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Home and Identity: Displacement, Belonging, and Hybridity in International Students on U.S. Campuses

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INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS ON U.S. CAMPUSES

by

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A Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
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JANA SIMONIS, for the Master's of Arts degree in Speech Communication, presented on April 4th, 2012 at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

TITLE: HOME AND IDENTITY: DISPLACEMENT, BELONGING, AND HYBRIDITY IN INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS ON U.S. CAMPUSES

MAJOR PROFESSOR: Dr. Miriam Sobré-Denton

International students, through a process of cross-cultural adaptation and acculturation, create a hybridized identity that helps them in their negotiation between different cultural membership roles. Hybrid cultural identity roles were detected in the participants to varying degrees, depending on age, the intention with which the student came to the United States, the exposure to American culture, and the social ties formed during the intercultural experience. Hybridization can pose potential struggles for the students which include, but are not limited to, identity confusion, displacement, and not knowing where one belongs. Social support systems, consisting of other international students, co-nationals, U.S. - American students, and family members and friends in the home culture proved to be essential in the students' negotiation of hybridized cultural identity roles. Hybridization is regarded as a possibility of bridging different cultures and thus, bringing them closer together in a mutual dialogue.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The number of international students coming to the United States to pursue academic degrees, as well as careers, is increasing every year. Some of the students are involved in short-term academic exchanges, while others stay in the host country for a longer period of time to pursue an undergraduate or postgraduate degree. According to the Institute of International Education (IIE),

> the number of international students at colleges and universities in the United States increased by five percent to 723,277 during the 2010/11 academic year […which] represents a record high number of international students in the United States. […T]here are now 32 percent more international students studying at U.S. colleges and universities than there were a decade ago. (www.iie.org)

Our modern-day societies are becoming increasingly intercultural, with people from different cultural backgrounds coming together and being expected to co-exist with each other despite their sometimes very different value systems, traditions, and norms. As Varner and Beamer (2011) point out, "[a]ll over the world, nations are trying to come to terms with the growing diversity of their populations. As migrations of workers and refugees have increased globally, some countries are trying to control diversity […] to protect the cultural 'mosaic' pattern that immigrants bring" (p. xii).

Universities and colleges, however, create a special type of "intercultural space", where locals as well as international students and instructors come together and function within an academic framework. Pearson-Evans and Leahy (2007) define intercultural space as follows:

> The 'intercultural space' is identified as a place where conventional norms and values can no longer be taken for granted, where there is the opportunity, and often the necessity, to challenge unexamined assumptions and existing structures. […] 'Intercultural spaces', by their very nature, provide a meeting point for diverse ways of interpreting and being in the world. In such places difference is the norm, with minorities, and outsiders taking centre stage, and challenging the status quo and majority beliefs and values. (p. xv-xvi)

For the purpose of this research, I examined a medium-sized Midwestern university as a place that creates such an intercultural space for its international students. My research focused on how a feeling of displacement and homelessness is created in people who live and work in a foreign country, paying special attention to students on university campuses. University campuses stand "in a liminal space between world and school and between life experience and academy" (Lichtmann, 2010, p. 17). I therefore consider universities to be a special type of intercultural space, which differs from the intercultural workplace for instance, and I explore how international students negotiate their cultural identity roles within this intercultural space.

Furthermore, attention is paid to societal and communal changes and progresses, such as globalization, and their influence on identity and identity formation since "identity can be displaced; it can be hybrid or multiple. It can be constituted through community: family, region, the nation state" (Sarup, 1994, p. 93). Due to the increasing diversity of our societies, finding one's own identity has become harder than ever before and thus, globalization provides even more chances for 'othering'. When using the term 'othering', I am referring to a process in which one is made the Other, as in binary opposition to the Self. The Self in this case represents the 'norm' which is part of the dominant discourse in society. The Other, on the other hand, is not part of the norm, and hence the dominant discourse, and is often negated a voice. In postcolonial terms, Robins (1996) explains,

> the juxtaposition to the Other [...] remains the essential, albeit never the sufficient, condition of self-understanding [...]. The story of how this temporal contrast became mapped on to a geographical polarization – with the dynamic West distinguishing itself from the static and immobile Orient – is now a familiar one. Through this dualistic imagination, the world was divided between the enlightened and the benighted. Its Other was made to symbolize whatever was alien to western modernity and its project of development. (p. 62)

Globalization is an imperative concept to consider in this realm because societal changes directly impact people's perception of their surroundings and other cultures, as well as their sense of cultural self-awareness. Tomlinson (1999) defines globalization as "the rapidly developing and ever-densening network of interconnections and interdependences that characterize modern social life" (p. 2). The world is becoming a global playing field and different cultures are coming increasingly closer together resulting in the Self/Other dynamic posing a potential problem: As a number of scholars have argued, a sense of belonging, or even of the 'Self', becomes increasingly blurred nowadays. Globalization is a world-wide phenomenon that does not only impact people, but also today's media, technology, travelling, society etc. Brennan (2008) states,

> The intended point [of globalization] is rather that the world is being reconstituted *as a single social space*. One might interpret this to mean that the world is becoming more homogenized, that we are seeing the creation of a single, albeit hybridized, world culture whose pace of life, tastes, and customs […] have increasingly fewer local variations. It could also be taken to mean that we are on the road to global political integration. […] To say "a single social space" still allows for complex and dynamic internal variations across an interconnected system of localities and regions. The key component is a governing logic or social tendency that brings all these localities and regions into a unity unknown before. (p. 39)

Because so many people are affected by this global societal change, I find it crucial to look closely at some issues that come with the progression of this formation of a global society. As Etoroma (2006) points out, "one of the most enduring legacies of modernity is the homelessness – the sense of alienation and identity crisis – it creates" (p. 107). Our societies are moving towards a more intercultural setting; however, within this constantly developing system, some people are left behind while others are left as outsiders who are not considered part of the norm.

> One of the main problems in modern societies is the conflict between the rights of man and/or the rights of citizen. It seems that one can be more or less a man to the extent that one is more or less a citizen, that he who is not a citizen is not fully a man. Between the man and the citizen there is a scar: the foreigner. (Sarup, 1994, p. 8)

With easier access to travel and companies' interest in the global market, intercultural communication and awareness has become an inevitable part of everyday life. However, a global and more intercultural world also requires a raised awareness of cultural differences which does not only mean that our intercultural world has an impact on our perception of other cultures and people, but also on our identity and the perception of our self. As Shin and Jackson (2003) argue, "communication scholars focus on the role of social identity in communication, the enactment of identity through social interactions, the manifestation of collective cultural identity, and the negotiation of cultural identity in intercultural encounters" (p. 214). The research of how hybridized identities are created and negotiated within our globalized world, therefore, becomes significant in Intercultural Communication scholarship since it encompasses all of the aforementioned aspects of identity scholarship. In addition, since identity is strongly connected to people's behavior and communication (compare Shin & Jackson, 2003), my research shows how hybridized identities negotiate and communicate their struggles with hybridity as well as the feelings of displacement and homelessness.

Following this brief introduction, I present my literature review, including my research questions, which addresses the most important theories that helped me in forming the theoretical framework for this study. I then describe my methodological framework, including a detailed description of how the research was conducted and methods used for data organization and analysis. The data is analyzed and discussed in the results and discussion section, including original accounts from participants' interviews, as well as field observations. I conclude by showing how I intend to use my research to help international students on the examined campus better deal with the issues of displacement, belonging, and homelessness. The key concepts that guided my research and allowed me to create a theoretical framework for my work are cultural difference and acculturation theory, hybridity, identity formation and negotiation, and notions of home and displacement.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Cultural Differences and Acculturation Theory

The term "culture" is very hard to define, since it is a very broad concept and might be interpreted differently for every individual. Varner and Beamer (2011) argue that

> [c]ulture is the property of a community of people, not simply a set of characteristics of individuals. Societies are shaped by culture, and that shaping comes from similar life experiences and similar interpretations of what those experiences mean. If culture is mental software, it is also a mental map of reality. It tells us from early childhood on what matters, what to prefer, what to avoid, and what to do. (p. 9)

This implies that culture is socially constructed, meaning that we as a society give meaning to the concept of culture. Additionally, Varner and Beamer (2011) argue that one is not born with a culture, but we learn our culture, its beliefs, values, traditions, norms, and rules from the day we are born. Viewing culture as something that can be learned becomes essential when exploring how international students experience culture, and cultural difference, when coming to the United States. Moving to a foreign country for many people means experiencing as well as having to negotiate cultural difference for the first time in their lives. No two cultures are alike; while different cultures may share certain beliefs or values, there are still things that differentiate them from one another. According to Varner and Beamer (2011), "[c]ulture explains how people make sense of their world. […] People from different cultures really are different (as well as similar) in how they see the world. Cultures are the amazing products of human imagination, and that is a reason to celebrate differences" (p. 4). Cultural difference, however, is hard to negotiate and often accompanied by a feeling of frustration, displacement, and/or not knowing where one belongs. Nedumchira (2009) argues, "as immigrants arrive in a host country and are faced with a new environment and unfamiliar customs and values, they are at risk of losing a sense of themselves" (p. 20). Learning that their cultural rules, norms, and values no longer apply within the context of the host culture,

international students often struggle with the negotiation of their positionality within the new cultural framework. As Singaravelu and Pope (2007) argue,

> international students face a number of experiences that may threaten their sense of self and their feelings of cultural and group identity. Because their sense of self is not endorsed by familiar others, their ideas about who they are and how they fit into society may erode or become confused. (p. 16)

Research suggests that international students from Western countries find it easier to assimilate to U.S. American culture due to the fact that most Western cultures are considered to be individualistic cultures, whereas Asian, Latin American, African, and Middle Eastern cultures are considered to be collectivist cultures. With "more than 80% of international students in the United States […being] from Asia (58%), Latin America (12%), Africa (6.4%), and the Middle East (5.5%), regions that have a predominantly collectivistic orientation" (Institute of International Education, 2005) (Singaravelu & Pope, 2007, p. 116), I find it imperative to take a closer look at the differences between individualistic and collectivist cultures.

> Simply defined, individualistic cultures such as those found in the United States and other Western societies, tend to emphasize qualities such as independence, self-reliance, and satisfaction of personal needs and goals, whereas collectivist cultures, such as those found in Asia and Latin America, tend to emphasize the interdependent self and are other-focused, group-oriented, and emphasize group rather than individual needs. (Singaravelu & Pope, 2007, p. 116)

International students from collectivist cultures, therefore, may face issues having to adapt to a culture that follows very different rules, norms, and values. Hence, the process of acculturation may be a lot harder for them than for international students from Western countries who grew up within a more individualistically oriented cultural framework. "Acculturation refers to changes in values, beliefs, and behaviors that result from sustained contact with a second culture. International students, classified as sojourners, represent a category of people undergoing acculturation" (Singaravelu & Pope, 2007, p. 13-14). However, there are different ways of dealing with the stress and struggles of acculturation.

Research has shown that when presented with the challenges of acculturation, international students tend to follow different strategies in order to deal with the stress and struggles of trying to fit in with their surrounding community, as well as pursuing their academic career. Singaravelu and Pope (2007) use the W-curve, a theory by Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963), which takes "reentry to the home culture into account" (Landis, Bennett & Bennett, 2004, p.14) for people going through the struggles of entering into and returning from a new culture, in order to demonstrate different acculturation strategies of international students. According to Singaravelu and Pope (2007), the first way of dealing with entering into a new culture is the assimilation strategy:

> International students adopting the assimilation strategy try to disengage completely from their culture of origin in hopes of being completely absorbed and accepted into the dominant host culture. […T]hey may sacrifice their sense of identity, their conational (those from one's own country or culture) supports, and groundedness in their culture of origin. (p. 20)

A different way of conducting oneself in a new cultural surrounding is to separate oneself entirely from the host culture.

> International students adopting a separation strategy […] will segregate themselves from U.S. students and establish relationships primarily with others from their own cultural group. While these students may garner much needed social support from their conationals and remain grounded in their cultural identity, they will be socially ineffective within the university community and larger society. (Singaravelu & Pope, 2007, p. 20)

While these students may not engage with the university community and other members of the host culture, they are able to preserve much of their own cultural values, norms, and traditions, which may prove beneficial upon return to their home countries. According to Kashima and Loh (2006), those students who "encounter a conational reference group who shares heritage worldviews with the newcomers and assists them in maintaining their heritage customs, they tend to embrace their heritage worldviews and freeze them, thus assimilating less to the host culture" (pp. 473-474).

On the other hand, some international students may also experience some form of marginalization from the host culture's community, due for instance to differences in physical appearance, religion, lack of understanding from co-nationals for going overseas, or culture-specific behaviors that differ from those of the host culture: "International students who are marginalized will experience the highest levels of acculturative stress. They will lack the behavioral repertoire needed to interact with members of their own culture and with people from the United States" (Singaravelu & Pope, 2007, pp. 20-21). According to Singaravelu and Pope (2007),

> The integration or bicultural strategy is associated with reduced risk and is increasingly recognized as the most adaptive strategy. [...This concept implies that] the degree of affiliation and rejection of one culture is independent of the degree of affiliation and rejection of the other. Therefore, it is possible for international students to have high levels of contact, involvement, loyalty, acceptance, and affiliation with both their culture of origin and U.S. culture. The bicultural strategy suggests that individuals can acquire the skills and psychological flexibility to function effectively in both their culture of origin and U.S. culture. (p. 21)

Therefore, the formation of a hybrid cultural identity (the concept of hybridity will be addressed in the following sections) is regarded as the most beneficial for international students, since it allows them to fully function within the host culture's community, while at the same time making the transition to the home culture upon reentry easier. "Those with more local or international ties would indicate better sociocultural adjustment whereas those with more conational ties would show poorer sociocultural adjustment" (Kashima & Loh, 2006, p. 474). However, upon return into their home culture, international students may still experience difficulties in terms of readjusting to their home environment. These difficulties, which are often referred to as reverse culture shock, or reentry shock, may strengthen a feeling of displacement and homelessness in the student. The concepts of reverse culture shock and reentry theory will be further discussed in the section 'Home and Displacement'.

Identity formation

In this section on identity formation, I draw from identity theories built by Sarup and Hall to examine their application of theories in terms of the social construction of identity, as well as cultural identity. Hall (1996) regards

> identification as a construction, a process never completed - always 'in process'. It is not determined in the sense that it can always be 'won' or 'lost', sustained or abandoned. […]Identification is, then, a process of articulation, a suturing, an over-determination or a lack, but never a proper fit, a totality. Like all signifying practices, it is subject to the 'play', of différance. It obeys the logic of more-than-one. And since as a process it operates across difference, it entails discursive work, the binding and marking of symbolic boundaries, the production of 'frontier-effects'. It requires what is left outside, its constitutive outside, to consolidate the process. (pp. 2-3)

As can be seen here, identity formation is not static, but a process which is always in motion and is never complete. People and their surroundings are constantly changing and since we are shaped by our surroundings, our identity as well is always changing. As Hall (1996) further argues,

> identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions. They are subject to a radical historicization, and are constantly in the process of change and transformation. (p. 4)

This also refers to what Hall (1996) describes as "identity being more about 'becoming' than 'being'" (p. 4). He argues, that identities are

> not 'who we are' or 'where we came from', so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves [is important]. Identities are therefore constituted within, not outside representation" (Hall, 1996, p. 4).

This notion plays on the importance of our social surrounding in our identity formation since we need sources of identification in order to form our own identity. As Bhabha (1990) argues, "identification is a process of identifying with and through another object, an object of otherness, at which point the agency of identification – the subject – is itself always

ambivalent, because of the intervention of that otherness" (Rutherford, 1990, p. 211). The

Self/Other dynamic is of importance here since identification happens through identifying

similarities and differences in one's cultural environment.

"Due to the multicultural nature of American society, identity has been a crucial

theme among communication scholars. Identity is a sociocultural construct that affects how

people behave and communicate" (Shin & Jackson, 2003, p. 212). Collier and Thomas (1988)

argue that cultural identity is based on the extent to which one is communicatively

competent. However, international students have to function in several languages and cultural

frameworks which then can lead to the assumption that they have to negotiate between

different cultural identities. Collier and Thomas (1988) define cultural identity as

"identification with and perceived acceptance into a group that has shared systems of

symbols and meanings as well as norms/rules for conduct" (p. 113). International students,

however, are expected to function within different social frameworks, therefore, having to

acquire fluency in different value systems and norms/rules – they are expected to become

hybrid beings. The study of hybridity, in the context of communication scholarship, is

significant because hybridization necessitates negotiation of multiple cultural identities to

communicate effectively. "Understanding of [hybrid] identity formation may be necessary to

manage [intercultural] conflict with the skills of intercultural communication competence

(Shin & Jackson, 2003, p. 213). This leads me to my first research question that I would like

to examine within the framework of my research:

RQ 1: How are hybrid identities constructed in international students on U.S. campuses?

For a lot of people the negotiation of hybrid identities can become a struggle, which can be

seen in the case of what Sarup (1994) calls "living on the borderline":

> One often hears the remark: 'They have a foot in each camp.' These may be
> migrants who don't want to give up their own culture or assimilate with the
> new group. The borderline is always ambivalent; sometimes it is seen as an

> inherent part of the inside, at other times it is seen as part of the chaotic
> wilderness outside. (p. 7)

This quote emphasizes the notion that while some people may succeed in their negotiation of different cultural identities, others may never be able to do so.

> The [intercultural] person is neither a part of nor apart from the host culture;
> rather, this person acts situationally. But the [intercultural] life is fraught with
> pitfalls and difficulty. [Intercultural] people run the risk of not knowing what
> to believe or how to develop ethics or values. (Martin & Nakayama, 2004, p.
> 291)

Furthermore, it is imperative to consider that the host culture also needs to remain open, in terms of letting the 'Other' in, and instead of insisting on similarity, appreciate difference and regard it as a chance for improvement and diversity.

Hybridity

Hybridity is a very significant notion for this area of research due to the fact that it creates an interesting paradox: In order to fit in better with their host culture, international students are expected to integrate into the new culture and function within it. Therefore, they are required to form a hybridized identity that combines elements from their home culture with elements from the host culture. However, this hybridization then puts them into a marginalized position within the host as well as the home culture, because as hybrid beings they do not conform to the cultural norms of either culture.

> International students face a number of experiences that may threaten their
> sense of self and their feelings of cultural and group identity. Because their
> sense of self is not endorsed by familiar others, their ideas about who they are
> and how they fit into society may erode or become confused. (Singaravelu &
> Pope, 2007, p. 16)

Hybridization hence pushes them into the position of the 'Other', an outsider who is not part of the dominant discourse. Sarup (1996) defines the 'Other' as follows:

> the one who does not belong to the group, who is not 'one of them', the other.
> The foreigner can only be defined in negative fashion. The foreigner is the
> Other. […] With the establishment of nation-states, the foreigner is the one
> who does not belong to the state in which we are, the one who does not have
> the same nationality. (Sarup, 1996, p. 7)

The works of Bhabha, Gomez-Peña and Turner help in the deconstruction of this paradox and illustrate ways of functioning within one's hybrid discourse.

I consider people who are required to perform different cultures in order to fit in with their community as culturally hybrid beings. As Jackson (2008) states, "theories of hybridity enlighten us about the patterns of cultural borrowing" (p. 148). While hybridized people are required to blend in with their environment and recognize the different cultural frameworks they work within, they mostly unconsciously acquire certain cultural features that become part of their own cultural identity – a hybrid identity. As Bhabha (1996) argues:

> The...hybrid is not only double-voiced and double-accented ... but is also double-languaged; for in it there are not only (and not even so much) two individual consciousnesses, two voices, two accents, as there are [doublings of] socio-linguistic, consciousnesses, two epochs ... that come together and consciously fight it out on the territory of the utterance ... It is the collision between differing points of view on the world that are embedded in these forms ... such unconscious hybrids have been at the same time profoundly productive historically: they are pregnant with potential for new world views, with new 'internal forms' for perceiving the world in words. (p. 58)

This hybrid identity, however, can also lead to the feeling of not knowing where one belongs because one is always considered different from what some think of as the "norm". As Rutherford (1990) in his interview with Bhabha argues,

> A transparent norm is constituted, a norm given by the host society or dominant culture, which says that 'these other cultures are fine, but we must be able to locate them within our own grid'. This is what I mean by a *creation* of cultural diversity and a *containment* of cultural difference. (p. 208)

Consequently, this also brings up the notion of xenophobia, which Gomez-Peña (1996) describes as "in the eyes of the xenophobes, any person with visibly different features, skin color, accent, clothes, or social or sexual behavior is an alien. […] Fear is always at the core of xenophobia" (Gomez-Peña, 1996, p.66). Additionally, different power structures and hierarchies become alive within different cultural exchanges which usually place the West above all other cultures. This concept of different hierarchies where certain people are marginalized because of racism, xenophobia, sexism, privilege structures, etc., can be seen in

most of today's societies. "Sharing a sense of sameness with a large group provides a sense of belonging and protection" (Nedumchira, 2009, p. 27). One could, therefore, argue that as a type of protection mechanism, due to being treated as the 'Other', international students form ingroups allowing members to stick together and create their own small community within the larger, host culture community. As Harrison and Peacock (2011) argue,

> the process of separation into ingroups and outgroups is a natural part of human experience. It reduces complexity by allowing assumptions to be made about interactions with other ingroup members, who can be trusted to behave in certain ways and to hold shared values. Conversely, outgroup members are seen as unpredictable and motivated by different drives, which may be at odds with their own. Humans will naturally stress and over-estimate both similarities *within* the ingroup and differences *between* the ingroup and outgroups, thereby subconsciously reinforcing preferences for the ingroup; this is sometimes termed 'mindless ingroup favouritism'. (p. 880)

Forming these ingroups may therefore help the students deal with the feelings of displacement, homelessness, and feeling like a stranger in the host country since the formation of an ingroup may help them find people that offer support and understanding for the students' struggles. At the same time, however, the students may also isolate themselves from the surrounding community which may hold back the development of the hybridized identity.

As Bhabha (1990) argues, "the postcolonial perspective forces us to rethink the profound limitations of a consensual and collusive 'liberal' sense of community and insists that cultural and political identity is constructed through a process of othering" (Rutherford, 1990, p. 219). Bhabha, therefore, suggests that in modern-day societies the Self/Other binary is imperative in order to keep power structures the way they are and form a societal identity through it. Hence, it can be concluded based on Bhabha's statement, that there always has to be an 'Other' who is neither part of the dominant discourse nor part of the norm.

While it is often argued that there will always be a line drawn between those who are identified as different (the Other) or as a member of a group, Gomez-Peña (1996) argues

that "it's all margins, meaning there are no 'others', or better said, the only true 'others' are those who resist fusion, *mestizaje,* and cross-cultural dialogue" (p. 7). In the notion of *mestizaje,* Gomez-Peña (1996) also addresses the notion of hybridity, which can be defined as an "in-between", or "being multiple things". Gomez-Peña (1996) defines hybrid as follows:

> An ability to understand the hybrid nature of culture develops from an experience of dealing with a dominant culture from the outside. The artist who understands and practices hybridity in this way can be at the same time an insider and outsider, an expert in border crossings, a temporary member of multiple communities, a citizen of two or more nations. S/he performs multiple roles in multiple contexts. At times s/he can operate as a cross-cultural diplomat, as an intellectual *coyote* (smuggler of ideas) or a media pirate. At other times, s/he assumes the role of nomadic chronicler, intercultural translator, or political trickster. S/he speaks from more than one perspective, to more than one community, about more than one reality. His/her job is to trespass, bridge, interconnect, reinterpret, remap, and redefine; to find the outer limits of his/her culture and cross them. (p. 12)

Gomez-Peña (1996) also argues that although a lot of people refuse or deny hybridity, "we can no longer put it up for discussion. It is a demographic, racial, social, and cultural fact" (p. 70). He, therefore, addresses the need of society to work with people who are part of the marginalized group of international people. In his interpretation one could argue that all international students in the USA are transformed into hybrid beings (consciously or unconsciously), which is a process referred to by Werbner (2008) as "organic hybridity", a "naturalness" of transformation (p. 57). International students, hence, are required to learn to position themselves within different cultural frameworks and have to learn to act within a space of in-betweeness – a liminal space. With a university being regarded as an intercultural space in this research, an intercultural academic environment may help international students on their way to finding said liminality. I would, therefore, like to introduce my second research question here:

RQ 2: How is a hybridized identity negotiated in intercultural spaces such as a university setting?

Bhabha (1990) defines liminality as a "productive space of the construction of culture as difference, in the spirit of alterity or otherness" (Rutherford, 1990, p. 209). The liminal space, therefore, becomes a space for in-betweenness where hybridity or 'Otherness' is accepted and not perceived as pure difference but maybe as the norm.

> The stairwell as liminal space, in-between the designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white. The hither and thither of the stairwell, the temporal movement and passage that it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities. This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy. (Bhabha, 1994, p. 5)

Imbert (2004) describes how, through globalization, the focus in society shifts more towards what differentiates us from each other, rather than allowing for our similarities to be taken into account as well. Furthermore, he argues that this focus on differences creates the problem of displacement for a lot of people, and conditions that they find themselves in a place where they struggle with their identity negotiation and a feeling of (not) belonging. Sarup (1994) argues that our identities are linked to our surrounding environments and thus, are not static, but always changing. Furthermore, he focuses on the notion of home, how a sense of home is created, and how boundaries are built between outsiders (foreigners) and insiders (citizens).

Home and Displacement

Here, I will discuss the notion of home and displacement, and how a feeling of home is created. Furthermore, I will address the notion of belonging which is also related to the previously addressed concepts of identity formation and hybridity. As Gomez-Peña (1996) argues, "home is always somewhere else. Home is both 'here' and 'there' or somewhere in between. Sometimes it is nowhere" (p. 5).

According to Etoroma (2006),

> Home is a physical or nonphysical place or situation with which one identifies and where one is and feels unconditionally accepted. […]Rapport and Dawson (1998: 9-10) state that 'One is at home when one inhabits a cognitive environment in which one can undertake the routines of daily life and through which one finds one's identity best mediated - and homeless when such a cognitive environment is eschewed.'" (p. 103)

The feeling of home is, therefore, conditioned based on whether or not one is being accepted into society and whether one is willing to integrate into the society and function within its norms, values, and rules. Etoroma (2006) then elaborates that "an immigrant group is at home when it is 'structurally assimilated' into a society - that is, when group members have experienced large-scale entrance into the host society's primary groups such as cliques and clubs" (p. 104). Based on this, it becomes imperative for international students to assimilate into the host culture in order to be considered as a member. However, this is not an easy task since cliques and clubs are formed mostly based upon similarities rather than differences.

> According to the similarity principle, we tend to be attracted to people whom we perceive to be similar to ourselves. And there is evidence that this principle works for many cultural groups. […] They discovered that many individuals didn't really know if the people they were attracted to were similar to themselves. (Martin & Nakayama, 2009, p. 344)

With international students, however, being regarded as the 'Other', being different, not being part of the norm, it becomes increasingly hard to join such groups. In addition, as discussed in previous sections, through the process of assimilation students often feel pressured to leave behind, or sacrifice, their own cultural values for the sake of fitting in with the host culture. However, upon return to the home culture, international students who followed the assimilation approach may realize that they are no longer considered full members within their own culture due to a progressed assimilation into the U.S. American culture. As has been mentioned previously, integration into the host culture proves to be the better approach for international students.

Due to the struggles associated with acculturation, many international students may experience identity changes and confusions because of their negotiation between integrating

into the new culture, while at the same time trying to maintain their own cultural values. This

process is referred to as cross-cultural adaptation, which Sobré-Denton (2011) argues,

> is defined as an identity change process that varies depending on the social
> support received by and the pre-departure of sojourners. […] Fontaine notes,
> that "social support systems have shown to significantly aid coping overseas
> in both civilian and military contexts [...] host-contact is important to decrease
> social difficulties, while home-contact is important for emotional support". (p.
> 81)

In order to become part of the host culture's community, the reactions and behaviors of the

surrounding community towards the students becomes essential. Social ties, hence, are very

important for international students during their process of cross-cultural adaptation.

> International students' friendship patterns identified three distinct types of
> social ties held by international students: (1) the *mono-cultural network*
> comprising of close friendships with other conationals, which tends to be the
> international students' primary social network; (2) the *bicultural network*
> comprised of locals including academics, students, and advisors, which tends
> to be their secondary network; and (3) the *multicultural network* involving
> internationals from other countries, which tends to be the third network.
> (Kashima & Loh, 2006, p. 472)

Kashima and Loh (2006) elaborate even further, stating that

> The monocultural network functions mainly to provide a setting for expressing
> values and engaging in practices of the culture of origin. The bicultural
> network serves instrumental functions, facilitating students to reach their
> academic and professional goals. The multicultural network had been said to
> have a social and recreational function. (p. 472)

Creating a friendship base consisting of locals, other international students, as well as

conationals allows for international students to have an easier transition into the new cultural

surrounding. Kashima and Loh (2006) argue that "greater amounts of social support and

stronger social ties with both locals and conationals are generally incremental to the

newcomers' psychological adjustment, or emotional wellbeing and satisfaction during

cultural transition" (p. 472). While certain aspects and values of the host culture are adapted

for the sake of integration and a connection with the host culture is formed, other aspects of

the home culture are still kept within the person's identity. Therefore, a hybrid identity is

formed which allows the international person to function within both cultures. While a feeling of displacement may still be experienced by students who have formed a hybridized cultural identity, the extent to which these feelings are experienced are less severe than for students who attempt to entirely assimilate into U.S. American culture and in doing so give up their home culture's values and identity. Kashima and Loh (2006) demonstrate that

> The more international ties the students have developed in the new country, the better adjusted they were psychologically. Students with greater international ties also tended to identify more strongly with their heritage culture, and with their [host culture]. Hence, ties with other international students seem important for the development of new identities among international students as well as their psychological adjustment. (pp. 481-482)

However, as Etoroma (2006) argues, "a core quality of a community is 'distinctiveness' which incorporates the notion that group members tend to define themselves as a group partly by contrasting themselves with less-known people who are 'out there' and who are not like themselves" (p. 104). Here the Self/Other dialectic becomes important again because one cannot become part of 'the group' if s/he is considered the 'Other' since, in terms of group membership, most people still prefer similarities over differences when allowing new members in. As the 'Other', international students, therefore, often feel like they will remain an out-group within the host culture, which often results in them "remaining in friendship groups with co-nationals or forming groups with other international students" (Harrison & Peacock, 2010, p. 879).

After having spent a significant amount of time in the host culture, and/or upon completion of their degree requirements, many international students choose to return to their home countries. However, the majority of international students suffer reverse culture shock upon return. Singaravelu and Pope (2007) define reverse culture shock as follows:

> Reverse culture shock is a common experience, particularly when international students have studied in a country with different cultural practices from their home culture. […] Students are often not aware of how much they have changed through international education and may be surprised by the feedback that they receive from family and friends. (Singaravelu & Pope, 2007, p. 44)

The feeling of displacement thus occurs when one is negated membership in both the home

and host culture based on the hybridization of one's identity.

> Difficulty in reentry into the home culture appears to be related to the
> magnitude of personal change and attitudes of the sojourners and their family
> and friends. The greater the change the more likely the chance that reentry will
> be difficult. Students who attempted to, or felt pressure to, revert back to what
> they were before their departure had more difficulty adjusting upon return than
> those who were allowed to incorporate the changes into their lives. (Kauffman
> et al., 1992, p. 119)

As Ben-Yoseph (2005) argues, "moving from one home to another, between countries,

cultures and languages is not only a matter of 'physical displacement but of interior

experience' as well. Different places create different experiences which in turn create

different memories. And memory plays a significant role in the construction of identity" (p.

118). The experience of moving between different cultures will inevitably result in some sort

of cultural hybridization of the individual exposed to the different cultures. As Kauffman et

al. (1992) argue,

> Those who became immersed to any degree found that they had changed
> more, and as a result, reentry was more difficult. Some experienced alienation
> from family and close friends because they had become different people while
> abroad. A number of these reacted negatively to their home culture, rejecting
> its attitudes, values, beliefs, and behavior patterns. Acceptance of the changed
> self by others as well as by the sojourner seemed to be the key to a healthy
> reentry adjustment. (p. 115)

My third research question addresses this phenomenon, asking:

RQ 3: How is hybridity negotiated upon return into the home culture?

Our different cultural environments impact who we are, they influence us whether

we are aware of it or not – they become part of who we are. Forming a hybrid identity –

whether this happens consciously or unconsciously - can be a big burden that may always

distinguish a person from the rest. However, if one chooses to grow with one's hybridity and

function within the liminal space that is created, then I think one is on the best way of moving away from being the 'Other' and becoming part of a global, intercultural world.

As established in this theoretical review, identity, as well as a feeling of home and belonging, is socially constructed. Therefore, it is important to explore the environment of a person since the influence of one's surrounding is important in the process of identity formation. As Sarup (1994) argues, "How do places get produced? […] Places are not static, they are always changing […and] are socially constructed, and this construction is about power" (p. 4). No one culture is alike; cultural differences exist and international students have to negotiate between their home and host culture. During this cultural adaptation process, the person's cultural identity is inevitably affected, by the surrounding culture, the community, social ties, and the host culture. A hybrid cultural identity is formed during this process, which allows the student to function within the several cultural frameworks the student is exposed to. However, hybridization can also lead to identity confusion and not knowing where one belongs.

In this project, I studied international students as a specific group of people who are impacted by the constant negotiation of their identity due to the constant back and forth travel between different countries, cultures, and languages. I explored how personal changes due to a hybridization of their identity may have lead to a loss of their membership role within their home culture, which can then lead to a feeling of displacement, homelessness, and not knowing where one belongs. In the following section, I illustrate to the readers the methods that I used for gathering and analyzing my data as well as provide further information about my participants and research site.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Positionality of the Researcher

I begin this section by briefly discussing my own positionality as a researcher within my research. I find this step very important, because I wish to not only remain transparent for my readers but I would also like to establish the fact that I am not speaking for my participants, but rather as one of them. Adler and Adler (1987) refer to this concept as the complete membership role of the researcher:

> The complete membership role entails the greatest commitment on the part of the researcher. Rather than experiencing mere participatory involvement, complete-member-researchers (CMRs) immerse themselves fully in the group as "natives". They and their subjects relate to each other as status equals, dedicated to sharing in a common set of experiences, feelings, and goals. As a result, CMRs come closest of all researchers to approximating the emotional stance of the people they study. (Adler & Adler, 1987, p. 67)

I have been an international student at a U.S. American university since August, 2009. I moved to the United States from Germany at the age of 22, after the completion of my Bachelor's program in Translation and Interpretation, as part of a one-year university exchange program. While I had been exposed to U.S. American culture and language throughout my studies, I had never actually been to the United States before. After the completion of the one-year exchange, I decided to remain in the United States to complete my Master's degree within the field of Speech Communication. As a person who had never fully felt connected to her home culture, due to never feeling fully accepted and appreciated by my family, as well as experiencing a disconnection with my surrounding community, I felt very welcomed in the United States and connected to the culture, language, and the people and community.

The inspiration to engage in this research started when I returned to Germany during my winter break in December 2009/10 and experienced reverse culture shock upon reentering my home country. I had only been introduced to scholarship on culture shock and

reverse culture shock briefly before I experienced it myself. Upon return to my home country, I felt displaced and the country and culture that I had grown up with felt strange to me. Since I had immersed myself a lot into the U.S. American culture, I had acquired many U.S. American traits, values, and behaviors which made it hard for me, my family, and my friends to regard me as a full member of the German culture. Realizing that I had become a hybrid cultural being during this three-year long journey as an international student, I decided to see if there are more international students like me, and whether or not they have had similar experiences of displacement and homelessness.

Participants

International Students

The participants for this research were 17 international students who had stayed in the United States for at least one academic year and had travelled back to their home country prior to the interview. This restraint in choosing my participants was imperative since I was looking at how their identities had been impacted by the host culture and the types of struggles they had encountered upon return into their home country. The 17 students that were interviewed for this research were eight male and nine female students who ranged in age from 22-49, pursuing degrees ranging from B.A. to Ph.D., and came from 13 different countries. The countries that the participants identified as their home countries were 2 Taiwan, 1 China, 1 Togo, 2 India, 1 Zambia, 1 Turkey, 1 Japan, 1 Colombia, 1 Saudi Arabia, 1 Ukraine, 1 Tanzania, 3 Germany, and 1 Mexico. International students remain a minority on the examined university campus, accounting for only 1,290 students (information provided by the International Students and Scholars) out of a total of 17,815 students (Baggott, 2012) on this campus. The majority of the international students at this university are graduate students, accounting for roughly 900 students, and undergraduate students accounting for roughly 300 students. Furthermore, international students on campus represent

over 100 countries, with the largest numbers of students coming from India, China, Saudi

Arabia, and Korea.

ISS Representative

The International Students and Scholars (ISS) office on the examined university

campus serves as the main source for counseling and problem solving specifically tailored to

the needs of international students. The ISS representative that participated in this research

has been an employee at the ISS office of the examined mid-sized university for several

years, and was interviewed in order to learn more about the programs, support systems, and

counseling opportunities that are made available for international students. Furthermore, she

was able to provide me with ISS insights into students' struggles and methods used by the

ISS representatives in order to assist students. Since the ISS is a very important institution for

international students, in terms of immigration issues, legal advice, immigration issues,

community involvement, and social support, I found it crucial to include statements and

observations from the ISS into the study.

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Participant Solicitation

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The purpose of this research was to draw connections between cultural changes, the

feeling of displacement, and homelessness that a lot of people experience in today's global

society. Furthermore, looked at how a feeling of home is created and how it is socially

constructed for international students in the U.S.. The first person that was contacted for the

purpose of participant solicitation was the ISS representative. She was thoroughly informed

about the research project and agreed to participate as the official representative of the ISS

office. During a personal meeting at the ISS office, she was presented with the approved

solicitation materials for herself and the international students. An agreement was made that

the easiest method to solicit students would be to contact them over the official ISS listserv,

which is monitored by said ISS representative, and present them with the official cover letter

that explained the purpose of the research, as well as provide them with my contact information. Hence, participants were able to contact me personally by email or phone to ask additional questions about the research and schedule interview times.

Interviews

My primary method was conducting qualitative interviews with international students on a medium-sized Midwestern university campus to see how students from different cultures, at different ages, and at different stages of their academic careers and lives manage the pressure of having to negotiate their identity between two, or more, different cultural frameworks. During the interviews, I used a semi-structured interview protocol which allowed for an open dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewee. As Stage and Mattson (cited in Clair, 2003) suggest, "ethnographic interviews can produce a more participant-respectful and insightful project that overcomes the common criticisms of ethnography" (p. 99). Hence, the open dialogue made it easier for the interviewer and the interviewee to connect with each other and was helpful to create a safe environment in which the interviewee felt more comfortable in sharing - possibly painful - experiences with the interviewer. Due to the nature of this research, interviewees were required to sign a consent form for their participation, allowing them to withdraw from the research at any time and to choose not to answer a question. In addition, a consent form had to be signed allowing the researcher to tape-record the interviews.

> The use of tape recorders has one significant virtue: It enables researchers to capture the interview more or less exactly as it was spoken. We no longer have to worry about remembering a remark or missing it in the first place due to our minds wandering or being distracted momentarily. […] Another important reason to tape-record is that it can free up investigators to participate more fully in the interview. (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 187)

Using a tape-recorder during the interviews, therefore, also fostered the notion of having an open dialogue rather than a formally structured interview setting.

To ensure the privacy of the interviewees during the interviews, private study rooms at the on-campus library were reserved and used for the duration of the interview. Finally, the interviews were transcribed in order to make them more accessible for analysis work, such as coding and the creation of a codebook (I elaborate on the coding process further in the Data Analysis section).

> By transcribing a taped interview, we end up with a text that reproduces the discourse – not only what was said but also how words or phrases were uttered. These interview texts can be imported into data analysis software, and portions of texts can be cut and pasted into research reports. (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 187)

The recordings, transcripts, and consent forms were handled with utmost confidentiality and were only available to the researcher at any time during the process of conducting this research.

Fieldwork Observations

In addition, I conducted fieldwork observations during the International Coffee Hour on three occasions. The International Coffee Hour is held every Friday afternoon at the International Students and Scholars office (ISS) on the university's campus and is open to every international student. The International Coffee Hour, therefore, proves to be a safe space, where international students can meet other international students, talk about their struggles, or just enjoy open dialogues, with coffee and baked goods. This observation site provided me with further information on how the ISS aids international students in their struggles with feelings of displacement.

The second site that was chosen for fieldwork observations was the 50th Annual International Festival, which is an open event which is held on campus on an annual basis and is carried out entirely by ISS representatives, international students, as well as additional volunteers. The 2012 International Festival was held on February 15th – 17th at the University Student Center and was open for all students, staff members, faculty members, and university

representatives to attend. The event consisted of an International Food Fair which was held on February 15th and allowed people to taste international cuisine, with dishes having been prepared by the international students themselves. Additionally, the international students served their own dishes, allowing for visitors to ask for additional information about the dishes, ingredients, and the culture of the students. On February 17th, the International Culture Show allowed students to introduce their home cultures to a large audience of attendees. Students chose different types of performances, such as dance recitals, in order to share parts of their home culture with the audience. The fieldwork observations were conducted during the second event of this festival to see how international students communicate their own cultural values and traditions to the general public.

Data Analysis

For the analysis of my data, I used the qualitative research analysis method of coding in order to manage, reduce, and draw conclusions from the different sets of data that I received from my fieldwork observations, as well as the transcribed interviews. Charmaz (2006) defines the process of coding as follows:

> coding is the pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to explain these data. Through coding, you *define* what is happening in the data and begin to grapple with what it means. […] we *create* our codes by defining what we see in the data. Codes emerge as you scrutinize your data and define meanings within it. Through this active coding, you interact with your data again and again and ask many different questions of them. (Charmaz, 2006, p. 46)

For the purpose of coding my research data, I printed out the interview transcriptions and started reading them several times. My next step was to use different colored highlighters to color-code every interview as well as the field observations. Every color used in the process of color-coding was assigned to a specific code in the codebook. Through this inductive development of a codebook, I was able to discover valuable patterns throughout the interviews and field observations that did not only make the organization of the collected data

more approachable, but more importantly helped me draw connections and conclusions from my data.

After careful consideration of the topic of my study and sites to conduct my research, I decided to use grounded theory and focus on two different research strategies that helped me with my data collection – fieldnotes gathered from participant observations and interviews. As Charmaz (2006) points out,

> A grounded theory study takes a different form than other types of ethnographies. Grounded theory ethnography gives priority to the studied *phenomenon* or *process* – rather than to a description of a setting. Thus, from the beginnings of their fieldwork, grounded theory ethnographers study what is happening in the setting and make a *conceptual* rendering of these actions (Charmaz, 2006, p. 22).

This specific research method, therefore, proved to be very significant for my research because I intend to create a space for voice for people who may not have as many opportunities to get their stories and experiences heard. As Goodall (2000) notes: "Voice is the sound of the ethnographic world being called into being' (p. 140); and as Clair (1998) explains, expressing the silence of marginalized individuals is fundamental to ethnography" (cited in Clair, 2003, p. 30). Therefore, my aim in choosing these specific methods was to create space to have the voices of the participants of my study heard. In addition, I wanted to demonstrate how different social and cultural backgrounds can become connected in the feelings of displacement and belonging. Since international people, foreigners, and migrants are often regarded as the Other who disrupt the status quo in society, I find it important to illustrate that this feeling of "not belonging" is mutually shared by people who identify as non-American but live in the USA.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, I present and discuss the results of my research by using the collected and analyzed data in order to answer my previously presented research questions. I address each research question individually to allow for a better overview of results for the readers. Additionally, this method allows me to strategically draw connections between the presented theories in the fields of culture theory, hybridity, identity theories, as well as home and displacement theories, and the collected data.

RQ 1: How are hybrid identities constructed in international students on U.S. campuses?

Over the course of this research and during the analysis of the collected data, I found that there are several factors that impact the formation of a hybridized identity: age, exposure to the host culture and social ties, and the motivation/intention with which the students started their programs. As I have mentioned in my theory section, I consider a person who performs different cultures, its values, rules, language etc., to be a culturally hybrid being. Hybridized people form an identity of in-betweenness, where they combine aspects of the home as well as host culture into one hybridized cultural identity. As Nedumchira (2009) argues,

> the goal for the immigrant is not to become a native but to develop an identity in the 'intercultural third' [...which] conceptualizes the immigrant as retaining his/her indigenous culture while accepting and relating to the host culture, thus functioning in an internalized potential space between his/her indigenous and host cultures. (pp. 19-20)

However, the degree of the hybridization seems to vary depending on the aforementioned factors, which will be further discussed in the following sections.

Age

The age of the research participants ranged from 22-49. Singaravelu and Pope (2007) suggest

that younger students are more likely to adjust to a new cultural surrounding than older

students (p. 115). In addition, Martin and Nakayama (2004) suggest that

> younger people may have an easier time adapting because they are less fixed
> in their ideas, beliefs, and identities. Because they adapt more completely,
> though, they may have more trouble when they return home. On the other
> hand, older people may have more trouble adapting because they are less
> flexible. However, for that very reason, they may not change as much and so
> have less trouble when they move back home. (pp. 287-288)

The three youngest participants in my research, ranging in age from 22-24, verified this

theory. One stated that

> It has been very difficult this entire adjusting process. I had to adjust my
> thinking and everything in order to fit in. I felt like I was expected to leave a
> part of me behind and become someone different in order to fit in with the
> culture and not stick out. The way I dress is different for instance, because I
> don't want to feel different. I had to adjust because I didn't want to be the odd
> one out. I also had to learn to rely more on myself and figure out things on my
> own. I think I am more independent right now. The way I think is different.
> (Participant 5)

Leaving her home country at a rather early age, the participant argued that she was more

prone to the community's influences on her identity and personality since she was still at a

stage in her life where she was discovering who she is. In addition, her exposure to her home

culture's rules, norms, and values had been short in comparison to other participants who left

their home country rather late in their lives: "As we age, we also play into cultural notions of

how individuals our age should act, look, and behave; we develop an age identity" (Martin &

Nakayama, 2004, p. 157). The age identity in younger students is, therefore, less developed

which makes them more prone to adapting to the new cultural environment, as well as

increasing their possibility for hybridization.

The older participants (ages 42 and 49) in my research on the other hand, had been

exposed to their home culture for a significantly longer period of time than the younger

students. In addition, neither of the two older participants had left their home country before they moved to the United States and furthermore, they had their own families back home (here I am referring to spouses and children):

> There are so many things here in the United States that affect you, I mean back home I was a parent, a husband, a chief of family, I used to order things, but now here I have to do everything by myself. […] I had left my wife and kids for 2 years, then being a parent it is really hard and be there with the separation. I mean being without your kids and wife is really hard and it was a new contact – because now the guy that's coming is a guy coming from the United States. […] I didn't know if I really had changed, but it was a really good thing for me to go back and getting back in touch with my family again, and my kids. […] But sometimes, you can just feel it that there is something that they are not saying. […] You know and when I came back, if you are separated from a person that you have been close to for a long time then everything becomes new again. (Participant 13)

The connection with the home country and the family that was left behind proved to be much stronger for the older participants. The older participants had been exposed to their culture for a longer time and their cultural identity had become more fixated upon the home culture as compared to the cultural identity of younger participants. The degree of hybridization in the older participants was therefore less advanced than in the younger participants.

Motivation/Intention

The motivation to study in the United States is different for every student. Some international students choose to study overseas because they feel that they will have more opportunities when looking for a job, others wish to improve their English skills, or merely find that there are more choices of programs offered by U.S. American universities than with local universities.

> See, what I found to be very different from the university in my home country – the technology. You know, we don't have the newest technology and these very advanced computers and laboratories in Zambia. Here, I have everything on campus and I can use it for my studies and research. I couldn't do these things at home, so I find it very valuable here – and many opportunities. (Participant 6)

Additionally, some students plan to get a degree from an U.S. American university and then return back to their home country, whereas others are looking into immigration to the United States. The intentions of the international students proved to be essential in terms of their behavior and choices on how to interact with their surrounding U.S. American community.

While some students were still undecided about whether or not they were considering immigration to the United States, the majority of the participants who I interviewed for this research shared that they were planning on merely graduating from a U.S. American university and returning to their home country after graduation. Fourteen out of 17 participants articulated that due to political, personal, and professional reasons they preferred to return to their home culture rather than staying in the United States.

Four of the participants argued that they considered the immigration process that they would have to go through in order to remain in the United States to be too excessive and complicated. One argued that

> You know, there are so many things that you have to do if you want to become a permanent resident here and get your Green Card. There is so much paperwork that needs to be filled out and it's just a hassle. Then you need to see a doctor that is authorized to work with potential Green Card holders and this doctor needs to clear your health. And all of this is extremely time-consuming and expensive, so you have to think – is it really worth it, and do I really want this. Sometimes, it is just easier to go back home because there you are already a citizen, you know. (Participant 16)

Furthermore, the recently passed anti-immigration laws in the states of Arizona and Alabama made some of the students feel like they were not welcome to remain in the United States after they graduated. As Williams (2011) argues, international students often "believe that they are not –and perhaps cannot be –fully accepted by their host society and therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it" (p. 5). Consequently, international students may choose to pursue a separation strategy during their acculturation process because they feel

marginalized by their host culture. This, then, also has an effect on the hybridization of the student because they are less likely to adopt elements of a culture that is unwelcoming towards them. Additionally, personal reasons such as homesickness and missing one's family members and friends were identified as reasons for wanting to return to the home country.

> Homesickness, an intense longing for one's family and home, is one of the most common complaints among international students. Without the familiar surroundings and supports of their home countries, many international students also experience a loss of social identity, the shared identity and feeling of connectedness that comes from being around family, friends, and the community. (Singaravelu & Pope, 2007, p. 15)

International students experience many losses – family, friends, community, culture, foods, etc. – however, all of the 17 participants agreed that while they have to overcome many struggles during acculturation, the benefits of an intercultural education cannot be denied. In today's global age, students identified the value of an U.S. American education in their home country – English proficiency and knowledge of U.S. American customs and culture were identified as very important assets on the job market in non-English speaking countries. Students, therefore, felt that their degrees and the acquired knowledge and skills would be more appreciated in their home country rather than in the United States.

> I definitely think that an education from an American university is important – I mean because of globalization everything is becoming more intercultural, you know. So when I go home and I can put on my resume that I studied in the United States I am sure that that will open so many doors for me. […] I don't feel that it's the same here, you know, here I am just an international person from some far-away country, but back home, I will be the person who studied in the United States and knows English and the culture. So, I think there are more benefits of my education back home for me than here. (Participant 16)

In my opinion, this brings up the question of the politics of hybridity: While the hybridization of the identity happens through the negotiation between U.S. American and home culture, it seems that hybridity has more economical value in the home country than in the host country. Therefore, international students may choose to return home rather than stay in the United States because they see their cultural hybridity being more beneficial in their

home culture. (I further address the issue of the politics of hybridity in the RQ 3 section and the discussion section.)

On the other hand, five of the participants shared that they were seriously considering immigration to the United States. Again, the motivation for the students' choice proved to be political, personal, as well as professional reasons. Four students felt like their immersion into U.S. American culture had progressed to a level where they no longer felt like they agreed with the values of their home country (compare Singaravelu & Pope, 2007):

> I feel like I have become more individualistic ever since I came here. But at home, my family is very traditional, you know. The values of my culture and religion are very important in my family. […] I wouldn't say that I don't agree with all of the things anymore – I like how my parents raised me, you know, to be respectful to everyone, for example. But I also see how here people have more freedom and opportunities and I enjoy that and would like to see that in my country. But I don't know if people will appreciate it as much as I do. (Participant 5)

The formation of a hybridized identity through immersion into the U.S. American culture, therefore, is strongly connected to the feeling of homelessness and displacement. By forming a hybrid identity and immersing themselves into U.S. American culture, students have to sacrifice certain aspects of their home culture in order to better fit in with the surrounding community. The sacrificed home culture values are then replaced by values of the host culture which aids the formation of a hybridized identity.

Furthermore, issues around personal reasons were identified by three participants as partnerships and relationships that were established during the students' stay in the United States:

> Well, my dream is for me and my girlfriend to move to an entirely different country where we are both foreigners and live and work there. But she is very proud of being American and likes it here, so I know she wouldn't like leaving the States. So I guess I will do my Ph.D. here and try to stay here and find a job and everything. She is part of my family and home here, you know, so she is part of the decision on where I will go and what I will do. (Participant 10)

Personal reasons, therefore, proved to play a significant role in the decision making process for international students who, over the course of their degree programs, establish various different types of relationships, friendships, and build up a support system. The issue of separation from these relationships, therefore, is an important factor for international students and would embody another loss.

Exposure to host culture

For the process of hybridization the exposure of the international student to the host culture is imperative. It, therefore, not only became essential to look at the acculturation strategies that international students pursued, but also to the general exposure to U.S. American culture.

As I have discussed previously, there are different strategies for international students to deal with the pressure of acculturation. The participants I interviewed proved to follow either the separation strategy or the integration strategy. Pursuing the separation strategy (compare Singaravelu & Pope, 2007) allows the students to isolate themselves from the surrounding community as much as possible and maintain their home cultural identity. The integration strategy, on the other hand, allows students to find a balance between the values of their home culture and the values of the host culture (compare Singaravelu & Pope, 2007), therefore, allowing the students to form a hybrid identity which allows them to function within both cultures.

The four participants who followed the separation strategy made the conscious decision to isolate themselves from the U.S. American and international community and seek out contact only with co-nationals:

> I feel like I have been dependent on the few Zambians that I have found on
> this campus and in my department. So they allowed me to have an easy

transition. I feel like I have remained more connected to my home culture through the Zambians that I have found here, one even being a professor here. So I really don't see myself as an international student here because I have very little contact with other international students and the ISS. […]See even when I was coming here, I knew that there were other Zambian students here already and ready to walk me through the system. So, I guess that made a difference for me in the transition. […] I don't really have American so-called friends, but I have a number of acquaintances most of whom I've had courses with. But I think when it comes to immediate friends, who I can talk with, I have mostly Zambian people. I just want to focus on my study and not also have to focus on integrating fully. At church I mix with Americans but I just like to stick to myself as well. It is not I don't want to mix with them, I do academically and spiritually, but I just don't want to get too involved in the culture. I feel like the only way I have been impacted by US culture is that I have become more open and frank. Back home we don't find it easy to talk to others about our problems and struggles, but here that is totally acceptable so I appreciate that. (Participant 6)

In doing so, the participants were able to maintain their cultural identity almost entirely since they were not extensively exposed to U.S. American values and culture. Feelings of displacement were, therefore, kept at a minimum since the participants only associated with people from their own home country, with the same cultural values. As Kashima and Loh (2006) argue, "the monocultural network functions mainly to provide a setting for expressing values and engaging in practices of the culture of origin. […] Greater conational ties, rather than local ties, foster stronger heritage cultural identity" (pp. 472-473). In addition, the participants stated that the choice was made consciously since they had no intentions of remaining in the United States, but had always planned on returning to their home country upon graduating from the university. While these four participants chose not to integrate into U.S. American culture, but to maintain conational ties, their hybridization process was kept to a minimum and happened mostly unconsciously. As can be seen in the quote of Participant 6, hybridization was never intended but took place at the minimal level of the participant 'becoming more open and frank' (Participant 6). I would, therefore, argue that hybridity is not a choice that the participant can make since it can happen consciously, as

well as unconsciously. Hence, it can be concluded that depending on which acculturation process is pursued by the participant, the degree of the hybridization varies.

The other 13 participants who decided to pursue the integration strategy and incorporate U.S. American values into their cultural identity, therefore, forming a hybrid identity, had to experience a greater level of displacement and homelessness: "As immigrants arrive in a host country and are faced with a new environment and unfamiliar customs and values, they are at risk of losing a sense of themselves" (Nedumchira, 2009, p. 20). Incorporating new values from the host culture into the person's identity oftentimes means that values from the home culture have to be replaced.

> You know, back home we enjoy spending time with the family, and only when we go to sleep we go to our rooms, close the door, and stay to ourselves. So, when I first went home again, one day I just wanted to be to myself a little bit, you know, find some time to think. But my family didn't understand it when I went to my room and closed the door – to them it meant that I didn't want to spend time with them, and I guess they were a little hurt because they hadn't seen me in so long. But, you know, here I have learned to appreciate some quiet time and not just appreciate it, but I need it every once in a while. I guess, this is where they see my 'Americanness'. (Participant 11)

Through the formation of this hybrid cultural identity, international students often raise "concerns […] how they will fit back into their home culture and surroundings (Singaravelu & Pope, 2007, p. 17). The participants who identified as knowing hybrid cultural identities addressed the issues they had upon returning to their home countries where they oftentimes experienced being treated differently from other members of their culture.

> I kind of accept my in-betweenness in terms of culture. I try to remember the good things but of course I complain a lot too, because it is hard sometimes. One of the struggles I feel is just missing it; missing Germany and German culture – missing interacting with friends and family in Germany and the culture in general. But then again when I'm in Germany, I miss certain things from the States – so I am never really 100% satisfied no matter in which country I am because I feel like there is always some part that is missing. That's probably the hardest part. I don't feel like a full member anymore anywhere. I think in Germany I could be a full member again if I decided to move back because after all, I did grow up with the language and the culture

and there are a lot of things I do like about the culture. [...] Some days I am just very torn between the cultures. But I feel that I can consider myself really lucky because a lot of people don't have several cultures to choose from but I do and that is something very precious. (Participant 15)

While their hybridity may allow these students to function within both their home culture as well as the host culture, they may face the loss of the full membership role in either culture, therefore, only being able to fully be accepted in an intercultural space such as a university for instance. (I elaborate on this topic in the RQ 2 section.) However, while hybridity may be related to feelings of loss of membership roles, and some "feel troubled or confused by the hybrid identity that they have […], others see it as having 'the best of both worlds'" (Williams, 2011, p. 57).

Participant observations during the International Coffee Hour and the 50th International Festival additionally suggested that students who have found a large community of their own co-nationals tended to associate more with their own cultural peers rather than building a diverse group of international friends. According to information provided by the ISS representative, the largest amounts of students currently enrolled at the examined university are students from India, China, Saudi Arabia, and Korea. In addition, the representative further suggested that for many students who already have a large community of co-nationals at the university, a transition into the U.S. American culture and educational system seems to be easier. As Kashima & Loh (2006) suggest, "the *mono-cultural network* comprising of close friendships with other conationals, […] tends to be the international students' primary social network" (p. 472). The mono-cultural network may, therefore, give the international students more security:

> You know, I met this one girl and she used to live where I lived at campus habitat, a housing complex that had to close down, and when we had to move out she said that she wanted to live where a lot of Indians live because she said she would just feel safer there. And I mean, I somewhat understood where she was coming from, but I don't think that is a good way of thinking because you won't get exposed to any other cultures at all. […] So, I feel that when you

travel and expose yourself to other cultures you can gain so much and win so many new experiences. I feel like travelling makes you also more open-minded because you get to know different peoples and cultures – I mean I might be wrong but this is just from my own perception. (Participant 4)

However, while there are benefits to having one's own cultural community, such as shared experiences and struggles, there may also be issues such as intercultural isolation which may appear if one chooses to only associate with co-nationals. The field observations during the Intercultural Festival showed that large numbers of international students chose to remain among themselves, speaking their native language, and not fully integrating themselves with other international groups, as well as U.S. Americans. These observations were especially seen in the larger international groups who remained almost exclusively separated from other groups, preferred speaking in their native tongue rather than in English, and who were all seated together. Since this behavior could only be found at the International Festival, an occasion where large numbers of different cultural groups came together, rather than during the Coffee Hour, where only a small, diverse group of international students was in attendance, the conclusion can be drawn that the larger the number of intercultural groups, the more students remained within a mono-cultural environment. The larger international groups, therefore, formed an ingroup that isolated themselves from others by openly performing their own culture, for instance, by speaking their own language (compare Harrison & Peacock, 2010). During larger intercultural events, the students' heritage cultural identity (see Kashima & Loh, 2006) seemed to become stronger and appeared to increase a separation from the host culture and other intercultural groups.

In conclusion, the analyzed data suggests that while international students who separate themselves from the host culture experience fewer feelings of displacement and homelessness, at the same time they only experience hybridization to a minimal extent. While this may help them in fitting in better with their home culture upon reentry, they may remain being regarded as the 'Other' by the surrounding community. As Harrison and Peacock

(2010) found in their study of home students' perceptions of international students, "the home students interviewed for this study had a strong sense of international students as 'other'; an outgroup or, more specifically, a series of overlapping outgroups based on factors such as nationality, language proficiency, work orientation and so forth" (p. 889). The international students who immersed themselves into U.S. American culture, on the other hand, and adapted certain values of the host culture into their cultural identity, showed a higher degree of hybridization. However, while the hybridization may aid the students in becoming part of the U.S. American community, they tended to show greater feelings of displacement and homelessness. U.S. American students tended to not label hybridized international students as the 'Other' as suggested by Harrison and Peacock (2010), but "where international students were members, their status as 'other' was downplayed by descriptions such as 'one of us' or 'just the same'" (p. 884). Hybridization, therefore, allows for greater acceptance into the host culture which is important for the socialization process of the international students.

RQ 2: How is a hybridized identity negotiated in intercultural spaces such as a university setting?

Forming social ties is very important for international students upon entering a new cultural environment. "Making friends is an important part of life among international students" (Kashima & Loh, 2006. p. 474). In addition, social ties help international students better negotiate the struggles of assimilation into a new cultural environment. The type of social ties that international students choose to associate with is also important when it comes to the level of hybridization (compare Kashima & Loh, 2006). The interview with the ISS representative showed that the main focus of the ISS at the examined university is to help international students better integrate into the U.S. American community and culture.

We have a lot of different programs that help international students in dealing with issues, such as homesickness or becoming involved in the community in general. For students who really miss their home we have the host family program where we find a nice American family for them that they can get to know and spend time with. […] Then we also have the English-In-Action program where Americans can volunteer as conversation partners for the international students. We also have our high school programs where international students can speak English for an hour in little groups with other kids in the high school. […] We think that this usually helps a lot to get to know the community better and learn about the educational background of classmates. […] Then there are also programs where international students can teach Americans their own language and things about their culture. […] So, we have a lot of things that help students get involved and get in touch with the community. (ISS representative)

However, while the ISS offers several different programs in order to get international students more involved with the U.S. community, five of the participants argued that they find it very hard to get to know U.S. American students.

Many of the international students I have been talking to, we all feel that you can connect more with other international students than American students. There seems to be a barrier in trying to be friends with Americans – I feel like a friendship with them can only reach a certain point but cannot pass it. I really don't know what the reason for this is, maybe because we have shared experiences amongst international students and they can understand you better. So it might be a cultural barrier between American and international students. (Participant 12)

Similar observations were also made by the ISS representative who argued that U.S. Americans are hardly ever identified as the people international students seek out to when they are in need of help. As Harrison and Peacock (2010) suggest, "a significant proportion struggle to socialise into the host culture, in particular finding it difficult to make friendships with home students and within the wider community" (p. 879).

I feel like no matter how much time you have spent in a country, at some point people will ask you 'Oh so where are you from? And what is your culture like?' and I don't like that because it reminds you that you are an outsider here. It makes me anxious that I always have to explain my fault – and it's not the person's fault, but I guess they feel a need to classify you. And I mean I also don't hate talking about my culture, but there is more to me as a person and I feel that sometimes gets overlooked. […] There are a lot of things that are culture specific and that set me apart because there are just a lot of things I

do not know – like sports for example. And it kind of makes me feel like an outsider that I cannot participate in these things. (Participant 11)

Oftentimes, the reason for this is identified as international students still being regarded as the 'Other'. Gudykunst (1983) found that

people make more assumptions about strangers, prefer to talk less, perceive conversations as developing less easily, ask more questions about strangers' backgrounds, and have less attributional confidence about predicting strangers' behavior in initial intercultural encounters than in initial intracultural ones. (pp. 205-206)

While the uncertainty factor in how to deal with international students still seems to be an issue, most of the participants still argued that they have a very diverse friendship base which is built by co-nationals, other international students, as well as U.S. American students (compare Kashima & Loh, 2006).

Hence, I conclude that the more diverse the social ties of the international students are, the greater the hybridization that can be detected in the students. Co-national ties help international students in keeping a bond with their home culture while international social ties are beneficial since shared experiences can help students better understand the struggles they are going through in the acculturation phase. While U.S. American friends are often harder to get acquainted with, as nine of the participants stated, they are beneficial for the international students since they become a social tie to the U.S. American community and culture. As Sobré-Denton (2011) argues, "contact networks for sojourners are encouraged to 'include eventually bicultural and multicultural networks in order to enrich the mutual learning processes between host nationals and new arrivals'" (p. 81). A hybridized cultural identity can, therefore, foster new social ties since it seems to remove the label 'Other' to a certain extent and encourages cultural learning for the international students as well as the surrounding community.

However, social ties to the home country prove to be very important when looking at the reentry. As previously mentioned, hybridization of the cultural identity is often related to feelings of anxiety and uncertainty of being accepted in the home culture.

> Coming home, we might think, should be easy. […] the anticipation of returning home, culture shock in finding that it's not exactly as expected, and then gradual adaptation. […] In the reentry phase, the sojourner has changed through the adaptation process and has become a different individual. The person who returns home is not the same person who left home. (Martin & Nakayama, 2009, p. 293)

Several of the participants agreed that they felt an anxiety thinking about having to return to their home country because they feared that due to their hybridized identity they would no longer fit in with their home culture's environment.

> Well, I feel that my life is held back a little bit – I look at my friends back home and a lot of them are married and have careers and everything and I am here at 30 years old and still a student and single. On the other hand, thinking about going back, I feel as if I am not Turkish enough anymore, I have changed a lot during the past years and people there see me differently, too. They see me as very different from the average Turk and will also treat me differently. I feel a little bit displaced because of that, too. [...] I don't know, I feel like I definitely have changed, and I have become more of a feminist and become more aware of political structures for instance. And I don't know if that will be accepted 100% back home. I can be very open and people may interpret it as inappropriate. So sometimes I feel awkward back home because I am not as used to the cultural norms anymore and not as aware of what is inappropriate. (Participant 11)

Social support from family and friends at home, therefore, becomes imperative in the negotiation of the hybridized identities of international students since they provide the students with the foundation for re-acculturation (compare Sobré-Denton, 2011). If the social support in the home country's environment is missing, students may experience greater feelings of displacement and homelessness and may not feel welcome as hybridized beings. (I further elaborate on this topic in the following section)

In addition, as suggested previously, the university environment can be considered as a special type of cultural space. Martin and Nakayama (2004) define cultural space as "the

social and cultural contexts in which our identity forms – where we grow up and where we live (not necessarily) the physical homes and neighborhoods, but the cultural meanings created in these places" (p. 236). All of the participants in this research argued that they felt more secure as international students in the university setting. Especially with the help provided by the ISS, they felt very welcomed here and integrated as much as they wanted to into the community.

> I don't really see a difference between me and other, 'regular' students. I don't see that I am labeled as an international students and I don't see that this advantage is only given to regular students and the other one is only given to international students. There is no discrimination, no I have never felt that, no discrimination. […]Outside of campus I had to be more careful, because I wasn't sure what the reality exactly is. (Participant 13)

Universities, I conclude, can therefore be considered as liminal spaces where hybridity can be performed without fear. This liminal space creates a safe space for international students and helps them in exploring and growing with their hybridized identity.

> I think that education gives us a lot of different opportunities because if it wasn't for this university for example we wouldn't all be together in this place – so many different cultural groups together in one place, you know. Education has opened up so many doors for people to collaborate and come together. So, I feel like education will allow for global communication and a global community. (Participant 4)

International students are provided with many opportunities and choices ranging from whom they wish to associate with, to what extent they wish to become integrated into U.S. American society and culture, etc. The university setting, therefore, appears to be ideal in negotiating hybridity and intercultural identities since social support is provided if it is needed. Thus, I propose that international students with a hybridized identity move to an intercultural space in which their hybridity is accepted and they no longer feel as the 'Other' who doesn't belong.

RQ 3: How is hybridity negotiated upon return into the home culture?

As I have briefly discussed in the previous section, the reentry into the student's home culture appears to play a significant role in the negotiation of displacement and homelessness of hybridized identities. They key issues that were addressed by the participants were the disconnection with the culture, family and friends, as well as a marginalization because of the participant's hybridized identity.

Disconnection with Social Network and Culture

The reentry into one's home culture can be a very hard process for people who have been out of touch with the progress of their culture. When I say progress here, I am referring to changes within the culture's society (political, etc.), as well as changes in the social network of the students. The home culture is often romanticized in the memory of the international student and remembered the way it was upon leaving it. Therefore, international students often do not account for the changes in their home community and country and assume that a reentry will be easy because one will fit in with the home culture without problems. The home culture

> is not remembered just as a geographical region or as a place of birth, but as a community possessing particular cultural traits and with people reflecting those traits. Sometimes the "collective memory" that is evoked isn't necessarily about the homeland itself but more about the […] people and about sharing "a sense of history, of living with [their] own past.[…]Immigrants and exiles commonly remember a romanticized and idealized version of their homeland […]. Part of the mythologizing of their homeland is due in part to the fact their homeland of memory is not reflected in the [home] that they see now, either in person through visits or secondhand through the media. (Williams, 2011, pp. 10-11)

However, depending on the period of time spent in the host country, the students have to account for family and friend dynamics evolving based on the changes the respective persons are undergoing.

The first time I went back to Germany was really horrible because I had to leave my boyfriend behind […]. I did not like or enjoy it at all and wanted to get out of there again. I mean it was nice seeing my family again but I really wanted to return again. […]Also going back home, I would say I suffered from reverse culture shock and I didn't really expect it to happen. But I also think that part of it was not having my boyfriend around which was not nice. After a while you get used to it though – it's another challenge to go through and you need to make an effort to not be sad all the time. And I was sad a lot and at first didn't negotiate it well. And even when I tried to talk to people about it they didn't understand because they had never experienced it themselves. Also, my friends had things to do on their own – like finding jobs, completing their programs and so on, so life didn't stop for them just because I was back home again, you know. And I mean they had their own problems and I had mine which were completely different. And as I said, we had not made the same experiences so they didn't really know how to help me, either. […] I also feel that back home there is not enough support for me and my struggles. I feel like I had more support back in the United States. (Participant 15)

The reason for this often is a disconnection with one's home culture which can lead to problems when a person tries to get readjusted to the culture s/he has been away from for so long. The social ties that were formed in the new host community and helped in the growth of the hybridized identity have become more important and present than the social ties back in the home country. This is due to the different experiences of family members and friends in the home country who cannot relate to the international students' hybridized identity that was developed through the integration into the host culture. "The more immersed the student becomes in the host culture, the more difficult the reentry" (Kauffman et al., 1992, p. 115). The disconnection with the home country and family and friends who were left behind can then lead to a strong feeling of displacement and isolation.

I often felt alone at home because I felt that I had no one to talk to really. None of my friends had ever lived overseas for a longer period of time, so we couldn't really connect and they didn't understand the things I was going through. Having no one to talk to at home was very hard and was one of the reasons why I felt so out of place. I just wanted to come back here again, you know, and talk to my friends who understand me. (Participant 16)

Hybridity can often cause an identity confusion in international students where they no longer feel as full members in the home society which then can cause high levels of anxiety upon reentry.

> Thinking about going back, I feel as if I am not Turkish enough anymore, I have changed a lot during the past years and people there see me differently, too. They see me as very different from the average Turk and will also treat me differently. I feel a little bit displaced because of that too. But of course, I miss home a lot – I only go back over the summer and spend shorter breaks in Canada with my friends. […] I feel in Turkey it is warmer, you don't feel as lonely because there are people there. I feel like here it is a little colder. I am probably romanticizing it now, since I know a lot has changed from the last time I've been there, but this is just how I remember it. (Participant 11)

Social support upon return into their home countries is oftentimes essential for international students in order to make the transition into re-acculturating with the home culture easier. While most tried very hard to build a support system within the United States to negotiate struggles of acculturation in the host culture, sometimes social relationships in the home country are neglected and, therefore, the disconnection with the home culture increases.

> It is hard to keep in touch with friends who live so far away from you. I'm sure you can understand, I mean as a student you are always busy and have so many things to do, like papers, assignments, research and so on. And my friends at home who are in school or who work they have a lot of stuff to do as well. Then the time difference also makes it hard sometimes to keep in touch and because we all have changed so much because of the different things we've been through, there are not so many things to talk about anymore at some point. You know, they are missing out on things that are happening to you and you are missing out on things that are going on in their lives – I feel like that sometimes makes the gap between me and my friends even bigger. (Participant 16)

A tendency that I was able to observe is that the 10 participants from collectivistic cultures tended towards remaining in touch with more people from their home culture, as well as have frequent contact with their family members. In doing so, while they may still experience a feeling of displacement, they appeared to be more up-to-date with the changes and the progress of their culture, family members, and friends.

See, when I talk to my girlfriend, and she is American, I find it shocking how different our two cultures are – she hardly calls her mom and I never understand why she doesn't want to invite her over. It just shows me that families here are not as close as we are back home[in Mexico]. I would always try to see my family as often as possible and speak to my mom at least three or four times a week. Maybe the reason is because my family is far away and hers lives in the same state as we do, but still it's also a different family relationship. Also, it shows me that they are a more individualistic culture, because they put their own needs first whereas family for me always comes first. (Participant 10)

I think it is crucial to notice that while the ISS exclusively encourages the integration of the students with the surrounding community, more attention has to be paid to the students also remaining in touch with their home country. For the culturally hybridized individual to be functioning within all of her/his cultural surroundings, attention has to be paid to equal socialization into the host and the home culture. As Kashima and Loh (2006) argue, "greater amounts of social support and stronger social ties with both locals and conationals are generally incremental to the newcomers' psychological adjustment, or emotional wellbeing and satisfaction during cultural transition" (p. 472). In order to grow with their hybridization, rather than feeling marginalized, I conclude that social ties have to be maintained on the co-national, family, international, and host country's level. Only if intercultural relationships and support systems are fostered can international students feel comfortable within their hybridized identity.

Dismissal of Hybridity

In addition to negotiating the struggles of reentry, international students who pursued the integration approach in dealing with the acculturation into the host culture and in doing so formed a hybridized identity, another issue appeared to be that members of the home culture would no longer regard them as full members (compare Kauffman et al., 1992). However, three of the participants argued that the refusal of their hybrid identity was unexpected and

shocking. The students felt that their hybridized identity was not accepted in the home

country which, for them, increased the feeling of displacement and homelessness.

>It was weird to be treated or looked at differently. I don't like that my family tried to treat me better, or differently because I feel that it's not fair for others. With my friends, I think they were proud of me because they feel I am doing something really brave in coming here and they are like 'you are my hero', you know. […] But it was strange that people would actually question my Mexicanness. Like, when I was at the airport and showed them my passport to go back into Mexico they would be like 'So, are you really Mexican?' and I was so confused because I didn't think that I spoke Spanish with an American accent. And when I told my friend and asked her 'Can you believe that?' she was like 'Yes, I can see that. You don't really seem Mexican to me anymore'. […] And I really didn't see it and understand it. They didn't read me as Mexican anymore but as a foreigner. […] It made me really sad because I am very proud of being Mexican and then when I was around them I felt like I wasn't part of them anymore. […] When Mexicans tell me that I don't look Mexican I think it's kind of insulting to me and makes me sad. (Participant 10)

Changes in behavior and appearance proved to cause problems for international

students upon reentry into their home culture. Significant problems appeared when the

personal belief systems of the student had changed and did not conform with the beliefs and

traditions of the home culture anymore.

>Difficulty in reentry into the home culture appears to be related to the magnitude of personal change and attitudes of the sojourners and their family and friends. The greater the change the more likely the chance that reentry will be difficult. Students who attempted to, or felt pressure to, revert back to what they were before their departure had more difficulty adjusting upon return than those who were allowed to incorporate the changes into their lives. (Kauffman et al., 1992, p. 119)

Students from more traditionally oriented countries, such as Saudi Arabia for instance,

argued that U.S. American culture had influenced their personal beliefs to a point where they

felt that the values of the home culture had become obsolete. Participant 8, for instance, is a

female student from Saudi Arabia who learned a lot about U.S. American values and the

voice of females during her stay here. In adapting U.S. American values, the participant

started to see the values and the positionality of females in her home country from a critical

perspective.

> I don't know, I feel like I definitely have changed, and I have become more of
> a feminist and become more aware of political structures, for instance. And I
> don't know if that will be accepted 100% back home. I can be very open and
> people may interpret it as inappropriate. So sometimes I feel awkward back
> home because I am not as used to the cultural norms anymore. […]I feel like I
> brought things with me that I would like to bring there – values. I feel that I
> would like more liberation over there and change so we won't just move into
> one direction, and not just in terms of religion, but also the openness and
> liberation. I would love to see more openness and discussion in my culture.
> (Participant 8)

The change in personal values and ideologies due to hybridization was often met with

disbelief and dismissal of the international student. As Kauffman et al. (1992) argue,

> Exposure to another culture and to other ways of thinking and behaving leads
> to new ways of looking at one's own culture. For most students, study abroad
> is a unique opportunity to compare firsthand various forms of government,
> systems of education, values, and lifestyles. This opportunity for comparison
> may result in a changed perception of one's home country, leading to more
> critical attitudes, more positive attitudes, or both. (pp. 68-69)

The international students' increased "Western" ideals were refused by their home

culture and their "Americanness" was frowned upon. In addition, the lack of support that

students found for their hybrid identities made a transition for them into their home culture

very hard and increased the feeling of displacement and homelessness even further.

Discussion

In this section, I proceed by discussing the previously presented and analyzed results

and draw valuable conclusions from them. The first important aspect that is suggested by the

data is that hybridity is not a choice – hybridity in international students can happen

consciously or unconsciously, as students realized upon reentry into their home country. As a

lot of the participants articulated, they never realized how much they had actually changed

until they returned into their home culture. Hybridity, "conceptualizes the immigrant as

retaining his/her indigenous culture while accepting and relating to the host culture, thus

functioning in an internalized potential space between his/her indigenous and host cultures"

(Nedumchira, 2009, p. 21). Upon their return, the participating international students became

aware that whether they tried to integrate into U.S. culture or they tried to separate

themselves in order to maintain their cultural identity, a form of hybridization took place.

This hybridization is connected to many struggles that the participants experience during their

cultural adaptation process. However, as Nedumchira (2009) argues,

> When faced with […] identity confusion and struggle to define their sense of
> self, if immigrants can internalize aspects of both their host culture and
> indigenous culture, they can develop a sense of self in the intercultural third,
> allowing them to relate to their multiple cultural self-states. Developing a
> sense of self in the intercultural third would allow immigrants to consolidate a
> fluid sense of identity that is representative of their experiences. (p. 32)

In addition, the degrees of hybridization did vary, depending on which acculturation

strategy the participant chose to pursue, the age of the students, and the social ties that were

maintained during their stay in the host culture. However, all of the participants experienced

some form of hybridization to varying degrees which oftentimes was connected to feelings of

displacement and homelessness. As Martin and Nakayama (2004) argue,

> An intercultural […] individual is significantly different from the person who
> is more culturally restricted. […] The [intercultural] person is neither a part of
> nor apart from the host culture; rather, this person acts situationally. But the
> [intercultural] life is fraught with pitfalls and difficulty. [Intercultural] people
> run the risk of not knowing what to believe or how to develop ethics or values.
> […]How individual migrants develop multicultural identities depends on three
> issues. One is the extent to which migrants want to maintain their own
> identity, language, and way of life compared to how much they want to
> become part of the larger society. […] Immigrants to the United States often
> are encouraged to "become American", which may entail relinquishing their
> former cultural identity. (p. 291)

Therefore, one can argue that while hybridity brings struggles and difficulties with it, it may

also allow for an easier acculturation or transition into different cultures. Our identities are

never fixed but always in motion, and so is hybridity. Hybridized identities have a different

outlook on the world, "learning to keep in mind the 'both/and' as opposed to the 'either/or' of

the experience is helping to appreciate these dual cultures that are each alive and well within

them" (Nedumchira, 2009, p. 68). I think the most important question I would like to discuss

is: Hybridity – a burden or a blessing? I am proposing to look at hybridity as a bridge – a

bridge between cultures and peoples. Hybrid identities have a unique connection between

cultures which allows them to shift perceptions and lenses of cultural values, traditions, rules,

norms, and rituals. By forming a bridge between different cultures, hybridized people can

serve as advocators for and mediators between cultures and help foster mutual intercultural

dialogues.

> I like that Americans identify me as the other because I feel that it's my
> responsibility to share with them things about my culture and talk to them
> about my culture. I like that they are curious, show interest, and want to learn
> more about my culture. So, I like taking the time to answer their question and
> communicate with them. […] Back home, I feel like people want to know
> more about the culture here but I found that they were also criticizing the
> values here. But I want to bring more of the freedom people have here to my
> home country – I would love to make these things possible for them.
> (Participant 8)

As Shenkar (2008) notes, "cultures can be "bridged" but not infringed upon or

overshadowed, nor can they threaten or be threatened" (p. 909). Hybridity, in my opinion,

allows people to function as diplomats who can help bring different cultures closer together

and "explicate cultural fusion" (Jackson, 2008, p. 147). As Participant 4 stated:

> I feel like in a way I don't feel like an Indian anymore. To be honest, not to
> make it sound bad or anything, but I have always seen myself as a citizen of
> the world. I mean to me there is no reason to be like I'm Indian, I'm German,
> I'm Korean and so on, you know. I feel like we have come to a point where
> we live in a sort of global village so I don't see myself as Indian or American.
> […] I feel like we are all related to each other in being humans – we are all the
> same, all of our blood is red so I feel like the entire world is my home. There
> is this quote we have in India, it says 'Yaathum oore Yavarum Kelir' by the
> Indian poet Pungranar from 3,000 years ago which means: I am a world
> citizen, every citizen is my kith and kin. […] The feeling of being torn
> between two countries – sometimes you just can't be everywhere and these
> politics will just separate and affect all of us. So, I really wish that there
> wasn't so much importance put on the politics of borders and different
> nationalities but I hope that maybe sometime in the future we will be able to
> all come together and look past our differences. (Participant 4)

I feel that hybridity allows for mediation and connection between different cultures which can help us move towards becoming a more intercultural society where hybridity and intercultural relationships become more of the norm. As Kauffman et al. (1992) state: "One of the important factors in developing effective connections is the capacity not simply to tolerate but to appreciate differences in other people, groups, and cultures" (p. 131). On the other hand, however, should hybridized identities choose to operate as a bridge, or mediator, between the cultures, they may be forced to live a constant life at the border. As Bhabha (1994) states, the

> "new" internationalism is that the move from the specific to the general, from the material to the metaphoric, is not a smooth passage of transition and transcendence. The 'middle passage' of contemporary culture [...] is a process of displacement and disjunction that does not totalize experience. (p. 30)

Therefore, should the international student choose to operate as a bridge between the cultures through his/her hybridity, feelings of displacement, identity confusion, and homelessness are experienced at advanced levels. "The borderline work of culture demands and encounter with "newness" that is not part of the continuum of past and present. It creates a sense of the new as an insurgent act of cultural translation" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 31).

I think what remains imperative in dealing with this dilemma are the social ties that the international students form during their journey with hybridity. I feel that it is crucial for international students to feel safe within their hybridity in the host as well as the home country which can only be achieved if social support is provided in both cultural environments.

> The only relationships with friends that seem to improve are with those individuals who have had similar overseas experience […]. A couple of studies have provided evidence that a lack of emotional support during the reentry period may have significant influence on how the experience abroad is perceived and integrated into the student's future life. (Kauffman et al., 1992, p. 115)

I, therefore, feel that it is very essential for the ISS to take the needs of these students into consideration and provide the support and help that they may need upon reentry into the home culture. As a possible solution for this issue, I would like to suggest adding a seminar or training workshop on reverse culture shock and issues with reentry into the ISS's program. The program should attempt to raise international students' awareness for the possible struggles they may encounter upon return to their home country, and should offer suggestions and steps the students can follow for an easier re-acculturation process. Furthermore, it should be addressed that while integration and forming social ties within the host culture is just as important as fostering social ties with the home culture. As Sobré-Denton (2011) suggests, "international social ties can potentially create a 'multicultural network' involving internationals from other countries" (p. 81) and, therefore, help in creating a more intercultural and global community.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Hybridity comes with many advantages, as well as disadvantages. The formation of

a hybrid identity is hard and is often connected to crossing boundaries, sacrificing personal

and cultural values, and leaving one's comfort zone. However, hybridity also allows for an

easier acculturation into different cultures and helps in shaping a more cosmopolitan

worldview. While the hybridization of a cultural identity may result in feelings of

displacement and homelessness, hybridized identities may be able to function as bridges

between different cultures and foster dialogue. Furthermore, hybridity raises more awareness

and mindfulness about different cultures, its peoples and values.

As Martin and Nakayama (2004) argue,

> More and more people are living on the border physically, making frequent
> trips between countries, or living on the border psychologically between
> bicultural identities. The trend calls for a new view of cultural boundaries and
> adaptation as new immigrant populations continuously interact across borders
> and between the home country and the host society, constructing… a
> transnational sociocultural system. (p. 295)

I feel like this research lends support to hybridity as a bridge between cultural

boundaries which becomes imperative in today's globalized world. Cultural borders become

increasingly blurred and we are moving towards a new era of a cosmopolitan community. I

hope that this research will highlight the struggles of hybridized identities in this society and

create more mindfulness to the work they are doing in order to fit in within our different

communities.

> The new mestiza copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a
> tolerance for ambiguity. She learns to be an Indian in Mexican culture, to be
> Mexican from an Anglo point of view. She learns to juggle cultures. She has a
> plural personality, she operates in a pluralist mode – nothing is thrust out, the
> good the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. Not only does
> she sustain contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else.
> (Hegde, 1998, p. 101)

In terms of further research, I think that the notion of home and how it is communicated by hybridized identities would offer further insights into the creation of hybrid cultural identities within communication scholarship. While traditionally, home has been regarded as a more place-based notion, through cultural deterritorialization – which can be understood as a weakening of "ties of culture to place" (Tomlinson, 1999, p. 29) – social relationships and ties have become more significant. Home appears to have become more about the people that inhabit a space, rather than a specific place, or country. I suggest looking at the changes in the notion of home, the aspects that have influenced the change, as well as the reasons for this change. In terms of international students, I propose looking at how home is identified prior to coming to the host culture, as well as upon return into the home culture.

Limitations

The first limitation of this research is the number of participants, as well as the fact that only one university was used to conduct the research. Only 17 students participated in this research and, therefore, the conclusions drawn based upon cultural heritage are limited. In order to draw further conclusions from this research, I suggest conducting interviews and participant observations at different universities throughout the country. Furthermore, increasing the number of participants would also be helpful in further strengthening the arguments, theories, and conclusions drawn from the data. In addition, since social ties played a very important role in the negotiation of hybridized identities, I suggest including home students, as well as family members and friends from the home culture of the participants in the dialogue in order to account for the positionalities and voices of all people affected by the hybridization process.

In terms of theory, I acknowledge the limitations of the social scientific idea of individualistic and collectivistic cultures which poses an oversimplified look at cultural

differences. The choice to include this theory into this research was made due to the references to said theory made by 13 out of the 17 participants. I propose considering cultural distance theory as a possible theory in order to look at "the extent to which different cultures are similar or different" (Shenkar, 2012, p. 519). By using this theory, a shift could be made from comparing abstract differences between specific cultures, towards a view of culture as more fluid.

Contributions

I hope that with my research, I was able to create a space for voice for the international students who experience the efforts connected with hybridity on a daily basis on U.S. American campuses. In addition, I would like to use this research in order to provide new insights into the struggles of international students to the ISS on the examined campus. Furthermore, I hope that this work will raise awareness within the international students community that they are not alone in their struggles and that a lot of people experience the same problems as they do.

Many of the participants articulated that the reverse culture shock that most of them experienced upon reentry into their home country was unexpected and they did not understand what was happening to them or how to negotiate their struggles. I, therefore, plan to work on a seminar (in collaboration with the local ISS) which will address issues of reverse culture shock and displacement for international students and how they can deal with the struggles of hybridization. In addition, since most of them argued that they were unaware of the existence of reverse culture shock, I wish to raise awareness of this issue since a lot of students possibly do not know about it and hence, will not know how to deal with it and make sense of it. I feel that students may be able to better negotiate their struggles if they are aware of what is happening to them and how they can deal with it.

In terms of theory, I hope that may research will be able to raise awareness for hybridity scholarship which does not only play an important role in my life but also creates a space for voice for people who struggle with cultural changes and displacement. Furthermore, I hope that people will see that their hybrid identity can be used in order to create a bridge between cultures. I, therefore, hope that hybridity will be further embraced as a possibility to bridge cultural differences and engage people in mutual dialogue about cultural differences. Therefore, I hope that my research will be a contribution to hybridity scholarship, as well as draw further connections between cultural change, hybridity, belonging, and displacement.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Interview Protocol (Students)

1. Background information
   a. Gender

   b. Age

   c. Home culture

   d. Major

2. How long have you studied in the United States?

3. How long have you been a student at SIUC?

4. How have you experienced coming to the United States as an international student and functioning within an academic framework?

5. What struggles have you encountered as an international student in the USA?

6. How have you negotiated these struggles?

7. How have you been impacted by the US culture?

8. What are some changes in yourself that you have been able to observe?

9. How did it feel to go back home after having studied in the USA for a while?

10. What struggles have you encountered upon return to your home culture?

11. How have you negotiated these struggles?

12. Who has helped you in negotiating your struggles?

13. How did your family, friends and other people in your home culture perceive you?

14. How would you define 'home'?

15. In what culture (if any) do you feel like you belong or do you feel as a full member? Why?

16. Comments:

Appendix B

Interview Protocol (ISS representative)

1. Background information
   a. Gender

   b. Age

   c. Home culture

2. How long have you worked with international students at SIUC?

3. What inspired you to work with the ISS at SIUC?

4. What are some struggles international students have that you are aware of?

5. What measures have you taken in order to help international students with their struggles?

6. How are international students impacted by US culture?

7. What are some changes in the students that you have been able to observe after they have studied at SIUC for a while?

8. How do you prepare international students for their return to their home culture?

9. Have you heard of any struggles they have encountered upon return to their home culture?

10. What do you think would be a good/better way to prepare international students for their return to their home culture?

11. How do you support international students who feel displaced or marginalized?

12. Comments:

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