The spaces in between

A Qualitative Enquiry into the Identity Development of

Third Culture Kids

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Abstract

Over the last few decades there has been an increasing focus on the role of culture in child development, aspects of development within cross-cultural psychology, as well reflections on the components of identity in a rapidly increasing globalised world. Influenced by these currents, this dissertation is an inquiry into the identity experiences of children who move cross-culturally, along with their parents, during their developmental years (Third Culture Kids).

The aim of this thesis was to explore how exposure to multiple cultural influences and frequent mobility during the formative years affects the identity development of adolescence. The first chapters present the topic and theoretical background for the study. The third chapter reviews the methodological direction of the study, and provides a detailed description of the research procedure. Chapter four and five present and discuss the findings of the investigation.

The design used for the research project was Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), and the interview sample consisted of ten adolescents/young adults who had spent part of or all of their childhood years commuting between various societies. There were three main findings drawn out of the analysis and extended through the discussion on the material. One of the findings was that the interviewees represented three different identity outcomes, indicating an individual structuring of the common components in their background. The second finding was that their status appeared to match the responses they received from others and their ability to reference their experiences. Finally, the way in which the informants viewed themselves appeared to form a consistent life narrative across time and place. These findings can be said to imply a need to expand the available understandings of identity development in a multifaceted setting, both within psychological frameworks as well as in society as a whole.

Foreword

"Our lives teach us who we are" (Salman Rushdie)

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Lill Salole Skjerven, February 2006

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents,
for providing me with wings;
and to my husband and children,
for teaching me to fly without uprooting.

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1. Introduction

"Psychology must attend not only to culture as it moves and mixes but to individuals, as cultural beings, as they move and mix between cultures; to the content, evaluation and structure of the cultural self; and to the awareness of identity in a cultural collective." (Sussman 2000:369)

1.1 Presentation of Third Culture Kids

With the whirling acceleration of forces such as modern technology, globalisation, communication and international politics; people and cultures are regularly being exported and imported across the globe. Diasporas of people are not a new phenomenon; people have migrated since the beginning of time. The intensity and frequency of movement across international borders, however, is a reflection of our current situation (Melucci 1997; Roudometof & Kennedy 2002). For this reason, there are a vast number of children who for varying intervals of time accompany their parents to places other than their passport country. These children are growing up amongst cultures, under the influence of several different societies, subjected to a wide variety of customs, with a fluid designation of home (Cockburn 2002). The past few decades have witnessed an escalating awareness of these young intercultural travellers, referred to interchangeably as global nomads, transculturals, internationally mobile children, cultural commuters, or simply *Third Culture Kids (TCKs)* (Brenna 2004; Fail, Thompson & Walker 2004; Gerner & Perry 2000; Haour-Knipe 1989; Straffon 2003).

The definition of a Third Culture Kid (TCK) is "a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents´ culture" (Pollock & Van Reken 2001:19). The "third culture" was a term originally introduced in the early 1950s, meant to describe "the complex of patterns learned and shared by communities of men stemming from both a Western and a non-Western society who regularly interact as they relate their societies, or sections thereof, in the physical setting of a non-Western society." (Useem, Donoghue & Useem 1963:170). They realized that expatriates living abroad

formed distinct communities and a lifestyle that was different from their home (termed first culture) or host culture (labelled second culture), but included elements of both. Thus, the expatriate community emerged as a culture between cultures, and the children growing up in these societies became known as the TCKs (Straffon 2003).

More recently, TCKs are typically considered to be the offspring of employees of various internationally active institutions such as the diplomatic corps, transnational business corporations, government institutions, international agencies, missionary organisations, and the military services (Shaetti & Ramsey 1999). Parallel to this, some organisations in charge of recruiting these families seem to be growing increasingly aware of the specific skills and challenges associated with the TCKs (Shames 1997). This has resulted in an internal production of articles and books intended to prepare personnel travelling with children (Bell 1997; Burt & Farthing 1996; Dahl 1990; McCluskey 1994; Nygaard 2002). One does not know exactly how many individuals are in this category, although the assumption is that the body of individuals who answer to this definition is growing (West 2001). In the absence of reliable figures Gerner, Perry, Moselle & Archbold (1992) estimated that internationally mobile children exceeded one million worldwide. It has later been suggested that accurate statistical data concerning the actual number of transients is made unattainable by the very constancy of transient mobility (Omwumechili, Nwosu, Jackson II & James-Hughes 2003).

There is little demographic similarity between these children, as there are endless combinations of varying, critical factors such as their countries of residence, length of stay outside their passport country, the number of places which they have inhabited, and their exposure to the local culture (Isogai, Hayashi & Uno 1999). Due to the rotation of places, people, languages, laws, and sets of values, TCKs not only get acquainted with several cultures, but simultaneously lack the familiarity with one dominant society (Kartheiser 2003). For the same reasons they are not only seen to form an abundance of relationships, but they are known to miss out on stable

attachments (Van Reken 2004). Still, one main theme has been extracted as central to the life of all; a chronic presence of liminality or in-betweeness (Shaetti & Ramsey 1999). This communality is reflected through internet sites such as “Global Nomads Virtual Village”, “Overseas Brats.com”, and “Living Abroad.com”. Also, publications of theme magazines such as “Among Worlds” encourage TCKs to leverage the common elements of their third culture heritage (Ulsh 2003).

A reoccurring topic linked to this is that the exposure to such cultural ambiguity in childhood has massive implications for the adult identity of TCKs (Fail et al. 2004). Culture and identity, therefore, appear to take on particular significance in the lives of these children (Cockburn 2002). The developmental angle of how these liminal spaces of childhood come to the fore during the process of identity *formation,* however, remains an important and unanswered question. Consequentially, it is seen to be of particular relevance to explore whether the young global nomad does in fact assemble a consistent sense of self in the midst of such a cacophony, if the frequent transitioning actually translates into internal psychological states during this process, and whether there exists a sense of subtle inner logic in the multicultural identity construction. To explore this territory, it is necessary that the focus is now directed towards capturing the essence of TCK identity experiences. To do so it is imperative to examine the strategies activated to navigate towards a constant sense of self through the intercultural maze. This will be the focus of this dissertation.

Delving into psychological experience in this way is to embark on a journey. As a fourth generation TCK, I have chosen to let my research voyage into the landscapes of identity as experienced by other intercultural travellers. This investigation allows me as a researcher to enter the world of wanderers, and the space of world citizens. The goal of this journey is to observe how culture resonates down to the developing child, to learn more about how culture becomes personal, and to further explore the ways in which the individual deals with internalising cultural dualism.

1.2 Social Implications and Relevance of Topic for the Field

The purpose of research should be considered along with the intention of improving the human situation investigated (Kvale 1996). The social implications of increasing the understanding for the processes that TCKs go through are understood as interrelated, but three-fold. Firstly, this information can help broaden the knowledge possessed by the individuals concerned. Secondly, parallel identification issues are tackled by a number of second and third generation immigrants. They too are balancing on cultural borders, and must deal with juggling the contradictory influences of being bi-cultural (Brenna 2004, Cockburn 2002; Kumar 1997; Kumar 2002). In the current global climate of today it has become imperative to understand what happens to the individual who exists at the juncture between cultures, shaped by contradictory traditions. Broadening the existing familiarity with the experience of multifaceted identity formation could, therefore, contribute to widening the societal respect for the heritage and issues of such individuals and thereby improve their developmental conditions.

Thirdly, TCKs are often referred to as being a prototype for the world citizen, or the United Nations of the Future, and it has been predicted that they can make a central contribution as the multicultural trend expands (Cockburn 2002; Podolsky 2004). Growing up amongst cultures is no longer exclusively reserved for the realms of refuge, immigration and work/pleasure. Gone are the days when the traditional voices we inherited spoke unanimously, children today do not have to move between countries to be directly influenced by other societal norms. Moving between towns, schools or social groups can also be a dramatic transition between standards and roles. Because of this erosion of borders, both local and international, it has been philosophized that the post modern self is in danger of being fragmented and dissolved (Bauman 2004; Baumeister 1986; Giddens 1991; Mantovani 2000; Mathews 2000).

In the lack of the communality associated with growing up in one homogeneous community, also so-called monocultural individuals wrestle with the need for more plastic identity concepts. It is therefore relevant to capture the processes of such fluid identifications (Hylland Eriksen 2004). In this light, dwelling on the topic of TCK identity development can provide an indication of the processes which face all children currently growing up in environments of plurality. The premise here is that studying this population group may not only serve as a guide to cultural bridging, but also as an indication of how one forms and preserves an identity in a hybrid milieu.

The topic of the thesis touches upon fundamental issues of child development, and culture's consequences for the individual. Consequentially, this investigation can be said to be an attempt to further illuminate the complex interaction between culture and child in development. This outlook merges perspectives from the fields of developmental and cross-cultural psychology, and is therefore considered relevant to both. According to Keller & Greenfield (2000), considerations of the culturally variable meanings of developmental stages have to be related to the universal maturational grounding of developmental stages. Their premise is that the idea of culture as an *individual process* found within developmental psychology and the notion of culture as an *external force* expressed in cross-cultural and social psychology could benefit from being *united.* By focusing on the identity components of those who grow up between cultures, the fruitfulness of merging the standpoints of these fields can be demonstrated.

1.3 Research Question, Definitions, and Organisation of paper

In line with the reasoning presented so far, the guiding research question of this project is: *How do Third Culture Kids (TCKs) experience their identity?*

It is imperative to include brief notes on the interpretations of key concepts before continuing the current discussion. In lack of a more consensual definition, this paper

recognises “culture” as put forward by Robert Kohls. He understood culture as “the total way of life of any group of people” (Kohls 2001:26). However, he integrated and emphasised the leading perspectives of culture when presenting it in imagery; taking the form of an iceberg, with one part visible above water and the larger part hidden below. The surface culture was thought to consist of elements such as customs, behaviour, and language. The deep culture was considered to be made up of the less concrete expressions of society such as philosophy, morals, values, and ideals (Pollock & Van Reken 2001).

The concept of “identity”, like culture, has also been interpreted in numerous ways. The discussion has raged across disciplines for over a century about the status of the self as bound by circumstance, social or personal, fragmented or unified (Ashmore & Jussim 1997). Kroger (2004:10) synthesized these viewpoints when stating that identity is “a balance between that which is taken to be self and that considered to be other”. For the purposes of this discussion, therefore, identity is understood simply as a definition, an interpretation, of the self (Baumeister 1986:4). The term “identity development” similarly acknowledges the self as an internalised narrative integration of past, present, and future (Widdershoven 1994:104). Inspired by Kroger (2000), the paper will operate with a more inclusive use of identity concepts, resulting in identity being expressed interchangeably as “identity”, “ego”, “personhood”, and “self”.

This chapter has introduced the bearings of the research project at hand. The following part will extend this picture by providing a theoretical overview of literature, theories and prior research considered relevant for the discussion. The succeeding part will dwell on the methodological reflections and decisions directed by the research question, as well as provide a detailed description of the research procedure. Section four sets out to present the results of the investigation. Chapter five will compare the findings of the investigation to the sketched theoretical models, offer indications and implications of the results, and follow this by a discussion of the soundness of the research products. The final chapter will provide closing remarks, as well as suggestions for further research.

2. Theory

The goal of this research project is to illuminate the identity processes of TCKs. The aim of this chapter is therefore to clarify the starting point and pertinent studies for the investigation. However, the information in this area is scattered, the research scarce and the concepts fuzzy. A broad psychological framework for understanding the phenomena of psychological effects resulting from regular intercultural commuting is lacking (Searle & Ward 1990; Sussman 2000). There are no available investigations which explore the qualities of identity formation as expressed by young global nomads in the process of ego development. For this reason, the theoretical material presented here will be divided into two, in accordance with Moustakas (1994). The first part is directed at considering the background material relevant for understanding the dimensions of the phenomenon at hand. The second part will present conceptual reflections and frameworks found to adequately illustrate these focal aspects of identity development between cultures.

2.1 TCKs Revisited

2.1.1 Review of Prior Research

The most widely known and elaborate attempt to capture the essence of the TCK experience was presented by Pollock and Van Reken (2001). In this book, the features of an internationally mobile childhood were sketched as overwhelmingly ambiguous. They introduced a helpful framework which amplifies the variations of the status global nomads are known to exhibit in relation to their surroundings (Podolsky 2004). Four basic categories are identified here. The typologies are tagged *Mirror* (look alike, think alike), *Adopted* (look different, think alike), *Hidden Immigrant* (look alike, think different) and *Foreigner* (look different, think different).

In other words, wherever they live, and at both the superficial and deeper levels of culture, TCKs appear either similar and/or dissimilar from members of the majority culture (Pollock & Van Reken 2001). Of course, non-TCKs may fall into any of these categories, but the difference is that TCKs are capable and prone to constantly change which box they belong in according to the situation they find themselves in (Pollock 1996). Attention was drawn to the fact that these contradictions had considerable implications for the development of an autonomous self (Pollock & Van Reken 2001; Cockburn 2002; Podolsky 2004). Interestingly, a qualitative elaboration of the identity processes involved did not follow.

Instead, some explorative and statistical research has focused attention on TCK characteristics; thereby uncovering related issues such as rootlessness, restlessness, maturity, independence, grief, relational disturbances, low home culture competency, an innate multicultural understanding, as well as the notion that an international sojourn affects children's sense of self no matter how long it is (Cockburn 2002; Shaetti & Ramsey 1999). Fail et al. (2004), Haour-Knipe (1989), Shaetti (1996) and Useem & Cottrell (1996), set forth to examine long-term effects of a third culture background, all mapping out outcomes resulting in variations of marginal identity.

The bulk of available investigations, however, have largely focused on matters such as transitions and re-entry, and the emotional identification problems connected to coming "home", as well as adapting to a passport country which does not feel familiar (Burt & Farthing 1996; Ellingsrud & Lørum 2003; Gaw 2000; Searle & Ward 1990; Smith (a) 1996; Ward, Bochner & Furnham 2001). In this vein, several studies have compared the repatriation processes of Japanese returnees with TCK concerns; finding similar identity modification issues involved for both population groups, such as confused credentials and split loyalties (Isogai et al.1999; Podolsky 2004).

Additionally, Gerner et al. (1992) and Gerner & Perry (2000) conducted studies comparing adolescent monoculturals to adolescent TCKs. They concluded that global nomads are generally more culturally accepting as well as interested in international

careers and geographically mobile lives than their peers. They also found the self-perception of internationally mobile adolescents to a larger degree affected by location. Stultz (2003) and West (2001) examined the relevance of global nomads` cross-cultural understanding for schools and universities, concluding that these institutions and the self-esteem of international students themselves would benefit positively from activating the experiences of attending TCKs. The central findings of these studies will be elaborated as the chapter progresses.

2.1.2 Orientation of Current Research

The extended definition of TCKs goes on to specify that the "TCK builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture are assimilated into the TCKs life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of a similar background" (Pollock & Van Reken 2001:19).Cockburn (2002) extracted two significant features from this background; *1) Being raised in a genuinely cross-cultural world. 2) Being raised in a highly mobile world.* It is the interplay between formative years, a culturally changing environment and a highly mobile world which has been found to characterize a globally nomadic childhood (ibid). The synergy between these factors has been largely overlooked in research, and the available investigations are limited by being mainly retrospective and/or quantitative in method.

According to Zaharna (1989), there is a need to go beyond group statistics in the field of cultural transients and focus instead on what is happening to the individual. There has been an echo of this concern within cultural and developmental psychology as well; a call for research which attempts to build a cultural understanding of human development through aspects of individual functioning (Keller & Greenfield 2000; Rogoff & Angelillo 2002; Valsiner 1997). The weaving together of these view points have resulted in the current angle of investigation. To fully appreciate the conditions for identity development afforded by the third culture environment, it is necessary to look into each one of the developmental facets extracted by Cockburn (2002) at more

depth and juxtapose them with fundamental aspects of identity development. The following sections will attempt to elucidate these points.

2.2 Identity and Cultural Norms

2.2.1 Enculturation, Socialization and Identity

Establishing a sense of autonomous personhood is thought to begin in infancy and proceed throughout the lifespan, a result of the interaction between the person and her or his environment (Stern 1985). Fail et al. (2004) argued that because people who are necessary for validating ones self-concept such as parents and peers, communicate conflicting values in the third culture, this background will result in a different identity outcome for someone who grows up in a non-homogeneous society. In order to detail the conceived effects for identity development of a cross-cultural childhood, it is imperative to understand the mechanisms through which culture and societal norms are thought to be transmitted to the child.

Within developmental psychology, the process by which the child obtains the social patterns appropriate for the culture she or he grows up in is known as *socialisation*. The child's caregivers are thought to act as agents for the transmission of these norms, shaping the child into their particular society (Hundeide 2003; Keats 1997; Schaffer 1996). Reflecting this, the process of ego development has been found to involve steps such as self-awareness and placing oneself within social categories in childhood (Stern 1985). The concept of social identity as ones role(s) in interacting with others neatly covers this portrayal (Goffman 1959). An image of how the *social aspect* of ones identity is formed emerges from this view (Tajfel 1981).

Enculturation is a parallel term from cross-cultural psychology which refers to the process which attaches developing individuals to their primary cultural contexts (Berry, Poortinga, Segall, & Dasen 2002). What is frequently referred to as *cultural* identity can be seen as the individual reflection of this contextual setting of

development (Sussman 2000). There has been an increasing amount of empirical research done on these cultural processes of human development, focusing on the role of culture in children's thoughts, actions, social engagements, and assembling of their worlds (Tamis-Lemonda 2003). Investigations on the culture-child dialectic within this developmental niche have indicated that parents´ belief systems and rearing techniques are in turn shaped by their culture (Super & Harkness 1996; Super & Harkness 1997). Studies have also shown the strong connection between child-rearing practices and identity formation (Stevens-Long & Cobb 1983). Numerous comparative cross-cultural studies have been staged to match results found in Western countries with research in non-Western societies, repeatedly demonstrating that the goals of human development vary according to the local cultural traditions and circumstances of different communities (Keats 1997; Rogoff 2003).

According to Rotheram and Phinney (1987), important differences in attitudes, values and responses distinguish ethnic groups; and these differences are believed to alter the socialisation of children within their own group as well as their responses to other groups. Some researchers have gone so far as to establish so-called cultural pathways of development, demonstrating a socialisation of independent or interdependent cultural competence (Greenfield, Keller, Fuligni & Maynard 2003). Although this perspective has been criticised for being too simplistic, it does continue to underline how culture is transferred to the individual (Neff 2003). Matching this, it has demonstrated that self-concepts are affected by frames of reference; consistent self-identities are seen to be more esteemed in the west and contextual identities are seen to be more valued in the eastern perspective (Suh 2002).

Bronfenbrenner (1979) envisioned the child as nested in direct or indirect systems of cultural influence. This model has been considered a valuable framework for illustrating the reverberation of cultural and social contexts for identity development (Phinney & Rosenthal 1992). The theory has nevertheless been criticised for placing culture in the periphery and not establising the immediacy of interaction between cultural influence and the individual child (Gardiner & Kosmitzki 2002). The

developmental niche of Super & Harkness (Super & Harkness 1996; Super & Harkness 1997) as well as Valsiner´s (1997) theory of bounded indeterminacy specify that a developmental pathway is jointly constructed by the person and the surrounding world. Applying this perspective, it appears that identification with culture and others is shaped early in development as a consequence of exposure to, and interaction with, specific languages, behaviour, laws, moral codes, customs, and traditions (Keller & Greenfield 2000).

2.2.2 Multiple Enculturation and Identity Effects

The above review portrayed ways in which cultural codes and world views are considered to be transmitted to the individual through developmental trajectories (Kagitcibasi 1996; Valsiner 1997). In the traditional understanding of cultural development cited above, the society is homogeneous, and the relationship of the child to the immediate environment is *continuous*. Each setting is taken to reinforce the other. In this manner the child learns her or his culture intrinsically on both deeper and superficial levels. That means that the norms handed down to the child through caretakers, school, and society at large are in unity, and the cultural messages the child receives are constant. Here, the cultural and social facets of the self are reinforced by the surroundings. The TCKs relation to the surrounding culture, however, is *discontinuous*. Instead of simply watching, studying or analysing other cultures, TCKs actually live in various cultural realities as they commute between home and host societies (Kartheiser 2003; Pollock & Van Reken 2001). TCKs can therefore be said to be socialised and enculturated by several societies simultaneously.

This means that TCKs often imbibe radically different values and views of acceptable behaviour (Shaetti & Ramsey 1999). The culture they learn in one place is not necessarily reinforced by what they learn in another setting, and so their developmental niches and systems can often be said to carry contradictory messages. For instance, the childrearing practices of their parents may be geared towards a

western individual goal of development, while the technique of their nanny might be more collectivistic. They can be brought up with one set of behavioural rules at home, another in interaction with the local culture, a third one at their parents workplace, and a fourth at school (Cockburn 2002). Additionally, they often attend international schools and arenas, and are exposed to supplementary cultural norms through their peers and friends (Fail et al. 2004; Straffon 2003). This unbalanced familiarity with the superficial expressions of several cultures but lack of knowledge of the deeper levels, is seen to result in holes in their repertoire or cultural *faux pas* (Kartheiser 2003). In the literature, this dimension is frequently linked to the notion of relative world views and confused identification of belonging (Cockburn 2002; Gerner et al. 1992; Pollock & Van Reken 2001; Useem & Cottrell 1996). The combination of receiving multiple outlooks simultaneously and lacking the safety net of reinforcement, illustrates the conditions for identity development of growing up in a cross-cultural world.

2.3 Identity and Cultural Transitions

2.3.1 Acculturation, Reacculturation and Identity

To illuminate the conditions of growing up in a mobile world for identity development it is important to view the ways in which identity is thought to be facilitated through self-sameness. According to Romanucci-Ross & De Vos (1996), society needs consistency of attribution for interpersonal functioning. In other words, identity involves some internally socialised consistency with respect to behavioural norms. In this way the individual and those with whom she or he is in contact know what to expect from themselves in interpersonal relationships.

A central premise of attachment theory is that infants are seen to be taught ways of relating from early relationships with their attachment figures, and thereby build up a set of expectations about themselves in relation to others, labelled “internal working models” (Bowlby 1984). This theory has been criticised for such aspects as the

neglect of attachment networks in its focus on the interaction in the dyad, and for the application of western models to non-western societies (Ijzendoorn & Sagi 1999). However, these early prospects for close relationships have also been found to affect identity development later in life and thereby shape the person's world view (Feeney 1999; Josselson 1994). In line with the importance of the self established in interaction with ones primary and secure relationships, relocation is seen to affect identity development, as it is thought to challenges this attained self-concept (Kroger 2000).

To assist the understanding of how identity is thought to be affected by cross-cultural transitions, one must turn to studies on intercultural migration. It must be noted here that the material on effects of intercultural relocations concern adult sojourners. As illustrated in the last segment, children are in the process of forming their sense of self. Adults have allegedly committed to their basic value system when they are exposed to culturally diverging points of view (Pollock & Van Reken 2001). In the field of cross-cultural psychology, losing ones cultural bearings due to geographical movement has been found to result in states of transition and adjustment. These reactions are in turn thought to manifest themselves directly into a confused self image by means of internalisation (Cockburn 2002).

Acculturation refers to the changes individuals go through in response to a changing cultural context (Berry et al. 2002). Searle & Ward (1990) made the distinction between psychological and sociocultural adjustment, linking the former to relationships with cultural others. It is considered uncomfortable for the self to be part of a social scene where the players change their parts inconsistently (Giddens 1991). Consequentially, the focus in this area has been mainly on the experience of the culture shock or acculturative stress that accompanies the realisation that other rules apply elsewhere, that one is perceived differently, and the resulting need to *adapt* to new cues (Storti 2001;Ward et al. 2001). Haour-Knipe (1989) described acculturating to the beliefs, norms, and way of life of another culture as a process of abandoning old ways; often accompanied by a sense of unease, guilt, and loss of

identity. As an extension of this, the re-entry and *reacculturation* literature has focused on the parallel shock and adaption issues experienced by intercultural travellers coming back home (Gaw 2000; Isogai et al.1999; Podolsky 2004). However, parallel to the situation for studying cultural attainment through ecological systems, these positions of categorisation and conformity have been criticised for pacifying the role of the individual. As a result, a general turn in the literature is the recognition of the acculturating person's own role in adjusting to the new cultural cues (Onwumechili et al. 2003; Sussman 2000).

According to Zaharna (1989), for instance, it appears more sensible to shift the focus from culture shock to self adjustment. He held that the confusion was no longer with the other during transitions, but with the self. The carrying argument here is that any situation that changes the meaning for behaviour has the potential for obstructing the ability of the individual to maintain consistent, recognisable self-identities. The vision of distorted self-images have been interpreted as leading to multiple sets of reflections and self-doubt (Isogai et al. 1999). Paradoxically, the individual is assumed to have a need to preserve her or his achieved self-identity in the face of change. This illustrates how cultural and social facets of the self are seen to become acutely apparent during cultural transitions.

2.3.2 Multiple Reacculturation and Identity Effects

The last section sketched the supposed effects on the self considered to accompany cultural relocation; as such a transition is thought to obstruct self-sameness. Mobility is the norm when growing up in the third culture, however. This appears on several levels. TCKs experience personal mobility as an effect of their own relocation (Gaw 2000; Searle & Ward 1990). Additionally, every third culture consists of a transitional lifestyle where people incessantly come and go (Cockburn 2002). Finally, they rotate between contexts, and thereby have to re-explain and reintroduce themselves and their background repeatedly (Kartheiser 2003). TCK are therefore exposed to a constancy of transitioning during formative years. The dimensions of

constant transience for identity are thought to be relatively unique for the cultural commuter (Onwumechili et al. 2003).

Not only are the languages around TCKs changing, their cultural cues are shifting, and their physical environments fluctuating, but due to moving, the people in their lives are temporary, and their social roles are always altering. Their familiar relationships, schools and communities might be modified suddenly, swiftly altering the system of values expressed to them, people they relate to, and the way they behave (Pollock 2002). As an extension of the adjustment reactions cited above, these issues have been associated with feelings of vulnerability and a loss of control (Bennett 1993 (a); Burth & Farthing, 1996; Haour-Knipe 1989; LaFramboise, Coleman & Gerton 1993).

The effect of struggling with the emotional issues brought by major transitions and adjustments, such as grief and loss, have been the focus of investigations, as presented in the opening of the chapter (Shaetti & Ramsey 1999; Cockburn 2002). Gerner et al. (1992) observed that TCKs become *socially marginal* as a result of their chameleon-like regulating. This refers to their finding that TCKs set aside a key part of their identity because the peers that surround them cannot relate to their unique overseas experience, and that this in turn sustains feelings of separateness (ibid). This completes the picture of how life's arbitrariness not only makes it hard for TCKs to make decisions about where they belong and what they believe, but that continuous adaptation of self-perception to fit into several cultural cues and situations can result in them establishing so many personas that they no longer know who they really are (Pollock & Van Reken 2001).

2.4 Identity and Cultural Pluralism

2.4.1 Marginal Identity

According to Woon (1992), one of the primary challenges for intercultural transients is the way in which to regularly negotiate their identity, which cultural traditions to embrace, and reviewing the possibility of aligning equally with several conflicting sets of norms. Concepts such as rubber band nationality, creolisation, hyphenated identities and transnationality have been used to label the effects for identity of balancing between cultural borders (Brenna 2004; Friedman 1997; Smith (a) 1996).Classic theories on migration assumed that because change was considered disruptive, an individual living with two cultures would suffer from various psychological distress. They viewed marginality as leading to psychological conflict and a divided self (LaFromboise et al. 1993). Rotheram & Phinney (1987) stated that a person could not hold a bicultural identity. These outlooks exhibit the image of the child as a passive recipient of exterior impulses, and thus ending up with role confusion if influenced by multiple societies.

Other investigations have indicated that for a healthy individual the risks of migration are minimal (Haour-Knipe 1989). Concepts such as bicultural competence, cultural acceptance, and intercultural sensitivity have recently appeared in the literature to indicate the possibility of juggling several cultures in ones sense of personhood (Gerner & Perry 2000; LaFramboise et al. 1993; Straffon 2003). According to De Vos & Romanucci-Ross (1982) some individuals learn to live with ambiguity and dissonance, and thus a sense of identity is a conscious part of the self rather than the function of automatic mechanisms. In addition, cross-cultural studies have called into question the classic premise that optimal psychological functioning requires the person to have a consistent self-identity across the different spheres of experience (Suh 2002).

Anderson (1999) stated that child identities in the bicultural environment derive from both conforming to and non-conformity to the constructions of others. He found that

it was possible for a child to make a personal home in hybridity, emphasising that she/he possessed the ability to accentuate and/or suppress fragments of behaviour, language, thought, and feeling to the pragmatic demands of varying circumstances. This outlook indicates the subjective role of the child in applying meaning to her or his sense of personhood. This is in accordance with Zhao (2005) who stated that culture does not only permeate the cultural and social identity of the developing child, but that the *personal* identity of the individual additionally structures her or his contextual influence into a subjective phenomenological meaning of the life experience.

2.4.2 Adolescence, Identity and TCKs

Adolescence is generally recognised as the stage when individuals are expected to select and integrate childhood identifications and integrate them, together with personal tendencies and the prospects offered by society, in order to construct a sense of who they are and what they will become in the future (Phinney & Rosenthal 1992). One critical way that adolescents establish a sense of self in western society is through questioning the cultural rules and codes that have been passed down to them, and then discarding the ones they no longer abide by. This conflict is understood as a vital step towards living as autonomous adults, as the conscious inquiry into the implicitly inherited rules is thought to assist the individual towards acting out of internalised norms and beliefs instead of exterior rules (Stevens-Long & Cobb 1983).

Useem & Cottrell (1996), however, found that due to the ambiguity of their life situation, TCKs are prone to experience *delayed adolescence*. This would suggest that the multiple worldviews and transitions that they have been exposed to in childhood complicate identity achievement in adolescence; that they are trying to figure out the cultural codes and appropriate behaviour at a time when they should be testing them (Pollock & Van Reken 2001). The task of identity formation obviously involves assessment and turbulence for monocultural adolescents as well (Harter 1997; Rutter & Rutter 1993; Stevens-Long & Cobbs 1983). Nevertheless, as stated

previously, it is the *interplay* between teenagehood and the mobile cross-cultural world which is thought to make the specific issues of identity development especially severe for TCKs (Cockburn 2002).

The general conclusion which can be drawn from merging the material on third culture developmental conditions with the literature extracted from developmental and cross-cultural psychological fields is therefore that a cross-cultural and mobile childhood is frequently viewed to result in a chronic state of social adjustment and cultural confusion, which can prove detrimental for the achievement of a stable sense of self (Eidse & Sichel 2004). As a result, it is thereby considered high time to adequately explore the level at which this temporariness actually does shape the identity development of adolescent/young adult TCKs. First, the issues presented above need to be elaborated through supplementary models and conceptualisations. This is the goal of the following sections.

2.5 Conceptualising Identity Status

2.5.1 Key Aspects of Identity Development

The crux of Erikson's (1995) famous model of psychosocial tasks lies in the idea that the way in which conflicts in the childhood stages are resolved affect the resolution of the adolescent stage of *identity achievement* or *role confusion*, which again affects the resolution of the adult stages (Kroger 2000). This highlights adolescence as the central period for identity development, and also implies that the main psychosocial undertaking at this stage is the achievement of a stable and continuous self-concept. According to Valsiner & Lawrence (1997), Erikson put emphasis on interactions between the individual and culture at different periods of the life cycle, and also underlined the developmental significance of interactions between individuals for stable identity formation. The concepts of the age-ordering of Erikson's theories have been found to be only partially supported by research, as the progression has not been found to hold at the individual level (Rutter & Rutter 1993). Erikson's theory has also

been criticised for its lack of cross-cultural applicability (Kroger 2004). Nonetheless, his reflections on the *continuity* of identity as a result of bipolar conflict have been extracted as a highly relevant backdrop for the consideration of the elements involved in the life narrative of a TCK. These aspects are therefore pivotal in organising the thesis, as they signify the part of context, the role of significant others in preserving self-image, and the part of the developing individual in constructing a coherent life narrative across time and situations.

Erikson (1995:236) stated that "the adolescent mind is essentially a mind of the moratorium, a psychosocial stage between childhood and adulthood, and between the morality learned by the child, and the ethics to be developed by the adult". This signifies the importance of mental identification with ones surroundings for identity formation. Additionally, he referred to ego identity as confidence in the inner sameness and continuity of ones meaning to others, focusing on how a child introjected the experience of the other, later to identify with those significant others and eventually form an identity to mediate these childhood identifications (Erikson 1995). This underlines the role of others for achieving a stable self-concept. Interestingly, he also pointed out the individual's role in choosing as the essence in establishing an identity which was a continuity of the living past and the anticipated future (Erikson 1974). This point underscores the active part of the individual child in constructing identity.

2.5.2 Frameworks for Marginal Identification

A way of assessing the resonance of multicultural influence on mental identifications is through theories of marginal identity. Brenna (2004) proposed a framework for understanding bicultural identity as a result of migration. She distinguished between *pure identity*, which is thought to result from either/or belonging, *creol identity* as a result of a neither/nor sense of belonging and *hyphen-identity* which is defined as involving a sense of multiple belonging. Sussman (2000) described the two predictions made by acculturation theory on effects of intercultural adjustment for the individual. These were classified as *assimilation*, where the individual was thought to transform her or his identity to meet the dominant culture, and *integration;* in which

sustained contact with the majority culture resulted in a strengthening of ones original identity (ibid). The effects of *separation* and *marginalisation* were later added, and these dimensions were elaborated as the wish to maintain ones heritage and culture or wanting to participate with the larger society (Berry et al. 2002). Here, the individual is recognised as an active participant in deciding her or his identity outcome.

According to Bennett (a) (1993:112) "an individual who has internalised two or more cultural frames of reference frequently faces an internal culture shock". This notion has resulted in the framework of marginal identity frequently being used to describe the identity outcomes for people who regularly commute between cultures (Fail et al. 2004; Isogai et al. 1999; Shaetti 1996; Straffon 2003; Useem & Cottrell 1996). This theory postulates that there are two identity responses to living on cultural margins; *constructive* or *encapsulated marginal identity* (Bennett (a) 1993; Bennett (b) 1993). Those experiencing *encapsulated marginal identity* are said to be trapped by their marginality, caught and isolated between ambiguous cultural frames of reference which seem equally valid to them, unable to construct a unified identity (Bennett (a) 1993). This can be related to Erikson's state of role confusion, and the view of the child as a passive recipient of contextual codes. Again, the underlying notion here is that long-term feelings of marginality or liminality can interfere with the development of a positive self-concept that comes from a sense of stable belonging and attachment, and is likely to be internalised into ones adult identity. This view was paralleled in the theory of situated, context bound identities, where it was proposed that the multicultural adolescent would experience a conflict of loyalties (Keats 1997).

Those experiencing *constructive marginality* are seen to recognise that various perspectives exist for any given situation, accept personal responsibility in deciding which sets of values to use, and create new sets of values when necessary (Bennett (a) 1993). According to Bennett (b) (1993), this outcome is linked to maintaining choice and the construction of own boundaries. These self-reflexive signs of attributing meaning back to the meaning-maker are considered the optimal level of

consciousness and intercultural sensitivity, and were consequentially considered the ultimate expression of intercultural development (ibid). This stance is in line with Erikson's state of identity achievement, and enhances the perspective of the active child choosing her or his route of personhood.

2.5.3 Frameworks for Identity Effects of Adjustment

There is a lack of frameworks that seem to appropriately address the effects of transitional obstruction of self-sameness, in the eyes of others and the self, across contexts. However, Harter's (1997) finding that cultural circumstances can obstruct or encourage a person to be authentic encompasses some classifications of the described effects of intercultural shifting for identity. In this theory, the *"voice"* was conceptualised as the stage a person feels free to express real beliefs and feelings. This can be seen as an extension of Erikson's (1995) concept of identity achievement. *"Loss of voice"* was thought to occur when people feel unable to express their real viewpoint and emotions due to their surroundings. This can be paralleled to the notion of identity confusion. As an extension of this, the identity process theory sees people as self-constructors who build, change, and monitor their own identities in relation to others through strategies of assimilation-accommodation and evaluation processes. It further argues that if these principles are obstructed, identity is threatened (Chryssochoou 2004). Again, the former outcome can be linked to the image of the active individual structuring of identity achievement, the latter can be paralleled with role confusion.

The theory of self-shock (Zaharna 1989) was introduced to sketch the intrusion of new and sometimes conflicting self-identities encountered when meeting the culturally different other. This shock was proposed in three dimensions. It is the second facet, however, which is considered the most central in the current presentation. This element relates to Cooley's notion of *the looking glass self*, where self-images were thought to be the reflection of others´ perception (Ding & Littleton 2005). In this approach, the individual is thought to attempt to give meaning to her or

his own behaviour through observing responses of the others; but when meeting another culture the responses of the other may not confirm her or his self-identities. The framework of self-shock assumes that the more one struggles to reduce the external ambiguity by adopting the behaviour of the other, the more one challenges ones self-concept and additional internal ambiguity is created within the self. In other words, the model envisions that during prolonged contact with another culture discontinuity and adjustment to rotating sets of self-images in ones environment will result in instability *within the self.* The state of "self" can be linked to identity achievement, while "self-shock" is similar to the description of role-confusion.

2.6 Conceptualising Identity Coherence Structures

The last sections have presented conceptualisations which juxtapose the ambiguous developmental conditions of the third culture with theories considering central elements of identity development. These facets have been based on Erikson's (1995) psychosocial ordering of continuity across time and place. In this context it is important to remember that this model not only underlined the importance of consistency in a set of mental reference frames and stable relationships to reinforce ones self-image. It also highlighted the role of the subjective individual in *choosing* her or his continuous narrative; suggesting that the way in which the cultural impact on identity is organised depends on individual processing. Similarly, Valsiner (1997; Valsiner & Lawrence 1997) emphasised that the organism participates actively in constructing her or his own life world. Below are three theoretical frameworks which elaborate on this individual structuring, through illustrating approaches to *construct* and *preserve* identity.

2.6.1 Framework of Developmental Strategies

Marcia elaborated empirically on Erikson's conflict of identity vs. role confusion, insisting that identity was an internal, self-constructed, and dynamic formation (Kroger 2004). He defined two dimensions, termed *Exploration* and *Commitment*,

which in combination define four identity statuses regarding the task of identity formation. *Exploration* referred to a period of struggle to arrive at various aspects of personal identity. *Commitment* involved making a firm, resolute decision in such areas. The four identity statuses were tagged *identity diffusion, foreclosure, identity-achievement and moratorium* (Marcia 2003). This extends the focus on the role of the individual in structuring her or his own path of personhood.

The individuals in the identity-diffusion stage were seen as neither to have explored nor committed to any identity status. People in the foreclosure category, were thought not to have gone through exploration but nevertheless committed to certain beliefs and values. Identity achievers were believed to have gone through a period of exploration and come through with firm commitments. Those in the moratorium stage were considered to be in the process of exploring alternatives (ibid). In addition, Marcia observed that these statuses were linked to information-processing and cognition styles; he stated that advanced identity formation is associated with sophisticated reasoning ability, and that as a result adolescents who could hold multiple perspectives of themselves and others also had a firmer and more flexible sense of who they were (ibid). Kroger (1992) criticised the framework for showing limitations in inferring the underlying structural organisation of identity. However, the focus on identity as a conscious process between *exploration* and *commitment* persistent in this perspective is an outlook considered important for mapping out the identity strategies a third culture childhood. This parallels Bennett's (b) (1993) insistence on considering intercultural development as it moves through not only affective or behavioural dimensions, but cognitive properties as well.

2.6.2 Framework of Negotiation Strategies

In the absence of studies concerning the identity processes of young global nomads, the frameworks presented below were originally introduced to clarify the identity preservation strategies of the adult intercultural sojourner. It remains to be seen whether they accurately describe the identity structures of international youth. The

theory of *identity negotiation contracts* (Onwumechili et al. 2003) depicted how transients who reacculturate multiple times negotiate their identities in three ways. Firstly, by maintaining their own identity or that of the familiar host (termed ready to sign cultural contracts), secondly by compromising i.e. retaining who they had become in the process of multiple reacculturation, although making subtle identity shifts to alleviate relational tension (called quasi-completed cultural contracts); or thirdly by collaborating with the familiar host through co-creating a third culture or communal arrangement (labelled co-created cultural contract).

The theorists went on to describe four strategies useful for exploring these coping mechanisms for internationally mobile transients. Here, the individual assumes a more active role in identity construction. *Buffering* was thought to be the act of protecting oneself from potential identity threats, by putting up isolation between oneself and another interactant. *Bonding* functions enhanced personal connectedness via attachment to the cultural collective as a means of alleviating psychological distress. *Bridging* referred to the attempt to be empathetic toward a cultural other's world view. *Code switching* was presented as an adaptive function where one adhered to the cultural codes which applied where one was.

2.6.3 Framework of Coherence Strategies

Camilleri & Malewska-Peyre (1997) argued that there were two strategies to preserve a consistent self in the face of mixed cultural messages. *Simple Coherence* was understood as strategies where the individual suppresses one of two contradictory statements, while *Complex Coherence* was thought to be when the person tries to reconcile two opposing statements. Valorisation and assimilation were presented as individual identity strategies employed in such a situation. Valorisation referred to an attitude of protest, where individuals dismiss the image projected of themselves from a xenophobic society, sometimes overvaluing their own differences. Assimilation was described as the opposite strategy of aiming to become assimilated into the dominant

group, trying to resemble them to the point of internalising the dominant culture, and denying ones own difference (ibid: 62).

The preceding theoretical assessment has made the point that young global nomads experience developmental settings which counter the classic theories highlighting the importance of constant cultural conditioning for optimal identity development, and that international mobility may be detrimental to the establishment of a consistent life narrative as it exposes the individual to multiple and shifting sets of self-images. In an attempt to establish the extent to which such a background actually affects the processes and outcomes of the stage of identity development, it is imperative to explore individual adolescent TCKs´ responses to a cross-cultural childhood found in adolescent TCKs. This can provide answers to whether internalising conflicting cultural values and roles does prohibit consistent identity formation, whether ambiguous cultural and social contexts necessarily results in a degree of split personhood, and if liminal identity is in fact upheld by an inner personal coherence. This focus may eventually assist the construction of a psychological framework which adequately weaves together these dimensions of elastic identity formation. The next chapter will review methodological decisions and procedures involved in investigating this phenomenon.

3. Method

3.1 The Research Design and Method

The previous chapter has shown the presence of an abundance of material which deal with the cultural acquisition of children, in addition to work done on the identity shifts occurring in adults who move between cultures. There is also, as reviewed, a growing amount of research concerned with the specific skills and challenges facing children who grow up as intercultural transients. This literature specifically recognises identity as a central issue for them. The preceding sections have established that the missing elements are studies that merge these directions; and thus look into the conditions of development and individual strategies involved in the identity processes of TCKs. It was further projected that to make TCK identity issues more tangible, they need to be explored and exhibited in a detailed manner. Although identity is a complicated entity to observe and measure, part of the reason for the missing link in the available literature may stem from how the phenomenon has predominantly been approached so far. According to Valsiner (1997) a researcher interested in capturing the essence of development needs to free her or himself from statistical obsessions, and focus instead on the interaction between person and context in the moment. Related to this, Kroger (1992) called for further investigations into identity to consider both the meanings consistency holds as well as the routes taken to identify structural ego organisation.

Choosing the methodological research design is a logical extension of the research theme and problem, as well as the theoretical frames of reference activated. In his manifest for the qualitative paradigm within psychology, Giorgi (1970:178) stated that the field "begins with life-world phenomena and must dialogue with them constantly so that it is not cut off from its raw data". Qualitative methodology provides the means to explore the essences of experience rather than measuring them (Moustakas 1994). Within phenomenology, the individual is viewed as a conscious agent, whose

experience must be examined from the first-person perspective (Ashworth 2003). This type of research permits the reader to penetrate a description which contains the magnitude of multifaceted experience. It enables her to view something from the standpoint of the subject (Creswell 1998). Consequentially, a phenomenological research design was chosen in order to explore the identity processes of TCKs.

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is a direction within phenomenology which is rooted in the philosophical ideas of existentialism. Another line of influence is symbolic interactionism (Smith (b) 1996). The substance of this approach is to search for the processes by which the respondents make sense of their own experiences through exploring accounts of what they have been through and attempting to tap into their strategies of self-reflection. This immersion is done through studying the description of their experiences, views, understandings and perceptions (Brocki & Wearden 2006). In fact, a double hermeneutic is involved in this process; the respondent is trying to make sense of her or his world, and the researcher is attempting to make sense of the respondents making sense of their world (Smith & Osborn 2003). Central themes of qualitative research are also discernable in the IPA approach, mainly a rejection of the positivistic paradigm and the Cartesian duality of the self-object (Smith 1996).

According to Kvale (1996:5), the research interview is “an interview whose purpose it is to maintain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the lived phenomena”. A flexible data collection instrument such as this was considered necessary to obtain in detail how the participants ordered their own life stories. A semi-structured interview was therefore chosen as the most appropriate tool for providing me with the required access to the life-world of my informants. This type of dialogue consists of the investigator having a set of questions prepared, meant to guide the interview without dictating it. Although the researcher has a few arenas to explore, the main goal is to penetrate as far as possible the reality of the interviewee. The underlying idea is that creating this kind of space to enter fresh territory can result in sudden junctions in the

communication between researcher-subject, and allow for rich data to emerge within the interview situation (Smith and Osborn 2003). This research procedure is thought to be helpful in the initial stages of mapping out properties of a phenomenon (Lørum & Ellingsrud 2003). Consequentially, it was considered to properly match the aim of the current project.

3.2 Preparation for the Study

The preliminary literature and database review for this study, the bulk of which was presented in the last chapter, was conducted during the spring months of 2004 and 2005. During this time I attended seminars and meetings with psychologists working with TCK issues. Parallel to this I carried out several key interviews with human resource personnel from major organisations responsible for staff travelling and returning from abroad. Interestingly, the knowledge about TCK issues seemed unevenly distributed amongst the organisations. When approached with the theme of this project, they offered mixed responses. The missionary groups were acutely conscious of the subject, while business and diplomatic corporations were partly cognisant of the field. A few of the above institutions have cooperated in arranging regular (but rare) seminars for kids who have moved internationally. The aid organisations approached, on the other hand, expressed unawareness, bordering on disinterest. During this time I additionally met with counsellors at two international schools, TCKs and parents of TCKs. I also had extensive conversations with individuals working with second-generation immigrants about these issues. In these environments the subject was familiar and met with enthusiasm. Internet sites, theses, magazines and artwork signed TCKs were additionally researched.

This process provided me with a proper overview of what themes are common in a multicultural childhood, and helped identify those most commonly associated as a challenge for identity development. It also helped keep my personal experiences as removed as possible while organising the interview guide (Appendix A). The procedure of writing the interview schedule involved thinking about what the

interview was hoping to cover, as well as what difficulties might be met (Smith & Osborn 2003). These reflections are the mirror view of considering the validity, reliability, and possibility for generalisation of the research process. These facets will be covered in the fifth chapter. The wordings of the questions were considered carefully not only with regard to the aim of the project, but also to the morality involved as well (Kvale 1996). More in-depth elaborations of these ethical reflections are provided in the following sections.

The interview guide took the shape of seven semi-structured questions with follow-up enquiries. They were written both in English and Norwegian to make the interview language optional for each respondent. A pilot run of the interview was conducted during the summer months of 2004 and slight alterations followed. The guide was then sent to the Privacy Issues Unit (NSD) for approval, along with an information and informed consent sheet which was constructed to notify the subjects of the purposes and procedures of the study at hand (Appendix B). One of the points on this sheet was that the respondents would receive the transcription of their interview to verify both their own statements and my interpretations before the material was analysed. Their right to withdraw and the claim to be anonymous, and reflections about benefits and challenges associated with this process, were also elaborated here in order to obtain an informed consideration for participation in the study.

3.3 Collecting and Organising the Data

The sampling strategy should match the logic and purpose of the study, and evolve out of the resources available (Patton 2002). Due to the fact that adolescence emerged as the key period in which identity issues rise to consciousness, this population group was the target of my investigation. In this particular case I was looking for young adults who had spent all or part of their developmental years in another country than their passport country (Norway) to talk about their sense of identity. The request for a sample consisting of young adults and not young teenagers was based on the specific observation of delayed adolescence in TCKs, as covered in the previous chapter

(Podolsky 2004; Pollock & Van Reken 2001; Useem & Cottrell 1996). I was tied to the city of Oslo by a low budget and a strict time schedule. Purposeful criterion sampling is recommended within a phenomenological study because it is important that all participants have experienced the phenomenon being examined (Creswell 1998; Patton 2002). IPA researchers usually try to find a fairly homogeneous sample through the technique of purposeful sampling, in order to find a more closely defined group for whom the research will be of importance. Usually, IPA studies are conducted on small sample sizes, as a detailed case by case analysis of the individual transcripts is a lengthy process (Smith & Osborn 2003). For the purposes of the research at hand I fused this logic with the principles of sampling within grounded theory research, where one proceeds to interview subjects until one is satisfied that the information obtained is saturated (Creswell 1998). Ultimately, the sample consisted of ten young adults, the properties of which will be described at the end of this chapter.

The recruiting of informants took place during the spring of 2005. This was done through contacts within aid, business, missionary and diplomatic organisations, as well as via administrators and information posters in two international schools. As specified in NSD regulations, permission from guardians had to be sought and granted before conducting interviews with interested informants below the age of eighteen. The information and informed consent sheets were sent directly by mail to the informants and their signed approvals were mailed back. All of their personal information was stored securely from then on, as had been ensured on the information sheet. A time and place for the interview sessions was agreed upon separately with each of the informants according to their individual requests. The interviews were conducted by myself during the spring and summer months of 2005. The locations for the interview sessions were the University of Oslo, and at an international school in Oslo. One interview was held at my home and another in the home of an informant. The duration of the interviews was between forty-five minutes and two hours, and the sessions were recorded on a minidisk. All of the informants chose to be interviewed in Norwegian. They were encouraged to respond to the

prepared questions in detail. As mentioned, related issues also arose spontaneously within each interview situation.

The participants were thus asked to elaborate on issues and wordings through probes and follow-up questions throughout the interviews. Every interview began with a briefing, which included a short summary of information about the intention of the study, the form of the interview and the procedure of recording. Every interview ended with a debriefing, at which time they were handed an overview of some TCK internet sites and relevant literature on intercultural commuting, in the event that they would be interested in further independent exploring of the area. They were also prepared for the fact that seeing their oral words in written form during their review of the interview transcriptions might be slightly disconcerting (Kvale 1996). Half an interview was lost due to a technical fault, but this was discovered immediately afterwards, and the transcript was written out at once from memory.

A full-length transcription of the interview was completed shortly after each session. This was done in order to capture the tone of the respondent, while the body language and the individual weighing of the words was still fresh in my memory. During this process great care was taken to preserve the essence of what had been said when converting the speech into written language. However, the language did have to be altered in places where rules for written and colloquial speech diverge. For example, verbal terminology such as “ah”, “uhm”, “like”, and “you know” were removed. Similarly, in the instances where the subject had begun with one word but altered it to another, only the last word was kept in the text.

The transcripts were also prepared to ensure confidentiality of the data material. The subjects were all awarded pseudonyms. Additionally, any reference to home and host countries or parental occupations, as well as sensitive information that came up during the interview situation, was coded. As planned, a copy of the completed transcript was returned to the individual informant to verify whether her or his statements had been quoted and understood correctly. The comments that were received from the participants were taken into consideration for the final copy. The

recording of the interviews were destroyed after the transcriptions had been approved by the respondents.

3.4 Analyzing and Synthesizing the Data

The preparation for analysis of the collected data material was done with the intention of finding the essence of the experience of identity development for this sample of TCKs. These proceedings, therefore, continued to follow the tradition within phenomenological analysis of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). The assumption is that the analyst wants to learn something about the informant's psychological world. Meaning is central in this design, and so the analysis involves the investigator engaging in an interpretative relationship with the material (Smith & Osborn 2003). Since there were ten transcripts, the decision was made to explore one interview in detail before moving on the others.

The procedure of analysis was conducted during the autumn months of 2005. It was adapted primarily from Creswell (1998), Kvale (1996), Smith (b) (1996), and Smith & Osborn (2003). First of all, a full description of the researcher's own knowledge of the elements involved in TCK identity development was written. The point of this was to bracket (epoche), or put aside, my personal familiarity with the subject in order to avoid subjective disturbance as much as possible when delving into the experience of the informants. According to Moustakas (1994), setting aside all prejudgements forces the researcher to rely more on openness to intuition, imagination and universal structures in order to obtain a clearer picture of the subject`s experience. The interview was then read and reread several times for me to become properly immersed into the subject's life world. Notes were made during these initial readings to mark what was interesting and considered relevant for the subject in her/his account of events. At the next reading, emerging theme titles were noted. This procedure was continued throughout the whole transcript. At that stage, the highlighted extracts and emerging themes were translated from Norwegian to English, and as in the original transcription great care was taken to preserve the

nature of what had been said. The conversion also allowed for a more in-depth examination of the meaning of the extracts, and further elimination of parts considered irrelevant for the subject at hand.

The budding themes were then listed on a sheet of paper, in order to look for connections between them. A directory over the participant's phrases that supported related themes was also produced. This part of the process involved a systematic and theoretical ordering of the themes, using cut and paste functions from the word-processing tools on the computer to place individual utterances. Using my own bracketed experience with the phenomenon to dialogue with the text appeared useful at this stage. Eventually some of the themes clustered together, unveiling a pattern. As the theme connections appeared, they were checked with the transcript to ensure that they were in fact an illustration of the primary source material. This was to compare my interpretation against what the person had actually said. The next step was to create a coherently ordered table of themes. The clusters themselves were given a name to identify secondary themes. The table listed the key themes with a match of secondary themes. A coded number was included to help relocate the statements in the original source material, ordering the organisation of the findings.

The procedure of *condensation, categorising, connecting* and *naming* was followed with every transcript. The themes from the first transcript were used to define the analysis of the latter. This facilitated the identification of the ways in which the descriptions of the informants both corresponded with and diverged from each other. When each transcript had been analysed in this interpretative manner, a final table of minor themes was constructed. The focus of the material was further clarified through the procedure of prioritising and thereby diminishing the minor themes. This process involved a back and forth overview of all the transcripts. Finally, four main themes were extracted, and in practice each of the ten participants is seen to embody all these focal themes in the expression of their identity construction to a greater or lesser degree. The closing section of the analytic process was writing up the final themes, with a concluding report sketching the findings of the meanings intrinsic to the

participants` identity experience. That report is the basis for the following chapter. Before these findings are presented, however, a description of the sample is required. This account is provided in the following section.

3.5 Description of the Sample

The sample of informants was composed of four boys and six girls between the ages of seventeen and twenty-two. They all had Norway as their passport country. Furthermore, all the interviewees qualified as TCKs, as they had lived in several different countries during their developmental years, accompanying their parents for the purpose of work or pleasure. The parental occupations responsible for initialising these transitions were business, diplomatic, aid and missionary organisations. The subjects had changed country of residence at least twice and at the most nine times in their lives. They had lived between one and fifteen years outside of their passport country during their formative years. One or both of their parents had Norway as their main country of origin. Four out of ten of the informants had one parent from at least one different cultural background, and consequently family in other parts of the world, exposing them to supplementary multicultural influence both directly and indirectly.

Some of the parents of the informants were still abroad, others were contemplating moving again. All of the subjects had attended Norwegian and English speaking local\international schools. The parts of the world represented through this sample, both as home and host cultures, were Scandinavia, Europe, Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and both North and South America. As specified earlier in the chapter, some of their characteristics were made anonymous for ethical reasons. The names used in the text are pseudonyms, Norwegian cities are not named, and other countries than Norway are coded into parts of the world. For example, the term “America” is used to incorporate places in both South and North America, as “Asia” and “Africa” are used as a reference for all countries on these continents.

Anne (19). She had Norwegian parents, and a diplomatic organisation initialised the international transition. She had lived in Asia between the ages of seven and twelve, and in Norway before and after the sojourn. This means that she had experienced two major intercultural moves and had resided five years abroad in total. Her schooling history was Norwegian and International.

Camilla (18). Her mother was Norwegian, and her father was from America. One of her parents has Asian roots. Their background for moving was work within an aid organisation. She lived in Africa between the ages of four and seven, as well as in a European country for six months at seventeen. Other than that, she had resided in Norway but travelled regularly to see relatives. She had made four major global transitions during her developmental years, and had lived three and a half years of her life abroad. Her schooling background was Norwegian, as well as African.

Lars (20). His mother was originally from another Scandinavian country, while his father's background is a mixture of Norwegian and a third Scandinavian nation. Their travels were initialised by a missionary organisation. He had moved between two different countries in South East Asia and Norway between the time he was born and turning eighteen. He had transferred interculturally four times, as well as reunited with his family at regular intervals. He had resided abroad for fourteen years in total. His schooling was Asian, Norwegian, American and International.

Elisabeth (20). Her parents were Norwegian, and they moved overseas to represent a missionary organisation. She was in transience between two places in an Asian country and Norway between her birth and her fourteenth year. She also spent a year between the ages of nineteen and twenty in America. She had therefore experienced eight world-wide transitions during her developmental years, and had lived a total of thirteen years outside of Norway. Her school history was Asian, American, International and Norwegian.

Leah (22). Her mother was Norwegian, but her father had origins in another Scandinavian country. Their intercultural commuting was directed by diplomatic

representations. She had alternated her country of residence between Norway and six places in Europe and one station in America from birth until turning nineteen. In sum, she had relocated nine times and lived fifteen years in a country other than Norway during her formative years. Her schooling was local, International and Norwegian.

Isabel (18). Her parents were both Norwegian. She had lived most her life in Norway, but spent one year in a European country during her sixteenth year. The background for her transfer was unspecified. She had experienced two major intercontinental moves, had resided one year abroad, and was months away from a move back to her host country. Her history of schooling was International and Norwegian.

Noah (17). His parents were Norwegian, and their intercultural travelling was activated by a diplomatic background. He had shuffled between a country in Asia, Norway and two countries in Africa between the ages of six and sixteen. He had relocated internationally five times, and spent seven childhood years in a place which was not his passport country. His schooling was International and Norwegian.

Sara (17). Her parents were Norwegian, and their directive for moving came from a business corporation. She lived in two Asian countries, in one country in the Middle East and in Norway between the ages of three and twelve. She had therefore experienced four major international transitions, and spent eight years outside of her passport country. Her schooling was Asian, American, International and Norwegian.

Philip (17). His parents were Norwegian, but one of them had roots in another European country. Their incentive for moving was representing a business organisation. He changed residences between America, a country in Europe and Norway between the ages of ten and sixteen. He had therefore relocated inter-continentally three times and had spent six of his formative years in another country than Norway. His schooling was Norwegian, American and International.

Joshua (20). His parents were both Norwegian, and their decision to move abroad was linked to their work within a missionary institution. He had commuted between two places in America and Norway between birth and his seventeenth year. He had

experienced six intercultural relocations and lived a total of thirteen of his childhood years in a place outside of his passport country and his parent’s country of origin. His schooling was Norwegian and International.

This chapter has reviewed the logic of the research decisions and procedure. The last segment introduced the interviewees. The following chapter will detail the findings of the analysis.

4. Findings

4.1 Condensation and Categorisation: Statements, Meanings and Meaning Themes

The statements which were noted in the interview transcripts during the preliminary readings were woven around such issues as the informants´ classification of home base (considering place, as well as the whereabouts of friends and family), worldview, the likeness or discrepancy between the respondents and their peers, the understanding of the evenness of their own characteristics from situation to situation, as well as the ways in which their past was thought to have affected them to date and was likely to influence their future prospects. These accounts were further explored for the extraction of the meanings they represented. Here, diverging themes emerged such as “far”, “close”, “certain”, “confused”, “discontinuous”, “polar”, “stabile”, “sad”, “content”, “standing out”, “fitting in”, “interest”, “disinterest”, “constant” “irregular”, “ashamed”, “proud”, “activated”, “repressed”, “relative”, “absolute”, “inside”, “outside”, “frustrated”, “satisfied”, “detached” and “connected”. The themes clustered together into meaning units.

During the initial condensation, it became clear that *distance* was a key factor in the organisation of the TCK´s identity experience. Through categorisation and naming of the themes, the presence of remoteness continued to saturate the material. In their accounts, the participants all related to gaps in one way or the other. As the next sections will present, this distance was illustrated in various aspects of their identity compositions. There were references to physical distance between home countries, as well as statements about distance between points of reference, distance between the self and others, and reflections around the distance between parts of the self. The final list of the minor themes mirrored this, and the four focal themes of *belonging & relationships, world view & attitude, discrepancy & resemblance,* and *stability & change* are direct reflections of this discovery. Each of the ten informants expressed

variations of attachment and detachment within these issues as essential in their identity experience. Identity formed in the third culture emerged as a process of polarities, ordered across a continuum of being part of and not being part of. The following narrative of the experience of TCK identity, therefore, is an account of how the individuals have dealt with the schism they have been exposed to in their life worlds. It reflects how they manage to leverage the ambiguity in belonging and loyalty, in outlook and points of reference, as well as in fitting in and standing out within the majority culture. The following sections will sketch these findings.

Some clarifying remarks about the form of narration are necessary here. The phrase “abroad” is used throughout the text to refer to nations other than Norway. To protect confidentiality, the “X” appears where the subject was referring to her or his particular host country. Similarly, the symbol (…) found in the quotations symbolizes statements which have been extracted due to their identifiable properties. Due to the fact that Norway and Norwegians are common reference points for all the informants, and thereby emerged as a backdrop for their identifications, they are referred to by the properties “majority culture” and “in-group”. These concepts, along with the terms “minority culture”, “marginal culture” and “out-group”, are used to organise the findings and make them more accessible to the reader. Additionally, the material is presented in a continuous storyline through blending quotes from the individual interview sessions as if describing a group interview. This measure was taken because it was found to clearly communicate the essence of the findings and exploration of the central themes. The form additionally preserves the strong narrative identity experience of the informants which materialised from the transcriptions, and effectively demonstrates the similarities and differences found within the sample. Below follows a general description of the experience of identity for TCKs.

4.2 Belonging & Relationships

The manner in which the TCK related to the divergences between her or his cultures surfaced as key in her or his developmental process. This showed itself on many levels. The young adults who were interviewed had all been exposed to places at great geographical distance from each other. The phrase "so far away" repeated itself throughout the transcripts. Clarifying where they had ties appeared to be a vital factor in their experience of identity. The location and status of *home* was therefore a central theme in the dialogue. Through the omnipresence of temporariness and transience described by the interviewees, home presented itself as a complex maze of passport country, parents' country of origin, family's place of residence, timeframe, as country of residence and length of time of the latter. The description was a complicated affair, immersed in the memories of airports, shifts in the environment, continuous rotation of surrounding people, farewells and hellos. Mostly, though, the experience seemed centred on the attachments made to people. Joshua reflected that: "Place is no longer of importance. It is more about the people". Philip said: "In a way it is the place [which makes you feel like you belong], but it is also about how close you get to friends there." In Sara's words: "It is definitely much more about the people". According to Lars, friends make sure you "don't feel lost, but feel at home". Leah echoed "my best friend is where I feel the most roots, I guess".

Interestingly, the outcome of this complex picture seemed to vary in relation to how they responded to the many spaces involved in their origin. The informants identified themselves as either "insiders" of Norway, "outsiders" of Norway, or "simultaneously insiders and outsiders". Although all of the interviewees expressed feeling close to at least one of their parents, the status of their friendships appeared to be the strongest indicator as to where they felt they belonged. Those who defined Norway as their home said that their closest friends were concentrated in Norway, the best mates of those who felt at home outside Norway were said to reside internationally, and those who felt at home both inside Norway and outside expressed having close friends in both environments. The exception was Isabel, who regardless

of identifying Norway as home, felt more of a connection with her friends elsewhere in Europe.

Anne, Isabel and Camilla dealt effectively with the gap between homes by labelling themselves as Norwegian. Their other base countries were looked upon as an extra dimension, a significant but remote part of their lives. Anne said: "I have to say that I feel mostly Norwegian…but living abroad has become an important part of my life". Isabel stated simply that although she also felt at home in X, "Norway is my home. It is where I have lived for most of my life, and where I feel I will always say is where I come from, my home." Camilla expressed this position elegantly when she said that "I see myself as Norwegian, with a twist." Joshua, despite his many years abroad, replicated the stance of defining himself as a Norwegian. He stated that "It is weird, but lately I have begun to feel mostly at home in Norway."

Lars and Leah, on the other hand, expressed the complete opposite reaction to the divergence. They positioned their real home as somewhere outside of Norway. In response to where he feels at home, Lars replied: "I hate that question about where I am from, of course". He went on:

> "I notice that it [home] comes up almost immediately in a conversation on just about anything. Something comes up which makes me want to make a reference to my background. Then I have to explain the whole story, and sometimes I find it tiring to tell people that I have lived here and there. The first question people ask is usually "where are you from", and then you just have to regurgitate the whole story".

Although he had moved to Norway consciously because he "kind of wanted to be a little Norwegian", he felt at home abroad, and talked about how he experiences "homesickness" when he is in Norway. Leah elaborated that:

> "X5 is where I lived the longest, where I sort of grew up. But I am a not a citizen of X5, and I can't live there, so I can't call it my home…I guess that is the big problem…that I don't have any place that I feel I belong. That is the problem. Now I have been back where I am a citizen…but I don't feel that I belong here. I don't have friends that I have known for a long time either."

She emphasised that she wanted to be "as little Norwegian as possible". She also added that she was "very good at not belonging anywhere". Indeed, she exclaimed that it would be "lethal to suddenly belong".

Elisabeth, Noah, Sara and Philip, however, claimed that they felt they belonged equally in and out of Norway. Elisabeth established this relativity of home by stating that the feeling of belonging is a process. "Since I am in Norway now," she said, "I feel mostly Norwegian. But not quite…" Philip followed through by observing that he felt less at home in Norway before than he did now, and that: "I guess I felt at home in X when I lived there." Similarly, Sara expressed this state of in-betweeness when she said:

> "I feel at home in Norway in the sense of family, house and things like that. I do have patriotic Norwegian feelings. I know that Norway is my home country, I do have something Norwegian in me, and I know that I am Norwegian… I should feel at home in Norway, but I don't…"

At the same time she underlined that she did not tolerate negative comments about Norway, especially when she was abroad. She concluded:

> "I don't really have a clear answer about where I feel at home…right now I feel that I belong to the international environment I am part of, but when I was in a Norwegian environment I felt the same sense of belonging to that too."

Noah declared that:

> "I guess I am Norwegian, but I don't take most of my identity from there. I feel like I belong more to the international community. A large part of my friends are more international than Norwegian, and I probably won't be able to stay in Norway for the rest of my life. I probably just have to get back out there. But, I sing the national anthem; hand on my heart and all that…so I feel that I have roots in Norway. But with modifications, to put it that way."

He summed up the experience of this mobile sense of home by saying: "I guess that I belong to the big rotating environment, and not to a specific country."

4.3 World View & Attitude

The presence of distance in the life world of TCKs was not only evident in their responses to geographical space, but also in the simultaneous exposure to several *contradictory* cultural expressions. These took the shape of different points of reference, such as societal circumstances, languages, and traditions. The informants described being able to relate to different modes such as ways of greeting, the view of time and paying respect. One of the frames of reference the informants were exposed to was the local host culture(s). The subjects explained how their social status was radically changed by the move. "Many people are surprised when I tell them what it was like to live there because it was so different," Anne said, "It was such a huge difference. Here, we were just regular people. There, we were wealthy."

Although they all described a larger or lesser insight into the host culture and language, they never accomplished complete cultural competence. Anne added that she learned a little about the country she lived in through school. She also learned a tiny bit of the local language, but "mostly for fun". Lars underlined that although he attempted to immerse himself in the local culture. He said: "It is hard for a rich, white person from the west to understand the culture completely, with all its overwhelming poverty and completely different possibilities." The main source of cultural influence was identified as the international community they were schooled in. Lars continued to describe the international school atmosphere eloquently; "People came from Asia, Europe, Africa, America, from all over, being multicultural was the norm." There, they were met with fragments of a cacophony of different cultures and mindsets. Elisabeth stated that she "identified a little with the local culture, but mostly with the culture at school."

The respondents talked about growing up in an environment where they picked up elements from many cultures, without absorbing any culture in its entirety. The general experience of cultural distance seemed to be that of being bombarded with several mindsets at the same time. Parallel to being introduced to other cultural norms, the TCKs described being prepped to identify with Norwegian national symbols and ideas which they did not altogether relate to. Elisabeth went on to

describe an incident when her mother was horrified to find her pledging allegiance to an American flag during assembly. She elaborated: "Because that is what we did, and I didn't think about it as an issue…after that they put up a little Norwegian flag next to the huge American one, and I stopped pledging allegiance." Sara added that: "My family has always been very conscious that we are Norwegian, that we were coming home to Norway, there was never any talk of us staying there forever. Still, it felt as though we were…" Philip told the story of participating in the 17th of May parade after his sojourn with the same enthusiasm as when he was a child, only to realise that his monocultural peers had reached a stage of complete disinterested. Leah summed up the confusion involved in the inheritance of cultural norms with which she did not identify when she expressed her thoughts on May 17th:

> "When I see Norwegian flags I get irritated, I get upset…and that isn't because people shouldn't be allowed to celebrate their day of independence, but it is because I don't have [a special day to celebrate]. What flag would I have chosen?"

The references by the subjects to their life abroad as a "story" enhanced the notion of how distant their memories from another place often appear both to themselves and to others. Anne said:

> "It seems that my life in X is so far away from people's perception of reality. I don't know that many people who have lived abroad in this manner, or who have travelled at all for that matter."

Noah explained that: "It is not easy to believe some of the stories that we tell for those who have not experienced anything like that. So they often react with disbelief." This concept of abstraction was further demonstrated by Elisabeth when she said:

> "Sometimes it feels like my life in X was a dream, because it was so different that I can't really combine those two lives….I start to wonder whether that place exists…I feel like because I think it was a dream, those first fourteen years of my life, I suddenly have a shorter life with fewer experiences to draw from."

Lars also found himself wondering regularly whether it really was him who did all those incredible things abroad. Sara stated simply that "my childhood lies abroad." These statements reflected the presence of detachment between the different parts of their lives and the connected reference points.

The interviewees' further descriptions continued to show how their worldview seemed structured according to this distance between cultural frames of reference. *Language* materialised as one important facet for organising identity in the midst of multitude. Semantics appear in this way to serve both as a tool to project culture and the self. Anne, Camilla, Joshua and Isabel saw Norwegian as their main language. "I am most comfortable with Norwegian, I am most fluent in that language," said Joshua, "I appreciate that I am Norwegian and that Norwegian is my mother tongue". Although some of them were equally fluent in English, this was described as an extra dimension. Camilla explained that her bilingualism was her main multicultural baggage. She said:

> "What affects my daily life most about having a multicultural background is the language; that I alternate between Norwegian and English at home. That is a bit of a duality. I still don't find that it affects me a whole lot, it is just natural. I often think in English, and I guess it is part of my life that I don't think about very much, my friends notice more than I do, so it is not a problem."

The importance of language in the identity experience was carried through by the other informants. Lars, Leah, Philip and Elisabeth said that they expressed themselves better in English. Leah explained that

> "I read a lot and pick up on the culture very quickly. Now I notice that there is not so much I don't understand when it comes to the humour here. Even though I don't find it funny. It is the same thing in X, I see the shows, and I know what they are referring to because I have lived there. Somebody else here wouldn't understand what it meant or what point was being made. I can understand it. English is me".

Elisabeth stated that she felt more comfortable with her "English version". Noah and Sara articulated an equal footing in the two languages, and described picking the

language they felt most suited their purpose in a given situation. Sara explained how she "switched" languages. Noah underlined that although he thinks English is a more nuanced language, "I have to have both [languages]. I have to be able to sing the [Norwegian] National anthem, and I have to have the Norwegian part with me." Evidently, the language(s) in which they felt most able to express their sense of humour, values, thoughts, and emotions is the one that is regarded as their own.

Another way the subjects expressed relating their exposure to cultural voids in their lives is through their *mentality***.** The respondents described being spoon-fed the fact that people differ in the way they do things across cultures. Philip underlined that it is not enough only to know "that there are other perspectives, but one has to know what they are". The TCKs described having inherited a first-hand understanding of the fact that there is no such thing as a "best culture", as well as knowledge that "there are good people and bad people in every culture". When forming their own perspective, however, they seemed to have integrated these multiple points of reference to varying degrees.

This is exemplified by their differing views on Norwegian culture, reflected in varying degrees of insider's, outsider's and middle perspective. Anne, Isabel, Camilla, and Joshua represented a rather disassociated view of their many frames of reference. They talked about actively using their background as a reference in their daily lives; however none of them seems to have integrated its duality. Instead, they expressed identifying with a Norwegian mentality. "Generally, I don't think there is a big difference between the way I view the world and how my friends here view the world", concluded Isabel. "I see myself exactly like [my friends]; we have the same opinions and experiences", said Camilla. Joshua concurred: "When it comes to culture and the worldview I feel mostly at home in, I think that I have a mostly Norwegian outlook". Although they said that they might be able to relate more directly than their peers to certain news, they expressed seeing things mainly from the same angle.

Leah and Lars described seeing Norway from a distance. They represented the opposite alternative to the general Norwegian standpoint, in this way continuing to

categorise themselves with the out-group. Lars was frustrated with Norwegian mentality, and could not identify with it. He said:

> "For people to get to know me they have to understand that I am a lot of different things at once…it is very difficult to articulate, especially towards those who have none of the same reference points…for example to people who have lived in a little place all their lives and are going back there. They understand me as little as I understand them. To me, they are missing out on the world. To them, I am missing out on stability. I think most Norwegians are very focused on Norway in everything, and it annoys me. There is a world outside Norway, outside Europe, and outside the West".

Leah agreed: "I see Norway as a tiny little insignificant country, while Norwegians see Norway as very important. There are so many people out there who don't even know where Norway is." Lars continued to point out his opposing perspective when he said that local news is as exciting for Norwegians as news on foreign affairs is to him. Their outside stance was further exemplified by adding that they liked to talk to foreigners so that they could discuss Norwegians, and that foreigners likewise enjoyed conversing with them because they represented more open values than the Norwegian on the street.

Elisabeth, Noah, Sara, and Philip expressed an integrated plural worldview. This was illustrated by *relativism*. These subjects described balancing on the margins of reference points, drawing on both inside and outside mindsets as they see fit. "All international education is directed at intercultural understanding and all that fantastic stuff. The result in the end is that you don't believe in anything…" said Noah. As they switched between homes and languages, they also held several perspectives at once. Elisabeth described the sensation of feeling split between values when she said: "I still don't know what I think…something in-between." Philip said that "Sometimes my opinions come into conflict with each other." Sara described the process of picking the culture which served the purpose within a certain context. She thrives in this interesting, evolving, weird, and international environment "of discussion", as she put it. She explained:

> "I have often seen a case from a different angle because I have an international background, and because I have experienced different cultures. I think it depends on

> where one has lived, whether or not one mixes norms or cultures. I have lived in a Muslim country, and seen strict Muslim codes up close. In Norway, there is a bit of an anti-Muslim climate. That makes me feel the need to defend the other culture, and explain how things work. I also think that my own choices are coloured by the codes that I have met. I don't only take into consideration how I see things, but how the choices I make are interpreted by others. Not just Norwegians, but foreigners as well. I seek out the Norwegian culture in a lot of contexts where I find it to provide the most effective answers to the questions I am asking. I pick details from the different cultures that I have met. I have met a lot of cultures, not just through the places that I have lived but through the people I have talked to in the different places. One can make out when a person ´s cultural heritage emerges, that I know isn't part of Norwegian culture, and I know that I can make that a part of my set of values. I think that a lot of people that I have met colour the many choices I make, that I pick freely from here and there."

Illustrating this conscious applicability of plenitude, were phrases such as "tune in" and "switch on". Elisabeth said: "It was sort of like I had to tune into Norwegian culture again". Noah added: "A scary tendency is that I switch on my Norwegian side when I am abroad, and switch it off again when I am here." He explained that he could not, even when he consciously tried, see things from just one side. He said:

> "Everything becomes relative, everything could be wrong, everything could be right, it is only about some people believing this and others believing the other. It all becomes very confusing, because most people who stay in one place receive clear guidelines to follow about how to live. They are told from they are little not to lie, for instance. We (TCKs) are taught that some people say you shouldn't lie, others say it is alright to lie to achieve the greater good. There are white lies, there are black lies, but you have to decide for yourself. It is not given that someone can tell you whether to lie or not in a specific situation. Everything is fickle and loose and it means you have no rules while others who stay put have rules they can relate to and believe in all their lives, to judge themselves and others from. We have absolutely nothing. It is a little frustrating."

All of the subjects who felt they belonged partly to the international community underlined that they felt they possessed a broader and more global outlook than the

general Norwegian, even when watching the news. They felt that the Norwegian angle on issues was too local and narrow. They spoke of seeing the "bigger picture", having "an outward perspective" and expressed a "global consciousness". Noah reflected that there were often selfish evaluations in the public space, but added that although he felt he might have a better comprehension of the broader issues, he lacked the depth of the local view. This expression of longing for a "simpler" and more cohesive picture of the world was echoed by the other informants who had incorporated various degrees of the out-group mentality into their world view. Noah described how not having a particular set of norms to follow complicated the affair of finding ones own standpoints as one kept moderating and making exceptions. Leah wished that she understood one culture thoroughly instead of having a little insight into several cultures. The subjects were in agreement that seeing the world in black and white was not necessarily right, but probably more comfortable than not being able to draw a conclusion.

Identifying with Norwegian mentality seemed to equate with categorising oneself within the in-group. A sign of this stance in the dialogue with those who saw themselves as mainly Norwegian was that the scale of prejudice was tilted slightly so that it was projected outwards, while tolerance was directed inwards. Camilla defined herself to be "tolerant to a certain degree". Anne said that: "I think I am tolerant…I am not really decisive. Instead I take in the situation at hand and review my options before I form an opinion." This position appears to involve some level of the representation of the Norwegian mindset of "Janteloven". Joshua described this attitude by saying:

> "One shouldn't brag about oneself, one shouldn't think that one is better than others. It has affected me a lot. And that is something which is very different in America. There, they are absolutely not that way, people are rather very direct about things, they don't try to hide that there are things about themselves that they are pleased with. There are no limits when it comes to bragging about something they are good at…That is something I found a little alien, something I did not really like about the culture…"

He added that he had been criticised there for being "too Norwegian" due to his reserved nature, and that "I think I prefer Norwegian culture where one can trust people, and expect people to be on time and that things happen when they are supposed to happen".

The informants who identified with an international outlook demonstrate how out-group mentality incorporated more prejudice towards the in-group and more tolerance towards the out-group. They all described having a better understanding of world issues than monoculturals, and they exuberated with a sense of pride over this. "It was not really a conflict of loyalties, but it made me want to avoid representations of that culture. I kept thinking "they are only Norwegians, I am not part of all that…" said Lars. Leah agreed: "in a way there is a sense of pride in not belonging here [in Norway]." Sara continued:

> "I think, and this sounds horrible, that amongst people who have not experienced another culture there exists a more one-sided view of things. One can never produce the same discussions; at least I have not experienced that. One agrees too much, and that never amounts to a very interesting relationship."

Elisabeth stated that "I think of them [Norwegians] as self-absorbed, racist and so on." Philip exclaimed: "It is a lot more interesting for people who have moved around to talk about politics and philosophy and books etc, than for those people who have lived here all their lives and played football". Leah added:

> "Mostly I feel arrogant myself, but I know that other people sometimes think so, too. But it hasn't bothered me. I come from a furnished home, I was taught to sit up straight and eat with a fork and knife, and get to hear about social classes from my family all the time. In addition, when I have lived in a place for so long and nobody has proven me wrong that strikes me as a little strange…not that they [Norwegians] are not nice people, but there is another style or perhaps a lack of style…"

In this material, arrogance emerged as the opposite of "Janteloven". Noah simply stated: "The main problem is that we have discarded "Janteloven" and that can either be interpreted as a lot of self confidence or arrogance". He believed that a little of the filter through which situations are observed gets eroded by frequent intercultural commuting. He explained that:

> "Every time I have a prejudiced thought I punch it out myself, turn it round and shove it back where it came from. After a while you understand that there are reasons why prejudice exists, that it is very convenient to be able to judge things at face value. It saves a lot of time, and they are often right, to lack prejudice can be a hurdle. We [international kids] have been bombarded with the notion that prejudice will not be tolerated since we were tiny."

Sara argued: "There is something about having been in and out of Norway, one generally has a broader acceptance and understanding of each other." This could present itself as a problem when the TCKs made references to their background. Referring to ones past experiences is natural when talking to others, because as Lars said, "One does want to contribute." Elisabeth explained that:

> "Just because I start talking about when I lived in X people perceive me as arrogant, but I am only talking about something I have experienced… I get frustrated when people don't understand that I am not trying to show off, I am only referring to something I have lived through, it is not like I am just talking about fantastic adventures…it is not because I think I am better than them; it is because I have l lived in another place."

4.4 Discrepancy & Resemblance

The distance involved in the TCKs life was also evident in the attributed differences and similarities that surfaced when they compared themselves to their monocultural peers. The scale of standing out and fitting in, therefore, was another central subject matter in the dialogue. Sara and Joshua pointed out that this dimension of identification was not really about being *accepted*, but rather about being *understood.* Those that remembered moving to their host cultures described that transition as challenging, but said that it did not take long before they felt "at home" in their new environment. As established, however, all of the respondents described coming back to Norway with a lot of cultural baggage which was difficult, if not impossible, to unpack. Many of the elements of their life world abroad proved suspended above reality for their new social circle.

They all described "coming home" to a place where they felt different and were out of touch with the cultural nerves to which their peers were so tuned into. Missing friends and common frames of reference were underlined as a central part of the transition experience. Linked to this was the memory of missing out on punch lines and standing out for reasons such as their accents, humour and values. Elisabeth described having a bit of a "retarded" understanding of what is accepted in Norway. Lars elaborated on this experience of cultural *faux pas*:

> "There are so many of the Norwegian cultural things, which have just escaped me, very many basic things. My friends tease me about this because they think it is funny. For example, a reference to classic children's song, television, or fairytales makes me feel left out and I wonder what they are talking about. Things which one normally picks up on while growing up, which I have missed. Some of these [holes] are filled in time. But new things keep popping up."

Joshua talked about how he did wonder about how to greet Norwegians at times. "Should I hug them, shake hands or just say hi? I concluded that you have to consider how close you are to the person you are greeting." The solution described by the interviewees was to learn the societal rules and adapt to them.

Once again, however, the informants conveyed the experience of adaptation in various degrees. Interestingly, it emerged from the dialogues with the informants that their experience of the reaction *of others* to their multicultural background was a key aspect in their sense of self. The way in which the informants experienced and dealt with cultural *faux pas* and unbalance came across as being strongly linked to perceptions of the way others responded to their life stories. This was illustrated by the finding that the feelings the interviewees associated with transience were in line with the reactions they described receiving from others. Anne, Camilla, and Isabel recalled a lot of interest and positive feedback from people when sharing their "stories". Anne reflected on the enthusiasm she has been met with when presenting her cross-cultural background, concluding that: "People are very interested, because it [the opportunity to live abroad] is so special. Not many people have lived so far away for so long." Isabel underlined that: "A lot of people think it [background] is exciting. There aren't

that many Norwegian families who get the opportunity to live abroad. I felt like a lot of my friends thought I was lucky to do so, and were envious".

These respondents expressed exclusively positive feelings about their shifting lifestyle. They did not feel different from the majority culture. Anne remembered missing X after the move, but did not recall the adaptation as an ordeal. She said that she slid easily back into her new environment.

> "I guess I jumped right in the deep end. I was not intimidated by starting [a new school]; I believed it was going to work out. I didn't really think about it. I see the whole experience [of living abroad] as an incredibly positive experience. I consider myself extremely lucky to have been able to travel and do so much".

Camilla agreed: "I just saw it [background] as something positive, that I have an extra quality which helped me when I needed to speak and write in another country". Isabel stated: "I think it has been really great. I am also keen to talk about my stay abroad as it has been a wonderful experience that I will remember all my life". This positive attitude was further expressed in possibilities to tap actively into their background. Anne, Isabel, Camilla and Joshua talked about their daily use of their multicultural skills such as language, global outlook, streetwise travelling, and comparing societies. Joshua explained that he was "quite disappointed" at the lack of interest for his life in X in Norway, while in X "sometimes the attention got too much". However, Joshua did not feel like he had such a hard time adapting to Norwegian culture; as illustrated earlier he felt that he identified better with Norwegian norms than the others he had been exposed to.

Lars and Leah recalled only negative responses. Leah elaborated that: "Personally, I think very many Norwegians who have lived in one place all their lives get kind of jealous, they don't want to hear about it, they don't think it is exciting, they are not interested.." Lars said:

> "Sometimes I can't emphasise enough how big that part of me my [cross-cultural heritage] really is, it is an incredibly huge part of me. Because people think I am strange they do not want to hear it…"

It seems that the more different they felt or were made to feel by their surroundings, the harder it was for them to tap into their heritage. Leah and Lars expressed exclusively negative emotions such as feeling "weird"," irritated", "strange", "silly" and "bitter" when talking about being different and experiencing cultural *faux pas*. Leah said that she was angry with herself for not fitting in anywhere. She added that:

> "There are a lot of ambiguous feelings involved in the experience [of cultural holes] …Adapting just happens…you learn the codes, you become one of those antenna kids. You just adjust to different situations."

Lars illustrated the conflict associated with covering parts of himself: "I try to avoid acknowledging [that I relate to several places at once]. It is something I want to express, really." They depicted less outward activation of their background, because "they [Norwegians] will never quite understand it" (Lars) and "my experiences are a thousand years from theirs" (Leah). "When I first arrived here," reminisced Lars, "I wanted to hold on to what I used to be, but now I have adapted. I don't know whether people can tell that I am not Norwegian anymore…but I think they used to be able to." In this way, they displayed an experience of having to modify themselves so much that a chunk of their lives appeared dormant when in Norway.

Sara, Noah, Elisabeth, Philip and Joshua received both negative and positive responses. Elisabeth told me that: "There are not that many people who want to hear…" but that "I have some friends who enjoy listening to me". Sara concurred:

> "When we first got back, I was met with a lot of interest. There has always been a lot of interest in where "Sara" has lived, the things that "Sara" has seen, and a wish for me to talk about it. The interest often fades, though, and there is still a lot one is left with inside, things one remembers".

Sara, Noah, Elisabeth and Philip all described both positive and negative attitudes linked to the mobility. These four remaining informants articulated their frustration with "those that had only lived in one place all their lives". However, adapting to Norwegian culture was not associated with as much resistance in this group as Lars and Leah had described. Elisabeth, Sara, Philip and Noah were very conscious of the

fact that their adapting was a controlled necessity. They said that they did not experience themselves as completely removed from the Norwegian majority, and did not feel trapped by the continuous modification. Rather, they expressed feeling in control of the adaptation and saw no need to repress their background, regardless of the responses they received from others.

They seemed equally comfortable with activating their multicultural legacy as the group who only recalled positive feed-back. As Elisabeth put it "I see that even though I have lived in another place, that doesn't mean that I can't talk about things I have experienced". Noah explained the process of fitting in:

> "It is not a problem in the international environment, because everybody's used to the fact that common points of reference don't exist. But when you come into groups of friends who have hung out since kinder garden, they all have the same reference points that they can use as examples in discussions. All they have to do is use a short comment for the others to remember it…they are not used to adjusting to the fact that not everybody understands. It is not a big problem, usually all you have to do is ask. In Norway it is not really a problem, as I can turn off my multiculturalism, to put it that way. I don't have to walk around speaking English to everybody. It is fine to speak Norwegian, wear Norwegian clothes, behave in a Norwegian manner and thereby slide in quite smoothly".

The code switching and conscious adjustment represented by this group was further exemplified when Sara simply said "I have slid pretty smoothly into different environments, I have not had any trouble adapting" and "one has to adapt." Philip agreed: "You just try to adapt as well as possible to the situation you are in, learn as much about it as you possibly can, so that you avoid having to stand there and not understand what is going on."

4.5 Stability & Change

It emerged from the data that the distance in the life world of the TCK also existed in the view of the self. The informants demonstrated some central characteristics during the interview session. Traits such as "restlessness", "maturity", and "independence"

were illustrated by all of the respondents. The experience of the regularity of their traits across contexts varied, however. Anne, Joshua, Isabel, and Camilla expressed themselves as continuous. Anne and Isabel claimed that they did not "really change" who they were depending on language and situation. Camilla and Joshua felt like they were "stable" and "the same regardless of the setting." Punctuating this position, they did not see it as uncomfortable mingling friends from different environments, as they felt they behaved the same across contexts and languages.

Leah and Lars, however, described a split and discontinuous sense of self. Leah elaborated:

> "If I am one thing at the end of the continuum I am also the other extreme…I think I am pretty unstable, really. I am different with different people. Some people think that I am very optimistic and say that I shine like the sun and make them happy every time they see me. Others say that I am so calm and careful, some people know me as quiet and cold, others call me "mum"….who is really "Leah"? What I really like, what am I really doing, these are things that I am working on. It takes time…there are times when I struggle with who I am".

Lars volunteered that "I can't really be the same with the people I know here as with the people I know there." The idea of mixing friends appeared more of a problem for them, because they were uncertain how to act in that setting, what humour to apply, and what to talk about.

Elisabeth, Philip, Sara and Noah said that they felt like they held certain basic qualities which remained stable across contexts, while others fluctuated according to the situation. Elisabeth said: "I am influenced by context…I am not just one personality". She pointed out that she was more mature than her monocultural peers in some situations but much more immature in others due to her particular reference points. "Switching" behaviour emerged as equally natural as changing languages or learning to function in a new culture for this group. Noah felt that the ease with which these slight adjustments were done were a result of the refined techniques he had mastered

through many years of temporary acquaintances and arenas of practice. Sara established that:

> "I feel like I have a core that is adaptable. I have a set thing which is me, and I think that if you asked my friends and relations who I am, you would get a pretty similar picture. But I adapt how I communicate those things. Or I adapt other things, like how I behave. I know when to tone myself down or up a notch. It is not at all conscious, but I may think about it afterwards. It is not like I walk around thinking about how adaptable I am."

Noah elaborated on this stance when he said:

> "I think that a certain core of me remains stable… A little core is probably constant, but one has to adapt a lot of the outer things. That sort of thing is very easy to adjust. How to speak, how to dress, one gets really good at adjusting those sorts of things very quickly. It [mingling friends] could also be quite a brutal clash…I can find mixing friends quite uncomfortable, actually, often because one acts different roles, and those roles don't often go too well together."

However, these informants did not express feeling as though they were stuck in the quicksand of role concepts. Sara concluded simply that her friends "serve different purposes".

The subjects reflected that multicultural children are particularly prone to dwell on issues of identity. Noah suggested that this was perhaps because they keep looking "long after everyone else has stopped searching". Lars said that "I think that when people have difficulties with having a fixed identity they are always more aware of identity issues. I think about it a lot more than "regular people". Noah elaborated:

> "Of course there are negative aspects to adjusting all the time; it makes the whole identity concept very fickle. But I also think it is very positive, it shifts the focus away from the outer noise. What I wear is not really who I am. One can stay focused on the inner things."

As if underlining the organisation of distance in their identity, the subjects´ retrospective view of their lifestyle and reflections on its impact on their self-image coincided with their other descriptions. The informants all regarded the sojourn as an influence in their lives, but seemed to have varied opinions of the extent to which it impacted on who they are. Anne, Camilla, Isabel and Joshua conveyed that their international stay had an affect on who they are, but not exclusively. Leah and Lars stated that who they are is a direct result of their multicultural heritage. Philip, Noah, Elisabeth, and Sara said that their background as transients had quite a large impact on them, but specified that it was not the only decisive factor in shaping them. In addition, Lars, Leah, Sara, Noah, Elisabeth, and Philip expressed that their style of friendship reflected their background as TCKs.

Similarly, although the informants all expressed future and vocational wishes to travel, the intensity of this desire varied. Anne, Isabel, Camilla and Joshua said that they *wanted* to travel, while Leah and Lars expressed that they *needed* to travel. In a sense, they appeared to feel predestined to remain rootless. Lars described his position by saying:

> "Now I have started to form friendships that make me want to stay on. At the same time I have not formed any relationships that mean that I won't leave. The will to leave is always stronger than the will to stay."

Elisabeth, Sara, Noah, and Philip presented a stance that was in between wanting and having to travel. It was more like a calling to this group. Noah explained:

> "When I arrived back in Norway, I realized that it was possible to become something completely different [than parents] like a policeman, carpenter or an electrician. I went through a phase where I was really excited about that…But I think it is a trap one falls into, that one thinks one can settle [for less] when one has seen that one can reach so far. When you have been raised to believe you can become anything you want and you see that those possibilities actually exist to become anything that you want. I guess one can never settle for anything else, because one feels that one is wasting potential."

Those that only saw positive effects of their own sojourn expressed positive attitudes about travelling with children of their own, while those who elaborated on the negative effects of multiple reacculturation were concerned with their future offspring turning "restless", "relative" , and having to deal with "missing friends who were spread all over the world."

The developmental arena described by the TCKs, was indeed a bombarding of cultural norms and influences. Growing up in the third culture had provided the interviewees with a discontinuous and ambiguous set of building blocks for their identity achievement. These took the form of irregular home bases, multiple values, and changing relations to the majority culture and surrounding people. The past appeared intangible and unreachable, because their environment had kept changing. As the last chapter has shown, however, it materialised through the structural overview of all the transcripts that there were clear and distinct courses represented by the sample in the midst of the cultural motion and ambiguity. It surfaced that the way the person defined belonging within the cultural distance that existed between her or his home countries actually resonated into the type of world view which was formed, the degree in which she or he experienced differing from or mirroring peers, as well as a sense of how stable her or his sense of self remained between contexts. It seemed that culture became personal through this individual construction of meaning concerning the common yet geographically diverse spaces which belonged in their past.

Factors which did not appear to have a large effect on the organisation of TCK identity in this analysis were the types of schools attended, gender, age, bicultural parents and families, the length of stay in the host country, access to international communities and multicultural others, or the distance in time of the sojourn. What did seem to be of importance was the location of their close friends (except for Isabel), their mentality and attitude, the reaction of monocultural others, and the ability/possibility to leverage a multicultural heritage. This completes the presentation of the analysis findings. The next chapter will elaborate further on the intrinsic

structure of these observations through an evaluation against the theoretical backdrop presented earlier.

5. Discussion

The aim of this chapter is to relate the findings offered in the preceding chapter to the theoretical background considered in chapter two. The guiding structure here is concerned with discussing the way in which ten adolescent TCKs experience their identities after exposure to cultural multiplicity and intermittent mobility during their formative years. The analysis of the way in which they connected to their past, defined themselves in the present and saw themselves in the future will be examined in points relating to the extracted focal themes of identity development, aspects of identity continuity and identity strategies. The examination will commence with a three-section exploration of signs of introjection of their familiarity with ambiguous enculturation and reaccultural adjustment issues (a cross-cultural and mobile childhood) in their formative years. The fourth section will compare the findings to the frameworks of identity construction and preservation. The fifth chapter segment is devoted to considering the indications and implications of the findings. The last section of the chapter will reflect on the methodological soundness of the research, through considering arenas of reliability, validity, and generalisability.

5.1 Exploring the Experience of Belonging and World View

Erikson (1995) pointed towards the centrality of childhood experiences for the resolution of identity in adolescence. This link was further demonstrated by Feeney (1999), Josselson (1994), Kroger (2000), and Stevens-Long & Cobb (1983). As established, developmental perspectives have repeatedly underlined the point that the child is attached to and shaped by her or his primary culture (Gardiner & Kosmitzki 2002; Greenfield et al. 2003; Neff 2003; Rotheram & Phinney 1987; Kagitcibasi 1996; Rogoff 2003; Super & Harkness 1997; Tamis-Lemonda 2003). The review of the background material presented in chapter two additionally illustrated the way in which global nomads are exposed to mixed cultural messages in their formative years (Gerner et al.1992, Haour-Knipe 1989; Pollock & Van Reken 2001; Straffon 2003).

Further, it was proposed that the confusion would manifest itself in an adult marginal identity of not feeling completely at home anywhere and having mixed loyalties towards differing cultural codes (Cockburn 2002; Fail et al.2004; Shaetti & Ramsey 1999; Useem & Cottrell 1996).

In line with the research question, the aim of this paper was to investigate the way in which familiarity with cultural liminality was expressed by a sample of TCK informants who were theoretically at the appropriate age of identity formation. In order to explore the effects of multiple belonging for identity development, the interview included questions on the informants´ perceived home country, the world view with which they identified and the way in which they experienced relating to more than one set of cultural norms (Appendix A). The analyses of the responses to these questions were articulated under the themes of "Belonging & Relationships" and "World View & Attitude" in the previous chapter.

5.1.1 Cultural Constraining and The Self

In spite of their common heritage of rotation, the informants apparently responded in three different ways to the definition of home. Anne, Camilla, Isabel and Joshua all referred to Norway as their home. Leah and Lars felt at home outside of Norway. Elisabeth, Noah, Sara and Philip explicitly stated that they felt that home was "in between", identifying their experience of home as relative. The ecological framework (Bronfenbrenner 1979) conceptualising how an individual personifies her or his cultural settings therefore only seems to apply to four of the interviewees identifications, as the rest of them did not express feeling as though they belonged equally to all sets of norms they were exposed to as children. Instead, the models of developmental niche (Super and Harkness 1996) and bounded indeterminacy (Valsiner 1997) appear closer to covering the varying results, with their emphasis on the role of the individual child in structuring her/his own development.

As shown, developmental theories have also underlined the importance of stable relationships to reinforce ones ego experience (Bowlby 1984; Ding & Littleton 2005;

Erikson 1995; Stern 1985). In accordance with this, the TCK definition showed how the identification of home was often expressed in terms of attachment to people and not places. In fact, the interviewees' recognition of home reflected the location of their friends. This suggests a need to re-elaborate and nuance the findings of Gerner et al. (1992) which claimed that location influenced the self-perception of adolescent TCKs.

The exception was Isabel, who regardless of her closest friendships identified Norway as her home. As will be discussed later in the chapter, the reason for this deviancy was not possible to capture in the current qualitative frame. However, several possibilities for this outcome are available. The finding could stem from un-entered layers of identification, or flawed interpretation. However, viewing the responses against the rest of her identification themes and their match with her definition of home, reasonable probabilities for her continuing closeness to friends abroad could be the recent termination of her sojourn at the time of the interview, and the fact that she was mentally preparing to go back to her host country.

5.1.2 Marginality and The Self

All of the informants expressed a clear and decisive stance to their outlook as Norwegian, not Norwegian, or both Norwegian *and* not Norwegian. In addition, they expressed the world view which echoed their definition of home. Anne, Camilla, Joshua and Isabel all identified with the Norwegian standpoint, felt that they could express themselves completely or best in Norwegian, and exhibited a majority attitude. Noah, Elisabeth, Sara and Philip identified with both an international and a Norwegian outlook, used Norwegian and English in accordance with the situation at hand, and exemplified holding a marginal attitude. Leah and Lars articulated an outsider's viewpoint, preferred communicating in English and demonstrated a minority outlook. In the perspective of the theories of cultural acquisition, one would expect the majority of the informants to communicate relative opinions and a confused world view (Hundeide 2003; Keats 1997; Schaffer 1996).The extended

assumption would be that the discontinuity between the reference points of the informants would result in a delayed adolescence (Podolsky 2004), or extended moratorium. As shown from the material above, however, it can be argued that this was not the case.

The seemingly effortless juggling of cultural codes that Noah, Elisabeth, Philip and Sara expressed can be said to hold the conceptualisation of constructive marginal identity. As reviewed, Bennett's (a) (1993) theory indicated that international commuters should express some degree of marginal belonging, due to the fact that they are recipients of multiple cultural customs. The level of passive or active individual functioning, however, was seen to diverge. The informant's experience of these informants of having a global consciousness, viewing an issue from several sides, and being able to draw on the language and codes that were fitting in the moment exemplifies Bennett's (a) definition of constructive identification. It can also be argued that the encapsulated marginal identity concept similarly embraces the difficulty exhibited by Leah and Lars in their frustration when attempting to merge world views. In accordance with the theory of situated identities (Keats 1997), one could argue that these two who felt like dissimilar outsiders, could be expressing conflicting loyalties and an extended moratorium as well as role confusion. The repression of their background to fit in adds to this interpretation, as will be discussed later.

The cultural majority identity displayed by Joshua, Isabel, Anne, and Camilla is, however, difficult to place in the above theory of marginal identity. Applying the same argument to the latter group, one could conclude that they were in denial of the multicultural aspect of their background and thereby also experiencing role confusion. Paradoxically, however, they too described consistent life narratives. The persistence of this identification with the majority culture across identification themes seems to indicate that this too is a constructive outcome, and thereby a sign of identity achievement. A more multifaceted picture of TCK identity formation thereby

emerges, as the presence of cohesiveness appears to saturate the responses displayed by Leah and Lars in this outlook.

The *integration*-identity represented by Anne, Camilla, Joshua and Isabel corresponds with acculturation theory (Sussman 2000). It also places the mental identifications expressed by Noah, Elisabeth, Sara, and Philip in the interactive *marginalisation* category. However, this model neglects to make sense of the minority identity status expressed by Leah and Lars through the *integration* route of maintaining ones heritage. The *separation*- identity path added later (Berry et al. 2002), seems to capture their experiences better. Brenna's (2004) framework places Noah, Elisabeth, Philip, and Sara in the *bridging* status, while Camilla, Anne, Joshua, and Isabel seem to have assumed *pure* identities. Lars and Leah represent the *creol* identities according to this viewpoint. The model does capture the minority identity stance slightly better than that of Berry et al.(2002), as it explicitly defines it as neither /nor identity; a negation identity. The consequent opposite stance represented by these two informants throughout their responses suits this classification.

Although this framework, in that it recognises the resolution of pure identities, characterises the majority group identification better than the model offered by Bennett (a) (1993), it also lacks the capacity to altogether elucidate the varying outcomes of identification. Through the above explorations of the dimensions of attachments, world view and attitude, the findings of various identity outcomes seem to point to the possibility that identity development of TCKs is more differentiated than the prior research, theoretical predictions and conceptual frameworks suggest. Their sense of self does not, as theory would predict, seem to replicate the polarities found in their cross-cultural childhood. In fact, the descriptions given by the sample illustrate that the whereabouts of their close friends indicate their cultural identification more than their childhood exposure to cultural commuting does. This implies individual structuring of the developmental trajectories (Kagitcibasi 1996; Valsiner 1997), and a view of the assimilating-accommodating individual, as offered by identity-process theory (Chryssochoou 2004).

5.2 Exploring the Experience of Self-Sameness

Erikson (1995) identified the need for inner sameness, in the eyes of others and for the self. He argued that an important task of adolescence was the achievement of a *stable* self-concept (Erikson 1974). As shown, developmental theories and cross-cultural studies have underscored the way in which the view of others influences ones understanding of oneself (Feeney 1999; Josselson 1994; Kroger 2004; Romanucci-Ross & De Vos 1996; Valsiner & Lawrence 1997). Relocation was established as a threat to this aspect of identity, as it takes the person out of reinforcing reflections and thereby provides different sets of self-images (Chryssochoou 1994; Kroger 2000). Cultural relocation was seen as especially severe in this context, involving identity confusion due to new images of the self reflected back by others (Gaw 2000; Isogai et al. 1999; Onwumechili et al. 2003; Searle & Ward 1990; Storti 2001;Ward et al. 2001).

Another important aspect of this research was thus the informants saw themselves compared to other people and the consequences derived from these perceptions. The questions concerning this dimension inquired into the way in which others responded to the informants´ multiple transitions, and to which extent they felt they differed or were similar to their peers (Appendix A). The analyses of the answers to these enquiries were presented under the theme of “Discrepancy & Resemblance”. Connected to this, was therefore a need to explore the way in which the adolescent TCKs experienced their sameness across languages, countries and situations, and whether this in turn reflected their sense of belonging, their world view and experienced degree of similarity to monocultural peers. The question concerning this element of identity involved asking the informants about their main traits, whether these were stable across situations, and whether they would feel comfortable merging their different groups of friends (Appendix A). The analyses of the responses to these questions were given under the theme of “Stability & Change”.

5.2.1 The Looking Glass and The Self

Anne, Isabel, and Camilla recalled positive reactions to their transitions, did not seem effected by cultural *faux pas*, felt that they used their background actively and did not experience incorporating constant adjustment. Leah and Lars felt that nobody was interested in their multicultural background; their self-esteem was negatively affected by experiencing cultural faux pas. Philip, Sara, Noah, Joshua and Elisabeth described both positive and negative responses from Norwegians, but exhibited using their background actively and consciously, without being negatively affected by the experience of cultural faux pas in their self esteem. These findings seem to show that the reactions of others were important indicators of their identity-experience, as indicated by the theory of the looking glass self which (Bennett (a) 1993; Ding & Littleton 2005).

Although Joshua articulated having experienced both a lack of understanding and overwhelming interest in his background, he did not appear to have introjected the negative sensations of self-adjustment, and his identifications placed him within the group who held the insider's perspective, expressing both an active use of his past references and a stable self-image. With the knowledge that he in fact had spent most of his life outside of Norway, it can be argued that this is a sign of weak analysis or un-accessed information during the interview. However, as with the deviancy found in Isabel's narration, comparing this outcome with the status he expressed on the subsequent themes, suggests the need to interpret his stance in a different manner; namely as an indication of his individual structuring of identity. These findings suggest that the multicultural individuals who experienced positive feedback grappled less with the issues of conflicting self-images than those who experienced negative feedback. The impression is that culture not only permeated to the individual, but that the individual structured her or his identity in interaction with the surroundings, in accordance with Zhao (2005).

Anne, Camilla, Joshua, and Isabel all referred to accessing and using their multicultural heritage in their daily lives. None of them expressed feeling negative

emotions such as shame or denial of parts of the self. The informants articulated that it was perfectly natural that they and their peers had different reference points, and activated ways in which to share their stories regardless of the perceived reactions. In this way they seemed to distance their self-perception from the lack of understanding they interpreted from others. Sara, Noah, and Philip described drawing on their multicultural references; but also said that they did not always have audiences that were interested in or understood their accounts.

They did not, however, appear to let that obstruct them from drawing on baggage from their third culture background. Elisabeth explicitly explained the process by which she first wanted to hide that part of herself because people found it so alien, but then came to the conclusion that she would continue to make references to her experiences even though people around her did not share her perspective. Even though all of the informants recognised the aspect of distance in their life world, the assumption of the theory of "loss of voice" (Harter 1997) can not be said to illuminate the experience of more than a small part of the sample i.e. Leah and Lars.

Indeed, the response of the informants as to whether they triggered or withdrew multicultural elements in the company of monocultural others appeared to directly relate to the way in which they felt that others responded to them. This fits with the claim of identity-process theory that people are self-constructors who build, change, and monitor their own identities in relation to others through strategies of assimilation-accommodation and evaluation processes (Chryssochoou 2004). One can argue that their retort came before the response, and that the interpretation of a response is subjective. Sadly, the direction of influence could not be captured by this design. There is, however, a strong indication of correspondence between the reactions of others, whether interpreted or intentional, and the identity statuses expressed by the informants. This indicates the need to re-elaborate the stance that TCKs experience social marginality and thus internalise cultural contradictions so that they form a split sense of self, as found by Gerner at al. (1992).

All of the informants who remembered experiencing positive feedback on some level, however, described a sense of pride and ability in accessing their experience. Only Lars and Leah depicted solely negative responses to their background, and matched them with sensations of shame, self-doubt, and denial in the presence of others. As with the forecast of TCKs´ internalising cultural marginality during identity construction, these findings seem to indicate that there is a need to elaborate the notion of the experience of a split self resulting from a transitory developmental milieu. Again, individual responses to common multicultural exposure come to the fore, underlining the understanding of identity as the balance point between the self and the other (Kroger 2004).

5.2.2 Self-Shock and the Self

In this sample, only Leah and Lars expressed feeling an apparently internalised confusion through their articulated split self-image. Isogai et al. (1999) stated that seeing many clashing images of the self simultaneously would be disturbing for the continuity of the self. Self-shock theory (Zaharna 1989) and identity-process theory (Chryssochoou 2004) underlined that the individual needs to do something to preserve self-esteem when it is threatened. According to these theories, therefore, it makes sense that TCKs would shy away from uncomfortable situations where they saw themselves simultaneously reflected differently. However, this outlook does not explain why four of the informants described their multiplicity as a positive attribute rather than a problem, while another four described seeing only permanent reflections of themselves across contexts.

The finding that TCK traits were not displayed to the same degree by everybody suggests that these expressions were not only graded but linked to their identity status of majority, minority or marginality. For instance, the more they appeared to identify with the categorisation of “look the same think the same” (Pollock & Van Reken 2001), the less strongly these typologies shone through. Additionally, the more they expressed identifying with elements of “hidden immigrant” (ibid), the more

international was their outlook. The former appeared correlated to feeling stable across contexts, the latter to the opposite.

Neither Joshua, Anne, Camilla, nor Isabel felt that they changed according to contexts. Noah, Sara, Elisabeth and Philip expressed having incorporated a degree of adaption into their identity, but still articulated having a stable core across situations. Even Leah, who stated that her self-image incorporated both ends of the continuum, represented an intact view of herself as contradictory across themes. Only Leah and Lars showed indications of experiencing a fragmented and rotating view of themselves. In this aspect, one could argue that their standpoint was a sign of self-shock and role confusion. On the other hand, the logical match of this reply with their responses to the other identity-dimensions indicated that this disjointed experience could, in fact, also be a sign of identity achievement and a continuous self-image. This accentuates De Vos & Romanucci-Ross´ (1982) claim that some individuals learn to live with ambiguity and dissonance, and thus a sense of identity is a conscious part of the self rather than the function of automatic mechanisms. This view is strengthened by the lack of reflection of the liminal exposure of childhood expressed by the other eight informants.

5.3 Exploring the Continuous Self of the Life Narrative

Finally, Erikson's theory of psychosocial stages (1995) underlined that the main task of adolescence was to bridge the past with the future, forming a continuous life narrative. Developmental perspectives showed how this is thought to be achieved through sorting through ones cultural and social heritage (Ding & Littleton 2005; Stevens-Long & Cobb 1983). Cross-cultural material elaborated on the perceived outcomes for a balanced self-image of resolving this task across contexts (Haour-Knipe 1989; LaFromboise et al. 1993). The literature on TCKs specifically identified delayed adolescence or an extended moratorium as a response to the difficulty of forming a cohesive life narrative in the presence of such cacophony (Podolsky 2004; Pollock & Van Reken 2001; Useem & Cottrell 1996). The final element to study in

this context was therefore the extent to which informants saw their experiences in the third culture as relevant for their current and future life situations. The question regarding this aspect of identity required the informants to view the way they felt that their third culture influences and transitions had affected them (Appendix A). The analysis of these responses were given under the theme of “Stability and Change” in the preceding chapter.

5.3.1 The past, the Present, the Future and the Self

As shown, the sample demonstrated that their view of the past echoed the stance they had expressed concerning the other dimensions of identity explored. Anne, Camilla, Joshua and Isabel concluded that their multicultural and mobile heritage had affected them, but not to a large degree. Noah, Sara, Elisabeth, and Philip gave their formative experiences as sojourners more credit as having influenced who they were, but did not regard them as the exclusive factors. Leah and Lars, however, expressed that their childhood in the third culture had thoroughly shaped them. The future vocations of the informants similarly seemed very much indicated by the articulated view of their cross-cultural experience. All of the informants expressed either an urge to travel or to move abroad for work purposes. In this light, the importance of childhood attachments on adult identity is repeated (Feeney 1999; Ding & Littleton 2005; Josselson 1994). However, this finding also encourages a respect for the qualitative nuances within that link. Anne, Camilla, Joshua, and Isabel *wanted* to travel abroad. Noah, Elisabeth, Sara, and Philip expressed a *calling* to move abroad, while Leah and Lars articulated a *need* to travel abroad. Philip, Elisabeth and Leah described some reservations linked to the negative aspects of transitions, but they still concluded that they would travel in the future.

The findings within this sample can therefore be said not only to exemplify a decisive self-concept being achieved as a result of an ambiguous childhood, but also to illustrate a definite pattern of a subjectively continuous life narrative (Giddens 1991; Kagitcibasi 1996; Zhao 2005; Valsiner 1997). Anne, Camilla, Joshua, and Isabel all

expressed coming from Norway, identifying with a Norwegian outlook, having a positive attitude towards the transition, activating their heritage, and feeling stable across situations. Additionally, they wanted to travel. They seemed devoted to a local Norwegian perspective. Noah, Sara, Elisabeth, and Philip expressed an in-between stance to all of the same themes, and felt that they should travel. Although they expressed some issues identified by the theory as signs of delayed adolescence such as relativism and an adaptable self, they appeared to be dedicated to the global standpoint.

Leah and Lars described an outsider's experience, a negative attitude towards the transition, less activation of their heritage and a fragmented sense of self. They stated that they needed to travel. One could argue that they had introjected the ambiguity involved in their childhood to the degree that the only way they felt they could properly express themselves properly was in travelling abroad, and that this in turn is a sign of role confusion. On the other hand, although they exemplified the split self and negation identity diagnosed by the literature as role confusion (Bennett (a) 1993; Brenna 2004; Eidse & Sichel 2004; Rotheram & Phinney 1987), they too expressed a definite continuity of this self-image in the presentation of their life narrative. It seems that both the stable and the fragmented experience of self found in this sample may in fact be a sign of a continuous and achieved ego development.

Consequentially, the legitimacy of the claim that adolescent TCKs are delayed in the process of bridging the past to the future and thus achieving a cohesive identity, as put forward by Useem & Cottrell (1996), and Podolsky (2004), thereby appears to be questioned by the sample. It can be argued that TCKs may be hampered by their physical environment or prolonged compliance to organisational rules, which can result in an extended moratorium (Pollock & Van Reken 2001). Cross-cultural studies have additionally illustrated the way in which identity issues of adolescence appear in part due to societal demands, concluding that this means that another reason for an extended period of moratorium may be the variations in the importance of individuality and the environmental demands to reach independence.

If, as Useem & Cottrell (1996) stated, prolonged adolescence is solely seen to mark the chaotic nature of the TCKs life, however, the theory is not matched by the findings of this research project. Instead, they suggest that these various experiences may in fact all be expressions of identity achievement rather than identity confusion. This is in accordance with the finding that healthy identity solutions to bicultural juggling exist, put forward by Gerner & Perry (2000), and Straffon (2003). Viewing these observations of continuous but differentiated identity statuses against frameworks considering various routes of identity structures may useful in providing further insights into the identity experiences of these TCKs. This is the goal of the next section.

5.4 Exploring Strategies for Constructing Identity

5.4.1 Commitments, Contracts and Coherence

As reviewed, Marcia focused attention on the ways in which identity is formed (Marcia 2003). The two dimensions of exploration (active struggle to arrive at identity) and commitment (firm decision in matters of identity) were conceived to in combination define four identity expressions, labelled respectively *Foreclosure, Moratorium, Identity-Diffusion* and *Identity-Achievement* (ibid). One could argue that Anne, Isabel, Joshua, and Camilla corresponded to the status of foreclosure, due to their apparent distancing from the impact of the third culture in their self-image. Applying the same reasoning one could state that Leah and Lars represented the uncommitted moratorium stage and that Elisabeth, Philip, Noah, and Sara were depictions of the status of identity-diffusion due to their in-between stance. Once again, however, the findings of a thematically continuous identity expression exhibited by the informants can be said to show that none of them were in a stage of exploration, but that they had all in fact committed to an identity resolution. This observation indicates that they were all identity-achievers, but had committed to different pathways.

Although the link between accessing cognitive strategies and identity development presented in the sample strengthens the explanatory power of this model, the indication that those who comfortably commute between selves are superior in information-processing strategies is questioned by the findings. The consequent expression of identity status throughout themes represented by the informants Leah, Lars, Anne, Camilla, Joshua and Isabel suggest identity commitment rather than identity exploration, and thereby indicate different but equally valid identity strategies and outcomes. In accordance with Kroger (1992) this perspective questions the proposed identity hierarchy, and renders the model incomplete as a basis for explaining the identity processes of the sample. However, the dynamics of ego development as an interactive process represented here is strengthened by the results of the material analysis. The cognitive aspects of the TCKs identity formation is underlined; not just in issues of morality but in identification of main language, attitude, self-esteem, adjustment, view of others, view of the self and perspective of their life narrative.

The findings of this research will now be compared to the frameworks for identity preservation in the face of intercultural transitions, in order to dissect and elucidate the varying strategies exhibited by the informants in this sample. The theory of identity negotiation contracts recommended by Onwumechili et al. (2003) depicted how multiple acculturating transients can be seen to *negotiate* their identities. As presented in the chapter sketching the theoretical background this was thought to be done in three ways: either by maintaining their own identity or that of the familiar host (termed ready to sign cultural contracts); or by retaining who they have become in the process of multiple reacculturation, and adding a compromise through making subtle identity shifts to alleviate relational tension (called quasi-completed cultural contracts); or by co-creating a third culture or communal arrangement and thus collaborating with the familiar host (labelled co-created cultural contract). In addition, they presented strategies believed to ease the identity negotiation of cultural transients, labelled *buffering*; *bonding*, *bridging* and *code switching.*

Comparing this model to the findings, one can place Leah and Lars in the first category as being ready to sign cultural contracts. The strategy of buffering to protect themselves from identity threats explains their identity expression as a negation and non-conformity to the Norwegian way. Anne, Camilla, Joshua, and Isabel could be placed in the second category of quasi-completed contracts and compromising. It can be argued that they exhibit non-identification with the other to reduce the threats to self-esteem accompanying the intercultural shift. Noah, Sara, Elisabeth, and Philip fit into the typology of a co-created contract. They represent the communal arrangement of the sample, and are seen to use strategies for both attempting to understand the cultural other and merging their different perspectives into their perception of self. Their use of terms such as "switch" and "turn on" to describe ways in which aspects of their identity fluctuate according to the situation correspond well with this category.

Camilleri & Malewska-Peyre (1997) argued that there were two strategies to preserve a consistent self in the face of mixed cultural messages; *Simple Coherence* and *Complex Coherence*. Valorisation and assimilation were additionally introduced as individual identity strategies employed in such a situation. Comparing the findings to the coherence model, one can argue that Anne, Camilla, Joshua, and Isabel, as well as Leah and Lars can be said to express different forms of Simple Coherence. The first four appeared to have assimilated into the majority culture, seemingly denying their differences and embracing their similarities. They seemed to have formed a simple positive identity, representing the Norwegian perspective. Lars and Leah can be said to have expressed valorisation, a strong attitude of protest, as they in turn appeared to dismiss the image of themselves projected to them by the majority culture. This materialised as an identity built on negation, illustrating the outside perspective. Philip, Elisabeth, Sara, and Noah, however, can be seen to have displayed strategies of complex coherence, as they attempted to reconcile opposing strategies of valorisation and assimilation in their identity formation.

5.4.2 Synthesis: Structure, Status and the Self

These models can be used as points of reference to illustrate the various identity outcomes of the informants in the sample. Additionally, they can be seen to adequately encompass the structural and strategic dimensions of the findings. This is in line with Kroger's (1992) emphasis that further investigations into identity should consider both the meanings consistency holds as well as the routes taken to identify structural ego organisation. First of all, the importance of the subjective ordering of TCK identity materialises in the differing responses to the introjection of distance found in the sample. This saturates the identity statuses found. However, several identity products are established as possible through routes such as negotiation and coherence without assuming a hierarchical composition. In this way the notion of constructive marginal identification, pure identity, and assimilated identifications (Bennett (b) 1993; Brenna 2004; Sussman 2000) are detailed through shading their apparent processes. The models similarly elaborate the stance of encapsulated cultural marginality (Bennett (a) 1993) in creating an image of a person who is in fact not lost or trapped in role confusion, but who has committed to an identity on the basis of no compromising and valorisation, and thereby protects this self through methods of buffering. The same extension can be applied to the typologies of creol and separation (Berry et al. 2002; Brenna 2004).

Fusing of the structural frameworks above can also be said to illuminate how incidents such as "loss of voice" (Harter 1997) and "social marginality" (Gerner et al. 1992) can be experienced at different levels by the informants, as it appears that their expression depends on the identity negotiation strategy initiated by the individual informant. It appears that the less retaining of the multiple exposures from their childhood the interviewees experienced, the more they identified with the home culture. The references to their experiences abroad were "stories", an extra part of life. Similarly, the more preservation of the third culture the informants experienced, the less they seemed to identify with the home culture and the closer the multiplicity appeared to their self-perception. Their references to their experiences abroad were buffered and protected, because these "stories" equalled the self. Concurrently, it

appeared that the distance between their pluralism and self-image was reflected in the need to refer to or suppress their experiences abroad. Finally, the finding that positioning the informants within these identity statuses is connected to their interpretation of the response of others, can contribute to the picture of the TCK identity experiences issued by these frameworks.

5.5 Indications and Implications of the Findings

5.5.1 Indications: The Others, the Distance and the Self

As a result of the reflections cited above, the experience of identity for this sample of adolescent/young adult TCKs appears to be multifaceted, but ordered. The phenomenon materialised as a continuous life narrative structured across the continuum of identification with distance and closeness. This image of identity is in accordance with the views put forward by Widdershoven (1994), Ashmore & Jussim (1997) and Kroger (2004). Anne, Camilla, Isabel, and Joshua represented the stance within the sample that identified Norway as their home base, recognised themselves in Norwegian mentality, experienced minimal minority issues and felt stable across contexts. They appeared not to have internalised the divergences between plural points of influence and multiple transitional adjustments into their self-perception.

Leah and Lars were at the opposite end of the spectrum. They illustrated a route where they neither saw Norway as their home base, nor identified with Norwegian mentality. They experienced maximum minority issues and felt split across situations. They said that they repressed rather than expressed their many reference points, and appeared to have personified the cultural confusion in their identity outlook. However, a closer look at their accounts suggested that this identity status could also be an expression of a committed identity achievement and not a sign of role confusion. Elisabeth, Sara, Noah, and Philip communicated an alternative path through the maze. They seemed to bridge gaps effectively as they drew actively on whatever cultural cues were useful to them in the moment, without feeling

constrained by one set of rules or confused by their many roles. Construing the self as fluid in this manner seemed to express an internalisation of the mobility they had been exposed to.

These findings are not in accordance with the view that marginality leads to psychological conflict and a divided self (LaFramboise et al. 1993). Nor are they representations of the statement that a person could not have a bicultural identity made by Rotheram & Phinney (1987). The indications of the research results show that the interviewees were in fact capable of holding such an identity, in accordance with De Vos & Romanucci-Ross (1982), Gerner & Perry (2000), Haour-Knipe (1989), LaFramboise et al. (1993), and Straffon (2000). In this way, they seem to answer Woon´s (1992) question of whether it is possible for intercultural transients to manageably negotiate their identity. The sample not only appeared able to do so, they also reflect Giddens`s (1991) reflexive view of the individual in varying the degree of bicultural identity expressions. This signifies that the active, subjective, and cognitive processing of the third culture experience is as important a subject for research as the behavioural and affective facets of such a childhood (Bennett (b) 1993). The formation of ego identity of the TCKs thereby appears to be a synthesis of dimensions, in accordance with Zhao (2005); with outcomes and strategies additionally dependent also on individual structuring of meaning.

5.5.2 Implications of the Findings: The Understanding of the Self

As stated, the purpose of research should be considered along with the intention of improving the human situation investigated (Kvale 1996). Even though the predictory power of a qualitative study is limited, the observations made during the process of interpretation can be said to hold several implications. Some of the results of earlier research have been accentuated in this study, such as the point that the international sojourn affects TCKs´ identities independent of length of duration (Cockburn 2002; Fail et al.2004), and that TCKs often opt for an international career and have a particular interest for international events (Gerner & Perry 2000). Also, the existing

image of the third culture as an ambiguous developmental arena can be said to have been underscored (Shaetti & Ramsey 1999). Many of the characteristics displayed by the informants were reminiscent of those listed in the TCK literature, such as adaptability, cultural acceptance, relationship effects, maturity, tolerance, arrogance (alleged or actual), and changing sensations of home (Isogai et al. 1999; Podolsky 2004; Pollock 1996; Pollock & Van Reken 2001; Van Reken 2004; Useem & Cottrell 1996). However, the results also point towards some novel discoveries.

The view of the culturally and socially confused identity outcome, as presented by Eidse & Sichel (2004), and Pollock & Van Reken (2001), of such a childhood was not exhibited by this sample, however. Although it can be argued that part of the experiences the informants described held some of these elements at face value, the arena of ambiguous and mobile formative years did not appear to obstruct their achievement of a cohesive sense of identity when viewing their narratives in-depth and as a whole. This suggests the need to normalise the understanding of hyphen-identities and begin to apply the same reasoning for the development of bicultural children as for monocultural kids, as emphasized by Anderson (1999). It seems that when the norm during development is change, alternations in the surrounding milieu may not be considered a threat to identity, and so identity may not be affected the way in which theories of identity-process (Chryssochoou 2004), situated identity (Keats 1997), and self-shock (Zaharna 1989) established.

This echoes the statement that the bicultural child can find a home in hybridity through juggling individual routes between conforming and non-conforming (De Vos & Romanucci-Ross 1982; LaFramboise et al. 1993). These observations can prove helpful to culturally commuting parents and children, both in international and other multicultural communities. The possibility that there are several legitimate solutions to the identity conflict implies that a sense of a continuous identity is a conscious part of the self rather than a function of automatic mechanisms (Romanucci-Ross & De Vos 1996). Additionally, the indication that the response of others and possibility to access distanced reference points correlates with self-perception, as illustrated by the

looking-glass self (Ding & Littleton 2005; Isogai et al.1999; Zaharna 1989), imply a need for improving interactive forums and general understanding for minority and marginal population groups.

It is no longer the rare person who is socialised from birth onwards to be a member of the third culture, as the Useems (Useem et al. 1963) first observed, and TCKs are not the only ones to bridge cultures. As specified in the introduction, the population of young intercultural commuters has grown to be plentiful, and the issues they tackle are therefore seen to be increasingly significant (West 2001). These implications hold a message not only for TCKs and other children in binational societies. The arguments for elaborating comprehension of multifaceted identity development are also applicable to domestic commuters, monocultural adolescents and other "invisible minorities" who go through daily identity shifting and negotiation on different levels and consider themselves members of at least two different cultures (Bennett (a) 1993). This speaks for the continuing need to create more allowances and understanding for the shades of grey in our society, focusing on communalities instead of differences, as argued by Cockburn (2002) and Hylland Eriksen (2004).

In accordance with Kroger (1992), the investigation has illustrated the need to expand the understanding of the concept of continuity for identity development. This has been suggested through including more consideration of aspects such as personal choice, contextuality and individual meaning construction (Suh 2002). A need for expansion of the interpretations of marginal, rubber-band, and hyphen-identities within cross-cultural theories has also been implicated from this review. Finally, through the procedure of this research project, the need for a framework integrating these aspects of identity formation has been underlined. The last sections have outlined the findings of the research interview, have evaluated them against the theoretical background of chapter two, and discussed their possible indications and implications. The next section will review the soundness of the methodological aspects of this investigation.

5.6 Methodological Reflections

To summarise the methodological incentives for this research project, a vacuum revealed itself when reviewing the literature on the processes of multicultural identity development. As a result this study set forth to initialise a dive into the life world of young adult TCKs. Because the nature of the research question was explorative, a phenomenological research design, sampling technique and data gathering method was chosen. Within phenomenology, the assumption of an objective attitude and the researcher independent from her or his research has been dismissed. Instead, the scientist is very much present in the research, as the subject is in relation to the object (Giorgi 1970). The aim of the previous chapter and the past sections of this chapter, therefore, have been to clarify both the obtained data and my own navigation through them (Churchill, Lowery, McNally & Rao 1998). The next sections will elaborate on the methodological considerations made concerning the validity, reliability, and possibilities of generalisation of the present study.

5.6.1 Validity

The evaluation of verification in interpretative research, involves the philosophical question about the experience of truth and world view (ibid). To ensure validity, all stages of research should therefore involve a consideration of accuracy and consistency. Looking at what is dependable from the point of view of the phenomenological methodologies therefore involves a post modern approach; a route which considers criteria such as subjective logic. In this light, to validate becomes to continuously check, question and contemplate ones findings (Kvale 1996).

In this study, the logic of the research question was derived from the theory overview. Similarly, the research design, method and sampling techniques were chosen to reflect the research question. The semi-structured interviews can be considered to reduce control over the situation, be more tedious to carry out, and harder to analyse than more structured research methods (Smith & Osborn 2003). Simultaneously, these traits are also considered the strength of phenomenological

analysis, as they are believed to uncover novel insights through meticulous interaction with the material. As established in the third chapter, the method was chosen for this reason. Stating explicitly my own experiences with the phenomena beforehand made me aware of my own selective interpretations and biased perceptions. I stayed aware of the need to bracket these experiences as far as possible in the interview situation in order to maintain a critical view of the answers given. The interviewees were probed to extend their descriptions and this created less room for interpretation. The interview situations involved continuous inquiring into the meaning of what was being said, as well as constant checking of the information obtained. Although biased, my own knowledge of the phenomenon assisted me to enter into a deeper understanding of the respondents´ communication.

The transcription stage consisted of thinking through accurate translations from oral to written language, reflected in the mode chosen for the transcript. Another validity test at this stage was to send the transcripts back to the informants to judge whether or not their statements had been interpreted correctly, re-checking the soundness of my own understandings. When analysing, the validity check questions centred on whether the questions I was asking the text were precise. It also entailed pursuing the logic of the translation from Norwegian to English and whether the consistency of interpretation was steady. Through the process of moving back and forth between the primary source material and my interpretations I was forced to check my findings repeatedly and this in turn obstructed deductions made solely on the basis of my own experiences. In reporting, the validity question involved giving an exact account of the main findings of the study (Kvale 1996). In this text, part of the verification process has been to make myself and my interpretative part visible.

5.6.2 Reliability

The distinction between validity and reliability is hazy in interpretative research. But as with validity, the issue of the accuracy of ones findings should be considered throughout the study (ibid). As noted, particular care was taken during constructing

of the interview schedule as well as during interviewing to avoid leading questions. However, in some places these were deliberate and thus included. I consciously attempted to keep my own perceptions of the phenomena out of this part of the research process, and relied instead on the overview with which I been provided through the literature review and key interviews conducted. During the process of transcribing, I translated from oral to written language as accurately as possible, altering the text slightly where written and ethical rules had to be applied. Additional changes were made in the text only through coding the sensitive information and deleting utterances which I considered to not to be relevant for the phenomenon at hand.

For the main part of the analysis, I continued to stay aware of my own bracketed knowledge and bias, and tried to keep it apart from the material being studied. As mentioned earlier, however, it proved useful to activate this engrained (epoched) experience during some parts of this procedure. Having access to my own experiences with the phenomena appeared to provide me with keys to untangle the meanings which the informants had expressed. Another researcher would most probably utilise different words to illustrate similar themes, as well as organising themes of meanings and present findings in a dissimilar fashion (Churchill et al. 1998). Again, however, this possibility to enter into a personal dialogue with the findings was the reason for choosing this particular research design. According to Kvale (1996) methods such as re-interviewing, triangulation, intersubjective transcriptions and interpretations are recommended to further ensure verification. These were not realistic options for this project, due to both the philosophical explorative grounding of the research design and practical obstacles. The two-sided and undisturbed intimate dialectic between respondent and researcher remained intact throughout all the stages of the research process due to the dependability of the reflections described.

5.6.3 Possibility for Generalisation

In accordance with the research question, the aim of this study was to be able to produce a specific statement about the perceptions and understandings of a given group of adolescents/young adults through detailed analysis of the transcripts, rather than proposing more general claims (Smith & Osborn 2003). However, the measures taken and described above to preserve the validity and reliability of the findings were seen to ensure the soundness of the findings to such a degree that this increased possibilities for generalisation. Therefore, *analytical* generalisations involving judgements about the extent to which the findings from this study may be used as a guide to what might occur in another situation have been drawn (Kvale 1996). As it emerged that the TCKs in this research project appeared to have achieved a cohesive identity regardless of their multicultural and fluid developmental arena, it was considered possible to analytically generalise this finding to other population groups operating with plural influences simultaneously. Extending this possibility, it was analytically generalised that such a discovery would involve a need for broadening the interpretation of psychological concepts and establishing proper frameworks for multicultural identity development. The next chapter concludes this investigation through final reflections on the phenomenon at hand, and suggestions for further research.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Response to Research Question

In the introduction, it was proposed that it was of particular relevance to explore whether the young global nomad could in fact assemble a consistent sense of self in the midst of cultural cacophony, whether the frequent cultural transitioning actually translated into internal psychological states, and if there was a sense of subtle inner logic in the multicultural identity construction. These queries were woven into the guiding research question which enquired into *how TCKs experience their identity.* The aim of this investigation and dissertation has been to uncover a response to this question.

The findings suggest that the TCKs in the sample have indeed constructed and committed to a coherent identity regardless of their multicultural baggage. The frequent transitioning and resulting self-adjustments seem to have been internalised in different degrees by the interviewees. Finally, the exploration did uncover signs of an inner logic to their identity construction strategies. They appear to have negotiated varying strategies and expressions linked to the way in which they perceived that others responded to their multiculturalism, and the degree to which they felt able to tap into their plural reference points in interaction with these others. In answer to the research question, therefore, the TCKs seem to experience their identity as a consistent but differentiated narrative across time and place.

6.2 Suggestions for Further Research

Due to the qualitative nature of the study and resulting explorative and interpretative decisions taken in this investigation, the methodological sacrifice of quantifiable, exactly replicable data was made. In the aftermath of this study, therefore, several themes stand out as worthy of further exploration. A comparison of identity issues of

TCK and non-TCK adolescents would be fruitful to further certify the results, as would more in-depth studies of the information-processing aspect of their identity processes. The direction of cause and consequence between the reaction of others and identity structures demonstrated by the informants is also essential to capture. A longitudinal study of pre-teen TCKs through adolescence to adult years could additionally provide more answers to the complexity of identity formation. A quantitative follow-up investigation would prove useful, as would studying the effects of location specific influence separately from mobility during childhood years.

In addition, research into the family interactions of TCKs, as well as their transition preparation viewed in relation to their identity outcome is necessary. Studying the link between identity processes and coping strategies, personality, attitude as well as self-esteem could be beneficial to further dissect how an identity route is paved in this versatile environment. The link between TCK identity procedures and the system they are brought up in, such as the ethos of employing institutions or religious affiliation, also emerges as highly relevant aspects in this context. These angles could facilitate measuring the soundness of the current findings, elucidate the reasons for slight deviancies such as those shown by Isabel and Joshua, and additionally control for factors such as gender and length of sojourn. As research into the identity processes of TCK adolescents is still in its infancy, the area is obviously still inundated with uninvestigated approaches to complete the puzzle.

6.3 Concluding Remarks

This completes the end of my journey into the realms of TCK identity. This voyage has been a lesson in how culture becomes personal. In the aftermath of this investigation it appears essential for psychology to continue the attempt to capture not only the role of context in shaping personhood, but also how the individual child structures her or his own development. If one rises to this challenge, a system may be revealed in what at first glance appears to be chaotic. This position not only materialises as politically correct, but also takes the pulse of the current psychological

stance of merging viewpoints. The amplification of such a direction may periodically make identity concepts more diffuse, harder to approach and define, and more complex to study. On the other hand, this perspective also reflects an image closer to reality, with all its shades of grey and many spaces in-between.

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Appendix A – Interview guide

1) **Where are you from/where do you consider to be home?** *Prompt: where or with whom you feel like you are most rooted or related, where have you lived and for how long, how many times have you moved, where are your parents from, where does your family live, where are your friends located?*

2) **Can you describe your experience with to what degree you feel your surroundings generally accept your multiple cultural heritage?** *Prompt: to what extent do you vary the answer to the question of "where are you from" according to who you are speaking to?*

3) **How do you deal with identifying with several worldviews and cultural codes at once?** *Prompt***:** *how do you deal with assessing which is the "most appropriate" way to behave, react or speak, or find yourself lacking alternatives on how best to behave/speak*?

4) **How would you describe your most important characteristics?** *Prompts*: *what sort of a person are you (e.g. restless/optimistic/open/irritable/tolerant)?*

5) **What is your experience with the extent to which the person you are remains stable across situations?** *Prompt: do you feel like you change according to places, countries, people, and languages* ? *How do you feel about mixing groups of friends?*

6) **In what ways do you find that your sense of yourself and the world differs from that which your non-mobile peers have formed of themselves and the world?** *Prompt: how do you believe your regard of self, other people and traditions differ from those who have not been exposed to as many societies as you?*

7) **To what extent do you think that your sense of identity has been affected by /is an expression of your multi-cultural roots?** *Prompt: in what ways do you do you feel that your commuting has shaped you into the person you are and the identifications you hold and have described today?*

Appendix B – Informed consent sheet

A proposal for participation in a research project concerning frequent cultural transitions and identity issues of mobile teenagers/young adults

The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You should know that you are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without further consequences. You may also refrain from answering any questions you find uncomfortable, and/or ask that certain information which you give during the interview not be used. The purpose of this study is to look more closely at the identity processes of adolescents who have spent their lives moving between different cultures, to attempt to further understand how this background affects their identity development. The procedure will be a qualitative research design.

Data will be collected through one-on-one semi-structured interviews with a number of adolescents who have a Third Culture Kid (TCK) background. The questions will be centred on their own experiences and thoughts about their specific cultural upbringing and sense of selves. These interviews will be recorded on a simple recording device for the purpose of heightening the quality of the data obtained. The recorded material will be destroyed after the process of "translating" the verbal interview into written form for analysis. As an extra precaution, a copy of the interview transcript will be sent to the respondent before analysis begins to ensure a loyal written record of his/her oral statements. Sufficient, but set, time will be given to study this and reword where he/she thinks it necessary. If the need arises, follow-up interviews will be scheduled with interviewees to delve deeper into emerging themes. The data will after this time be interpreted by the interviewer/researcher. The results will be presented in the equivalent of a master's thesis (a "hovedfagsoppgave" in Psychology).

The collected data from the interviews will only be in the hands of the interviewer/researcher, who is bound by the law of confidentiality to store and code it securely from the eyes of others. Care will therefore also be taken to keep the respondents anonymous in the write-up, by taking such measures as using false names and not identifying countries of residence, ethnic origin or parental sponsor organisations. In this way your participation in the study is known only to the researcher. The research project has been registered with the Privacy Issues Unit, The Norwegian Social Sciences Data Services AS (NSD). Do not hesitate to ask any questions about the study either before or during participation. The researcher is happy to share the findings with you after the research is completed.

There are no known risks associated with this study. Details concerning relevant organisations and literature will be provided for your information. The expected benefits associated with your participation in this study are the opportunities it provides for reflecting on and learning more about how your multicultural background may have

shaped you. Taking part may also introduce you to the concept of Third Culture Kids (TCK), and thereby provide you with yet another sense of belonging. Ultimately, sharing your experiences can help give a voice to the growing number of "children in transit" in the world, and can hopefully be used to improve networks, understanding and acceptance for this group's unique issues and resources.

If you wish to participate in the study, please fill in, sign, and return the consent and personal information form provided with an indication about whether you want more information about the procedure (a copy is included for you to keep). This form will be kept securely by the interviewer/researcher until the termination of the study, at the latest in June 2007. Afterwards it will be destroyed together with the rest of the data material gathered. Please return the consent form, in the pre-stamped envelopes provided, within ten days of receiving this information. You will then be contacted by me, the researcher, to set a time and choose a place for the interview session.

Yours sincerely,

Lill Salole Skjerven

(cand.polit student of Psychology)

Personal information

Name:	
Address:	
Age:	
Telephone:	
E-mail	
Type of work/reason which has determined Moving	**Diplomacy:☐ NGO:☐ Business:☐ Missionary:☐** **Media:☐ Army:☐ Other:☐**

Please indicate whether more information is needed about the study, and if so by which preferred medium (telephone, letter or email):

Informed consent

By signing this form I am consenting to participate in the current study. I am doing so with full knowledge of the nature, purpose and procedure of the project, and under the conditions set on the information sheet.

_____ _____ _____

Signature of Participant Place Date