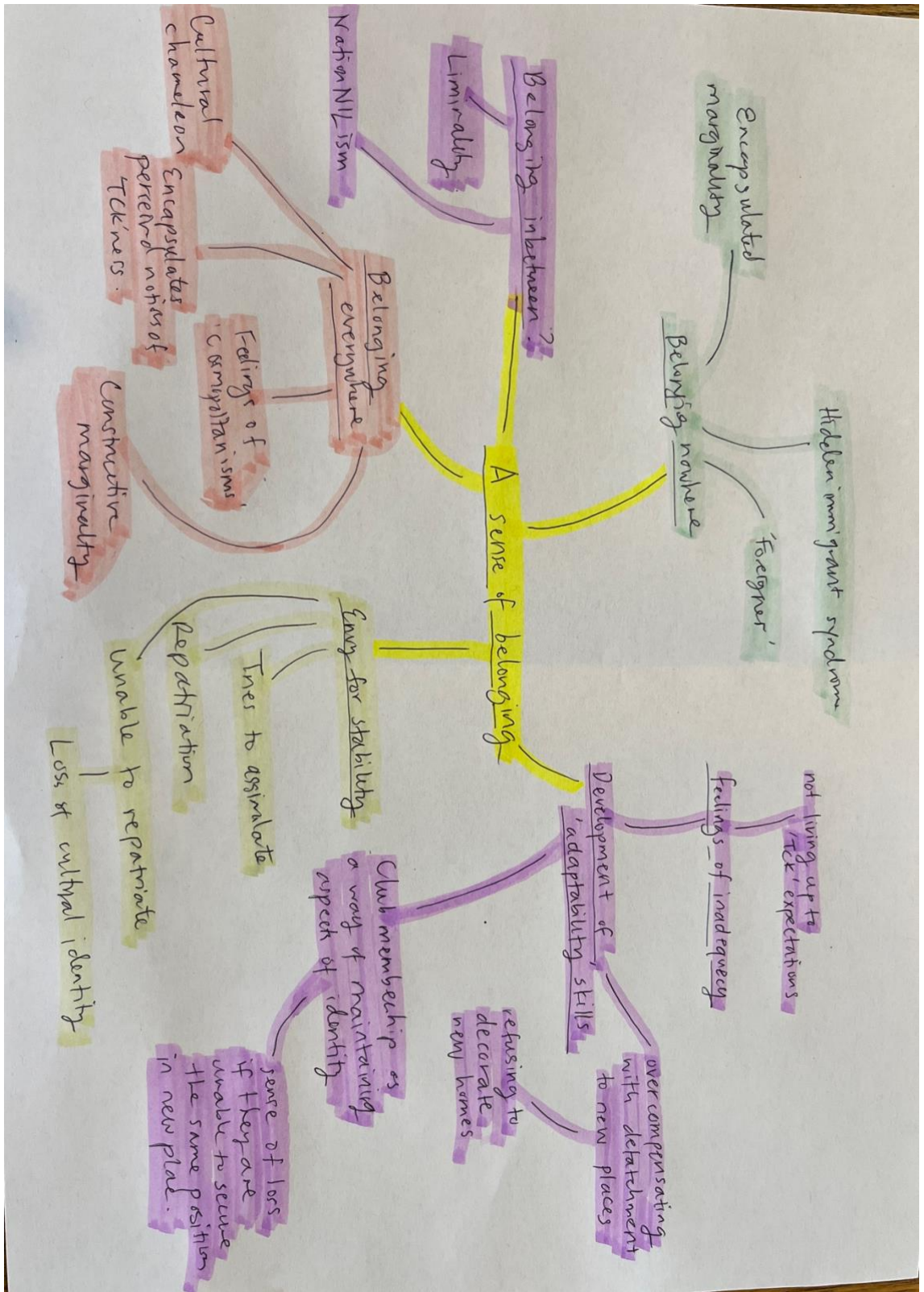
Participant's electronic signature:

Date:

Appendix 5: Example of handwritten notes taken during interview



Appendix 6: Example handwritten mind map of themes



Appendix 7: Example of NVivo coding of themes

The screenshot displays the NVivo software interface, showing a hierarchical tree of codes on the left and a list of data items on the right.

Left Panel (Navigation):

- Inter...
- File Cla
- Externa
- CODES**
- Nodes
- CASES**
- Cases
- Case Cl
- NOTES**
- Memos
- Annotat
- Memo L

Right Panel (Code Tree):

- Hierarchy
- Holidays
- Identifiers of international school experie...
 - Having maids or drivers
 - IB Curriculum
 - Relationship with other international s...
 - Sports and extracurricular activities
 - The 'American' school culture
- International mindedness
- Performative culture multicultural
- Performative acts of community service
- Salvation complex
- Teachers
 - Experiences with 'bad' teachers
 - Experiences with 'good' teachers
- Tension in TCK community
- Values
- Variation of international schools
- Interest in researcher's background
- INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL FACILITIES
- PLACE
 - Comfort in diverse environments
 - Ability to navigate big cities

Bottom Panel (Data List):

Name
American Embassy
Keeping their people 'Americanised'
High mobility as a way to keep people...
BELONGING
Envy for those with stable 'normal' childh...
Feeling blamed for circumstance that is b...
Feeling misunderstood, isolated, different
Negative reactions to upbringing backgro...
Postive reactions to mobile upbringing
Struggles relating to those who don't sha...
TCK solidarity by bonding over marginality
Transitions
Adaptability
Culture shock
Difficulties during transition between h...
Not finding integration to passport co...
Not knowing local culture
Shedding marginality by local embeddi...
The paradox of encapsulation
CLOSING REMARKS
COGNIZANCE
COMPARISON BETWEEN INTERNATIONAL...
CURRENT OCCUPATION
CURRICULUM

Appendix 8: Example of transcribed interview

Location of Interviewee: Cambridge, United Kingdom

Location of Netta: Leeds, United Kingdom

Interview conducted: 14-07-2020

Interview transcribed: 17-07-2020

Interview platform: Skype voice call

Netta: Hello, how are you?

Freddie: Hey, good thanks. It's okay.

Netta: Yeah, it's kind of unfortunate what's going on right now. Where are you right now?

Freddie: Cambridge.

Netta: How are things in Cambridge? Won't they have a new rule issued soon?

Freddie: Nobody will follow it. At Tescos for the last couple of weeks, for about a week after that then nobody cares.

Netta: Yeah, people give me dirty looks when I wear my mask.

Freddie: Yeah, oh my god, they look at you like you're diseased. Why are they doing that?

Netta: It's one of the things I guess when you grow up in Asia you're used to it.

Freddie: Yeah exactly. Like we're all used to seeing and wearing masks. I've seen people here wearing masks with cuts through it.

Netta: Yeah one of my friends finds it quite stuffy to wear, but I'm not at all bothered by it.

Freddie: Yeah, it's a bit annoying that the masks sometimes slides up. They're not designed for white people, because you know when we speak English we open our mouths more than like definitely Japanese people.

Netta: Yes definitely. Well anyway, thanks for giving me your time on your day off.

- Freddie: Yeah no worries. I literally just got back from a bike ride, just trying to squeeze it in before this.
- Netta: Perfect, so we'll get right into it.
- Freddie: You can ask me anything.
- Netta: Before we get into this though, have you read through the information sheet and the consent form?
- Freddie: Yes.
- Netta: Do you have any questions before we begin?
- Freddie: Nope.
- Netta: Okay, and do you give me your consent to go ahead with recording this? It will be deleted as soon as I'm able to transcribe it.
- Freddie: Yes absolutely.
- Netta: Okay, so I guess, tell me about yourself. Your background.
- Freddie: I was born in Hong Kong. My parents moved out in the early 90s for a year. Then came back to the UK for a year and then my Dad. Obviously, he tried to get a job out there and I'm the oldest in the family so I was the first born. The three of us were born in Hong Kong. Lived in Hong Kong until the end of 2009. I did all my primary school in Hong Kong. Then I did one year of secondary school and then moved to Yokohama, Tokyo.
- I repeated a year when I moved because I was in the wrong year in the Hong Kong education system. So I did all of high school in Japan. Then I left Japan in 2016. So my parents, my parents left Asia when I lived in Hong Kong. There was this really big organisation called the ESL English Foundation school and the secondary school I went to the mixed school. It was a lot of Australians. Some Brits, Indians, and half Chinese. Yeah, so it was pretty much all English speaking. I've realised that I have an Australian accent too.
- Netta: What do you think the difference is between an international school and a normal one?

- Freddie: Definitely price. Based off when I went to an international school in Japan, I almost went to the British school but I went to the Yokohama International School which is the second oldest International School in Japan, so it's quite old but it's also quite small. There was about 50 people in my year.
- Netta: Wow.
- Freddie: Yeah and the British school was even smaller. I don't know whether this is due to the breakdown of people but I definitely felt that in Hong Kong. Most of the people in Hong Kong stayed all the way through school, or like they moved from a different school in Hong Kong. In Japan, in general, people only stayed for two to three years. I stayed for seven and that's not the longest, because some people have gone the whole way up but I was one of the few.
- Netta: Yeah so you finished high school in Yokohama right? What was the international school curriculum like, if you remember?
- Freddie: I did like GCSE. A lot of schools were transitioning from it. There's the Primary Years Program (PYP) which is the diploma program or for like young kids which ran from kindergarten to grade one through grade six ... it was a bit different to like, say college here (in the UK) yeah, I say it's pretty much "The American experience"... there was always a constant drive to one-up others and play the hierarchy system, so like it's basically you have PYP which is the middle years program, which is grade six to grade ten before the last two years.
- So it's broken down into three sections. And that is what my brother and sister did. Because we had the option of doing some GCSEs, I did that and that was the only one I did. My brother and sister never got the option to. And the only reason I did it is because I was potentially moving to the UK.
- Netta: Yeah if I was given that option I probably would have done the same. I did the IB but only the diploma I didn't do the full IB since I wanted to avoid the CAS project.
- Freddie: Yeah, understandably.
- Netta: Did your school have to do anything with the local students? Like our school tried to arrange some projects that involved us with the local students, but it wasn't very expansive.

Freddie: I wasn't someone who's service-minded anyway so my creativity would have been creative really. We had an interesting partnership with this organisation in Cambodia, things where you know you pick out some money from rich people in international schools but it's also kind of a trip to see where they live and it's kind of helping them build schools. The trip was quite fun! I'll give it that, but yeah it's a bit depressing to come back and see the same thing on the streets of the country you're living in but we're just kind of like conditioned to turn a head, a blind head eye? Yeah so I was very concerned when I left, I thought it was kind of I don't know ((*sighs*)) I recognised that the surface of it was more of raising the money and giving the money

Yeah so I was very concerned when I left, I thought it was kind of I don't know. I recognised that the surface of it was more of raising the money and the giving of the money. Kind of contributing by thought, but it was fantastic in terms of the way to see the country, because you know, I grew up in Southeast Asia. I hated it when people go to the busy district in Bangkok. It's nice but at the same time like this is obviously geared towards foreigners. It's a bit over the top. But we really got the chance to go into a lot of the history of the country. And we went to these tiny little towns in the middle of nowhere. So interesting and I came across some of the most creative people I've ever met. Such a big impact on me actually, how creative people who are and how happy they were especially because the first thing when we went to see the killing fields, and the school turned into a torture camp during the Khmer Rouge. Yeah, so kind of having that context and then seeing the rest of the country and how people actually live. It had quite a big impact on me actually because you realise, I think, some people find it a bit weird when it's heart-warming. Because I feel like a lot of us international kids feel the difference.

Netta: The difference?

Freddie: Yeah people in the UK kind of give you the whole story, but when you give them the whole story it seems like you're being rude.

Netta: What made you think others found it rude?

Freddie: Oh you know (*rolls eyes*) or (*sighs deeply*) or like a snide remark like 'Oooh rich boy!' but even like ... you can tell like right, when someone is genuinely interested or if someone is just politely saying 'wow that is so interesting'. I guess even before that the big thing was moving to Japan. Because when I was in Hong Kong alone. It wasn't as bad when

I was in Japan, maybe since we were still super close [geographically] and I was able to visit more frequently, like I could just go on the weekend y'know? Now that it's like half a world away I don't know... it was hard to accept, my mental health just nosedived, and I was getting homesick for the first time in my life and feeling so many mixed emotions. Even at a young age you have that kind of feeling from a very young age. So when I moved to Japan from Hong Kong I never really fully settled into Japan. I never dealt with it properly, with the grief of leaving Hong Kong until March of my final year. I went back every single year. Every summer, for a couple of days, both for legal reasons and because I wanted to go back to that. My first thought when I moved to Japan was 'why is it so quiet and where are all the buildings?'. Yeah, I remember that very clearly and I never really eventually adopted or was comfortable with that but the difference between Hong Kong and Japan. Especially when I lived outside of Tokyo. Japan in general has less than 2% foreigners. You really felt like a foreigner in Japan and you don't really feel like that in Hong Kong. That was pretty big. Like I never really settled into Japan and I started to like it and I like the people in the place. I mean it's beautiful, it's a beautiful country. Interesting for sure. Certain things about the culture didn't sit right with me and got a lot worse because my girlfriend and my family in international schools, our whole life, but she was Japanese and so being around her kind of opened my eyes even more to kind of more of the culture. Yeah. So when I left Japan I was worried about losing the people in the place. Because the turnover was much higher at those schools. A big moment for me was the end of ninth grade when I broke up with my first girlfriend who I've been in a long distance relationship with in the UK. And a lot of my friends left in one year. Yeah, and in 11th grade we had to write this poem. And I was really tired, and half an hour before I went in, we had to kind of explain what I meant. And when you're tired you don't think about what you're writing you just write. I read it after and it was all over the place and it doesn't make any sense. You can tell it's kind of a mishmash. It was about all the different journeys I've taken from my house to the airport in Hong Kong. I was writing about the last time I left, and when I read the first few lines out loud I realised I never left. When I moved to the UK there was a similar feeling, I really thought it would be okay, like I'm pretty flexible I think I can hold my own with those kinds of situations. I'm already British like that was my only personality at school, but when I finally came it was just a whole different situation. For Freshers, this isn't related, but I got my second girlfriend from February until I left and going into that I was like I'm not doing long distance again, that's not happening. So I took her to Hong Kong for a week and a half so I left Japan and went to Hong Kong. I have never ever you know, I was so excited to be meeting new people,

and I'd tell them about how I grew up in Hong Kong and Japan, and then someone said to me something like isn't that cultural appropriation, or but you're just White or British, which is just so fucking stupid, I was so offended (*laughs*) but also kind of angry. Some people just really made me feel like shit, like they really did not help with adjusting at all, I don't know, they maybe had good intentions but yeah

Netta: What did they do or say exactly, can you remember any instances?

Freddie: Saying things like 'it's normal, we all go through it, stop making a big deal out of it, you'll get over it' or just really holding it over you that they've lived in way more places than you and they were well-adjusted, the insinuation is just that you're weak or inadequate in some way. I been in my life emotionally open, and when I was in Hong Kong there were three tiers. One through security, and then I was emotionally numb for the next three years of my life. I had anxiety and panic and fear, anger, and then I had no emotions for the next three years.

Netta: Why do you think you turned off your feelings? Was it a choice that you turned off or was it a just an uncontrollable response?

Freddie: I was just so angry. My first panic attack when when I was punished while playing hockey. I had never been so angry in my life. I screamed at somebody and woke up three floors of people. I barely slept the last night I came back. I really struggled. I really shut everything off in my first year. I didn't realise it was anxiety until my parents said to me they would buy a flight to Hong Kong. And when I got off the plane, the humidity hit me and I broke down on the ground.

Netta: So Hong Kong is just your home?

Freddie: Yeah in a way. So that was my whole first year. There was so much, for so many years, and it's kind of hard to break down in a way that's logical. Yeah, first year was bad. So much emotional kind of baggage. You know how the first questions you get asked during freshers, the first two questions that are asked is everybody's name and where they're from. And I felt like a fraud. I've never lived in an English speaking country before. I've never live din a country where everybody was white. I've never lived in a country where I look like everybody else and subconsciously I think, I think I pulled away from my British side, like I started to not want to be associated with just being British anymore. My accent always had a bit of an Aussie-ish-ness to it and I think it came out a bit more just enough to make people hesitate. I was used to them letting you get away with things because you're obviously foreign. Yeah and going into every interaction I've ever had with someone there was a kind of breakdown of an understanding of when I don't necessarily know

what to say, and had to grapple with what was real or perceived. So every interaction I have talking to someone I tried to explain to them that I hadn't grown up here. Every conversation, I was nervous to speak English which is weird because that's the only language I speak. I would plan every single phone call and write down what I was going to say, and I didn't even need to be like that in Japanese. I felt, probably the most isolated I've ever felt in my life because yeah I was kind of alone and never really left my room. It was very different. Very very different to my life growing up with you know, going from the second largest city, like I grew up in like the second largest city with 14 million, and that was normal for me, I felt quite comfortable to a 30 minute train ride away to a city of less than a million was a massive shock.

Another thing is I never felt settled. I don't think I ever will be. Obviously with everything that's going on at the moment I've probably ... I cried a lot in those first couple years because I didn't know what the fuck was going on. Yeah, that was probably the most I've cried because it's something that's going on in terms of what's been going on in Hong Kong. Every time I've watched the news about it I cry. I mean, even the first time. I know when I was twelve but I didn't know my way around here, I knew how to get from the car park to the store but I didn't know what the hell it was. So, every time I've gone back when I lived in Japan I pushed myself further. I thought 'okay, I'm going to explore and discover a couple places on my way around and kind of work out where things are. It's not a really comfortable feeling but I feel more alive, more comfortable talking to people, I'm more comfortable interacting with the world. And everything feels like in work like I'm slowly getting to the UK, it's not nearly on the same scale. Nearly on the same scale.

Netta: Right, and with that all said, how do you culturally identify yourself?

Freddie: I don't consider myself British. I think only people who've grown up with that definition themselves understand. A really big moment for me in my life was when I read the third culture book, the first I've ever read it. I read it for the first time that year and I was like 'Oh shit, what I'm feeling isn't abnormal, it's normal'. And I went through a highlighter and I was like, shit. It's not like somebody has written a book describing how I feel. So it's clearly not like a unique thing to me. So that's fine. But if you asked me 'where are you from' that's the place simultaneously think of. It links me and gives me a less complicated answer and I don't feel like I'm lying. But it means that if somebody then wants to ask the next question, and is more interested in small talk it kind of gives me the opening to kind of go into that. That was the kind

of thing I learned from the first year, a long life story every single time somebody asked me where I was from was never asked for.

Netta: Makes sense.

Freddie: Like how do you define that experience. Where do you find somebody to count on. Because I've read the book, I think the goals in the book most adequately describe it. The quote changed my life. It was the quote where there comes a point in the life of a third culture kid where they realise weirdly that they don't feel at home anywhere. I'm assuming you've also read the book.

Netta: Yeah I think so.

Freddie: Things just jumped out at me like that is the feeling I'm feeling! I struggle to make connections with people because I've been hurt so many times I definitely feel I've realised recently in the UK that I've formed zero real attachments in the last four years. I've probably made one friend in the last four years, this one guy who moved from Latvia. Like, it's genuinely only in the last year that I felt comfortable trying to make friends and people that are British.

Netta: What do you think helped this transition?

Freddie: I think it's time, like I finally reached a level of comfort where I have lived here long enough to like have enough experiences where I can talk about being here rather than where I was right. I've also reached a level of like, I lost a bunch of people to things like .. for example, I went to get stuff in the store and they asked me to get *Wotsits* and I thought it was a sweet. I would have understood like Cheetos. So I've grown into my skin a bit where I'm simultaneously kind of comfortable but at the same time it's kind of like I got to a point where I don't give a shit anymore. Like, I don't care, but it's what I felt when I went back to Hong Kong. What the hell's going on? Like I went back and I was like 'No, there's a place in the world where you fit in, our people might not be from a country but it's a culture bubble that exists in many capital cities all over the world.'

Netta: Yeah, I understand that completely. Have you met any other TCKs after you left school? There's actually a TCK society at our university, have you joined it?

Freddie: It's like random, I always felt like, oh first we must all join a society, and by the time I thought about it again it was March, which basically

happened this year as well. It was weird like I did a 180 or 360 whichever y'know just total turn around suddenly I wasn't the British guy and I just clung onto the fact that I never lived here, I didn't grow up here, I tried to make friends that were other internationals because I felt more connected to them. I definitely feel that there's a very ... there's a lot of similarities but also big differences between people who are Third Culture Kids and people who moved from one country to the UK.

Netta: In what way?

Freddie: I don't know, I just, I just feel it. When you have a conversation I just kind of feel it. Yeah, and even talking to the other Brits ... like the other day I went down to London to see a really good friend who I went to school with and we were hanging out with her new boyfriend who had to study in Leeds here with us, ahead of us. And it was just interesting how because she was there I felt comfortable talking about certain things but I normally wouldn't feel comfortable talking about because I knew that there was at least somebody in the room who could relate to the talking about visas, talking about travelling and talking about that sort of stuff which I found quite interesting. It might be because in general, I think being a third culture here. My family by most standards are very well off, obviously, by the standards of the people I went to school with particularly Yeah that was a big shock moving up here. I think a big part of that is this feeling of like culture was being catered to somebody whose parents are German in Germany. I think that's the key difference, money. That's the sort of feeling of how we see the difference between immigrants and expats. And I disagree with that. I think the difference between an expat and an immigrant is the expectation that where they are is temporary, and they'll go back. Yeah, whereas when an immigrant is permanent and you attempt to assimilate in a new home.

Wherever you are, it's always temporary so even for me now in the UK. I have two conflicting feelings. One of them is, I'm here now, and only English like is easy. I have no other reason to move it's not easy for me to move anymore. I've been out of the bubble for years. But I still have this restlessness so I don't want to be in my life. Imagine if I've lived in a country to the age of 18. I live in a constant state of internal conflict, which I don't think people necessarily agree with. I think there's a lot of dichotomies in your life, almost impossible to come to terms with. Yeah, in a good and bad way in that we're not tied down anywhere but we also don't necessarily have anything to anchor ourselves to permanently. So far it's been not good to say the least, I've been struggling quite often with it especially with the UK going into lockdown *again* it doesn't seem like we'll pull out of this anytime soon, never mind the money and time

[in quarantine] but I think I literally like they would not let me in. I mean it's shit for everyone I understand that but I just feel that it's so unfair that I can't go back, like I don't have any rights in that, and with what's going on in Hong Kong right now, every time I think of it my heart just aches.

I used to call Hong Kong as my anchor. Well, I think the only reason I started to kind of be able to settle down in the UK was because I went, okay, this is my starting point to kind of being a place in the world where I'm comfortable. And so because of that, I know I can't be like this so I'm going to try to be the best that I can. When you've made the decision when you're in your 20s to move, you've made that decision for yourself. Whereas, when you're younger you can't, you have a very big lack of control in your life. I always linked it to phones. Since the moves were usually around three years four years I would always get a new Blackberry or iPhone since that's usually the lifespan of one of those anyways and I usually felt bad after I moaned about it since like I'd already accepted a really expensive thing y'know. That was like how they were making it up to me. You like definitely can't finish adolescence as a third culture kid. I remember somebody from the American Embassy coming to see us in the seventh grade when we were like to 10 and they were like 'you cannot have your parents get deported'.

Netta: Yeah

Freddie: Yeah, you don't have this freedom to kind of explore who you are because of that. God one of the best things that happened to me was spending a night in a prison cell, really. Because, for years, I was terrified of the police. You know, I got caught trespassing with my friends. The police turned up and he turned to me when I don't speak Japanese. But that that was honestly, for me personally that was such a good moment because it gave me a bit more license to say okay, if I do get arrested it's not the end of the world. I can go and I can kind of explore and try to work out a little bit, and then when I moved here, I had to deal with that even more like you think the worst thing about moving to the UK, moving home is, you think you know the rules you think you know them all your life and then you move and all of a sudden you go, I know. But that doesn't happen until you've actually landed. Yeah. And so the shocking surprise makes it take longer to get over and you don't have the same support system so you still have a bunch of other foreigners are also dealing with the same type of group I remember you need the

Arabic kids, you had all the Chinese kids, you had all the British kids. I'm really sorry I'm rambling.

Netta: No not at all.

Freddie: Feels a bit like therapy. I have basically spent two years in therapy, trying to deal with it.

Netta: I feel like that is not at all an unusual thing in our community, because it is difficult to come to terms with so much.

Freddie: Yeah I don't feel anybody prepared me about this or told me about this reality, it just kind of happened. I'm not sure it is anything that someone can prepare you for.

Netta: That could also be the case. Anyway, we're just about running up to the end of this now. Do you have any questions or concluding remarks?

Freddie: No, I might do later.

Netta: Yeah that's perfectly fine too. I'll message you with maybe some further questions and you can just e-mail or message your answers back, or if you want to arrange another call that's also fine.

Freddie: Cool yeah.

Netta: Anyway, thanks for your time today. Hope you have a good rest of your day.

Freddie: Yeah you too, see you.

Location of Interviewee: Cambridge, United Kingdom

Location of Netta: Leeds, United Kingdom

Interview conducted: 10-07-2020

Interview transcribed: 17-07-2020

Interview platform: WhatsApp messages

Freddie: Hey, hope yesterday was useful! Realised it was a bit more of my having a ramble rather than having a conversation; lockdown's sent me into a bit of a weird mood cause haven't been able to see many people. Was just thinking this morning and thought of something that was really

important to me in the first year but forgot about yesterday: It's this feeling that as a TCK I can never go back . Whereas other people might be able to go home or drop out of uni and take a path and whilst their friends might all be at uni the place is kinda the same. I felt a real sense of panic that I couldn't go back to Japan or HK because of Visas and because I'd have nowhere to stay, and if I did, literally no one I knew from that place would still be there. Made it so hard for me to settle, and it's why going to HK and feeling comfortable there was so important to me as it gave me a base from which to settle into the UK slowly.

Netta: No worries, it's was a very helpful talk! Thanks for sending this, I'll be sure to include it. I also wanted to ask you what you studied/ what you want to do in the future (if you have an idea yet) and if being a TCK had any influence on this? Like where you would like to work?

Freddie: I will answer in a bit, going to be a long one so I'm going to take the time to make it make sense.

Location of Interviewee: Cambridge, United Kingdom

Location of Netta: Leeds, United Kingdom

Interview conducted: 30-07-2020

Interview transcribed: 03-08-2020

Interview platform: WhatsApp messages

Freddie: Just remembered to reply! Been studying civil and structural engineering and would really love to become a structural engineering working on big projects all over the world, not sure how realistic that is or if I'm good enough for it but if I could choose anything and get it it would be that. I definitely think it is: I got the opportunity to live in two of the world major cities where literally everything you look at is a feat of engineering on an impressive scale. I also got the change to grow up around engineers from all over the world and I think that subtly has shaped my thinking and understanding of the world, my parents don't have that background at all so don't really know where else it would come from. This is something I was thinking about recently and I think in a way being a TCK is both a hindrance and a help; it's a help because you have had all these experiences and explore and eye opening opportunities which many people won't get in their lifetime, but it's a hinderance because I find that moving abroad and doing something useful with your life and having these amazing life experiences isn't

something to aspire to but becomes the bare minimum expectation, and that if you aren't moving towards this straight away, have you failed? I

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE APPLICATION FORM ¹



realised when I was only applying for like international firms and I had this thought of like, it would be so easy to just live in the UK and have my childhood feel like a dream but then how sad would it be to have lived in more countries by the age of 20 then you do after. Where I would like to work, I don't know, honestly don't, I'd love to move around and before when I wasn't in the UK I seemed easy but now I wouldn't even know where to start finding opportunities and it's honestly very confusing and a bit demoralising. That's make sense? I haven't really had the time to mull it over in my head to make it coherent yet.

Netta: Makes perfect sense. Thanks for getting back to me on this, I'll be sure to add it to the transcription. Let me know if you have any further questions.

Appendix 9: Research Ethics Committee Application Form

Please read each question carefully, taking note of instructions and completing all parts. If a question is not applicable please indicate so. The superscripted numbers

(eg⁸) refer to sections of the guidance notes, available at <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/UoLEthicsApplication>. Where a question asks for information which you have previously provided in answer to another question, please just refer to your earlier answer rather than repeating information.

Information about research ethics training courses:

<http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/EthicsTraining>.

To help us process your application enter the following reference numbers, if known and if applicable:

Ethics reference number:	
Student number and/ or grant reference:	201299066

PART A: Summary

A.1 Which [Faculty Research Ethics Committee](#) would you like to consider this application?²

- Arts, Humanities and Cultures (AHC)
 Biological Sciences (BIOSCI)
 Social Sciences/ Environment/ LUBS (AREA)
 MaPS and Engineering (MEEC)
 Medicine and Health (Please specify a subcommittee):
 - School of Dentistry (DREC)
 - School of Healthcare (SHREC)
 - School of Medicine (SoMREC)
 - School of Psychology (SoPREC)

A.2 Title of the research³

A Phenomenological Study of 'Third Culture Kids' in an International school in Jakarta, Indonesia

A.3 Principal investigator's contact details⁴

Name (<i>Title, first name, surname</i>)	Miss Netta Chalermpanupap
Position	Research student
Department/ School/ Institute	School of Education
Faculty	ESSL

A.6 Will the research involve NHS staff recruited as potential research participants (by virtue of their professional role) or NHS premises/ facilities?

Yes No

If yes, ethical approval must be sought from the University of Leeds. Note that [approval](#) from the NHS Health Research Authority may also be needed, please contact FMHUniEthics@leeds.ac.uk for advice.

A.7 Will the research involve any of the following:¹⁰ (You may select more than one)

*If your project is classified as [research](#) rather than service evaluation or audit and involves any of the following an application must be made to the [NHS Health Research Authority](#) via IRAS www.myresearchproject.org.uk as NHS ethics approval will be required. **There is no need to complete any more of this form.** Further information is available at <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/NHSethicalreview> and at <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/HRAapproval>.*

You may also contact governance-ethics@leeds.ac.uk for advice.

- Patients and users of the NHS (including NHS patients treated in the private sector)¹¹
- Individuals identified as potential participants because of their status as relatives or carers of patients and users of the NHS
- Research involving adults in Scotland, Wales or England who lack the capacity to consent for themselves¹²
- A prison or a young offender institution in England and Wales (and is health related)¹⁴
- Clinical trial of a medicinal product or medical device¹⁵
- Access to data, organs or other bodily material of past and present NHS patients⁹
- Use of human tissue (including non-NHS sources) where the collection is not covered by a Human Tissue Authority licence⁹
- Foetal material and IVF involving NHS patients
- The recently deceased under NHS care
- None of the above

You must inform the Research Ethics Administrator of your NHS REC reference and approval date once approval has been obtained.

The HRA decision tool to help determine the type of approval required is available at <http://www.hra-decisiontools.org.uk/ethics>. If the University of Leeds is not the Lead Institution, or approval has been granted elsewhere (e.g. NHS) then you should contact the local Research Ethics Committee for guidance. The UoL Ethics Committee needs to be assured that any relevant local ethical issues have been addressed.

A.8 Will the participants be from any of the following groups? (Tick as appropriate)

- Children under 16¹⁶ *Specify age group:*

- Adults with learning disabilities¹²
- Adults with other forms of mental incapacity or mental illness
- Adults in emergency situations
- Prisoners or young offenders¹⁴
- Those who could be considered to have a particularly dependent relationship with the investigator, eg members of staff, students¹⁷
- Other vulnerable groups
- No participants from any of the above groups

Please justify the inclusion of the above groups, explaining why the research cannot be conducted on non-vulnerable groups.

It is the researcher's responsibility to check whether a DBS check (or equivalent) is required and to obtain one if it is needed. See also <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/healthandsafetyadvice> and <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/agencies-public-bodies/dbs>.

A.9 Give a short summary of the research¹⁸

*This section must be completed in **language comprehensible to the lay person**. Do not simply reproduce or refer to the protocol, although the protocol can also be submitted to provide any technical information that you think the ethics committee may require. This section should cover the main parts of the proposal.*

The aim of the study is to gain a fuller understanding of different perspectives of the 'Third Culture Kid' identity. Much of the focus when broaching the subject of 'Third Culture Kids' has generally been American-centric or focusing on students from Anglophonic countries (namely the United States or the United Kingdom), which is understandable, given the origins of the 'Third Culture Kid' phenomenon. It is important, however, to also consider those who are not usually involved in the 'TCK' discourse but are fundamentally 'TCK' themselves. How this 'TCK' label has developed and continues to develop has been seen to have a lasting impact on those living a transcultural lifestyle, both positively and negatively. As the 'TCK' identity and label are rooted in migration, the label itself needs to be unpacked and explored with consideration on how internationalisation and globalisation has changed how the individuals within international schools are framed.

Students at an international school will be interviewed individually for their personal perspectives on their experiences, followed by focus groups which will explore the group perspectives.

A.10 What are the main ethical issues with the research and how will these be addressed?¹⁹

Indicate any issues on which you would welcome advice from the ethics committee.

1. Sensitive experiences – while the topic being researched is not overtly a sensitive one, it does participants to share their personal experiences as an international school student. Past research in the specific international school I intend to conduct the study has indicated that there are some social hierarchies that are separated by wealth, class, and ethnicity. This may result in some sensitive topics arising about the participant's experience with not integrating, being bullied, or ostracised due to these circumstances. The school counsellor will be briefed on the topic and these potential issues in the case a participant wishes to speak further or needs counselling.
2. Data protection – all data that will be collected will be stored in an electronic and hard copy format. The electronic copies will be stored on a secure university network drive which will only be accessible with my log-in details and is password protected.
3. Informed consent – participants will be briefed initially through the information sheet and consent form which they will have to sign. They will be given a detailed account of what will be expected of them as well as let known that they can withdraw from the study at any point without given any reason.
4. Confidentiality – all participants will be given pseudonyms to assure confidentiality.

PART B: About the research team

B.1 To be completed by students only²⁰

Qualification working towards (eg Masters, PhD)	PhD
Supervisor's name (Title, first name, surname)	Dr Judith Hanks
Department/ School/ Institute	Education, Social Sciences, and Law (ESSL)
Faculty	Faculty of Education
Work address (including postcode)	1.25 Hillary Place Leeds LS2 9JS
Supervisor's telephone number	0113 343 0524
Supervisor's email address	J.I.Hanks@education.leeds.ac.uk
Module name and number (if applicable)	

B.2 Other members of the research team (eg co-investigators, co-supervisors) ²¹

Name (<i>Title, first name, surname</i>)	Dr Haynes Collins
Position	
Department/ School/ Institute	School of Languages, Cultures and Societies
Faculty	Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Cultures.
Work address (<i>including postcode</i>)	B.04 Michael Sadler Building Leeds, LS2 9DA
Telephone number	0113 343 0102
Email address	H.Collins@leeds.ac.uk

Name (Title, first name, surname)	
Position	
Department/ School/ Institute	
Faculty	
Work address (including postcode)	
Telephone number	
Email address	

Part C: The research

C.1 What are the aims of the study?²² (Must be in language comprehensible to a lay person.)

The overall aim of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of the 'Third Culture Kid' experience and to explore how the discourses around migration and internationalisation has affected the development of the 'TCK' label. There seems to be a clear link between social hierarchies within the international school environment and the 'TCK' label, which is why it is important to shed light on those who are being marginalised and explore what factors are being involved. It is my hope that by exploring these factors, new understandings can be developed about the concept of 'Third Culture Kid'; and in doing this, something can be done about the integration of the students who are feeling marginalised in international schools by not being 'TCK' enough.

C.2 Describe the design of the research. Qualitative methods as well as quantitative methods should be included. (Must be in language comprehensible to a lay person.)

It is important that the study can provide information about the aims that it intends to address. If a study cannot answer the questions/add to the knowledge base that it intends to, due to the way that it is designed, then wasting participants' time could be an ethical issue.

Semi-structured in-depth phenomenological interviews will be the primary conducted with the participants. I am relying on my participants to tell me what I don't know and am utilising semi-structured interviews as a platform for them to do so. Therefore, the following open-ended questions will be used to guide the interview which can be adapted and changed depending on the participants' answers. See Appendix A for a list of prompts and follow-up prompts.

The open-ended questions were designed to put minimum restriction on the participants' answers. The participants will be informed of the nature of the interview, the purpose of the research, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time. They will be briefed on the conduct of the interview, asked for permission to be recorded, and given answers to any queries they may have.

Interviews will be conducted both individually and in focus groups (approximately 3-4 people per group depending on availability), beginning with individual interviews, as the selection for the focus groups will be determined by the data

which will emerge from the individual interviews. The focus groups will be organised so the participants will be interacting with one another for the most part, with my role being more as a facilitator.

Observations of the international school itself will also be taken to paint a better picture of the institution. Some classes will be observed, and field notes will be taken of the general student life. Photographs of the campus will be taken to give context to how the institution presents itself. Focus will be given on where the students spend time during their breaks, so photographs will also be taken of the cafeterias and the outside seating areas.

C.3 What will participants be asked to do in the study?²³ (e.g. number of visits, time, travel required, interviews)

All participants (10 in total) will be involved in an individual interview with a follow-up interview commencing 1 month after the first interview. Some participants will also be involved in a focus group interview, these are detailed below:

- a) an individual interview (40-50 minutes)
- b) a follow up individual interview one month after the first interview (20 minutes)
- c) a focus group interview (30 minutes)

The interviews will be semi-structured, with the following being the guiding questions:

1. What has your experience here at this school been like?
2. What are some observations you have made about the community here?
3. Have you heard of the term 'TCK' or 'Third Culture Kid' before?
 - a. if so, do you identify as a 'TCK'?
 - b. if not, what do you identify as?
4. What does the label 'TCK' mean to you?

These questions are of course subject to change, and flexible depending on the participants.

C.4 Does the research involve an international collaborator or research conducted overseas?²⁴

Yes No

If yes, describe any ethical review procedures that you will need to comply with in that country:

None that I know of.

Describe the measures you have taken to comply with these:

N/A

Include copies of any ethical approval letters/ certificates with your application.

C.5 Proposed study dates and duration

Research start date (DD/MM/YY): _1 February 2019 Research end date (DD/MM/YY): 1 January 2022

Fieldwork start date (DD/MM/YY): 1 March 2020 Fieldwork end date (DD/MM/YY): 31 March 2020

C.6. Where will the research be undertaken? (i.e. in the street, on UoL premises, in schools)²⁵

An International School in Jakarta

RECRUITMENT & CONSENT PROCESSES**C.7 How will potential participants in the study be identified, approached and recruited?²⁶**

How will you ensure an appropriately convened sample group in order to meet the aims of the research? Give details for subgroups separately, if appropriate. How will any potential pitfalls, for example dual roles or potential for coercion, be addressed?

The participants I would like to interview would be current students at the international school in Jakarta, Indonesia who would be aged 16 and over, and current faculty members (e.g., teachers, school counsellors, teaching assistants). The aim will be to interview around 10 students, but this can be adjusted to include more or less depending on time and availability.

For the individual interviews, the participants will be selected on a first come first serve basis (convenience sampling), as this will lessen the chances of my personal bias affecting my data).

For my research, I have decided to involve approximately 10 participants (a mixture of mostly students with some faculty) with consideration to the overall feasibility of completing the research within the recommended timeline as well as the possibility of participants withdrawing from the project.

As discussed in the previous section, the participants for the individual interviews will be chosen as part of a convenience sampling. The selection process for this will be made primarily through the school's gatekeepers (the principal and then the teachers) as this will be my first point of contact. If they are willing to briefly

introduce who I am and talk about my research project at their homeroom meetings (which occurs every morning before the start of school) or even during a monthly assembly, then that would be the easiest way of reaching out to prospective participants who would be interested in getting involved. If there is enough interest, I would also be happy to give a brief presentation discussing who I am, why I am here, and what the students could be involved in if they were to participate in my research. If there is more interest in the research than anticipated (if there are more participants than I need) I plan to conduct a short five-minute interview to gain a general idea of who they are so that the groups of participants I do end up choosing aren't overly saturated in any particular way (e.g., if there were to all be Missionary Kids 'MKs' or all 'local').

C.8 Will you be excluding any groups of people, and if so what is the rationale for that?²⁷

Excluding certain groups of people, intentionally or unintentionally may be unethical in some circumstances. It may be wholly appropriate to exclude groups of people in other cases

No groups of people will be excluded.

C.9 How many participants will be recruited and how was the number decided upon?²⁸

It is important to ensure that enough participants are recruited to be able to answer the aims of the research.

I have decided to involve 10 participants (a mixture of mostly students with 1 or 2 faculty members) with consideration to the overall feasibility of completing the research within the recommended timeline as well as the possibility of participants withdrawing from the project.

If you have a formal power calculation please replicate it here.

N/A

Remember to include all advertising material (posters, emails etc) as part of your application

C10 Will the research involve any element of deception?²⁹

If yes, please describe why this is necessary and whether participants will be informed at the end of the study.

No.

C.11 Will informed consent be obtained from the research participants?³⁰

Yes No

If yes, give details of how it will be done. Give details of any particular steps to provide information (in addition to a written information sheet) e.g. videos, interactive material. If you are not going to be obtaining informed consent you will need to justify this.

Prospective participants will be given the information sheet and the informed consent form prior to any data being collected or any interviews being conducted. If they have any further questions that could not be answered on either form, they will be able to contact me either in person or on the university email I have linked on the forms. Should they decide to participate after reading through these forms, they will be asked to sign the informed consent form. The participants will be told that they are able to withdraw from the study at any point in time, even after they have submitted the informed consent form or completed interviews. No reason is required but if the participant is willing to share their reasons for withdrawal, I will include it in my data processing.

If participants are to be recruited from any of potentially vulnerable groups, give details of extra steps taken to assure their protection. Describe any arrangements to be made for obtaining consent from a legal representative.

N/A

Will research participants be provided with a copy of the [Privacy Notice for Research](https://dataprotection.leeds.ac.uk/information-for-researchers)? If not, explain why not. Guidance is available at <https://dataprotection.leeds.ac.uk/information-for-researchers>.

Yes No

Copies of any written consent form, written information and all other explanatory material should accompany this application. The information sheet should make explicit that participants can withdraw from the research at any time, if the research design permits. Remember to use meaningful file names and version control to make it easier to [keep track of your documents](#). Sample information sheets and consent forms are available from the University ethical review webpage at <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/InvolvingResearchParticipants>.

C.12 Describe whether participants will be able to withdraw from the study, and up to what point (eg if data is to be anonymised). If withdrawal is not possible, explain why not.

Any limits to withdrawal, eg once the results have been written up or published, should be made clear to participants in advance, preferably by specifying a date after which withdrawal would not be possible. Make sure that the information provided to participants (eg information sheets, consent forms) is consistent with the answer to C12.

Withdrawal from the study will be possible during the initial interviews, after which they will be given 1 month in between before the second follow-up interview will be conducted. It is expected that if the participant wishes to withdraw for any reason, that they will do so either before or during the second interview. Completion of both interviews will be taken as consent to use their data in the study. However, if they wish to withdraw after the second interview or the focus group interviews, they can do so by writing to my university email (if I am already back in the UK) and their information and details will be withdrawn.

C.13 How long will the participant have to decide whether to take part in the research?³¹

It may be appropriate to recruit participants on the spot for low risk research; however consideration is usually necessary for riskier projects.

I expect the participants to decide whether they would like to partake in the research and sign the form approximately one week after they express interest in participating in the research and read the information sheet.

C.14 What arrangements have been made for participants who might have difficulties understanding verbal explanations or written information, or who have particular communication needs that should be taken into account to facilitate their involvement in the research?³² *Different populations will have different information needs, different communication abilities and different levels of understanding of the research topic. Reasonable efforts should be made to include potential participants who could otherwise be prevented from participating due to disabilities or language barriers.*

All subjects at the international school where the participants are studying are taught through the medium of English, therefore I don't anticipate any participants having issues with language. However, if it is necessary, I will try and locate a translator or use a translating application to facilitate with minor translations. For those who have special communication needs, I will consult the support workers at the school itself and devise a plan that will help them in their participation in my study.

C.15 Will individual or group interviews/ questionnaires discuss any topics or issues that might be sensitive, embarrassing or upsetting, or is it possible that criminal or other disclosures requiring action could take place during the study (e.g. during interviews or group discussions)?³³ *The [information sheet](#) should explain under what circumstances action may be taken.*

Yes No *If yes, give details of procedures in place to deal with these issues.*

Students might find discussion about the social hierarchy or popularity distressing, particularly if they are the subject of exclusion. As I do not personally have professional experience with dealing with this, I will brief the school counsellor prior to the start of the study so that they will be available should any participant need the support or just wish to speak to someone.

C.16 Will individual research participants receive any payments, fees, reimbursement of expenses or any other incentives or benefits for taking part in this research?³⁴

Yes No

If Yes, please describe the amount, number and size of incentives and on what basis this was decided.

RISKS OF THE STUDY

C.17 What are the potential benefits and/ or risks for research participants in both the short and medium-term?³⁵

The students who volunteer to participate in the individual interviews would have already expressed interest in the subject, so they will have the benefit of being able to discuss their experience in confidence. During these interviews, they will be encouraged to speak out about whatever they want to focus on and have the time to personally reflect on these experiences. Their experiences may shed light onto a new perspective on the intercultural kid discourse, one that will be more inclusive than the essentialised notion of the 'TCK'. There might be risk that the students feel distressed or frustrated at the situation they are in. In order to minimise this, questions will not be guided to target these sentiments, and it will be made clear to student participants that they can withdraw or talk to the school counsellor at any point in time during or after the study.

For faculty participants, there is the risk that what they discuss during the individual interviews may have the potential to jeopardise the relationship between the faculty and students, or faculty and the institution itself. However, all faculty participants will be anonymised and no details regarding their subject or position will be disclosed anywhere in the study.

C.18 Does the research involve any risks to the researchers themselves, or people not directly involved in the research? *Eg lone working*³⁶

Yes No

If yes, please describe:

Is a [risk assessment](#) necessary for this research?

If you are unsure whether a risk assessment is required visit

<http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/HealthAndSafetyAdvice> or contact your Faculty Health and Safety Manager for advice.

Yes No If yes, please include a copy of your risk assessment form with your application.

RESEARCH DATA

C.19 Explain what measures will be put in place to protect personal data. E.g. anonymisation procedures, secure storage and coding of data. Any potential for re-identification should be made clear to participants in advance.³⁷ *Please note that research data which appears in reports or other publications is not confidential, even if it is fully anonymised. For a fuller explanation see <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/ConfidentialityAnonymisation>. Further guidance is available at <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/ResearchDataManagement>.*

All electronic data will be stored on the University of Leeds network, accessible only by my log in details. Participants' names will be removed and given pseudonyms in the written reports. Data will also be stored on a personal back up USB which will also be password protected. Any hard copies of the data will be stored in locked drawer.

C.20 How will you make your research data available to others in line with: the University's, funding bodies' and publishers' policies on making the results of publically funded research publically available. Explain the extent to which anonymity will be maintained. (max 200 words) Refer to <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/ConfidentialityAnonymisation> and <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/ResearchDataManagement> for guidance.

NA

C.21 Will the research involve any of the following activities at any stage (including identification of potential research participants)? (Tick as appropriate)

- Examination of personal records by those who would not normally have access
- Access to research data on individuals by people from outside the research team
- Electronic surveys, please specify survey tool:
_____ ([further guidance](#))
- Other electronic transfer of data
- Use of personal addresses, postcodes, faxes, e-mails or telephone numbers
- Use of audio/ visual recording devices (NB this should usually be mentioned in the information for participants)
- FLASH memory or other portable storage devices
Storage of personal data on, or including, any of the following:

- [University approved](#) cloud computing services
- Other cloud computing services
- Manual files
- Private company computers
- Laptop computers
- Home or other personal computers (not recommended; data should be stored on a University of Leeds server such as your M: or N: drive where it is secure and backed up regularly:
<http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/ResearchDataManagement>.)

Unclassified and Confidential University data must be kept on the University servers or in approved cloud services such as Office 365 (SharePoint or OneDrive). The N: Drive or Office 365 should be used for the storage of data that needs to be shared. If Highly Confidential information is kept in these shared storage areas it must be encrypted. Highly Confidential data that is not to be shared should be kept on the M: Drive. The use of non-University approved cloud services for the storage of any University data, including that which is unclassified, is forbidden without formal approval from IT. Further guidance is available via <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/ResearchDataManagement>.

C.22 How do you intend to share the research data? (Indicate with an 'X') Refer to <http://library.leeds.ac.uk/research-data-deposit> for guidance.

- Exporting data outside the European Union
- Sharing data with other organisations
- Publication of direct quotations from respondents
- Publication of data that might allow identification of individuals to be identified
- Submitting to a journal to support a publication
- Depositing in a self-archiving system or an institutional repository
- Dissemination via a project or institutional website
- Informal peer-to-peer exchange
- Depositing in a specialist data centre or archive
- Other, please state: _____
- No plans to report or disseminate the data

C.23 How do you intend to report and disseminate the results of the study? (Indicate with an 'X') Refer to <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/ResearchDissemination> and <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/Publication> for guidance.

- Conference presentation
- Peer reviewed journals
- Publication as an eThesis in the Institutional repository
- Publication on website
- Other publication or report, please state:

- Submission to regulatory authorities
- Other, please state:
_____.
- No plans to report or disseminate the results

C.24 For how long will data from the study be stored? Please explain why this length of time has been chosen.³⁸ Refer to the [RCUK Common Principles on Data Policy](http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/info/71/good_research_practice/106/research_data_guidance/5) and http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/info/71/good_research_practice/106/research_data_guidance/5.

Students: It would be reasonable to retain data for at least 2 years after publication or three years after the end of data collection, whichever is longer.

___2___ years, ___0___ months

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

C.25 Will any of the researchers or their institutions receive any other benefits or incentives for taking part in this research over and above normal salary or the costs of undertaking the research?³⁹

- Yes No

If yes, indicate how much and on what basis this has been decided

C.26 Is there scope for any other conflict of interest?⁴⁰ *For example, could the research findings affect the any ongoing relationship between any of the individuals or organisations involved and the researcher(s)? Will the research funder have control of publication of research findings? Refer to <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/ConflictsOfInterest>.*

Yes No

If so, please describe this potential conflict of interest, and outline what measures will be taken to address any ethical issues that might arise from the research.

C.27 Does the research involve external funding? (Tick as appropriate)

Yes No ***If yes, what is the source of this funding?***

NB: If this research will be financially supported by the US Department of Health and Human Services or any of its divisions, agencies or programmes please ensure the additional funder requirements are complied with. Further guidance is available at <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/FWAcpliance> and you may also contact your [FRIO](#) for advice.

PART D: Declarations

Declaration by Principal Investigators

1. The information in this form is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief and I take full responsibility for it.
2. I undertake to abide by the University's ethical and health & safety guidelines, and the ethical principles underlying good practice guidelines appropriate to my discipline.
3. If the research is approved I undertake to adhere to the study protocol, the terms of this application and any conditions set out by the Research Ethics Committee (REC).
4. I undertake to seek an ethical opinion from the REC before implementing substantial amendments to the protocol.
5. I undertake to submit progress reports if required.
6. I am aware of my responsibility to be up to date and comply with the requirements of the law and relevant guidelines relating to security and confidentiality of patient or other personal data, including the need to register when necessary with the University's Data Protection Controller (further information available via <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/ResearchDataManagement>).
7. I understand that research records/ data may be subject to inspection for audit purposes if required in future.
8. I understand that personal data about me as a researcher in this application will be held by the relevant RECs and that this will be managed according to the principles established in the Data Protection Act.
9. I understand that the REC may choose to audit this project at any point after approval.

Sharing information for training purposes: *Optional – please tick as appropriate:*

- I would be content for members of other Research Ethics Committees to have access to the information in the application in confidence for training purposes. All personal identifiers and references to researchers, funders and research units would be removed.
-

Principal Investigator:

Signature of Principal Investigator:

(This needs to be an actual signature rather than just typed. Electronic signatures are acceptable)

Print name: .Netta Chalermpanupap.. Date: (dd/mm/yyyy):25/11/19

Supervisor of student research:

I have read, edited and agree with the form above.

Supervisor's signature:

(This needs to be an actual signature rather than just typed. Electronic signatures are acceptable)

Print name: Date:(dd/mm/yyyy):

.....

Please submit your form by email to the [FREC or School REC's mailbox](#).

Remember to include any supporting material such as your participant information sheet, consent form, interview questions and recruitment material with your application.

To help speed up the review of your application:

- Answer the questions in plain English, avoid using overly technical terms and acronyms not in common use.
- Answer all the questions on the form, including those with several parts (refer to the [guidance](#) if you're not sure how to answer a question or how much detail is required).
- Include any relevant supplementary materials such as
 - Recruitment material (posters, emails etc)
 - [Sample participant information sheet](#)
 - [Sample consent form](#). Include different versions for different groups of participants eg for children and adults, clearly indicating which is which.
 - Signed [risk assessment](#) (If you are unsure whether a risk assessment is required visit <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/HealthAndSafetyAdvice> or contact your Faculty Health and Safety Manager for advice).

Remember to include use [version control](#) and meaningful file names for the documents.

- If you are not going to be using participant information sheets or consent forms explain why not and how informed consent will be otherwise obtained.
- If you are a student it is essential that you discuss your application with your supervisor.
- Submit a [signed copy](#) of the application, preferably electronically. Students' applications need to be signed by their supervisors as well.

Appendix 10: Participant chart

Freddie	Freddie is a Caucasian male, his passport country is the U.K. He was born in Hong Kong and lived there until the end of 2007. Attended an international primary school and one year of secondary school in Hong Kong. He later moved to Yokohama, Tokyo where he repeated a year and attended High School in Japan. In 2016, he left Japan and moved to the U.K. for university. Identifies as a 'Third Culture Kid'.
Theresa	Theresa is a Caucasian female, her passport country is the U.S.A. She was born in Texas where she stayed for some years before moving to Louisiana. When she was nine years old, she moved to the Netherlands where she attended an international school between the ages of 9 and 18. She moved back to Texas for university and settled in Oklahoma, U.S.A. Identifies as a 'Third Culture Kid'.
Gabriel	Gabriel is a biracial (Black and Caucasian) male, his passport countries are Belgium and Denmark. He was born in Belgium to a Moroccan mother and a Danish father and stayed in Belgium until he was 14 years old. He moved to Luxembourg where he attended an international school until he graduated high school. Afterwards he spent seven months in Denmark before moving to the U.K. for university. Was unsure if he can identify himself as a 'Third Culture Kid' but is inclined to identify as one.
Ben	Ben is a Caucasian male, his passport country is the U.S.A. He was born in Moscow, Russia where he stayed until he was five years old. He later moved to Budapest, Hungary where he stayed for four years at an international school. Then he moved to another international school in Madrid, Spain where he also stayed for another four years. After graduating he moved to Seattle, Washington for university, where he is currently a third-year student. Identifies as a 'Third Culture Kid'.

Clara	<p>Clara is a Caucasian female, her passport countries are the U.S.A. and the U.K. Both her parents are Caucasian British (her father has dual-American citizenship from his first marriage to a U.S. national). Clara moved to the U.S.A. and attended five different international schools. She moved to the U.K. and attended a non-international secondary school. Then moved to France and attended a small religious international school. Moved to Nigeria and attended a compound international school. Moved to Houston, Texas and attended an international school. Moved to Paris, France. Moved to The U.K. and attended a local sixth form. Stayed in the U.K. to attend university and continued to stay after graduating. She intends to settle in the U.K. Clara identifies as a 'Third Culture Kid'.</p>
Amari	<p>Amari is a Caucasian female, her passport country is the U.S.A. She was born in San Francisco and attended a small public elementary school there before moving to an inner city urban public middle school. She then moved to Beijing, China for 7th and 8th grade. Moved to Mumbai, India for 9th and 10th grade. Moved to Moscow, Russia for 11th and 12th grade. Then moved to the U.S. for college and went 'home' to Russia (where her younger sister and parents still lived) for two years to visit. She identifies as a 'Third Culture Kid'.</p>
Vincent	<p>Vincent is a biracial (Asian and Caucasian) male, her passport country is the U.S.A. She was born to a Chinese American mother and a Caucasian American father (both New York natives). He moved to Indonesia and attended a Christian international school that catered towards missionary families where he stayed until he was six years old. Then he moved to Manila, Philippines and attended an international school there. When he was in 11th grade, he spent a semester abroad in the U.S. in a low-income public High School. After graduating from high school he moved to Texas, U.S. for university. Now he is in Taiwan teaching at an international school as a high school maths teacher. He identifies as a 'Third Culture Kid'.</p>

Mark	<p>Mark is a Caucasian male, his passport country is the U.S.A. He was born in Texas and lived on various U.S. Air Force bases throughout the U.S. He attended approximately 12 different schools throughout his life and has moved houses 41 times. While he was a high school student, he moved to the Philippines and attended an international school there. He later returned to the U.S. as an adult where he is now settled. Identifies as ‘Accultural’.</p>
Jason	<p>Jason is an Asian male, his passport country is Indonesia. He was born in Jakarta, Indonesia where he lived until age 11. He attended a school that had a dual curriculum system that followed the national curriculum that also embedded an international curriculum stream. When he was 15 years old, he moved to Singapore where he attended an international school that was mostly attended by Singaporean nationals. He identifies as a ‘Global Citizen’.</p>
Maya	<p>Maya is a Caucasian female, her passport country is the U.S.A. She grew up in San Francisco before moving to Beijing, China where she attended a small international school for two years. She then moved to Mumbai, India where she attended an American international school for two years. Then moved to Moscow, Russia for four years where she attended an international ‘Anglo American’ school. She returned to the U.S. for university and she is currently living there with her boyfriend.</p>
Kelsey	<p>Kelsey is a Caucasian female, her passport country is the U.S.A. She was born to a Caucasian American mother and a Turkish father. She moved to Tokyo, Japan, where she attended two different international schools over the span of six years. She then moved to London and attended a non-international boarding school (but did not board). Then she moved to Doha, Qatar where she attended an American international school for three years. After graduating high school, she moved to the U.S. for a year to re-gain residency in order to qualify for in-state college tuition. She was then employed at a desk job for a few years before transitioning into international outreach and admissions for a university. She now travels frequently throughout Asia for her work. Maya identifies as a ‘Third Culture Kid’.</p>