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Diversity and dissonance: a narrative exploration of adolescent transcultural identity construction within the International School

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DIVERSITY AND DISSONANCE:

A NARRATIVE EXPLORATION OF ADOLESCENT TRANSCULTURAL IDENTITY
CONSTRUCTION WITHIN THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

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A Thesis

Presented in

Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

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BY

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my mom, Carolyn Conrad, who first taught me the joy of learning.

From the sunshine-filled, homeschool days of endless reading, poem recitations and history

enactments to the shared shrieks of excitement at my college acceptance, you were my first and

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Abstract

This qualitative research study explores how the analysis of identity narratives written by transcultural individuals who attended international high schools can strengthen researchers' and international school teachers' understanding of how to better assist this population in negotiating their multicultural identities. This study examines a sample of eight narratives written by adult transculturals now in their twenties who attended high school at the International Christian School of Vienna (ICSV). The analysis of the identity narratives also aims to shed light on how the power structures present in the international school affect transculturals ongoing identity construction and perception of their agency and place on the global stage. The resulting research paper considers the effects that experience had on shaping their current understanding of their cultural identity. It also explores how the interplay of identity, power dynamics and rhetorical/discursive practices within the international school can aid adolescent transculturals in better understanding the construction, negotiation, and ongoing transformation of their multi-faceted identities. This project draws upon the intersecting arenas of intercultural communication identity theories, critical rhetorical/discourse analysis, and the rhetorical impact of narrative.

Keywords: transculturals, third culture kids, third culture, international schools, multicultural education, intercultural communication, identity negotiation, identity transformation, rhetorical discourse practices.

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Introduction

"The world is my country; all mankind are my brethren" – Thomas Paine

The Global Context of Transculturals

Rising immigration and ever-advancing technology continue to increase worldwide cultural knowledge, exposing people across the globe to customs and mindsets previously remote. Like never before, people must decide to what extent we will welcome the influx of new ideas and embrace the "Other" amongst us. Despite the rapid rise of globalism in the 1970's (McDonald, 2010**),** recent events such as the Brexit, President Trump's immigration bans, and the growing popularity of far-right parties across Europe reveal an increasingly nationalistic response to the world as a global village. Remnants of colonialist thought continue to subtly fortify "the myth of cultural essentialism," emphasizing "the division between self and the Other" as a "natural and therefore unproblematic fact of life" (Kostogriz & Doecke, 2007, p. 2). Yet, because our perception of groups and their identities is ever-shifting and contextually dependent (Cohen, 2010), when we are exposed to and taught to healthily communicate with those different from us, we too can learn to balance our own nationalistic tendencies. Within this current context, international schools and their surrounding global communities have a chance to swing the pendulum back towards "a healthy balance of diversity and unity," that reaches "beyond the national" (Noddings, 2013, p. 14). If strategically empowered, the growing population of transculturals (Willis et al., 1994), also known as third culture kids (TCKs), can stand as a bold challenge to cultural essentialism as they help facilitate global dialogue and distill fear of the "Other."

Yet, before they can act as cultural mediators, transculturals must first learn to carefully navigate the complexities of communication in and between diverse cultures to give agency to

their own multifaceted identities. Also called "global nomads" (McCaig, 1992) and third culture

kids (Pollock and Van Reken, 2001) in western countries and *kaigaishijo* in Japan (Fry, 2007),

transculturals are often the children of military personnel, missionaries, or international business

men and women. Pollock and Van Reken (2001) define third culture kids (TCKs) as those who

have lived a large part of their formative years in a culture or cultures other than their parents'

home culture, developing "a sense of relationship to all of the cultures while not having full

ownership in any" (p. 19). Because they are highly mobile and thoroughly cross-cultural,

transculturals become accustomed at a young age to continually transitioning between diverse

cultural groups and environments. Unlike many immigrant children, most third culture kids are

expected to return to their home culture at some point, and yet their lack of identification with a

single culture can set them up to be perpetual foreigners, even in their own country of citizenship

(Cockburn, 2002, p. 479). The third culture refers to the in-between world where TCKs are most

comfortable, a world neither fully their parents' nor their host culture(s), but rather one they

create with other members of the international community (Pollock and Van Reken, p. 6).

   In light of continuing globalization, transnational children such as third culture kids are

increasingly exposed to situations where their home cultural values and practices are oppressed

by the dominant culture they are living in, which can affect their ability to transition and balance

their multiple cultural experiences. Because intercultural communicators are – "without any

exception" – affected by both subtle and severe types of power at work (Miike, 2014, p. 113), the

third culture experience frequently leads to a heightened need to learn how to negotiate and

transform one's identity within hegemonic structures. Raised in multicultural environments,

exposed to the stereotypes of numerous cultural groups, and often incompatible to the mold of

any one culture, third culture kids can frequently experience intercultural interactions that question or threaten their identities.

Myself as Researcher

I met my first transcultural student when I moved to Austria in 2006 to teach high school English at the International Christian School of Vienna (ICSV). Before moving overseas, I attended a two-week cross-cultural immersion training which included an introductory seminar into the make-up of our future students, the majority of whom qualified as transculturals. I first heard the term TCK that summer of 2005, and for the next four years, I taught transcultural students from more than forty different nations. It became apparent to me that, given their early international exposure as children of diplomats, missionaries and international business men and women, these students often had an expansive grasp of cross-cultural affairs, flexibility in moving between varied communication practices, and a vital appreciation for social, cultural, and ethnic differences. Soon, I became intrigued by how to best meet the educational, emotional and psychological needs of this unique population in my roles as English teacher, class sponsor, and student mentor.

It wasn't until I taught 10th Grade World Literature at ICSV that I began to see how the unique experiences of transculturals – so often perceived as a gift – also made many of my students uncomfortable with cultural labels of any kind: they didn't see themselves fitting into any of the subscribed boxes. In the English curriculum, I began to experiment with the effect of personal story telling on their identity negotiation. In the opening unit of their sophomore year, I asked students to write a personal narrative explaining how a childhood incident had shaped their current identity as a fifteen or sixteen-year-old. After four years of grading this assignment, it was impossible to miss the unifying thread: even as teenagers, my students recognized their

cross-cultural experiences as individual and formative in shaping their personal identities and world views. Yet, writing the identity narratives also left them with numerous questions as to who they would be as they left high school and moved to a new host culture or returned to the home culture many of them knew only through furloughs and vacations.

After I left ICSV, I spent five years teaching English literature in an American public high school, and the contrast between the identity development of my American and international students continued to intrigue me. I chose to focus my research and thesis on adolescent TCK's examination of their layered and often fragmented identities, and to expand my knowledge base from mainly literary and educational to rhetorical construction of identity within intercultural communications. Going forward, I hope to continue to work with international students and find practical ways to incorporate rhetorical identity negotiation tools into current school practices.

The Role of the International School

Though school plays a largely formative role in the lives of most children, the international school holds the unique responsibility of ensuring a consistent environment and supportive community for the transcultural child and her family. On a global scale, their impact is hugely significant. "Matthews (1989 - McLachlan) describes the importance of international schools on education worldwide as being "an influence equivalent to a nation of three or four million where 90% of students go on to higher education" (p. 24). Considering the unique communication and leadership skills of TCK students, clearly international schools play an important role in developing the world's future leaders. On a more individualistic scale, many studies show that these schools serve as a "safe haven" for internationally mobile families, often providing the only stable environment these children might experience in their formative years

(McLachlan, 2005; Akram, 1995 – McLachlan; Cockburn, 2002; Fail et al., 2004; Ittel and Sisler, 2012). Not only can the often-formulaic nature of an international school's schedule and curriculum provide ease of transition from one country to another, usually regardless of its geographic placement, these schools can – and should – act as a stopgap of protection for the TCK by recognizing stressors such as cliques, personal anxiety, and bullying. Cockburn (2002) emphasizes the need for schools to conduct "whole picture" assessments and support of the TCK child. Ittel and Sisler (2012) call for educational training for teachers and staff that strengthens the TCK student's self-efficacy (p. 491).

As well as providing support, the existing literature claims that the third culture of the international school itself often acts as the strongest influence in shaping a TCK's cultural habits and outwardly expressed identities. While attending international schools, transcultural students learn what Pierre Bourdieu (1977) describes as "habitus," or the thoughts, beliefs and understanding that make up our world. Because our socialization creates our habitus, and the international school remains one of the only consistent sources of socialization for the TCK, transculturals often view the school community as the truest reflection of their personal cultural identity. A third culture kid's habitus may be most shaped by the international school's characteristics of speech, humor and world outlook. Often, the school's social and cultural expectations stand in stark contrast to those of both the home and host countries of the third culture child (Bourdieu, 1977). Transculturals who attend international schools are often expected to allow their home culture to shift from that of a dominant role to that of a subordinate role in their school lives, sometimes causing identity confusion and fragmentation lasting into their adult lives (Schaetti, 1996).

Obviously, the implications for each transcultural student largely depend on the specific makeup of the international school he or she attends. Though many international schools structure themselves on the societal norms of the dominant culture, it widely varies as to which culture dominates. Originally created to ensure a "western" education for the children of expats and diplomats, now many international schools serve a local population who want to ensure competitive university opportunities for their children in western countries (Wechsler, 2017). International schools today offer varying degrees of culturally-rooted programs, from "imported curriculum… in nationally-affiliated international school[s]" to dual programs which offer a blend of host and national resources (Hayden and Thompson, 2008, pp. 75). There are also a growing number of "internationally oriented – rather than nationally-oriented" schools whose curriculum aims to create "global citizens" (Hayden and Thompson, 2008, pp. 76). However, the definition of "global citizen" still carries a decidedly western bent. Even though 46% of schools claim their "learning approach is internationally oriented," 42% of international schools worldwide offer a British curriculum and 23% offer an American one (Glass, 2014, p. 1). Clearly, the effect that an international school as on its students' habitus will essentially rely on the curriculum, staff and student makeup of that particular school. This lack of consistency and accountability across international schools allows for the possibility of racial, ethnic and cultural hegemony to exist in individual schools worldwide. Hegemony, understood as the use of one's social or cultural dominance to wield power over others, can appear anywhere there is an imbalance of power, and directly affects the healthy negotiation and transformation of transcultural identities.

Context of the International Christian School of Vienna

The International Christian School of Vienna (ICSV) in Austria was first founded as an American curriculum-based school in 1986 for the children of American missionaries serving populations across Europe, largely behind the Iron Curtain in Eastern Europe (Factsheet: International Schools in Vienna, 2017). In 1991, after the USSR fell, the school opened its doors to the children of American expats and the international business community (International Christian School of Vienna, 2017). Due to Vienna's centrality in Europe and its role as host to one of the four UN headquarters in the world, the city offers a diverse population, with twenty-three percent of their citizens identified as foreign-born as of 2015 (Franz, 2015). Currently, the International Christian School of Vienna (ICSV) – one of ten international schools in Vienna – serves a population of 285 students representing approximately fifty countries (International Christian School of Vienna, 2017). Despite its densely diverse student population, because ICSV is an American international school, eighty-two percent of the current sixty-one faculty and staff members are American, seven percent are Austrian, and eleven percent identify as other (International Christian School of Vienna, 2017). Though Americans are the minority within the student population, the majority representation shifts away from non-American students of color since the faculty and staff are largely white Americans who identify as Christians. Therefore, the curriculum and school culture of ICSV stands as decidedly white, Christian and American.

ISCV's location in Austria in this modern era of rising nationalistic sentiment also served to largely separate the school from the general Austrian culture. During the time the narrative authors in this survey attended ICSV and continuing until now, the FPO political party, an extreme right-wing party that publicly expresses anti-foreign sentiment, has rapidly grown in power and became the third most popular party in the most recent 2017 election (Witte and

Beck, 2017). In my experience as a teacher at ICSV from 2004 through 2010, the school made intentional choices to separate itself from the Austrian culture, to prevent student exposure to this kind of anti-foreign sentiment. However, as evident within the findings of this research study, the students of color at ICSV were very much exposed to and effected by Vienna's nationalistic mindset.

Research Goals and Questions

This qualitative research study explored how the analysis of identity narratives written by transcultural adults who attended international high schools can strengthen researchers' and international school teachers' understanding of how to better assist these students in negotiating their transnational identities. The analysis of the identity narratives also aimed to shed light on how the power structures present in the international school affected third culture kids' (TCKs) ongoing identity construction and perception of their agency and place on the global stage. The study explored how the interplay of identity, power dynamics and rhetorical/discursive practices within the international school can aid third culture kids in better understanding the construction, negotiation, and ongoing transformation of their transcultural identities. Specifically, I ask three research questions:

> RQ1: How does the rhetorical/discursive construction of identity reveal the ways in which transcultural students experience identity crises due to the clashing of diverse cultures and pressure to assimilate to the dominant culture within the international school?

> RQ2: How do the hegemony and power relations embedded in the international school experience shape the multicultural identity formation, negotiation, and ongoing transformation of transculturals as they grow into adults?

> RQ3: How do the personal interactions that occur within the international school serve to contest the power relations between the cultural majority and minority students, and thereby shape the identities of transcultural students?

Significance of Study

This research study has the potential to assist the intercultural communications, rhetoric and writing, and international education fields in further understanding the complexity of life as a transcultural individual. Because the third culture in which they exist qualifies as "neither the home nor the host culture," meaning they live fully as "other," TCKs are constantly aware of the weight of their own difference (Pollock and Van Reken, 2001, p. 20). Although burdened with the extra responsibility of negotiating the schemas of multiple cultures along with their own composite identities, TCKs are also often gifted in playing the role of cultural broker, forming a bridge of understanding between discordant cultures.

Even though relatively little research currently exists which represent the number of third culture kids worldwide, migrants under the age of twenty number 34.8 million globally (Mobbs, p. 1), and the number of students attending international schools has risen to over 4.3 million in 2016 (Glass, p. 1). The international trend continues to rapidly rise, with 8,257 English speaking international schools worldwide – a 41.5% growth in the past five years – and student enrollment up 45.9% in those same five years. By 2024, ISC Research Global Report estimates 6.9 million students will be enrolled in over 12,000 international schools (Glass, p. 1). Though not all migrant children or international school students qualify as third culture kids, many do, ensuring that the number of worldwide TCKs continues to dramatically increase.

Because transculturals live in "a place in-between," "a world textured with threads of changing cultural contexts," they face the challenge of integrating a multiplicity of influences into a singular self (McCaig 52). Both the intercultural communication and multicultural education fields stand well-positioned to support TCKs in learning to navigate and integrate their cross-cultural lives, allowing them to "[impose] coherence where there is none" (Pavlenko and

Blackledge, p. 18). This research project aimed to address these needs through specific rhetorical factors that can help lead to the healthy identity development of third culture individuals. Identity narratives can offer transculturals a distinctive means of resolving the tension of their divergent influences. Applying identity narrative theories, critical discourse analysis, and acculturation theories to analysis of selected identity narratives written by transculturals who attended international schools could help provide further insight into the individual identity formation of third culture kids. Teachers of transculturals can also benefit from the information presented in this study as well as the model of using identity narratives in their classrooms to better support the identity growth and transformation of their students. As globalization accelerates the proliferation of international schools and transculturals worldwide, the need for increased, varied and creative means of reaching and supporting this population also rises. This study endeavored to offer one approach of achieving the support these transculturals need.

This study first reviewed the past and current literature on the role of the international school, acculturation and identity theories, critical discourse theories and the rhetorical function of narrative from a blended perspective of intercultural communication, rhetorical analysis and international education (Chapter One). Thereafter, I applied a qualitative approach to a research study in which adults transculturals wrote narratives explicating how their international school experience affected their cultural identity (Chapter Two). The results of this analysis (Chapter Three) and their implications and limitations (Chapter Four) either confirm the findings of past research or introduce future arenas of study needed to assist transculturals in achieving healthy identity negotiation and transformation.

Chapter One

Literature Review

Since this study bridges the fields of intercultural communication, rhetoric and discourse, and international education, it was foremost important to highlight the pertinent theories and terms from each discipline in order to establish context. In the following paragraphs, I first address the role of the international school in forming the identity of the transcultural student, and then delineate the various intercultural communication theories of identity with which I analyzed the TCK narratives. From there, I clarify the methods of critical discourse theories used within the analysis, and finish by elucidating the impact that rhetorical narratives can have upon transcultural identity negotiation and transformation.

Identity Negotiation through Communication

Because the self-view of third culture individuals is formed by diverse influences and negotiated and transformed through continually shifting communication approaches, understanding their own multi-layered identities often both fascinates and frustrates TCKs. Conquergood (1991) reminds us of the dynamic and fluid state of identity negotiation: as individuals move to new physical and cultural locations, their identities also require renegotiation. In light of the frequent boundary crossing required of third culture individuals, Fail, Thompson and Walker (2004) explain that TCK identity development perpetually fluctuates as their "identity and self-concept are constantly being challenged" (p. 323). Exchanges with others are central to that challenge. Ting-Toomey (2005) asserts that interaction with other people both defines and negotiates culture for individuals, which highlights the necessity of healthy communication approaches for third culture kids as they navigate multiple cultures. TCKs can develop a hyper sensitivity to communication styles as they learn to constantly alter

the way they communicate every time they "cross" cultures, sometimes simply by stepping outside their family home into the host culture. Mendoza, Haluualani, and Drzewieka (2000) agree that "through communication, ethnicity is re-constituted over and over again, regulated, and made to appear authentic, natural, and continuous" (p. 421). Obviously, the barrage of messages inherent in fluctuating communication styles and layers of cultural expectations can negatively affect the healthy identity negotiation of third culture individuals if they are not able to make sense of the conflicting communication styles in which they participate. Yet, if they can achieve a sense of self-balance, Pollock and Van Reken (2001) contend that TCKs are able to become "cultural chameleons" (p. 11), transcultural individuals who can fluidly shift between cultural codes as needed.

Historical Limitations for Transcultural Identity Transformation

Though the field of intercultural communications has long worked to define the desired aims of healthy identity transformation within a multicultural existence, much of the terminology does not adequately address the complexity of the search for identity transformation experienced by transculturals. Heavily influenced by lingering colonial thought, intercultural communications experts initially portrayed the effects of intercultural living as profoundly negative. Theories encouraged those crossing cultures to completely assimilate into the host culture – usually depicted as western (Stonequist, 1937; Park, 1950; Oberg, 1954; Gullahorn and Gullahorn, 1963; and McFee, 1968). Not until Adler's (1975) concept of the "multicultural man" did researchers recognize the adaptation skills required in cultural transition as crucial qualities needed for self-growth. Adler's (1975) theory posited that cross-cultural individuals can learn to adapt themselves, in habits, mental scheme and identity, as they shift between cultures. Adler's notions influenced others to develop ideals of cross-cultural identity transformation, such

as the "cultural chameleon," a transcultural who can blend seamlessly into any environment (Pollock and Van Reken,1991; 1999; McCaig, 96; and Downie et. al, 2006). As the first and best-known TCK-specific scholars, Pollock and Van Reken's (1991) terminology continues to heavily influence TCK research. Yet, these theories fail to address how power imbalances affect the cross-cultural experience and one's ability to transform as desired. In Sparrow's (2000) study, minority students viewed the construction an individual identity as "a luxury available only to those in dominant social categories" (p. 394) For third culture students who attended international schools, Pollock and Van Reken's (1991) ideal of a "cultural chameleon" ignores the racial and cultural stigmas placed on them by dominant group members in their home, host and school cultures.

In response to these limitations, Stuart Hall (1991) and Bhabha (1994) developed theories of "hybridity," emphasizing how agency can be given to marginalized cross-cultural communicators who must rely upon varying pieces of their existing cultural identities in instances of contestation with dominant group members. Building from these concepts, Kim (2008) developed her theory of Intercultural Personhood, which suggests that the desired goal for transculturals is open-minded co-existence. Kim describes the "cross-borrowing of identities" not as an "act of 'surrendering' one's personal and cultural integrity," but as an "act of respect for cultural differences that leaves neither the lender nor the borrower deprived" (p. 360). In contrast to Pollock and Van Reken's (2001) focus on the third culture composed of other like-minded TCKs, Intercultural Personhood attempts to connect transculturals to the world around them. Instead of striving to "transcend" or disconnect from the reality of the varied cultures in which they live and bond only with other TCKs, theories of hybridity and Intercultural Personhood offer ways in which the transcultural – marginalized or otherwise – can fully engage

in each culture. Though Kim's (2008) theory of Intercultural Personhood acts as a helpful

narrative analysis tool, as fleshed out in the section above, ultimately, it relies on the

transcultural's ability to persevere, maintaining the strength and openness to continually adapt. In

contrast, Breinig and Losch's (2002) concept of transdifference allows for consideration of the

"mutual overlapping of contradictory aspects of belonging" inherent in transcultural existence

(Kalscheuer, 2009, p. 186). Most pertinently, transdifference allows for "moments of ambiguity,

indecision and contradiction while constructing difference" (Losch, 2005, p. 27). In light of the

frequency with which transculturals encounter contrasting cultural demands, transdifference acts

as a possible realistic method of attaining identity transformation.

Critical Rhetorical/Discourse Theories and Identity

When viewed through a critical lens, it becomes clear that transculturals are themselves

sites of contestation who, at times, find themselves battling the dominant powers of their host

culture to achieve personal agency. Starosta (2011) described his own hybrid identity as "a place

replete with hierarchies and domination and hegemony" (p. 95), while Nakayama (2012)

revealed that his identity is inextricably linked to communication and the way the dominant

society "represents his interests" (p. 21). Stuart Hall (1996) and Bhabha (1994) both

demonstrated how cultural boundaries become places of contestation when dominant powers and

individual agency wrestle for control over transculturals' expression of their identity. As a

response to the difficulty of claiming agency while living under hegemonic influence, Ting-

Toomey (2005) views identity negotiation as the core tool used to communicate resourcefully in

intercultural encounters. As Blommaert and Bulcaen (2000) assert, both the conscious and

unconscious choices made within discourse speak to the "struggles over normativity, attempts at

control, and resistance against regimes of power" (p. 449). Because third culture individuals

often move in and out of dominant and marginalized positions of power by shifting from one

culture to another, it is necessary to consider the hegemonic influences within their interactions

of contestation. Gee and Green's (1998) four analytic procedures consider the interwoven

characteristics found within all discursive texts, which include the building of identities,

semiotics, worlds and connections. Though all four characteristics exist within each personal

narrative, this paper narrows in on the socially-situated identity built by TCK authors as they

"assemble situated meanings about what [aspects of their] identities are relevant to the

interaction" of contestation at hand (Gee and Green, p. 139). All forthcoming theories used to

examine the personal narratives are viewed from a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective on

identity building.

It is beneficial to this project to illuminate several relevant concepts from varying

ideologies. The poststructuralist field reveals an interconnected relationship between language

and identity, as Blackledge and Pavlenko (2004) explain, "on the one hand, languages supply the

terms and other linguistic means by which identities are expressed, and, on the other, the

linguistic resources individuals use to index their identities" (p. 249). Also helpful from the

poststructuralist view, Cullum-Swan (1994) mandates that all reading of texts should be

conducted from the given cultural perspective, rather than from solely a western or Greek-

Roman perspective. This necessary widening of focus allows narrative analysis to highlight each

individual voice, not just the cultures that might have dominance in analytical fields. In the same

vein, critical discourse analysis' emphasis on power allows for examination of which cultures in

transcultural' own personal experiences may have taken domination over the others, in both the

content and expression of the narrative. As previously discussed in the section on the role of

international schools, Pierre Bourdieu's (1991) idea of habitus can illuminate how each narrative

reveals common and contrasting perspectives on the international school dispositions. Fairclough's (1995) explanation of ideological domination and Gee's (1996) definition of situated identities also help to augment the critical discourse perspective and ensure the acknowledgement of the levels of power at play within transculturals' lives. Finally, Conle's (2005) idea of resonance sheds light on the process of people's experiential stories meeting each other, and can better elucidate the areas of commonality within transcultural identity differences (as cited in Phillion et al.)

Achieving and Maintaining Healthy Transcultural Identity

Identity narratives can reveal how cross-cultural communication functions as one of the key challenges to achieving and maintaining healthy transcultural identities. Orbe's (1998) co-cultural theory of communication, Kim's (2008) theory of intercultural personhood and Evanoff's (2006) ideas of a two-sided adaptation model can shed light on the participants' chosen approaches to communication and the level of stability they possess in their third culture identities. Orbe's (1998) co-cultural theory relies upon the premise that dominant groups create their privilege by developing communication structures catering to their perspective. In response, marginalized group members "strategically adopt certain communication behaviors," consisting of "assertive, non-assertive and aggressive approaches," to "negotiate the oppressive dominant structures" (Jun, p. 331). Orbe also explores whether the individual's goal regarding the dominant culture is to separate, accommodate or assimilate, and constructs nine categories that combine the communication approaches with the individual's preferred outcome (p. 110). To achieve Kim's (2008) idea of intercultural personhood, transculturals must learn "effective interpersonal communication between newcomers and the people in the host culture" (Kristjansdottir and DeTurk, 2013, p. 196). Kim then alleges that if individuals do not eventually

attain intercultural personhood, they are often afflicted with "a negative self-image, low-self-esteem, and social isolation" (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003, p. 372). In contrast to Kim's theory, Evanoff's (2006) ideas of two-sided adaptation asserts that the host culture members must accommodate the newcomers as well, "adjust[ing] themselves to the presence of sojourners in their midst" (p. 5). Therefore, unlike Intercultural Personhood, two-sided adaptation removes the sole responsibility for cultural adaptation from the transcultural individual and allows for healthy identity negotiation to be achieved more easily.

Rhetorical Functions and Impact of Narrative on Identity

Storytelling has long been acknowledged as a key means of achieving self-discovery, and all cultures have developed some form of communication to share the narrative of their daily experience, from the pictorial representations of cavemen to the oral traditions of bards, to the onslaught of personal blogs online today. According to Cortazzi (1994), personal narrative has garnered the attention of contemporary researchers across such varied fields as linguistics, education, psychology, sociology, and anthropology. Not only can narratives benefit diverse disciplines, Blackledge and Pavlenko (2001) state that they also have the ability to allow individuals to use "their linguistic resources to reposition themselves, reimagining and refashioning their social, ethnic, and gender identities" (p. 251). The beauty of this thought is that the process of writing life stories can actually empower people to rewrite their position and even identity, first on paper and then enacted in reality.

Within the hegemonic frameworks often present in transcultural existence, agency can be created and claimed through the counter-ideological discourse of narratives, as seen in practices of counter storytelling (Yoso, 2006), rhetorics of difference (Flores, 1996), and vernacular discourse (Ono and Sloop, 1995). Nelson (2015) defines counter storytelling as "the intentional

sharing of co-cultural stories and experiences" to give voice to marginalized peoples and to fight racism "by restoring the humanity of the oppressed" (p. 77). Basically, counter storytelling acts as a literary activism which challenges dominant racial ideologies, and therefore is quite like Flores' (1996) concept of creating identity through a "rhetoric of difference," which allows marginalized voices to establish their own "self-named identity" (p. 145). Ono and Sloop's (1995) vernacular discourse also examines the rhetoric of oppressed communities, but "is not necessarily always positive or counterhegemonic," centering instead on daily interactions in order to "more fully articulate cultural spaces" (Mudambi, p. 45). Griffin (1994) acknowledges the alienation inherent in multicultural living and points to rhetoric as the solution. She claims that if "identities can be formed and reformed through rhetoric, then a continual critique of alienation and freedom from alienation also are possible" (p. 309). The rhetorical space of identity narratives can therefore allow transculturals to create their own counter-hegemonic discourses, assisting them in achieving healthy identity transformation.

After an extensive review of the literature, clearly many researchers have examined the links between transcultural lives and its effects on healthy identity negotiation and transformation. However, there remains a distinct shortage of research on the usage of rhetorical space as a tool in assisting the international school population of transculturals in their efforts to achieve identity transformation. This study sought to explore how identity narratives can offer the rhetorical space for third culture individuals to reflect upon interactions of contestation, address the hegemony at play, and claim agency for their own hybrid identities. The role and effectiveness of the third culture purported to exist in international schools among transculturals was also examined and challenged. In the following chapter, I describe the methods employed to conduct this IRB approved qualitative research study.

Chapter Two

Methodology

Research Design

For this research study, I first asked twenty of my former international school students who qualify as transculturals to write identity narratives. The eight transculturals who agreed, now in their twenties, were directed to write a narrative specifically centered on an experience that took place during their time at the International Christian School of Vienna (ICSV). The study then considered the effects that experience had on shaping the transculturals' current understanding of their cultural identities. I then analyzed the identity narratives to explore the third culture individuals' process of identity negotiation and transformation within their international school experience. The study relied on Critical Discourse Analysis methods (Wodak, 1995), as well as Cortazzi's (1994), Blackledge & Pavlenko (2001) and Bamberg's (2012) approaches to narrative analysis, and Gee's (1999) concept of situated identities. The total data collected consisted of the eight identity narratives and a demographic survey pertaining to students' family and background, international school experience, and narrative writing process.

In total, I collected eight identity narratives of a minimum of two pages in length, in which participants described an experience during their time in the international school that shaped their understanding of their own cultural identity in some way. The following describes the IRB approved process of my data collection and analysis.

Participants

This study limited participants to third culture individuals between 20-29 years of age who are alumni of ICSV, the international school in Vienna, Austria where I taught. These parameters were set to benefit from the insight of post-adolescence as the participants looked

back on their experience as high-schoolers in an international school. The student population of

ICSV was especially relevant to the study's objectives in that it included a culturally and

ethnically diverse representation of transnational, third culture kids who graduated from an

American international school. Therefore, all participants were fluent in English and able to

compose personal narratives about their complex international experiences in English. Almost all

students who attended ICSV are technically considered third culture kids since they spent their

developmental high school years in a culture different from their parents' home culture, thereby

creating a "third culture" of their own with other international students. Those few students from

Austria who chose to attend ICSV but did not spend their developmental years in a country other

than their parents' home country were excluded from this survey.

Data Collection

The data collected consisted of final drafts of identity narratives written by third culture

individuals, and demographic survey answers pertaining to students' family and background,

languages and cultures, experience at the international school, and process of writing the identity

narrative. The data collected from each participant was analyzed from a Critical Discourse

Analysis perspective alongside identity negotiation and cross-cultural adaptation theories.

Narratives were also considered for their ability to act as a rhetorical safe space in which third

culture individuals could fully express their complex identities.

Initially, I individually contacted alumni of the International Christian School of Vienna

(ICSV) through its alumni Facebook page, of which I am a current member, by sending a

Facebook message inviting them to join the research study. I attached the Adult Consent Form,

explaining the project and asking them to respond via Facebook messenger if they would like to

be part of the study. I then followed up on Facebook messenger with those who agreed to

participate in the research study and set up a time to call them. During the call, I read over the

Consent Form, answered any questions they had, and assessed their understanding of the

research task. After the participants granted their formal consent to participate, I read over the

Writing Task and identity narrative examples, answering any questions and clarifying the task as

needed. The call lasted between 30-45 minutes. Immediately after, I documented their coded

participant number with the date and time of their given consent in my secure records.

Upon completion of their identity narratives, participants Facebook messaged or emailed

me their finished product and I responded in kind, thanking them for their participation and

asking them to complete a short demographic survey online via Qualtrics. In all, the participants

were given one month to write the identity narrative. The writing of the narrative itself took

approximately 5-10 hours to write over as many days in the month as the participant needed, and

the online survey took approximately 15 minutes to complete.

The participants received a Writing Task with their purpose for writing and directions to

consider the effects of their international school experience on their identity. They were also

provided five sample excerpts from personal narratives. Though the narrative examples do not

respond to the exact prompts the participants addressed, they did provide a variety of narratives

written by adult third culture kids, diverse in both authorial background and writing styles. The

writing task and narrative examples were essential to this project in order to guide the alumni in

constructing personal narratives set in the international school context and examine the complex

issues of identity fragmentation and acculturation necessary for critical and rhetorical identity

negotiation analysis.

The demographic survey completed online via Qualtrics provided the details needed to

connect their specific transnational experience to identity negotiation, acculturation, and critical

perspective theories. The survey asked about the participants' and parents' home countries and languages, their international experiences, their time at ICSV, and the process of writing the identity narrative.

Data Analysis

Once I received each narrative, I ensured the confidentiality of all participants using a simple coding system of numbering each narrative in random order from 1-20. I then marked which narrative number belonged to which participant in a separate, confidential document.

To analyze the narratives, I relied upon the overarching structure of Wodak's (1995) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which allows for investigation of narratives on the textual (descriptive), contextual (processing) and interpretive (social) levels (Fairclough, 1995). Within that framework, I applied acculturation theories, such as Gee's (1996) situated identities, Orbe's (1998) Co-Cultural theory, Kim's (2012) theory of Intercultural Personhood, Cockburn's (2002" discussion of interactions of contestation, DuBois' (1903) double-consciousness, Conle's (1996) theory of resonance, Bourdieu's (1991) theory of habitus, Breinig and Losch's (2002) transdifference and Kalscheuer's (2014) theory of the third space to the analysis.

Using an online qualitive analysis database called DeDoose, I coded the eight narratives for each of the theories above, and took note of the patterns which emerged. As I coded, I continually asked which of the above theories the TCK participants reported relying upon as high school students. I also studied their current self-reflection as adults, whether or not they had achieved intercultural personhood, and if so, through which means. From there, I examined the patterns in relation to my initial research questions to develop broad categories of my findings.

Throughout this process, I also took note of the patterns I had expected to arise, but did not, such as minimal references to the international school as a safe-haven for identity

negotiation among other transculturals. I was also surprised by the abundance of references to culturally significant interactions after high school, which was not part of the given Writing Task, but which seven of the eight narrative authors included. I searched for alternative understandings, and then began to write this research study as a culmination of all the above.

In the following chapter, I present the results of the study.

Chapter Three

Findings

This study endeavored to examine how the enactment of cultural identity within the power-filled dynamics and discursive practices of the international high school can affect the identity negotiation and transformation of transcultural students. As stated in the research questions, this study utilized the rhetorical space of TCK narratives to analyze the effects of transcultural identity crisis as experienced through interactions of contestation. It also questioned how the power relations of the international school structure shaped transcultural identities. Finally, it examined the interplay of relationships between the transcultural students for patterns of behavior suggesting either cultural dominance or willingness to create a third culture. This section of the study organizes the findings into major patterns and explicates the themes illustrated by the transcultural authors in their narratives.

The most significant motifs found within the narratives were the negotiation of the complexities of transcultural identity through repeated interactions of contestation, and the achievement of identity transformation through transdifference. The reported interactions of contestation were so prominent within the narratives that they were further divided into three categories: the transculturals' more non-assertive negotiation of their identities during interactions of contestation within the international school; the identity contestation of students of color caused by the hegemonic structure of the international school; and the transculturals' more assertive responses to interactions of contestation after the international school. Also of note were the lack of expected references to the positive community building of the third culture; when given a writing prompt that allowed for positive, neutral or negative responses, the authors most often chose to use their rhetorical freedom to focus on the pain of acculturation and their

contested identities rather than the support found among other transculturals, upon which much

previous research has focused.

Table 1 provides an overview of the participants' demographic information, background,

transcultural experience, time at ICSV and self-description of whether they felt part of ICSV's

cultural minority or majority.

Table 1: *Overview of Participants*

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Category	Citizenship of Parents	Country(ies) & Ages of Residence	Grades Attended ICSV	Self-Identification as Cultural Minority/Majority at ICSV
Oby	Female	25	Diplomat	Nigeria	Nigeria: 0-3 mo. England: 3mo-8 Austria: 8-15 Nigeria: 15-18 England: 18-21 USA: 21-25	3rd to 9th	Minority
Alejandro	Male	25	Diplomat	Costa Rica	Costa Rica: 0-12 Austria: 12-18 USA: 18-20 Austria: 21 Hungary: 22 Austria: 23 Netherlands: 24-25	8th to 12th	Neither
Jack	Male	22	Missionary	America	America: 0-1 Austria: 1-2 Serbia: 2-6 Austria: 6-11 USA:11-14 Austria: 14-18 USA: 18-22	1st to 5th 8th to 12th	Sometimes minority because of student population; sometimes majority because of teacher/staff population
William	Male	24	Expat	Scotland, Austria	Austria: 0-19 England: 19-24	8th to 12th	Neither
Catherine	Female	25	Expat	America, Austria	Austria: 0-18 USA: 18-25	5th to 12th	Neither
Ngozi	Female	28	Diplomat	Nigeria	Nigeria: 0-1, 12-14 Mali: 11-12 Austria: 14-19 Nigeria: 19-28	8th to 12th	Minority
Jane	Female	27	Missionary	America	England: 0-1 Ukraine: 1-3, 4-7, 8-9 USA: 3-4, 7-8, 12-13, 16-17, 18-27 Austria: 9-12, 13-16, 17-18	4th to 6th 8th to 10th 12th	Majority
Francisca	Female	26	Diplomat	Costa Rica	Costa Rica: 0-13 Austria: 14-20, 22-26 USA: 20-22 Hungary: 24	9th to 12th	Minority

Negotiation and Contestation of Identity through Interactions

We children, on the other hand, were becoming 'others' all the time, shuttling back and forth. We were the fifty-fifties. We were the cobbled ones" (Arana, p. 302)

Within their narratives, all but one of the eight TCK authors described experiencing interactions in which aspects of their cultural identity were challenged by dominant group members. While many of these encounters took place in the international school, as expected, four of the authors who depicted experiencing challenges to their identity in high school also unexpectedly detailed moments when their cultural identity was continually contested afterwards, either back in their home culture or in a new host culture for university. In total, the narratives depicted seventy-five instances of communication in which TCKs had to negotiate the cultural demands of dominant group members, with four of the narratives describing multiple encounters of challenge and subsequent change. Through these interactions that questioned aspects of their identities, the narrative authors experienced reoccurring patterns of transcultural identity negotiation, such as Du Bois' (1903) description of "double-consciousness," describing the African American experience of only seeing oneself "through the revelation of the other world" (p. 2). These patterns included vulnerability to hegemonic influences, both forced and voluntary isolation, and a growing awareness of their own double-consciousness.

Because third culture kids consistently shift in and out of differing cultural groups, they often belong to the dominant group in one cultural setting and then find themselves viewed as a minority group member in the next setting, frequently without preparation. Due to this fluid state of existence, Orbe's (1998) Co-Cultural Theory helps in understanding the communication choices the transcultural authors made when their cultural identities were contested in the differing contexts of the International School of Vienna, various host countries after high school, and even back in their own home countries. Co-Cultural Theory reasons that dominant groups

create their privilege by developing communication structures which cater to their strengths

(Orbe, 1998). To negotiate these "oppressive dominant structures" of communication,

marginalized group members "strategically adopt certain communication behaviors," consisting

of "assertive, non-assertive and aggressive approaches" (Jun, p. 331). These three

communication approaches allow us to categorize how the transcultural authors' responses to

dominant group members changed based on the context. Orbe's (1998) theory also relies on

Berry's (1997) multi-dimensional acculturation model, in which he proposed that people are able

to choose "how far they are willing to go through acculturation levels; in other words, how much

of the host and home cultures and languages they wish to accommodate/maintain" (Fry, p. 138).

Co-Cultural Theory labeled these acculturation choices as the three "preferred outcomes" of

separation, accommodation or assimilation (Orbe, 1998, p. 110). Orbe then asserts that these

outcomes answer the question of which communication behavior (assertive, non-assertive or

aggressive) will lead to the desired acculturation outcome (p. 110). For instance, if an individual

wants to separate from her current culture, she might rely on the non-assertive communication

method of "avoiding" and "maintaining her interpersonal barriers" (Orbe, p. 110). Whereas, if

she wanted to assimilate into the culture, the transcultural might utilize assertive communication

methods of "extensive preparation," "over-compensating" and "bargaining" (Orbe, p. 110).

Viewing the TCK identity narratives through the lens of Orbe's (1998) Co-Cultural

Theory allows understanding of transculturals' contextually-dependent, situated identities (Gee,

1996) and their oft-shifting roles as both the "target and vehicle" of oppressive communication

(Foucault, 1979). Co-Cultural Theory also provides awareness of hegemonic structures – the use

of ethnic, cultural or racial dominance to wield power over minority members – described within

the narratives. In the presence of hegemony, transculturals can easily experience Du Bois' (1903)

description of "double-consciousness," in which they see themselves as through another's eyes

as "other." Examining the TCK authors' communication approaches as non-assertive, assertive

or aggressive in conjunction with their preferred outcomes of separation, accommodation or

assimilation revealed patterns of context-dependent communication, often dramatically shifting

from home to host to school settings. In Kim's (2012) theory of Intercultural Personhood, she

defines adaptation as "effective interpersonal communication between newcomers and the people

in the host culture" (p. 88). She describes well-adapted individuals as those possessing the ability

to "establish and maintain a relatively stable, reciprocal and functional relationship with the

environment" (p. 88). Kim's definition of adaptation aligns well with Orbe's (1998)

characterization of accommodation, arguably the healthiest of the acculturation methods.

Table 2: *Co-Cultural Theory (Orbe, 1998)*

	Acculturation Preference: Separation	Acculturation Preference: Accommodation	Acculturation Preference: Assimilation
Non-assertive Communication Methods	• Avoiding • Maintaining Interpersonal Barriers	• Increasing Visibility • Dispelling Stereotypes	• Emphasizing Commonalities • Developing positive face • Censoring self • Averting Controversy
Assertive Communication Methods	• Communicating Self • Intragroup networking • Exemplifying Strengths • Embracing Stereotypes	• Communicating Self • Intragroup Networking • Using Liaisons • Educating Others	• Extensive Preparation • Overcompensating • Manipulating Stereotypes • Bargaining
Aggressive Communication Methods	• Attacking • Sabotaging others	• Confronting • Gaining advantage	• Dissociating • Mirroring • Strategic Distancing • Ridiculing Self

In comparing the seventy-five interactions of communication described in the eight narratives, the TCK participants most often exemplified a preferred outcome of accommodation at 44%, with assimilation the second most preferred outcome at 31% and separation the least preferred at 25%. In their communication approaches, the TCKs chose assertive methods 45% of the time, non-assertive methods 44% of the time, and aggressive methods only 9% of the time.

The following three sub-sections explore the effects of instances of identity contestation, first within the context of the international school, then in regard to racial hegemony, and finally, within the context of host and home cultures after high school.

Non -Assertive Responses to Contestation within the International School

Upon moving to Vienna, entering ICSV and finding themselves facing massive cultural adjustments, four of the TCK narrative authors initially chose to separate themselves from their classmates by avoiding conflict and maintaining interpersonal barriers, as specified in the chart above of Orbe's (1998) Co-Cultural theory. The authors responses of non-assertive separation affirmed research claiming that transculturals commonly struggle with anxiety, depression, feelings of marginality, and identity confusion during the process of acculturation (Downie, et al., 1976; Ward and Kennedy, 1994). Within other instances of contestation detailed in the narratives, the desire to conform appeared most often in non-assertive methods of assimilation, especially when the TCK adolescents were confronted with differing aspects of their cultural identities in already established friendships within ICSV. LaFromboise, Coleman and Gerton (1993) assert that in intercultural encounters, transculturals often revert to assimilation methods, thereby experiencing alienation and becoming overly malleable in their cultural identities. Kim (2012) also avers that during acculturation, "The conflicting forces between the old and new can create an internal disequilibrium that is manifested in "intense emotional lows of uncertainty,

confusion and anxiety" (p. 88), which can be seen within the TCK narratives. Together, the narratives revealed themes of hegemonic influence, forced or voluntary isolation and an awareness of double-consciousness, though all three did not arise in each described interaction of contestation within the international school.

For TCK participant Catherine, she became aware of her own double-consciousness at a young age, as one of the few students who remained at ICSV from kindergarten through 12th grade, maintaining friendships with a rotating group of the more than fifty diverse ethnicities present at ICSV. Fail et al. (2004) found that TCK identity development is in "constant flux" as they must "learn to adjust again and again," thereby developing "a certain cultural relativity and chameleon-like quality which may affect his or her long-term identity well into adulthood" (p. 323). She described a Saturday morning meal at an Indonesian friend's house at the age of eleven:

> The rice was warm and sticky and at the table with a family that I looked nothing like, I belonged. Something about the mismatched furniture, the warm, spicy smell that settled into the furniture of the Tampubolon's home brought a new comfort.

In looking back at her experiences, she chose to highlight an early memory that spoke of her "chameleon-like quality" (Fail et al., p. 323). Later in her narrative, Catherine expounded on the realization that, for her, "sharing at the table was an entry point. For a young person [for whom] travel to Asia or Africa or South America was impossible, the table brought joy in difference. That made me rich." Though her described acculturation approaches were mainly non-assertive, Catherine's experiences of assimilating into her school friends' cultures developed in her an early awareness of her own double-consciousness. Her portrayal also aligns with Mendoza et al.'s (2000) assertion that "particular foods are used repetitively as performative enactments of

[ethnic] identity" (p. 421). In Catherine's case, making and eating ethnic-specific food acted as a "re-coding" of her Austrian-American identity into her preferred "international" identity (Mendoza et al., p. 421). While at the table both in her own home and in school friends', Catherine learned which cultural behaviors were accepted in which of her multicultural contexts, and, also, that she had the power to accept or resist those norms.

When first arriving at ICSV from Nigeria, TCK author Ngozi faced unexpected hegemonic opposition from dominant group members. In response, Ngozi employed methods of avoidance and maintenance of interpersonal barriers to non-assertively isolate herself. She explained that, when students initially excluded her soon after she joined their class, she retreated inside herself. "Throughout eighth grade, I barely spoke; not just in class, but throughout school hours. I did not have any friends for what seemed like eternity." Confronted with dominant group members who demonstrated their power to label and exclude, Ngozi "strategically adopt[ed] certain communication behaviors to negotiate the oppressive dominant structures," in accordance with Co-Cultural Theory (Jun, 2012, p. 331). With few means of claiming agency available to her as an newcomer and adolescent striving for conformity, Ngozi voluntary chose to isolate herself from as many interpersonal interactions as possible to avoid any chance of repeated rejection.

After more than a year of intense, extended contestation of her cultural identity, Ngozi learned to employ methods of assertive-accommodation with the help of liaisons. Her high school teachers eventually played a key role in her acculturation to the school culture, specifically in her communication approaches. After keeping her after school to talk through her difficulties, they began employing in-class methods as well. Ngozi explained that,

they would deliberately make me answer questions in class to test my understanding of

the subject and be free. If I was not loud enough while answering any questions, Mr.

Householder would make everyone quiet just to hear me, as opposed to telling me to

speak up. I began to loosen up, began [to] feel a little comfortable, I became more

inquisitive and I put in efforts to speak louder in class.

Here, Ngozi's American teachers exemplified Evanoff's (2006) theory of two-sided adaptation

as dominant cultural members who worked to accommodate marginalized outsiders by

"adjust[ing] themselves to the presence of sojourners in their midst" (p. 5). Through those

teachers, as well as key friendships and even novels of similar acculturation stories, Ngozi

continually resourced liaisons to help her begin to network regularly and therefore assertively

communicate herself as she accommodated to the school culture, instead of separating from it.

Among the narrative authors, Jane acts as an exception in her response to continued

interactions of identity negotiation both in her communication responses and in the political

turmoil she experienced while living overseas during America's "War on Terror." Instead of

showing increasing confidence in her communication methods as the other authors did, Jane

chose to use her narrative to acknowledge her ever-present uncertainty and tension. A few years

older than the other narrative writers, Jane's experience at ICSV as a young American was

heavily shadowed by the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center and the subsequent period of

global resistance to American war efforts. Contrary to the previous authors' initial transition

from methods of non-assertive separation to those of assertive accommodation, TCK participant

Jane described continual use of non-assertive separation and assimilation approaches throughout

her nine years at ICSV.

She explicitly described how her national identity was contested after 9/11: "I wasn't entirely sure how it was supposed to impact me. I didn't know which group to claim as mine or who to feel the most sorry for." Her narrative reveals conflicting desires to assimilate and to support the two most influential groups in her life: her family and her classmates. Soon after, when President Bush declared war, Jane mostly relied on non-assertive methods of separation to avoid causing conflict, while giving herself space to figure out her own opinions on the complex topics of war, retribution and global politics:

> I knew that at least one, if not both, of my parents had voted for Bush and listening to my peers talk about the war made me feel awkward. I was American, even though I had lived only two of my eleven years there—they were talking about me, my parents, my grandparents, everyone I knew when we visited the US…. I had gone from feeling that 9/11 was equally devastating for everyone to feeling confusion about the many different perspectives I was hearing.

As a young child facing such complex challenges to her cultural identity, Jane displayed non-assertive separation methods as her loyalties were split between her family ties and her classmates' global perspectives. Like Du Bois' (1994) concept of the "veil of race," a TCK's nationality can act as a "veil" through which others view her, and through which she learns to view the world. Later in the same narrative, Jane detailed that "what was most painful was trying to understand how I was perceived by my peers." She remembers a class discussion during Bush's reelection:

> One student from South Africa stated strongly that America should not have any business in Afghanistan or Iraq at all. This was the sentiment that was voiced the loudest from the

class and, from my perspective, with a heavy tone of frustration and annoyance toward

America in general. I was very uncomfortable.

Jane's narrative reveals how memories of classmates challenging her American identity have

remained poignant into her late twenties, solidifying the moments she first became fully aware of

how her own internalization contrasted with the interpellation of her classmates.

Throughout the continuing war in Afghanistan while Jane was in middle and high school,

she described increasing, self-inflicted isolation as she continued to experience the double-

consciousness often felt by minority group members. Instead of identifying with the dominant

group of American teachers and students, the author felt trapped by her inability to disconnect

herself from the image of America as an overbearing world power, and the personal stigmatism

that came with that association. She detailed,

Once again, at school, I wondered how I was perceived. Did I make them angry? I was

only fourteen and couldn't even vote. I felt as though I had to defend my country as

having some good left in it. I was from there after all—were there good things about me?

Jane's reaction in the face of unexpected hegemony reflects Erikson's (1968) stage of identity

versus role confusion in which adolescents question who they are, how others see them, and how

they fit in. McDonald (2010) claims that transculturals "must resolve each stage of [Erickson's]

development successfully (in this case, they must have confidence in their own identity) to

become a healthy individual" (p. 42). For Jane, navigating the double-consciousness of

transcultural existence, with the added stress of a highly-polarizing war, caused continual tension

and a decreasing lack of confidence in her cultural identity. Obviously, the complete influence of

the pressures of war on Jane's ability to healthily negotiate her identity remains difficult to truly

analyze. Yet, her experience also reflects the unsettled current political atmosphere across the

globe in which transcultural students now live. Therefore, Jane's narrative serves as an insightful

glimpse into the communication and acculturation methods chosen by a transcultural within the

context of war.

Negotiation of Racial Hegemony within the International School

Not only did the narratives reveal the authors' tendency towards non-assertive

communication when confronted by members of the international school, three of the authors

also addressed how the racial hegemony present in ICSV affected the identity negotiation of

students of all races. Here too, Co-cultural theory helps us examine the authors' complex

experiences with race in the context of ICSV, which often celebrated the commonalities of its

international students. Orbe (1998) asserts that within a co-cultural setting, "Emphasizing

commonalities… focuses on human similarities while downplaying or ignoring personal (co-

cultural) differences" (p. 58). Three of the eight TCK narratives revealed that the multicultural

environment of ICSV at times limited the students' ability to fully express their individual ethnic

and racial identities. This limitation occurred through heavy emphasis on the students'

commonalities, even the commonality of their "difference" from the monocultural host culture of

Austria. Mendoza (2006) asserts that "intercultural encounters among people who have opposing

histories of colonial domination… can never be entered into innocently, no matter the level of

goodwill on the interpersonal level (p. 244). In a setting such as ICSV, run by Americans and

populated by many students from formerly colonized home countries, it is no surprise that the

narrative authors' experiences aligned with Miike's (2014) contention that intercultural

communicators are – "without any exception" – affected by both subtle and severe types of

power at work (p. 113).   The personal encounters detailed within the TCK narratives

emphasized that even though the international school in many ways provided a safe-haven from

the explicit racism of the outside Austrian culture, the school's overarching post-racial approach subverted students' ability to express and analyze the complexity of their racial identities.

The following two sub-sections discuss the damaging effects of ICSV's post-racial mentality and the racial discrimination of students of color empowered by both the hegemonic structure of the school itself and the individual racist mindset of some transcultural students.

The Illusion of the Multicultural "Bubble"

Though all but two of the TCK narratives mentioned the diverse and inclusive atmosphere of ICSV as a positive part of their identity formation, a few authors dug deeper into the implicit danger of utilizing a solely multicultural approach. In describing his shifting mentality towards race relations as a white American male, TCK participant Jack succinctly expressed what several of the other authors alluded to:

> My graduating class of 20 kids boasted 4 continents and over a dozen countries represented in some way. This was a microcosm of the school as a whole[;] 250 students represented over 50 nations. I lived in a deeply multicultural, multi-national city filled with people who thought and spoke differently than I did. If anyone should know about race and race relations, it was me. Or so I thought.

Due to their constant exposure to so many different cultures and ethnicities, the students easily cultivated a colorblind mindset while at ICSV. Bös (2011) defined colorblind racism as that which emphasizes individual responsibility and "sustains racist structures through the denial of the importance of racism for social inequality" (p. 3). Colorblind thinking exhorts that "we solve our 'race problems' by talking as if race did not matter at all" (Pollock, 2004, p. 1). For the three

transculturals who explicitly addressed race in their narratives, it took years for them to understand the dangers inherent within this viewpoint.

Jack continued his narrative by detailing an occurrence in the school cafeteria:

'Hey look, all the white people are on this side of the table, all the black people on the other!' We noticed this one day during lunch. Over the course of a school year we'd naturally migrated to sit at a certain spot every day. It took us a while to notice how we were all lined up, but it seemed to amuse everyone at the table. 'This is what it looks like when we stop talking about race,' I thought. 'We can laugh and joke about it because we don't even notice it anymore.'

Another TCK participant from Nigeria, Oby, reflected on a similar anecdote which took place in the school hallway during her 9th grade year when one of her teachers offered to get a coffee for another teacher.

Instead of asking if his colleague wanted milk and sugar in his coffee, my teacher pointed to three students, one White American, one Indian and one Nigerian, and asked his colleague which of the students' complexions best represented how he wanted his coffee. My teacher laughed and said this question would never be allowed in the United States because people were so sensitive. I laughed too and mentally agreed with him that race did not play a huge role in our multicultural school environment.

Together, these anecdotes revealed ICSV's lighthearted attitude towards racial and ethnically-based jokes – at least in the moment detailed. However, the teachers making this comment and the students acquiescing to them did not acknowledge – and perhaps truly did not perceive – the limiting effects of their colorblindness. Nelson (2015) elucidates that colorblindness perpetuates

"whiteness's ability to 'transcend' race while maintaining demeaning racial categories for others." These categories work to "justify contemporary racial inequality" and "maintain systemic white privilege" (p. 71). By refusing to acknowledge the cultural differences and difficulties people of color endure due to their marginalized status, whites – however unintentionally – wield their privilege to disempower. While students often felt free to discuss their ethnic differences, there were few opportunities given to recognize and address the added difficulties they faced as students of color living in a blatantly racist culture such as Vienna.

Both Jack and Oby described their reactions at the time as non-assertive and even welcoming of this casual treatment of race and difference, yet, as adults reflecting on these occurrences, their understanding changed. Jack elucidated how later, as a college student in America, he had to confront the misconceptions about race he had developed during his time at ICSV:

> 'I just never really had to think about race in the same way that people here do. It's just been different for me, something I've never had to deal with.' This time a shameful phrase from the beginning of my Junior year of college, spoken to my roommate the day before classes started. But this time, something in me knew that I was wrong. It took me weeks, months before I would fully admit it to myself.

Jack explained how he then began to watch and understand how race truly affected the people around him – including himself – as he acknowledged his own privilege as a white male and the implicit and destructive messages such a colorblind approach can facilitate. At the age of twenty-two, he readily admitted in his narrative that,

Living in a multi-cultural environment didn't teach me about race. If anything, it made

me too sure of myself. But being in a multi-cultural environment also helped me learn

how to listen. It helped me to observe. I didn't learn about race at [ICSV], but I learned

how to learn about it. I can only hope that it continues.

As a black Nigerian female, Oby's experience with racial discrimination was much more overt.

Forced to daily confront it in the outside Austrian culture, she valiantly tried to ignore the weight

the discrimination had on her while inside ICSCV. Oby described her initial reaction as

accepting of ICVS' casual treatment of race and difference, yet, as a twenty-five-year-old

reflecting on these occurrences, her understanding changed. She explained,

Looking back, however, I realize that this assumption [that race did not play a huge role

in the multicultural school environment] was quite misleading. While it's true that I had

friends of different nationalities, and negative racial stereotypes bore little weight in our

school, growing up as a black girl in Vienna, Austria meant that I never had the luxury of

ignoring race.

Oby then detailed the difficulties she faced while in the Austrian culture as she was constantly

stared at, cursed at, called derogatory racial names, falsely accused of stealing when store alarms

went off, and once had raw eggs thrown at her while waiting for the bus. Yet at ICSV, the

emphasis on their commonalities as international students motivated a lack of communication

about the adversities of living in Austria as a person of color. Since a firmly rooted racial identity

remains critical to identity formation and development (The Aspen Institute, 2005), ignoring a

student's race can threaten the identity development of third cultural adolescents like Oby.

Levinson (2012) warns that "learning the language of power may in some, even many, cases

extract the ultimate cost of permanently altering students' personal identities" (p. 91). As the

context of the ICSV forced Obie – and perhaps other students of color as well - to make small

yet repeated accommodations to the dominant, white culture, she risked loss of core identity.

Now, at age twenty-five, Obie more clearly understands how that silence affected her daily life.

> I carried my race like a personal cross that I had to bear during my time in Austria, and I
>
> believed it was my duty to shield my friends from this particular burden. After all, I
>
> didn't want to disrupt the interracial bubble that we enjoyed in [ICSV].

Surrounded by over fifty diverse ethnic identities, including many students of color, Oby

experienced separation from her school friends due to a lack of communication about the

adversities of living in Austria as a person of color in favor of continual emphasis on their

commonalities as international students.

Non-Assertive Responses to Racial Hegemony at ICSV

As portrayed in the narratives, the detrimental, colorblind thinking that took place at

ICSV caused continual misrepresentation of racial identities. Though ICSV's student population

was densely diverse – made up of 50 plus nationalities – at the time of the narrative authors'

attendance there, the administration and staff were mostly white Americans. The racial disparity

of those in control meant the majority representation shifted away from the students of color. The

Aspen Institute (2005) defines race as an imbalance of power between groups, "socially

constructed, created (and recreated) by how people are perceived and treated in the normal

actions of everyday life" (p. 15). In a setting such as ICSV, run by Americans and populated by

students from formerly colonized home countries, it is no surprise that the only two African

narrative authors both recounted experiencing subjugation of their black racial identities. These

two narratives, written by Nigerian female students with dissimilar backgrounds, illuminated the

specific ways in which the illusion of the multiracial "bubble" affected their individual identity development, as they experienced racial hegemony – however unintentional – within their personal interactions at ICSV.

Ngozi, a Nigerian female who moved to Vienna in her eighth-grade year due to her parents' diplomatic positions, had rarely interacted with white Americans before her immersion into ICSV school culture. Though she grew up speaking English, the lingua franca of Nigeria, Ngozi was unprepared to find that her Nigerian English was deemed insufficient for mainstream English classes in the American curriculum-based international school. Ngozi explained,

> I was placed in [an] ESL class that was structured to help me ease in but instead, made me feel worse. This was because I realized that ESL class [was] comprised of students from mostly developing countries. In other words, my English was not good enough. ESL means English as a Second Language[;] whereas I considered it first for me.

Upon her arrival to ICSV, one of the first messages Ngozi received was that the American-led school perceived her Nigerian language and language instruction as inferior. Even as an eighth grader, she linked those students labeled as needing ESL to their origin from "developing countries," identifying hegemonic structures from the onset. In her response in this research study to the question on the demographic survey asking whether she felt she was in the cultural and ethnic minority or majority during her time at ICSV and why, Ngozi acknowledged that,

> I felt I was in the minority because there were probably only 5 Black students in my grade. So that would be the number. And I was placed in ESL, together with whoever couldn't speak English properly. Of course[,] ESL was designed to help me ease in and not to make me feel small but it in fact, made me feel more inferior.

Here, Ngozi directly connected her ethnic identity to her racial identity, and then emphasized her

minority status through her placement in ESL classes. Thus, she felt restricted by the inherent

power structure at ICSV wherein predominantly white, American teachers and administrators

had the ability to build a hierarchy of "Englishes," subverting her native English to the bottom.

As a result of this perceived discrimination early in her ICSV experience, Ngozi clearly

felt mislabeled and misunderstood. In response, as previously detailed in the above section, she

chose self-isolation as a defense against further discrimination, even amongst other students of

color. She explained that in trying to make friends at ICSV: "There were dark colored students in

my grade at the time but one of them told me once I was weird so, I considered any attempt at

becoming friends with anybody a total disaster." Ngozi's words reveal that she implicitly linked

her opportunities for friendship to the "dark colored students in [her] grade," seemingly

disregarding the lighter colored students as friendship possibilities, at least initially. Raised in

Nigeria with little exposure to classmates or friends of European descent, she may have simply

found the "dark colored students" easier to connect with, or her reaction could suggest few or no

white students reached out to her in friendship, confirming her initial assumptions about her

subordinate position as a black Nigerian student at ICSV. Because the author doesn't reference

race again in her narrative, it is impossible to know her full experience. Ngozi later explained

that she did not develop strong friendships or truly feel like she belonged or could succeed at

school until her sophomore and junior years. The initial impact of the discrimination against her

Nigerian English played a part in Ngozi enduring more than two years of non-assertive

separation, including self-enforced isolation, instead of healthily accommodating the ISCV

school culture.

Oby, the second author to directly address racial discrimination in her narrative, was also born in Nigeria, though her parents moved to England when she was three months old due to her father's job at OPEC. She lived in London, her identity formation largely influenced by British culture, until she was eight, when her family moved to Vienna and remained until she was fifteen. For eight years, Oby was immersed in both Austrian and ICSV culture, and her narrative centered on the ways in which her ethnic and racial identities were constantly challenged during that time. In reference to her racial identity and the discrimination she endured, she explained that, "Despite my cares to keep this part of my life separate from those of my friends, it always shocked me when they went out of their way to bring race into the equation and remind me of my difference." In spite of the post-racial mindset prevalent at ICSV – or perhaps because of it – Oby experienced blatant discrimination due to her race, two instances of which she detailed in quick succession in her narrative.

> At a sleepover with three friends in 5th grade, one of the girls remarked,
>
> 'Isn't it so cool that if you go way back to the times of Noah, we're all related to each other?'
>
> 'Yes!,' I said with a pleased smile.
>
> She quickly responded, "[W]ell not you, because you're black…"
>
> I immediately felt like I had been punched in the stomach. I remember sinking low into my seat and remaining silent for the rest of the evening. I knew that what she said wasn't right, but my 10-year-old self didn't know how to respond.

For Oby, who in many ways had already happily assimilated into the school culture after two years there, instances like this provoked her to resort to non-assertive methods of separation as she avoided confrontation and maintained interpersonal barriers of protection against such

remarks. Yet despite, her best efforts to separate her racial identity from her more easily accepted

Nigerian identity, the discrimination continued into high school:

> I didn't have a response once again in 9th grade, when two classmates told me that "I
>
> wasn't really black. I was more white than anything." This time though, instead of
>
> [feeling] hurt, I felt infuriated. Why couldn't they accept me as black? Despite us all
>
> growing up in the same place, for some reason, I had to act like the stereotypes of
>
> African-Americans that they saw on TV to "qualify' as black.

Oby once again found herself caught within a hegemonic structure in which her peers felt free to

define and limit her racial identity, fostered by the far-reaching power of media representation.

Cohen (2012) emphasizes the impact of media distortions on racial representations, and their

ability to lead to "public misperceptions that reinforce existing biases and stereotypes (p. 11). As

Oby experienced firsthand, even her international peers were influenced by media's portrayal of

youth of color. Crouch (2004) labels this misrepresentation the "new minstrelsy," in its depiction

of black youth as "bullying, hedonistic buffoons ever ready to bloody somebody" (p. 10). Due to

this kind of dangerous portrayal, Oby found herself at age fourteen, surrounded by fellow

students around whom she thought she could fully express herself.

 She detailed her internal response in her narrative,

> I didn't know how to explain to them that being black transcended my accent or "having
>
> attitude." I knew without a doubt that I was black because I paid the price for my skin
>
> color daily… My classmates' suggestion that I was not black, was not only factually
>
> inaccurate, but it also completely ignored my deep conviction that I had earned the right
>
> to claim my blackness with pride.

Though she could logically defend herself and clearly refute her classmates' claims, the overtly expressed post-racial mindset of ICSV kept Oby from feeling understood and achieving healthy accommodation methods such as "dispelling stereotypes," "communicating herself," and "educating others" (Orbe, 1998, p. 110).

In response to the limitations placed on her by media misrepresentation, Oby carefully protected the way she represented herself to her peers:

> I carried my race like a personal cross that I had to bear during my time in Austria, and I believed it was my duty to shield my friends from this particular burden. After all, I didn't want to disrupt the interracial bubble that we enjoyed in [ICSV].

A side effect of the focus on commonalities at ICSV was that Oby felt that, to be viewed as respectable, she had to hide the difficult realities of her "raced" existence (Levinson, 2012, p. 95). Therefore, she strove to keep the peace and sustain the "interracial bubble" of ICSV. Brooks-Higginbotham (1993) asserts that the politics of respectability constitute "a deliberate, highly self-conscious concession to hegemonic values" (as quoted in Cohen, 2010, p. 40). Oby communicated later in her narrative that "being black transcended my accent or 'having attitude.'" She understood that she "had earned the right to claim my blackness with pride." Yet, the environment at ICSV did not empower Oby to voice these key realizations. Instead, the way in which dominant ICSV group members downplayed individual racial identity and promulgated a post-racial hegemonic mindset kept Oby from fully expressing herself and achieving healthy identity negotiation.

Oby's experiences – and her non-assertive reactions as a student at ICSV – align with Jun's (2012) assertion that, within the frame of Co-Cultural Theory, non-dominant group

members "strategically adopt certain communication behaviors to negotiate the oppressive dominant structures" (p. 331), whether those structures are purposefully oppressive in their dominance or not. Oby's identity narrative illuminates how ICSV exacerbated a post-racial mentality. Instead of directly contesting these issues, the school community members ignored both the structural racism students of color dealt with in the Austrian culture and the misrepresentation they endured within the school. In her narrative, Oby addressed the post-racial attitude effected by ICSV's "interracial bubble," as she termed it. Obviously, the Austrian mindset towards ethnic minorities also played a major role in the context of ICSV. Tomlinson (2004) claims that within European nations like Austria there remains a chasm between their democratic ideals and the educational reality for minority students. The "cultural, linguistic, and religious differences" of minority students can lead to discrimination in which "both students and teachers often perceive these students as the 'Other' (Banks, 2015, p. 19). Even though ICSV is an international school with a specific mission of inclusivity that stands in contrast to the current Austrian culture, if the administration and staff do not fully acknowledge the context in which their students of color live, then they too contribute to the marginalization.

Assertive Negotiation of Contested Identity after the International School

Though the participants described mostly non-assertive responses to the cultural and racial hegemony present in ICSV as they "averted controversy" and "maintained personal barriers" throughout high school, their responses to interactions of contestation became much more assertive after ICSV, as they learned to better "communicate themselves," rely on "liaisons," and "educate others" (Orbe, 1998, p. 110). Unpredictably, even though the Writing Task prompted the TCK authors to center their narratives in the context of the international

school, four of the eight authors also detailed encounters after high school in which their cultural

identities were challenged. Clearly, the authors felt the need to make connections between the

practices of the international school and their continued cross-cultural experience afterwards.

One transcultural illustrated his move to a new host culture after high school and three more

authors described re-acculturating back to their home cultures. As these three authors detailed,

the move back to their home country often proved more painful than adjusting to a new culture.

Their experience supports Pollock and Van Reken's (1999) argument that re-entry to the home

culture is "painful, turbulent and traumatic" because TCKs often experience "alienation,

rootlessness, homelessness and lack of identity" (p. 136). Often, TCKs are unprepared to find

that in returning to their home cultures, they experience transition and re-acculturation as

"hidden immigrants," visibly undiscernible from their monocultural counterparts, yet desperately

trying to rediscover the correct social codes in order to remain undetected amongst their social

peers (Cockburn, 2002).

Whether transitioning back to their home country or to a new host country, TCKs will

often feel "other," keeping their intercultural identity separate (Cockburn, 2002). Cockburn

contends that transculturals' "lack of identification with a single culture can set them up to be

perpetual foreigners, even in their own country of citizenship" (2000, p. 479). Whether returning

to their home culture or to a new host culture, all transculturals have to address the sense of

"otherness" they have developed in the multicultural exposure. Therefore, as Bhatia (2011)

asserts, "The work of cultural translation and the reframing and stretching of cultural boundaries

between majority and minority groups is fraught with issues of distrust, mutual suspicion, and

asymmetrical power relationships" (p. 404). Seen from that perspective, it is no surprise that half

of the narrative authors chose to connect their international school experience to later instances

of identity contestation and negotiation during acculturation.

As we continue to view the narratives through the lens of Co-Cultural Theory (Orbe,

1998), we see that while the authors almost solely utilized non-assertive communication

approaches during their time at ICSV, once they left and moved either to their home culture or a

new host culture to attend university, the TCK adults generally employed more assertive, and at

times aggressive, methods of communication. Overall, more accommodation also occurred, even

while a clear dichotomy arose within the narratives: when the TCKs chose to assimilate or

separate into home and host cultures after high school, they tended to do so either aggressively or

assertively, with many fewer instances of non-assertive communication appearing.

As the son of American missionary parents, TCK author Jack grew up in Serbia from the

ages of two to six and in Austria from six to eleven and again from fourteen to eighteen. Having

spent only three of his formative years in his passport country, his transition to the U.S. for

university was initially shaped by non-assertive methods of separation, echoing the same

protective measures he had employed throughout his life overseas. When preparing to attend his

largely white, suburban American college, Jack described feeling anxious about the transition,

especially given his tendency to withdraw in new situations:

> Another side-effect of living in such a multi-cultural environment has been, at least for
>
> me, a fear of interaction. What I mean by this is not simply a fear of interacting with new
>
> people or places. I see the world as large pond, filled with ripples of action from places,
>
> people, ideas all over the world. The greatest fear for me is to upset one of these ripples,
>
> to change what cannot be unchanged. What I prefer instead is to watch the ripples play

out, to watch the patterns emerge while safe in the knowledge that they played out

without me.

Growing up as a third culture kid, Jack developed a strong awareness of acculturation as a

powerful act, one to be approached with great caution, since cultures, habits and dominant

groups were already in place. Likely due to moving back and forth into drastically different

cultures every four years or so during childhood, Jack's self-view reflects that of a perpetual

foreigner. Speaking as a transculturals who discovered that he was seen as an outsider in this

national culture, Nakayama (2000) questions, "Who am I perceived to be when I communicate

with others? My identity is very much tied to the way in which others speak to me and the way in

which society represents my interests" (21). This heightened sense of double-consciousness can

make TCKs like Jack anxious and withdrawn, strengthening their initial reactions of non-

assertive separation.

However, Jack soon realized that he did not need to remain in this state of separation

because other modes of acculturation were readily available to him:

I learned quickly that it wasn't that difficult to fit in. Though I'd had many more

interactions with multiculturalism than many of my classmates[,] I was, at heart, a white

American male.

Though the rest of Jack's narrative centered on his own internal struggle with coming to

understand the effects of race in America, each of the described interactions of communication

portrayed assertive accommodation methods, as he freely communicated self, relied on

roommates as liaisons, and achieved intragroup networking (Orbe, 1998). As Downie's (1976)

study found, American TCKS returning to the States for college "engaged in a high degree of

identity management… which involved a setting aside of their third culture experiences in order

to adapt" (qtd. in Fail et al., p. 323). Given such a brief narrative highlighting short instances of

transition, it is unclear how much of his cultural identity, Jack had to set aside in order to

integrate into American culture.

Jane, another child of American missionaries, grew up in Austria, only living in her

"home" country of America for four separate furlough years when she was three, seven, twelve

and sixteen. After graduating from ICSV, she moved to America to attend university, and

continues to live here today. Yet, even now at the age of twenty-seven, when writing her

narrative, she chose to describe the lingering pull she feels between her ties to ICSV and life in

America.

> Yet, I sense in myself somewhat greater shame from my American identity. My
>
> perception during those class discussions [in ICSV] about politics was that the whole
>
> world was against the US. I was outnumbered. America was disliked because of its
>
> power, influence, and egocentrism. Not everything about the US was bad, but sometimes
>
> it felt that way. While in the US, I find it easier to take pride in my American passport,
>
> yet I am still filled with a strong empathy for the rest of the world's complaints.

In this section, Jane employed methods of assertive accommodation, in which she transcended

the non-assertive methods that governed her time at ICSV. She also communicated herself in a

way that allowed her to balance both her worlds, and even educate others about the TCK

experience. Jane later described her transcultural upbringing as having "brought dissonance in

my national identity to the forefront of my attention," as she continued to vacillate between

strong feelings of pride and shame in her American identity. In accordance with Jane's

experience, Fail et al., (2004) stress that the TCK often struggles with identity confusion,

"constantly seeing herself as "other," identifying with the passport country when in the host

country and with the host country when in the passport country" (p. 325). In response to this

continual "othering," adult TCKs such as Jane often become more assertive, whether they choose

to assimilate or separate themselves from their home culture.

Like the previous two authors, Ngozi also left ICSV to return to her home country for

university, however her narrative portrayed her struggle to re-assimilate to a passport culture

markedly different from both the Austrian culture and the American-based culture of ICSV – a

struggle which the American TCKs did not have to fully bear.

> Outside school, I had to drastically tone down my American accent and relearn the
>
> Nigerian Pidgin English, not only to be understood, but also to prevent being cheated
>
> while bargaining. My stomach had adjusted to kebab, pizza, schnitzel, burgers and
>
> cheese; I found it difficult to readjust to heavy starch, carbohydrates and spicy foods. In
>
> the end, after confusing moments, I made some readjustments.

Ngozi's narrative revealed the broad scope of acculturation she dealt with, as she addressed

adjustments in accent, language, societal behaviors, and even digestion in order to regain her

footing in a culture which she considered home. In her transition back to Nigerian culture, Ngozi

realized just how much ICSV culture had impacted her:

> I had worked so hard on improving my self-esteem in High School that I think I became
>
> too confident. On top of that, I should not have thrown away the Nigerian me in my quest
>
> to adjust to a new environment. My course mates in my University considered me too
>
> outspoken, too confident and probably proud because I would not hesitate asking

questions in class or, contributing in ways that would have gotten me fantastic class

participation grades in high school.

Upon her return. Ngozi recognized the assimilation that had eventually taken place at ICSV

during her acculturation process. As a teenager, she swayed from the non-assertive separation of

an initial two-year, self-enforced isolation to complete assimilation into the school culture. As

Lee (2010) asserts, transculturals "may face particular problems in becoming too culturally

malleable and conforming, while losing their own cultural roots. They may adopt an

assimilation mode in intercultural encounters, and suffer from a sense of alienation and low self-

esteem" (pp. 59-60). Ngozi found that she had "thrown away the Nigerian me" to facilitate her

acculturation to ICSV. Yet, in direct contrast to her reaction upon entering ICSV, Ngozi

continued to express her transcultural identity to her Nigerian classmates through more assertive

methods of accommodation, such as communicating self and increasing her own visibility, and

assertive separation, such as exemplifying her own strengths.

William stands as the only participant who described an interaction of contestation

outside of the international school that did not take place back in his home culture. Rather,

William grew up in Vienna as the son of a Scottish mother and began attending ICSV in the

eighth grade, then moved to England for university. It is important to note, however, that due to

William's Scottish mom, he grew up speaking English and therefore most likely experienced the

transition to England as a "hidden immigrant." In his narrative, William detailed a difficult

conversation with his housemates, all British citizens, about the newly voted-in Brexit. Initially

in reaction to the Brexit vote – which threated his own future as a foreigner, William internalized

his fear and avoided conversation.

> As the votes in favour of exiting the European Union climb steadily higher, my heart is
>
> racing, trying to comprehend the continuously increasing possibility that life may never
>
> be the same… I go upstairs and try to sleep, but [I'm] tossing and turning restlessly,
>
> nervous, trying to comprehend how my life would change once the exit would happen.

Extremely aware of the possible consequences on his own life as a non-British citizen, William

drew inwards to first process his own thoughts. Yet, by the next day he chose to open himself to

potential negative reactions from his natural born British flat mates, communicating himself and

seeking liaisons with his housemates as they discussed the impact of the Brexit on the country

and their lives:

> My friend asks me what I think of the demographical statistics that have shown us many
>
> voters for Brexit to be twenty to thirty years older than us: "Who cares about that shit? It
>
> doesn't matter what age they are. Yes, older generations will have a different outlook
>
> from what we have. But what is going to change? Which freedoms could we lose? What
>
> if ….": I trail off, emotionally spent, trying to understand.

When his flat mates' responses ignored and subverted the difficult reality he and thousands of

other immigrants now faced, William switched from assertive accommodation techniques to

aggressive ones in which he directly confronted the conflicting opinions. However, even in

opposition, he still worked towards accommodation, neither separating from the host culture or

abandoning his home culture. William employed all three communication styles – assertive,

aggressive and non-assertive – while almost entirely maintaining accommodation methods, as

opposed to separation or assimilation techniques. William chose to work through his emotional

reactions in order to communicate himself clearly to his flat mates and give them room to speak

as well.

Once he became overwhelmed with emotions he didn't know how to communicate to monocultures from a differing worldview, William then switched to soliciting opinions instead of giving his own.

> 'Guys, what do you think is going to change for all of you, seeing as you['re] all British and not like me?' My friends look at me perplexed, until one of them says "I don't know, but we will find out in about 2-3 years and that's if they actually get all the legal processes started now. *He is right, to be fair. But what kind of limbo are we going to life in the meanwhile? What is going to change in the UK, from now until we actually leave?* (emphasis original)

Presented with his housemates' lack of understanding about his own position as an immigrant, William continued to assertively accommodate them, asking for their opinions and then still acknowledging their perspective even when they didn't acknowledge his. Though he was willing to "actively negotiate the norms [that] govern relationships between… newcomers and members of the host culture" (Evanoff, 2006, p. 5), William found that his efforts failed when they weren't reciprocated by members of the dominant culture. He ended his narrative by acknowledging that even though he "was surrounded by British culture and opinions," he carried within him "my own personal microcosm from my time in High School." This awareness and acceptance of his own difference as a transcultural allowed William to handle the stress of cross-cultural communication and claim his own complex, multicultural identity even in the face of continued contestation.

Achieving Identity Transformation through Transdifference

"The truth is that I am all of these. Each name reveals a different facet of identity that allows symbolic, historical, cultural, and political connectedness… It is sometimes difficult for people to understand the "both-and" mentality that results from this simultaneity of existence" (Tanno 36).

As seen throughout the preceding three sections, transculturals must constantly negotiate who they are and who they want to be in the face of contestation and hegemony. Yet, identity negotiation is not the end goal for TCKs; rather, the hope is that all transculturals can attain identity transformation, in which they freely and confidently enact their chosen identities in a healthy manner. Kim's (2008) idea of intercultural personhood asserts that when transculturals learn "effective interpersonal communication between newcomers and the people in the host culture," they achieve the identity transformation of "intercultural personhood" (Kristjansdottir and DeTurk, 2013, p. 196). However, Kim's (2008) theory relies on the transcultural's ability to persevere, maintaining the strength and openness to continually adapt. While a few of the narrative authors did exemplify Kim's (2008) theory of Intercultural Personhood, many did not. Therefore, when examining the TCK narratives for moments of identity transformation, we must echo Bhatia's (2011) question: "What happens when the act of cultural translation fails?" (p. 406). When TCKs experience moments of human weakness and the tenuous bridge of intercultural communication breaks, how do they recover? How do they achieve identity transformation in an ever-shifting climate of identity contestation? Moving from analysis of how interactions of contestation affected the narrative authors' identity negotiation, this section discusses the process in which a majority of the TCK participants achieved identity transformation.

Within their identity narratives, the TCK authors seem to suggest continual awareness of the complexity and ambiguity of their own transcultural existence as a possible method of coping with the tension. Breinig and Losch's (2002) concept of transdifference allows for

consideration of the "mutual overlapping of contradictory aspects of belonging" inherent in

transcultural existence (Kalscheuer, 2009, p. 186). Most pertinently, transdifference allows for

"moments of ambiguity, indecision and contradiction while constructing difference" (Losch,

2005, p. 27). Six of the eight TCK authors implied that when they chose to name and accept the

ambiguity and contradiction of the transience in which they live, they could then claim their own

agency and take control of their cultural identity, thereby achieving identity transformation.

The TCKs took pains to depict their growing awareness and acceptance of the

complex reality of transcultural life in their narratives. In particular, four of the narrative authors

thoroughly detailed how their often-painful cultural transitions led them to a state of

transdifference, in which they were able to negotiate the "moments of ambiguity, indecision and

contradiction" in order to achieve identity transformation. Though the authors portrayed a variety

of reactions to the opposition befitting their preferred acculturation method, all four also

discussed moments of self-doubt. These reactions align with Cockburn's (2002) assertion that

interactions of contestation can cause feelings of insecurity and reinforce the transcultural's

status as an outsider. Du Bois' (1903) idea of "double-consciousness" also applies to the TCK

author's experience in attaining transdifference. As seen in their narratives, the four

transculturals often found themselves constantly questioning how their instinctual actions and

reactions might be perceived by the dominant cultural group, thus viewing themselves through a

"double" or even triple lens of vying home and host cultures. However, as Schaetti (1996)

asserts, transculturals can lessen the weight of their fragmented reality by perceiving transition as

a definable and navigable process.

As the TCK authors examined their own double-consciousness within the context of their

varying situated identities, they often described learning to accept their oscillating identities,

thereby achieving identity transformation. In her narrative, Ngozi claimed that because of her cosmopolitan adolescence spent interacting "with people from many tribes in Nigeria, a few people in Turkey, Egypt; many from Libya, Mali, Niger, Hungary, Czech Republic and so on," she can "meet people of different cultures and relate on common grounds." This awareness of – and appreciation for – her ability to culture-shift suggests a comfortability with her context-dependent identity. Ngozi did not arrive at this positive outlook lightly; instead, she spent most of her narrative detailing painful transitions in which she often felt insecure, first to the international school culture in Austria and then back to her home culture of Nigeria. She explained:

> It was a different ball game as I returned to Nigeria for university after years in Europe…. It seemed like I had more readjusting to do in my home country. I had to tone down and do away with some confidence. All of these I did with no clue and with the littlest help.

As she then described making changes to her habits, demeanor, and even food preferences, Ngozi emphasized her inability to escape from awareness of her own double-consciousness. She had no choice but to transition and situate much of her identity within the societal demands of Nigerian culture, just as she had done previously to the American international school culture of ICSV. Still, Ngozi remained convinced of the merits of cross-cultural interactions. She ended her narrative by stating:

> Traveling for me remains one of the most life-changing experiences. As rightly put by Mark Twain, "travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness and many of our people need it solely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's

lifetime." The world is indeed a Book and I do not regret reading quite a few pages

regardless of the confusion and strain that comes with readjusting."

Like Ngozi's book metaphor suggests, allowing a multiplicity of influences into her life shaped

and changed her. Ngozi's self-understanding exemplifies the process of transdifference as she

acknowledges the "moments of contradiction, tension and indecidability that run counter to the

logic of inclusion/exclusion" (Kalscheuer, 2009, p. 186). Transculturals like Ngozi possess no

simple answer to the question of identity, no distinguishable path that others have trod, no easy

way to name themselves. They must instead learn to live in the ambiguity of transcultural life,

willing to freely dialogue with the swirling voices of influence before they can achieve

transformation. As Ngozi referenced Mark Twain, she emphasized how "travel is fatal to…

narrow-mindedness." Ultimately, she decided to embrace the frustrations of her multicultural

experiences and her frequent status as an outsider alongside the complex, broad-minded

worldview she has acquired.

      Also working to avoid restrictive descriptions of her life as a transcultural, Jane took

pains to avoid a fully positive or negative representation of herself as a multicultural person.

Rather, she acknowledged the "mutual contradictory aspects of belonging" inherent in

transdifference (Kalscheur, p.186). In Jane's narrative, she explained how, as a young American

student in an international school during 9/11 and the Bush administration, she felt trapped by

her inability to disconnect herself from the image of America as an overbearing world power.

During a furlough year back in America, she realized the effects of that experience:

      In my junior year of high school in the US at a Fourth of July parade, an adult from my

      church turned to our family and said, "Doesn't everyone just want to be an American?"

      My stomach churned. Uncomfortable criticisms of America throughout the Bush

administration [while at ICSV] burdened my heart and my mind. I was exposed to the

pride of America that day, and I was remembering the shame of America that I was

exposed to at my international school. It was helping me become more aware of what I

was proud to represent and what I was embarrassed about as someone with an American

passport.

Jane's experience as the minority American at ICSV at a time of international disdain for

American foreign policy and as a hidden immigrant in America during the influential years of

her youth produced feelings of both shame and pride in her American cultural identity. As a

result of this forced double-consciousness, Jane learned to open herself up to the tension of

existing as Other in both her home and host cultures. In writing about her refusal to accept only

one portrayal of her American identity, Jane directly confronted the dualistic, prejudicial

tendencies of both herself and others.

I have come to an understanding that there are no cultures which are completely good or

completely bad and that nobody has to force an either/or identity upon themselves. The

entire concept of a Third Culture Kid is that there is no possible way to be either/or of

anything at all—extremes feel the most uncomfortable; making choices between two

things feels most uncomfortable. Understanding diversity and living with dissonance,

accepting a blend of different perspectives is what makes a TCK.

As an adult processing her transcultural upbringing, Jane showed how her experience could not

be confined by limiting binary thought. Beinig and Losch (2002) emphasize that transdifference

includes "all that which resists the construction of meaning based on an exclusionary and

conclusional binary model" (p. 23). As Jane came to terms with while writing her narrative, the

tension and ambiguity of multicultural communication worked to create a less limiting, fuller

understanding of her transcultural identity.

Jane chose to end her narrative still fully immersed in the tension she continues to feel as

an adult TCK:

> The confused loyalties and ambiguity in my cultural identity remain… I often hesitate to
>
> share experiences such as these out of fear that I may be asked to simplify my story by
>
> choosing sides and minimiz[ing] the confusion. The reality is that ambiguity is exactly
>
> what my experience has brought me. Embracing the ambiguity is difficult, but necessary
>
> in order to respond to my experience with genuineness.

By using the narrative space to declare her willingness to live within the ambiguity of her TCK

identity, Jane chose to "rework the given identity repertoires" of national labels (Mendoza et al.,

p. 419). In doing so, she both resisted and modified the American identity thrust on her by

subjectifying identification processes, and therefore achieved identity transformation through

transdifference.

Two of the TCK authors directly equated their cultural experiences with personal growth,

displaying transdifference by questioning how the uprooted reality of their transcultural lives

shaped their current identities. Rather than seeing their identities as fully situated and subject to

change upon context alone, these TCKs viewed their identities from an additive model. As they

experienced ongoing intercultural exposure, they continued to question who they were, thereby

transforming into more self-aware and self-assured identities.

Set within the international school culture, Alejandro's narrative illustrates how the

trauma of transitioning from his home culture of Costa Rica to the school culture of ICSV led to

internal questioning. He explained that, after adjusting to the school culture, he recognized the impact of the transition on his identity.

> I understood instantly that new vistas shape new horizons. And as such this small institute of knowledge twisted me into who I am today. Would I have been the same [person] as the pupil that wanted to stay in his ancestors' land? I often question this myself.

Instead of concentrating solely on the stress and confusion of cultural transition, Alejandro used the narrative space to question whether or not he would have developed his current identity without the cultural upheaval of life as a TCK. In this manner, he utilized the narrative as a space to dialogue with his inner questions, to wonder who else he could have become had he not experienced cross-cultural transition.

Like Alejandro, William – a student of Scottish heritage who moved from Austria to London to attend university – frequently questioned the effects of his transcultural experiences. He too chose to use the narrative as a place to dialogue with his inner questions:

> I still wonder if me having been born in Europe and now living in Great Britain defined my opinion at the time. At the same time, I also find myself trying to discern if the opinion I had was bias[ed] or not, could it be that my identity is to pick whatever side suits me during any given moment. Or am I just lost in the maze of all my identities from childhood, through high school, to the UK, to finishing University[?] At every significant point in my life there has been some shifts in culture and politics, or a distinctive change in the people surrounding me.

Of the eight TCK authors, William most frequently acknowledged his own cultural uncertainty, seemingly embracing the frustrations of cross-cultural communication as part and parcel of his

intercultural existence. Kalscheuer's (2009) definition of transdifference as produced by "multiple cultural affiliations, mutually exclusive ascriptions of membership" and discordant groups vying for loyalty coincides with William's blunt admission his own identity confusion (p.189). William's dialogical act of acknowledging and questioning the constant pull of each cultural influence throughout his life reveals the state of transdifference he has achieved.

Both TCK authors also expressed their transcultural identities as an on-going process, allowing for and even encouraging continual growth. Alejandro and William chose to articulate their identities as culturally additive, expanding over the years. Alejandro explained:

It is true that I sense that I do not belong to one place anymore, but to a many. Throughout those years it was evident to me that I became something else [other than] those sedentary souls that remain a gusto with their monotonous lives. I cannot remain stagnant anymore, and this does not make me superior, it is just my own reality.

Of course, this does not suggest that Alejandro's behaviors do not alter somewhat to fit the expectations of the varying cultures he moves in and out of, but rather that one cultural label can no longer fit who he has become. Therefore, rather than contradicting Gee's (1996) concept of situated identities in which enacted identities fluctuate from cultural context to cultural context, Alejandro expressed his identity as the ever-expanding totality of his situated experiences.

Likewise, William regarded his own identity negotiation as a process of change and development:

The lasting impact that my time in High School had was that I gained a greater appreciation of a variety of different opinions and was infused with cultural diversity. This again changed in University when I was surrounded by British culture and opinions, with my own personal microcosm from my time in High School.

In his narrative, William observed the on-going growth of his own cultural diversity, continually impacted by each new cultural experience. In this focus, both Alejandro and William echoed Hall's (1996) definition of identity as a "process of becoming," with an emphasis not on past cultural identifiers but rather on who they wanted to become and how they chose to represent themselves in each cultural context (p. 4). Through their willingness to question who they have become in various stages of life and to consider the developmental outcomes of each new experience, both Alejandro and William have achieved identity transformation.

The four TCKs described above used the rhetorical space of their narratives to describe their own progression of navigating and accepting the contradictions of their intercultural identities. In employing their narratives as places to define, accept and transmit their understanding, the authors echoed Miike's (2014) construction of transdifference as "a centering of oneself in one's own culture, dialoguing with it, and bringing forth a particular and useful insight and discourse to the multicultural project" (p. 111). In varying degrees throughout their narratives, the four TCKs engaged in an ongoing dialogue that facilitated acknowledgment of their own double-consciousness (DuBois, 1903) and acceptance of the reality of their situated identities (Gee 1996). Ultimately, this process allowed the transcultural authors to recognize and reflect on their individual experiences of achieving transdifference (Breinig and Losch, 2002).

In stark contrast to the conflict described in the narratives above – as well as the multiple moments of identity contestation addressed in the other three narratives – Francisca's account of her identity transformation stands as the only narrative not to mention any tension or pressure experienced during her years of cultural transition. Instead, Francisca chose to compare a recent trip to an international food festival to her experiences in ICSV's high school cafeteria. When viewing all the international delicacies of the food festival, Francisca realized that:

> In this kind of environment, I felt at home. It brought me back to my high school
>
> cafeteria… As we shared that time together I remember sharing and tasting all kinds of
>
> new foods. For example, my Indian classmates bringing the spicy Indian dish. Also[,] I
>
> remember when my Korean classmate brought dry squid for us to try. We even had the
>
> famous bake sales with all different American desserts, like chocolate chip cookies and
>
> brownies. And my favorite, the Filipinos always had spring rolls and rice noodles to
>
> share.

Choosing to ignore the frequent tensions of multicultural life, Francisca chose instead to focus her narrative solely on the bonding experience of food. In doing so, she described how she has repeatedly enacted her intercultural personality through food. Mendoza et al. (2000) describes food as a "signifying practice," and when used repetitively, it can work as a "performative enactment" of ethnic identity (p. 421). In Francisca's narrative, food became a signifier of her self-avowal as an international person, and even represented a kind of "home" for her:

> Thinking about it more closely, I realized that these international cuisines were not
>
> international at all. Instead, they always reminded me of a place I could call home. All
>
> these different dishes are not an exotic new flavor, but they [each] represent a friendship I
>
> have from high school.

As she connected global tastes to the comforting friendships she established at ICSV, Francisca drew a unifying thread between all her disparate transcultural experiences, and found a way to express her own identity transformation.

> And I am reminded [that] this mix of international foods and people all in one room is a
>
> new kind of globalized culture, a culture I belong to and where I feel at home. In this

sense food connects us in a way that goes beyond a specific culture or cuisine. We are

connected in a way of living and understanding the world in a way that goes beyond

geography.

Through her descriptions, Francisca exemplified Kim's (2008) definition of an Intercultural

Person as someone who appreciates the particularities of diverse cultures, yet can bring them

together into an amalgamated whole. In this way, Francisca aligns with Kim's assertion that

"cross-borrowing" identity traits does not lead to a loss of one's own cultural identity, but

instead, acts as "an act of respect for cultural differences that leaves neither the lender nor the

borrower deprived" (p. 366). Even though Intercultural Personhood's potential weakness lies in

its reliance on the transcultural's ability to persevere and maintain the strength and openness to

continually adapt, it clearly works to define Francesca's identity transformation, at least in the

case she chose to describe.

Though Francisca's narrative contains no evidence of interactions of identity

contestation, this of course does not mean that she has never experienced contradictions or

difficulties while acculturating from one culture to another. Rather, it suggests that she simply

did not choose to use the rhetorical space given to address issues of cultural identity contestation.

Consequently, Francisca completely avoids Kalscheur's (2009) theory of transdifference. Her

narrative contains no acknowledgement of "the mutual contradictory aspects of belonging," only

a celebration of the bringing together of cultural differences (Kalscheur, p. 186). As an anomaly

among the TCK narrative authors, Francisca helps point to the diversity of the transcultural

experience itself, and reminds us that – like many aspects of the TCK life – there remains no

single way to best achieve identity transformation.

Chapter Four

Discussion

"I learned to make my mind large, as the universe is large, so that here is room for paradoxes"
(Kingston, as qtd. in Chen 3)

Implications

In the chaotic atmosphere of the contemporary global arena – filled with cultural clashes,

misunderstandings, and an underlying fear of the "Other – transculturals can provide a much-

needed hope that bridges can be built and relationships restored. When TCKs are well supported

in learning to conquer the rootlessness of constant transition, overcome their marginalized

placement, find connected relationships that provide stability, and culturally adapt wherever

placed, their complex identities endow them with great potential as future world leaders.   In

coming to terms with their own seemingly fragmented identities, transculturals can use their

experiences to speak to the fears and accusations of the world at large because they have seen

humanity on a broad scale – often in its most beautiful and most broken states. If they build

healthy, foundational roots and continue to negotiate their own identities in the face of constant

change, TCKs can eventually learn how to reconcile the conflicting images first within

themselves, and then out in the world.

The examination of TCK narratives in this qualitative study has underscored the need for

international schools to directly acknowledge and empower their transcultural students' multi-

faceted identities. Because rising nationalistic ideologies can lead to intensified ethnic, racial and

cultural discrimination, international schools like ICSV should carefully address the complex

needs of their transcultural students to facilitate healthy identity development. This study has

highlighted the frequency with which dominant group members contest the identities of

adolescent TCKs. Therefore, transcultural students must be provided methods of understanding,

analyzing and expressing their cultural and racial identities without "shed[ding] their own

languages, their own experiences, and their own cultural or social referents at the door of the

polis" (Levinson, 2012, p. 92). They must also be given the support required to acknowledge and

accept the ambiguity of cross-cultural existence. If international schools are able to do so, they

have the possibility of exemplifying Kalscheuer's (2009) definition of the third space, as a

"temporary and provisional place which facilitates cultural encounters" (p. 186). Only when the

needed support is given, can the international school act as a third space that empowers this

essential population to navigate its fragmented existence and achieve healthy identity negotiation

and transformation.

Interactions of Contestation and Co-Cultural Theory

Strikingly, during interactions of contestation regarding their cultural identities, the TCK

narrative authors utilized only non-assertive communication approaches of separation and

assimilation while situated in the international school. When directly challenged as to a specific

component of his or her cultural identity, not one participant described immediately addressing

the challenger in an assertive or aggressive manner. Although, when given time and resources

such as liaisons, a few of the authors learned to more healthily communicate themselves

assertively within the school setting. Later, as college students and adults in their home and new

host cultures, they described employing both assertive and aggressive approaches of

accommodation during interactions of contestation. However, as adolescent students surrounded

by other TCKs and mostly white American teachers in an American international school, the

narrative authors portrayed initial reliance on non-assertive separation methods, such as avoiding

confrontation and maintaining interpersonal barriers, as well as assimilation methods of

censoring themselves. Because transculturals must endure the "added challenges of both mobility and international cultural differences" as well as the usual developmental trials of adolescence, they are especially "driven by conformity and striv[e] to fulfill societal roles" (McDonald, 2010, p. 41), which can manifest in both separation and assimilation techniques.

After high school, even though the narrative authors continued to fluctuate in their acculturation approaches between separation, accommodation and assimilation, they increasingly became more comfortable acknowledging their cultural differences to dominant group members of their home and host cultures than they had been to multicultural members of ICSV's third culture. This finding brings into question Pollock and Van Reken's (1999) assertion that third culture kids "feel most comfortable with other TCK's, bonded through their shared 'third-culture' experience" (p. 8). Much of this can of course be attributed to maturation and to the hard-learned lessons they took away from their full immersion into cross-cultural communication at ICSV. However, this finding raises questions about how international schools can more thoroughly assist students in learning to use moments of cultural conflict and contestation to better negotiate and strengthen their individual cultural identities. Specifically when considering interactions of contestation, the hope is that adolescent TCKs can learn to assertively communicate their layered cultural identities with increased frequency within the international school, as well as outside of it. If given the right support, international school students can learn to view their fellow TCKs as potential resources and liaisons, instead of as another cultural hurdle they must overcome. Kalscheuer (2014) described a "third space," in which "one's own cultural boundedness is loosened," as having great potential for individual cultural enrichment (p. 180). The international school could align seamlessly with Kalscheuer's (2009) definition of the third space, allowing room for confrontation and clashing of cultures, which then can lead to

acceptance in oneself of "the mutual overlapping of contradictory aspects of belongings" that

Kalscheuer terms as transdifference (p. 186). The choice of the TCK, then, becomes whether

they will enter into the dialogue themselves, willing to bring their sundry experiences to the

table, unafraid if they contradict someone else's reality. If international schools can broaden

their curriculum to teach students how to see the clashing of cultures which occurs during

interactions of contestation as a necessary component of their identity negotiation, TCK students

may be able to avoid prolonged periods of separation and assimilation, and more quickly achieve

healthy accommodation techniques that can last into their adult TCK lives.

Overall, Co-Cultural Theory's (Orbe, 1998) focus on accommodation over assimilation

allows for the "in-between" existence of third culture individuals (Pollock and Van Reken, p. 6).

They can learn to healthily "accommodate" each culture they move in and out of, but are not

required to fully assimilate to any. The results of this narrative project confirm that, overall,

assertive accommodation was the most frequently relied upon communication approach

throughout the TCKs transcultural interactions. The narratives revealed that the adult TCK

participants seemed to be most at peace and satisfied with their portrayal of their own complex

cultural identities when utilizing assertive accommodation methods. Together, the narratives

revealed that the authors did not fully fit within Kim's (2008) theory of Intercultural Personhood.

Although the authors showed themselves adaptive to portions of Kim's theory, in that they

willingly "learn[ed] new cultural elements", often one culture after another, they did not fully fit

the Intercultural Personhood mold in that they never "unlearn[ed] the old ways" (Kim, 2008, p.

88). As transculturals, this refusal to "unlearn" habits of their previous culture(s) benefitted them

in many instances, as they found themselves shifting between home and host countries, relying

on the particular communication skills required in each culture. Within the additive rather than

subtractive structure of Co-Cultural Theory, transculturals can learn to healthily "accommodate" each culture they move in and out of, but are not required to fully assimilate to any. If adhered to, Evanoff's (2006) theory of two-sided adaptation makes the accommodation process less stressful for third culture individuals, allowing them to feel more at home in cross-cultural situations where others are willing to make the needed adjustments for them.

To actively facilitate Evanoff's two-sided adaptation, ICSV and other international schools should move toward implementing specific approaches and tools that both teachers and students can use to help all students reach healthy identity negotiation, especially during their initial acculturation to the school culture. Cockburn (2002) claimed that in addressing transcultural identity negotiation, international schools should implement "more formal means within the curriculum and through task forces called 'transition teams'" (p. 481). This kind of structure can lead to student-led empowerment, known as self-efficacy, and can be promoted through educational training for TCKs and teachers alike. Ittel and Sisler (2012) argued for strengthening the self-efficacy of TCKs by "facilitating efficacious socio-cultural adaptation by way of bolstering close family bonds and friendships, online, in the classroom, and beyond" (p. 491). This kind of intentional, multi-faceted approach would encourage open conversation about the difficulties of acculturation for TCKs, such as the transcultural authors experiences of challenges to their cultural identities throughout their time at ICSV. An intentional approach would also facilitate the students in recognizing their own needs, and learning how to better equip themselves for continual transition.

Racial Hegemony within ICSV

Unexpectedly, three of the narratives illuminated how ICSV exacerbated a post-racial and colorblind mentality by ignoring the structural racism the students of color dealt with in the

Austrian culture instead of directly contesting it. Bös (2011) averred that due to the combined

factors of colonialism and globalism, racism acts "as a transnational process" that is sometimes

called the "American model of race relations" (p. 3). At an administrative level, this can mean

systematically structuring differentiations between ethnicities and races, which facilitates a

colorblind mentality (Bös, 2011, p. 3). Narrative authors Oby and Jack, as black Nigerian and

white American students respectively, addressed the post-racial attitude of the teachers and

students, due to the effect of the "multiracial bubble" at ICSV, as Oby termed it. Ngozi and

Oby's narratives elucidated that, as black Nigerians, they experienced degrees of racism absent

from the other narratives, even those written by non-black students of color. In their examination

of race in multiracial American schools, Quillian and Campbell (2003) found that "black-non-

black is an important dividing line in multiracial schools (p. 560). Though Quillian and

Campbell's example is set in an American context, it also rings true globally due to the

American model of race relations and the lasting effects of colonialism worldwide. Obviously,

the overarchingly negative Austrian mindset towards ethnic minorities also played a major role

in the context of ICSV. Tomlinson (2004) asserted that within European nations like Austria

there remains a chasm between their democratic ideals and the educational reality for their

minority students. The "cultural, linguistic, and religious differences" of minority students can

lead to discrimination in which "both students and teachers often perceive these students as the

'Other.' (Banks, 2015, p. 19). Even though ICSV is an international school with a specific

mission of inclusivity that stands in contrast to the current Austrian culture, if the administration

and staff do not fully acknowledge the context in which their students of color live, then they too

contribute to the marginalization.

To combat this destructive post-racial mindset, international schools like ICSV need to engage in global citizenship education that specifically addresses the realities of race. First and foremost, schools must explicitly acknowledge existing issues surrounding race and identity, and then facilitate continuing dialogue which engages and empowers all members of their community. The problems students like Oby face often begin with a lack of recognition. Ginwright et al. (2005) asserts that researchers often characterize communities in a way that ignores the underlying social and economic factors marginalizing youth. If schools will acknowledge the structural factors contributing to the marginalization of their students of color, then the problem can begin to be addressed at its foundation. In a study regarding structural racism and youth development, The Aspen Institute (2005) recommends that those who work with youth, "adopt racially equitable outcomes as an explicit part of their mission and vision" (p. 2). Yet, they also caution that racial issues do not always require overtly racial mediations (The Aspen Institute, 2005). As Noddings (2013) emphasizes, democratic equality is often forged through an underlying and continual focus on values, "which are not simply handed down," but instead "are cooperatively constructed in dialogue" (p. 14). A dialogical approach can embolden school community members to work through the "uncomfortable issues that often arise when dealing with race and racism" (The Aspen Institute, 2005, p. 2). This Deweyan concept of community dialogue can help all members of a school engage with each other's constructed narratives, thereby building "more empowering civic narratives," that "incorporate individuals' and communities' lived experiences while simultaneously justifying and reinforcing a sense of personal and political efficacy, of civic membership, and of civic duty" (Levinson, 2012, p. 108-109).

Although ICSV already includes many of the characteristics suggested to improve intergroup relations, such as individuals experiencing equal status, sharing common goals, cooperating between group members, and having the sanction of teachers and administrators (Allport, 1954;1979), it still lacks explicit instruction on racial studies and appropriate platforms for the students' individual voices to be heard, on racial as well as ethnic issues. Banks (2008) argues for a restructuring of curriculum, moving from teaching mainstream academic knowledge, which reinforces established methods of viewing culture, to focusing on "transformative academic knowledge", which "challenges some of the key epistemological assumptions of mainstream knowledge," and has been championed by leading scholars of color (p. 135). In transformative education, teachers utilize strategies and materials that model democratic racial attitudes and behaviors such as multiethnic readers (Litcher & Johnson, 1969); simulations (Weiner & Wright, 1973); multicultural social studies materials (Yawkey & Blackwell, 1974); folk dances, music, crafts, and role-playing (Ijaz & Ijaz, 1981); plays (Gimmestad & DeChiara, 1982); discussions about race (Aboud & Doyle, 1996); and discussions combined with antiracist teaching (McGregor, 1993).

Modica's (2014) study showed that "apprehension over discussing race hindered productive classroom conversations and stopped teachers from addressing evidence of racial inequity" (p. 396). Because the topic of race can be difficult to directly address within the school setting, another option for international schools – and one that ICSV adopted in 2016 – is to move towards a set program of study such as the International Baccalaureate curriculum. This program "carries its own philosophy and standards of education" that a school must adopt in its entirety (Zhao, 2015, p. 248), and thereby makes race-centered conversations a part of the daily lessons. Though no set program is perfect, the IB curriculum's international perspective

facilitates development of active, compassionate global citizens. Nussbaum (2006) emphasizes

the power of a curriculum for world citizenship, which can "enhance self-respect," "promote

people's ability to control and plan their lives" and expand students' "opportunities to choose

and act" (pp. 9, 10, 12). This purposeful structuring of the overarching school curriculum and

providing of platforms for student expression and empowerment should go far in encouraging

the kind of open discussions and critical understanding of race which the TCK narratives

revealed were lacking at ICSV.

Embracing the Ambiguity and Tension

Within the narratives, the same authors who spent the most time detailing the pain they

experienced in cultural conflicts also recounted learning to accept the complexity and ambiguity

of transcultural life as young adults in their twenties. As Jane asserted, "Understanding diversity

and living with dissonance, accepting a blend of different perspectives is what makes a TCK."

Yet, coming to terms with the continual cultural discord that accompanies the benefits of

transcultural living is no easy task. Rhetorical discursive practices – such as the writing of

identity narratives – can help transculturals recognize and perhaps eventually come to peace with

both the triumphs and tensions often present in their lives. For some TCKs, the most helpful

rhetorical practice remains a more individual act, a written discourse that helps them process

their experiences. For the TCK authors in this study, the narratives provided a discursive place

free from cultural restrictions in which the authors could claim agency by "assembl[ing] situated

meanings" (Gee, 1992, p. 139). This rhetorical space then allows the individual to process how

the interactions of contestation have formed, negotiated and transformed the way they chose to

communicate their transcultural identities.

For some transculturals, the discursive practice can become more external, allowing them to enter into dialogue with others about the intricacies of cross-cultural living. Bakhtin's (1981) idea of "heterglossia" maintains that "individual voices provide the necessary centrifugal tension to counter the centripetal and stultifying voice" of dominant forces, and that "these voices create opportunities for a range of perspectives to share space" (Fecho & Botzakis, 2007, p. 553). As evidenced by the TCK narratives, transculturals are often forced to reconcile themselves to the tension of heterglossia. Like Baldwin's (1988) explanation of the African American need to embrace painful complexity, "only within this web of ambiguity, paradox, this hunger, danger, darkness, can we find at once ourselves and the power that will free us from ourselves" (p. 13). While verbalizing such complexity will likely feel uncomfortable at first, Holquist (2004) argued that it is that exact tension, "the thirdness of dialogue," which "frees [our] existence from the very circumscribed meaning" of our immediate understanding of interactions (p. 38). The goal of healthy identity building for TCKs is that they too can approach their multicultural lives from such a dialogical perspective.

Though the TCK authors in this study did not specifically identify themselves as cultural ambassadors in their narratives, the discursive act of centering their personal narrative around an interaction in which their transcultural identity was challenged is, in itself, an act of ambassadorship. By communicating their own deeply personal experiences in their narratives, the TCKs can act as ambassadors who willingly share the reality of their many worlds with those who have not shared such experiences. As Mujeeb (2013) asserts:

> As TCKs, we hold a piece of the puzzle that is missing in mass media. We add context
> and real human stories to the headlines and photographs that seem so distant. With an
> acute understanding of both sides, all we have to do is pick the right stories to fill in the

gaps. One can think of it as a responsibility or a burden, but I think of it as a gift. You

won't get through to everyone but even if you add a layer of perspective for every few

people that you talk to, that is still a success. (p. 3)

While many TCKs may never feel comfortable in the role of ambassador, some transculturals

who have achieved identity transformation may choose to communicate the peace they have

found in their non-binary, diverse and often dissonant existence. Several of the narrative authors

accomplished just this, acting as ambassadors as they contested cultural labels and explained

their transcultural identities, as Jack did with his British flat mates, Ngozi with her Nigerian

college friends, and Jane and Obi through the actual writing of the narratives.

Limitations of the Study

The most significant limitation of this study was the sample size of narratives used.

Though patterns of identity negotiation and transformation arose within the eight narratives,

clearly the sample size limited me from proving theories on a broader scale that may have more

direct application for transcultural students, globally. However, the qualitative structure of the

Critical Discourse Analysis approach does allow for in-depth examination of texts. This study

can be extended to a more extensive collection and analysis of TCK personal narratives, which

would permit broader patterns to arise and for claims to be proven across multiple experiences

and interactions. A larger sample size would also ensure further differentiation amount the

participants. The relatively limited amount of differentiation among the participants – three

males, five females; two Nigerians, two Costa Ricans, two Americans, one American/Austrian

and one Scottish/Austrian; all aged twenty-four to twenty-eight – may have skewed the results

in unknown ways. It is impossible to estimate if the same patterns of communication responses

to interactions of contestation, the same tendency to acknowledge the ambiguity of TCK life would have arisen if the participants had included more and different ethnic, racial, cultural, gender and age variations. When discussing complex cultural questions of identity, even the smallest shift in any type of variation could have had a significant change on the treatments or reactions of a transcultural author in their various home and host countries. However, as a limited sample size, this study does offer insight into the experiences of these eight participants, which may help educators see the need for some systemic changes within current practices of international schools.

Though the TCK authors were free to detail their experiences in the narratives, both the length and scope of the prompt allowed for possible limitations. Because the writing task prompted a minimum of two pages, the brevity of the authors' responses made it difficult to understand the full scope of influence the interactions recounted in the narratives had on the authors' negotiation and transformation of their transcultural identities. Of course, this meant that the breadth of the author's intercultural experiences was not expressed in its entirety, which is almost always the case with a subject as complex as identity. As Mendoza et al. (2000) assert, within interpretive research studies such as this one, "identity-in-context is denotatively read like a 'text'," which can mean that connections to "wider socio-political formations and historical influences" can at times be missed (Mendoza et. al, p. 417). With longer narrative accounts – or more in-depth ethnographic approaches – the researcher would be able to better track patterns of behavior and growth in response to the contested encounters. Yet, it is the straightforward manner with which rhetorical studies can be conducted that makes them a useful and easily repeated method of research, especially on a scale large enough to affect educational practices.

Also, though the writing task attempted objectivity, the participants were directed to a particular subject, and therefore did not come to it naturally. The prompt asked the participants to describe how their international high school experiences affected their cultural identities in a positive, neutral or negative manner; whereas a fully free response may have produced different patterns of results. It is also important to note that participants constructed their narratives through back formation, in which they considered the effects of their high school experiences in light of later life events. Therefore, later experiences very well could have influenced how the authors chose to describe the effects of their school experience on their current cultural identities. Yet, even taking into account the above limitations, the resulting narratives still provide a specific and insightful look into the effects of the context of ICSV on the identity negotiation and transformation of these eight participants, and could help lead to a more in-depth look into the identity development of transculturals in international schools worldwide.

Future Research

The findings from this research study illuminated the need for further study of transculturals to help them navigate the complexities of identity development, since they have the potential to be the "prototype citizens of the 21st century" (Ward, 1984 as quoted by McCaig, 1994). Because of third culture kids' growing population, position at the forefront of intercultural collaboration, and role as key players in world leadership, both the intercultural communications and multicultural education fields can greatly benefit from further research into the identity formation of TCKs, and the factors that lead them into successful and healthy maturation. As Kim (2008) makes clear, our globalized and changing world is one of "clashing traditions and collective identities" and we face "the deepest social upheaval and creative restructuring of all time" (p. 359). This new reality means that third culture individuals who spent their lives

traversing and balancing multiple cultures can provide an exemplar population for the rest of us

to learn from. Yet, more research is needed to reveal how transculturals can best acknowledge

the tension of their multicultural realities, and therefore strategically positioned themselves to

help reveal the "unnaturalness" of nationalism (Gomez, 2007). Itell and Sisler (2012) also

reiterate the need for further study, seeing as "a paucity of knowledge exists with respect to the

support these [TCK] youth might need" (p. 487).

New research studies in intercultural communications examining the outcomes of TCK

identity negotiation would allow for better understanding the following theories. Careful

examination of Hall's (1996) theory of cultural hybridity in relation to Adler's (1975) concept of

the multicultural man, Kim's (2008) theory of intercultural personhood, Bhatia's (2011) cultural

translation model and Kalscheuer's (2009) concept of transdifference would provide detailed

understanding of transculturals' comprehensive needs in identity development. Also, comparing

Phinney and Rotheram's (1987) concept of ethnic identity to Fong's (2006) theory of cultural

identity would clarify the distinction between transculturals' ethnic and cultural identities, which

seem to be ever-shifting in today's context. Also, supplemental research on third culture models

of adaptation and accommodation – rather than assimilation – could further assist this population

in finding healthy identity negotiation models for themselves.

Moreover, in contrast to Adler's (1975) idea of the multicultural man, further exploration

into multicultural womanhood would illuminate whether there are specific differences in

developmental needs between male and female transculturals, as suggested by Sparrow (2011).

Research in this area could assist in differentiating the approaches to each gender, in school,

counseling and work environments. Sparrow also reveals the need to explore the essential idea of

multicultural identity formation from a global perspective, not just a western one. She questions

if the very idea of an individual identity is Eurocentric in its origin. Due to the collectivist thinking of eastern cultures, the very definition and foundational study of identities may be coming from a place of western privilege. Researchers should continue to examine today's political and social arenas to continually question who has the rhetorical power to label and define, in order to counter the past effects of imperialistic-influenced research.

The field of multicultural education also would benefit from further research into practical means to assist their transcultural population. These students would greatly gain from further creation of resources to meet their specific needs, through identity development assessments as well as curriculum geared to help them healthily develop their individual processes of identity negotiation. Also, there exists a need for studies to be conducted in order to develop methods of finding those TCKs who might still be hidden immigrants, completely unaware that they are part of a larger group of "others," which means that tools need to be designed for use in schools that are not solely international but may have a significant transcultural student population. In addition, specific measures need to be developed to identify transculturals in crisis as well as those who are primed for global leadership. Then, tools need to be created that can have wide implementation in international school and counseling settings. International educators also have the opportunity to make use of the discursive devices of counter storytelling (Nelson, 2015), rhetorics of difference (Flores, 1996), and vernacular discourse (Ono & Sloop, 1995) to empower their students. Much more research can be directed to how rhetorical space for identity negotiation and transformation can be woven into academic curriculum to better reach the need of multidimensional needs of transcultural students.

As globalization accelerates the proliferation of international schools and transcultural students worldwide, the need for increased, varied and creative means of reaching and

supporting the TCK student population also rises. For intercultural communication researchers and multicultural educators alike, there is much work to be done in field study as well as development and implementation of school and classroom tools to meet the largely under-addressed needs of the rapidly increasing transcultural population. If communications researchers and educators can unite their efforts, together they can find solutions to assist transculturals in navigating their identities and achieving transformation. In the current political climate, often fraught with fear of the Other, transculturals' balanced perspective and acceptance of paradox offer a possible model of how to best navigate the complexities of modern life.

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Appendix A

DEPAUL UNIVERSITY

Office of Research Services
Institutional Review Board
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Chicago, Illinois 60604-2201
312-362-7593
Fax: 312-362-7574

Research Involving Human Subjects
NOTICE OF INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD ACTION

To: Rachel Conrad, Graduate Student, Interdisciplinary Studies Program

Date: December 7, 2016

Re: Research Protocol # RC092716LAS
"Transnational Identity Negotiation within the International School: An Analysis of Identity Narratives of Adult Third Culture Kids"

Please review the following important information about the review of your proposed research activity.

Review Details
This submission is an initial submission. Your research project meets the criteria for Expedited review under 45 CFR 45 CFR 46.110 under the following category:

> *"(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies."*

Approval Details
Your research was originally reviewed on October 20, 2016 and revisions were requested. The revisions you submitted on November 11, 2016 were reviewed and further revisions were requested on November 22, 2016. The revisions you submitted on November 30, 2016 were reviewed and approved on December 7, 2016.

Approval Period: December 7, 2016 – December 6, 2017

Approved Consent, Parent/Guardian Permission, or Assent Materials:
1) Adult Consent, version 3 – 11/23/16 **(attached)**
   Waiver of documentation of consent granted under 45 CFR 46.117 (c) 2 – verbal consent process

Other approved study documents:
1) Initial Recruitment Message Sent Out to the ICSV/VCS Alumni via the Facebook Page, version 3 – 11/23/2016 **(attached)**
2) Response Facebook Message/Email to Participant Indication of Interest, version 3 -11/23/2016 **(attached)**
3) Summary Topics of Phone/Facetime/Skype Call, version 3 – 11/23/2016 **(attached)**
4) Thank You Facebook Message/Email After Receiving Identity Narrative with Qualtrics Link, version 3 – 11/23/2016 **(attached)**
5) Crisis Intervention Resources, version 1 – 11/11/2016 **(attached)**

Number of approved participants: 20 Total
You should not exceed this total number of subjects without prospectively submitting an amendment to the IRB requesting an increase in subject number.

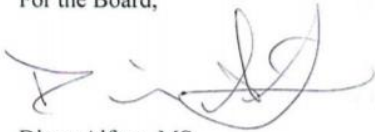**Funding Source:** 1) None

Approved Performance sites: 1) DePaul University

Reminders

- Only the most recent IRB-approved versions of consent, parent/legal guardian permission, or assent forms may be used in association with this project.

- Any changes to the funding source or funding status must be sent to the IRB as an amendment.

- Prior to implementing revisions to project materials or procedures, you must submit an amendment application detailing the changes to the IRB for review and receive notification of approval.

- You must promptly report any problems that have occurred involving research participants to the IRB in writing.

- If your project will continue beyond the approval period indicated above, you are responsible for submitting a continuing review report at least 3 weeks prior to the expiration date. The continuing review form can be downloaded from the IRB web page.

- **Once the research is completed, you must send a final closure report for the research to the IRB.**

The Board would like to thank you for your efforts and cooperation and wishes you the best of luck on your research. If you have any questions, please contact me by telephone at (312) 362-7592 or by email at dalfaro@depaul.edu.

For the Board,

Diana Alfaro, MS
Assistant Director of Research Compliance
Office of Research Services

Cc: Xing (Lucy) Lu, Ph.D., Faculty Sponsor, College of Communication

Appendix B

Identity Narrative Writing Task

Consider the role the international school played in shaping who you are today. Then, choose ONE of the following writing prompts and compose a personal narrative revealing how the international school influenced your view of yourself, your culture(s), and the world.

1. Write a narrative centered around an experience during your time in the international school that positively developed your understanding of your cultural identity and helped you better grasp how your multiple cultures benefit your life. Make sure that this is a particular and specific incident (e.g., happened at a particular time and in a particular place) rather than a general "time" or "period" in your life. When brainstorming, consider the relationships, interactions, conversations and ongoing activities/rituals at the international school that most shaped you.

OR

2. Write a narrative centered around an experience during your time in the international school that negatively affected your understanding of your cultural identity and emphasized the difficulty of balancing your multiple cultures in your life. Make sure that this is a particular and specific incident (e.g., happened at a particular time and in a particular place) rather than a general "time" or "period" in your life. When brainstorming, consider the relationships, interactions, conversations and ongoing activities/rituals at the international school that most shaped you.

OR

3. Write a narrative centered around an experience during your time in the international school in which you underwent an important transition or change with respect to your understanding of yourself and your multiple cultures. Make sure that this is a particular and specific incident (e.g., happened at a particular time and in a particular place) rather than a general "time" or "period" in your life. When brainstorming, consider the relationships, interactions, conversations and ongoing activities/rituals at the international school that most shaped you.

Your narrative should be a minimum of TWO pages and should describe all of the following elements in detail:

1) **What happened**
2) **When it happened**
3) **Who was involved**
4) **What you were thinking and feeling**
5) **Why this event is significant**
6) **What this event says about you and your multicultural personality**

When writing, consider:
- Who would you most like to read this piece? Who might want to know about your experience?
- What do your readers need to know to understand the weight and importance of this experience?
- How can you SHOW your readers your experience? Bring the scene to life with imagery and description – avoid generalities!