Place-Based Intercultural Liminality and the Potential of Art Therapy in Cultural Identity Negotiations

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Abstract

This research, in the form of a literature review, offers a broad discussion of the factors of identity formation related to the complex negotiations of place-bound intercultural liminality, a phenomenon resultant of developmentally early experiences of multiple relocations and exposure to a multiplicity of competing cultural frames of reference without the establishment of a secure cultural home. Moreover, it serves to propose art therapy as a fitting therapeutic technique for intervention for this population due to the inherent qualities of this form of psychotherapy. This would ideally be as a proactive approach to realizing the benefits of a highly cross-cultural upbringing and therefore hindering the highly correlated development of identity confusion or even experiences of cultural homelessness. It has been argued that art therapy carries the potential to ease the transition between cultures in the event of relocation, and adolescents in particular are extraordinarily apt for self-expression and individuation through art and the creative process due to their developmental task of identity construction. As such, self-exploratory and self-reflective art therapy approaches may positively encourage strong emotional resiliency and coping, and thereby promote the formation of a cohesive bicultural identity as opposed to a confused cultural interstitiality.

Keywords: identity crisis, globalization, highly mobile upbringing, migration, acculturative stress transnationalism, biculturalism, interstitiality, cultural homelessness, third culture
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Introduction

Throughout the history of mankind, a single question has taunted the most intelligent and creative amongst us in its enigmatic nature: *Who am I?* Philosophers, artists, academics, scientists, psychologists, theologians, and politicians have all, to little avail, willingly dove into the bottomless ocean of the philosophical paradox presented by these three small words hoping to navigate the waters of abstract logic and reach a semblance of a consensus. But the question persists in our contemporary consciousness; and while we are painfully aware that the investigation of such in hopes of a sure answer is equivalent to approaching the ocean with a teaspoon, driven by an existential fervor we continue to ask: *Who are we?*

An important marker of the contemporary world, the notion of identity has gained significant traction as an inquiry of theoretical academic research interest. Described as ‘the bridge between culture and communication’ (Cockburn, 2002, p. 478) and a ‘unique unification of self and communality’ (Parisian, 2015, p. 130), identity is deeply embedded in a socio-cultural context, and so a contextual shift inevitably alters and re-shapes the metaphorical mold of identity and necessitates re-negotiations of self-definitions (Szabo, 2015). The global forces of economic globalization and migration have therefore quite naturally and inevitably influenced a reframing of the identity construct with multicultural considerations.

In vein with the accelerated focus on multicultural awareness and sensitivity, in the mid-1980s research into identity formation began to develop beyond the foundational framework of Erik Erikson and other pioneers in developmental psychology and identity theory to specifically investigate the contributing factors of identity construction in marginalized minority groups such as African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, females, immigrants, and multi-racial/ethnic individuals. The initial stages of this multicultural framework in identity theory placed emphasis on understanding the contributing factors of power, privilege and oppression that minority groups must confront in navigating self-concept. With the turn of the twenty-first century, the research interest in minority
identity construction advanced towards the inclusion of broader developmental and emotional dilemmas present in the minority experience and its effect on self-concept clarity (Vivero, 1999).

Simultaneously, the phenomenon of globalization began to increase inquiry into new trends in immigration patterns as affecting cultural membership. As opposed to the traditional view of migration as permanent relocation culminating in full assimilation, a radical new framework was proposed to reconceptualize contemporary immigrants as individuals whom sustain social relation within two cultures simultaneously – home and host – rather than one alone (Garret, 2011). This newly popular notion of transnationalism further advanced theoretical and research interest in identity formation to include transnationally bicultural individuals living between cultures and defined by their liminality. In particular importance to this research endeavor, the consequence of a newly recognized cross-cultural demographic and the observed crisis of identity abrasion and negotiation correlated to culturally liminal individuals led rise to the theoretical conceptualization of cultural homelessness (see Hoerdting & Jenkins, 2011; Navarette & Jenkins, 2011; Vivero, 1999) and creation of ‘third cultures’ (see Gandana, 2008).

In recognition of the impact that a highly transnational bicultural upbringing has on the developmental trajectory of an individual’s identity formation, and more specifically ‘place identity construction’ (see Lijadi, 2018; Lijadi & Van Schalkwyk, 2017; Vivero, 1999), research revolving this newly targeted population of cross-culturally immersed and thereby culturally rootless individuals focused first on defining and raising awareness of this phenomenon, but more importantly qualitatively describing the nature of the associated struggles and quantifying the beneficial effects these struggles might have on interpersonal sensitivity. Still, despite the acknowledgement of intercultural adaptation stress on psycho-social development of this demographic of globally nomadic cultural chameleons, a gap remains in recommendations for therapeutic intervention, whether proactive or reactive, to relieve the correlated identity crises.

It is true that, outside of the realm of academia and research, there is a widely popular industry for “Third Culture Kids” (TCK) with cross-cultural upbringings distinguished by high mobility lifestyles that fit within this description of bicultural liminality (Abe, 2018; Cockburn, 2002; Cranston, 2017; Hoerdting & Jenkings, 2011; Lijadi, 2018; Lijadi & Van Schalkwyk, 2017; Lyttle et
This industry, in the form of self-help, surfaces a shared identity and creates a new interstitial cultural enclave to provide a sense of belonging for this otherwise culturally homeless population. The power of the industry lies in its’ assumption of expertise and acting as biopower in producing and providing a name for emotional responses with a previously unknown and unexplored description. In this way, despite the bold simplifying and essentializing view of culture and cultural self-identity, the “self-help” informed TCK industry acts as a psy-discipline in constructing and constituting its cultural members and labeling and shaping their identities as third culture individuals (Cranston, 2017). However, as the world continues to globalize, in effort to uphold of the ethical merits of the true psy-disciplines (i.e. psychiatry, psychology, psychoanalysis, psychotherapy), it is of utmost importance that research be produced to explore professional therapeutic intervention for the developmental crises of identity experienced by TCKs and other liminal individuals distinguished by their markedly cross-cultural upbringing.

It is important to note that, while the TCK industry and identity will be discussed, this research endeavor favors a broader description of the population in focus, using terms such as interculturally liminal and interstitial. The orchestrated production of the TCK identity is focused on a demographic of children of Western businessmen, military families, diplomats, missionaries and other socio-economically privileged populations whom typically intend to relocate multiple times and eventually repatriate, thereby propagating a homogeneous view of the TCK population. This not only overlooks the extreme diversity between like interculturally liminal individuals with similar backgrounds of highly mobile and cross-cultural upbringing, but it essentially ‘McDonald-izes’ this category of migrants and fits them within a consumable “box.” Despite popular usage, the term “Third Culture Kids” is therefore analytically troublesome, conceptually confusing, and inherently limited (Cranston, 2017).

All in all, this research endeavor aims to, in the form of a literature review, serve as a broad discussion of the factors of identity formation related to culturally liminal individuals, with an emphasis on the significance of place. Moreover, it serves to propose art therapy as a fitting therapeutic technique for intervention due to the inherent qualities of this form of psychotherapy. Art
Intercultural Liminality, Art Therapy & Identity Negotiations

Art therapy is an integrative mental health professional psy-discipline which incorporates the creative process of visual art making to facilitate therapeutic reflection and expression. While the application of art therapy for identity negotiations have been researched for numerous populations, the research has focused largely on populations with considerations in developmental stressors (i.e. adolescence, adoptees), marginalization (i.e. minority groups), and multiculturalism (i.e. immigrants, refugees). Those studies that do focus on migration, acculturation and ethno-cultural identity lack a broad overview of the issues within the context of art therapy due to their qualitative nature in the form of case studies (Godfrey, 1998; Kaizer 2003; Sit, 1996). This research aims to fill the gap which remains for distinctly cross-culturally liminal identities described here as the target demographic of interest. Beyond the argument for art therapy as an answer to the need for recommendations for professional therapeutic interventions for identity crises resultant of cultural liminality, recommendations for specific art therapy interventions with high potential for this demographic will be reviewed.

Conceptualizing Identity

Identity is defined as “a number of complex and at times contradictory psychological, physical, cultural, political, and spiritual factors that individuals experience. It is the gathering, creation, and organization of an individual’s abilities, beliefs, goals, and history to create an image of self” (Toledo, 2018, p. 13). In simpler words, identity can be understood as a complex comprised of the piecing together of scattered pieces of personal experience, involving an “inward and outward journey that connects us to the larger world” (Parisian, 2015, p. 30). Though at times contradictory and conflicting, the contributing social, physical, geographical, cultural, historical, political and spiritual factors that assemble identity are all significant in weight in the stratification of self-concept, though varying in weight of influence depending on the particular circumstances of a group or individual. According to Stroufe (1996), however, regardless of specific identity markers, “forming an identity requires an integration of past experiences, current personal changes and societal expectations for one’s future into one’s self concept” (p. 4). When the interrelated components of personal identity are successfully explored, a clear and consistent self-concept emerges, resulting in a consolidated self-sense characterized by positive self-regard and a balanced sense of being (Szabo
& Ward, 2015). But how is identity formed? What negotiations come into play? And even more, what thwarts the construction of a consolidated sense of identity?

**Identity Formation**

Perhaps the most recognized contemporary theoretical model of identity formation is developmental psychologist Erik Erikson’s comprehensive psychoanalytic theory of psychosocial development, which emphasizes the relationship between society and the individual by connecting personal development to social environment. In his theory, Erikson conceptualizes identity development as the fifth of eight sequential developmental stages across a lifespan. Each stage involves a central critical crisis requiring adequate resolution in order to develop a foundation of competence which grows exponentially stronger with every theoretical developmental pass (Erikson, 1982).

In the first two stages, an infant must resolve a crisis of trust versus mistrust, and a toddler of autonomy versus shame/doubt. The following two stages during early and middle childhood respectively confront the child with the crisis of initiative versus guilt, followed by industry versus inferiority. Once a sense of trust, autonomy, initiative, and industry are ideally established through successful resolutions of the initial four stages, the fifth stage of development confronts the adolescent with the psychosocial crisis of identity versus role confusion, during which they are faced with the critical task of consolidating their sense of self (Erikson, 1982). The disequilibrium of self-concept which characterizes teenage years is commonly referred to as an identity crisis, defined as a normative period of identity development during which an individual must explore ‘masks’ of identity and decide *who they are* (Erikson, 1982).

Only with a successful construction of self-concept can the adolescent then move on to the final three stages of development of early, middle and late adulthood, during which an individual is challenged to achieve intimacy over isolation, generativity over stagnation, and ego integrity over despair, respectively (Erikson, 1982). While it is possible to revisit unsuccessfully resolved crises and retroactively resolve them, the failure to resolve a stage successfully negatively affects the potential of successful resolutions thereafter (Lijadi, 2018). According to this framework of psychosocial
development, Erikson therefore argues that a coherent sense of identity is carefully and continually constructed through meaningful self-exploration and negotiation throughout a lifespan, rather than simply the sum of early identity markers (Parisian, 2015).

**Identity Statuses & Formation Styles**

In specific focus for this research endeavor is the challenge of overcoming role confusion in adolescence. Although there are several theories conceptualizing identity construction with differing stages and terminologies, they all, like Erikson’s, identify intensive analysis, self-introspection and decision-making as a critical staple of adolescent years (Force, 2019). Other theories are important to note, however, in discussion of contemporary understanding of identity formation. James Marcia’s ‘identity status theory,’ for example, extends Erikson’s theory to propose four identity statuses of psychological identity development defined by choices and commitments made during an individual’s search for self-concept consolidation. ‘Identity foreclosure’ describes uninformed blind decision-making; ‘identity diffusion’ describes reluctancy to decide; ‘moratorium’ describes active self-introspection and crisis confrontation; and finally, ‘identity achievement’ describes successful identity construction. Simply put, these statuses describe the steps towards resolution and identity commitment, yet don’t fully outline the way ‘identity achievement’ is realized (Kasinath, 2013).

Another theory to note is Berzonsky’s 1989 process-oriented theory of identity styles, which builds upon both Erikson and Marcia’s identity theories and paradigms to explore how individuals confront their psychosocial dilemmas and decision-making tasks when negotiating identity, and the effect these distinctive styles of dilemma confrontation have on the structure, evaluation and perception of self-identity. Berzonsky identified three different strategic styles of exploring the tasks of constructing self-concept, maintaining a consistent sense of self, and revising self-concept in the event of an identity crisis – in other words, coping strategies to stressors and potential threats to self-identity (Szabo & Ward, 2015).

According to Berzonsky’s theory, ‘informational’ style individuals are characterized as information seekers whom actively explore alternatives and evaluate self-relevant findings. This ‘seeking’ style has been correlated in subsequent research with higher cognitive complexity and
motivation and higher willingness to engage in identity revision, leading to a well-integrated identity structure. ‘Normative’ style individuals are less independently ‘seeking,’ more influenced by social norms, and pursue stability over change. Finally, ‘diffuse-avoidant’ style individuals are characterized by conscious delays of explorative behavior and decision-making, leading to tendencies towards excuse and short-term decision-making. This weak commitment style has been negatively correlated with identity commitment and self-concept clarity resulting in a present-oriented, loosely integrated identity structure (Szabo & Ward, 2015). This theory is helpful in conceptualizing identity due to its recognition that, beyond the psycho-social factors in play, there are associated coping mechanisms that can either benefit or further detriment an individual’s potential for a fully integrated and balanced sense of self.

**Conceptualizing Cultural Identity**

The strongest implication of Erikson’s emphasis on sociality in his theory of identity development, as well as the theories that came thereafter and built upon his work, is the assertion that one of the most significant and formative elements in the construction of identity and development of self-concept is *culture*. According to Thomas and Schwarzbaum (2006), “culture not only determines our perception of ourselves and others, it also shapes who we are and how we organize our lives” (p. 3). By surrounding the individual, culture in effect impacts the person they become (Moore & Barker, 2010). But what *is* culture, after all? And what about the omnipresence of culture in the life of ‘man’ grants it the ever-influential force it carries on human development? A dynamic *process* in essence, ‘culture’ as a concept is multitudinous in nature and requires understanding in order to fully grasp the ways in which ‘cultural identity’ informs overall exploration, maintenance, and reconciliation of self-construct.

**Defining Culture**

While difficult to precisely define, the concept of ‘culture’ has a general consensus of understanding. According to Lemzoudi (2007), “culture is a linear transmission of knowledge expanding through time, through the values and physical attributes of a group, and the shared
mundane experience of life” (p. 3). It encompasses the shared values, beliefs, attitudes, and learned behaviors of a group (Salazar, 2018), and includes group linguistic, customary and ritualistic characteristics permeated through encultured socialization (Goldman, 1994). Culture pervades all aspects of life and therefore dictates the way we interact with and give meaning to the world around us by guiding our attention to, and perception and construction of thinking and behavior patterns (Lemzoudi, 2007). In other words, “what we see and take in depends on our culture and what the culture chooses to pay attention to or see as important” (Salazar, 2018, p. 5).

Building a Cultural Home through a Sense of Belonging

The theory of social constructionism dictates that in order to make sense of a challenging world, humans interact collectively so to develop ‘constructs’ for understanding. This theoretically supports the view that the nature of human interaction is dependent upon the surrounding environment and perception of that environment. It also sets the ground for the development of social cohesion within a group or society through the cooperative formation of shared values and practices. Social cohesion in turn allows for individuals within a group or society to develop a sense of belonging to a greater whole, which subsequently allows for the creation of what is referred to as a cultural home.

According to Vivero (1999), “a cultural home is a sense of belonging to an ethnic or geographic community with consistent socialization themes and traditions, demarcated by a clear understanding of who the in- and out- groups are” (p. 9). It is informed by the cultural frame of references developed through the ‘constructs’ built by a society, which includes their cultural, social and emotional norms. Through the stability of belonging to a collective of shared environment, history, practice and other contributing elements of culture, an individual is able to find security in their social support systems, inscribe meaning unto their social interactions, and increase emotional attachment to their cultural group (Vivero, 1999). As positive emotional attachment increases, a sense of belonging increases, and so the process becomes a positive feedback loop.

As explained by De Vos (1975), “people need to attain a sense of survival through social belonging, which can be achieved by self-identifying with, preferring, and behaving according to one’s own ethnic [or cultural] group” (p. 10). The socialization process and acceptance of individuals
as members of a cultural home allows a group to become a cultural enclave with symbolic and emotional ties that foster a socially cohesive in-group mentality and feeling of “being at home.” Ultimately, by providing a sense of safety and security through a sense of belonging, the cognitively grasped concept of a cultural home becomes a vital coping resource and means of survival for an individual, for the society or cultural group to which they belong, and for the separate yet complementary development of identity for both (Vivero, 1999).

**Cultural Identity and the Locality of a Cultural ‘Home’**

According to Tajfel (1981), “cultural identity is a personal experience of representation and ‘part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from knowledge of membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership’” (p.255). With this definition in mind, the feeling of “belonging” and commitment to a cultural home is arguably the most vital component and foundational necessity in the construction of a cultural identity (Phinney and Ong, 2007).

Although a stable location is not necessarily always an essential feature of a cultural home, as is the case with cultural groups such as nomadic Gypsies, there is a marked significance to the geographical and physical space associated with an individual’s view of what is home? and where do I belong? which greatly influences the sense of “feeling at home” and subsequent production of self-concept (Vivero, 1999). If the construction of a cultural identity is dependent upon a sense of belonging, and the emotional response of ‘belonging’ is seen as produced in relation to ‘place,’ a person’s particular place of origin and culture and the emotional connection they foster with the physical surroundings that inform their sense of a cultural home during their earlier years of development must have deep influence on their cultural identity (Cranston, 2008; Garret, 2011).

According to Lijadi & Van Schalkwyk (2017), “Home – the physical component of the dwelling, town, city, or country of residence – is where people develop place attachments during their early childhood years, engage in social interactions, and explore identity during adolescence” (p. 191). In this sense, the initial construction of identity can be considered as rooting and residing in the social relations and interactions related to the physical space of ‘home’ and the community in which
the home is situated – the broader cultural home. Indeed, an integral part of identity development is a person’s place identity, or the way in which one makes meaning of their sense of belonging to a certain place (Lijadi & Van Schalkwyk, 2017). By adding value to a place, a person grows a strong affiliation with it so much so that their developed sense of identity becomes imbedded in their sense of emotional belonging to said place (Lijadi, 2018). As such, the locality of the cultural home becomes an anchor for cultural identity (by way of place identity) against the inevitability of change throughout the lifespan (Lijadi & Van Schalkwyk, 2017).

**Cultural Identity: A Crisis of Cultural Awakening**

As discussed in relation to place identity construction theory, the significance of a particular place in the making of a cultural home is reliant upon the social meanings and beliefs attached to the interactions between an individual and their social surroundings. With this in mind, it can be argued that the ‘self’ is a product of social interaction. This notion highlighting the importance of sociality in the production of self-identity is the foundation of the closely allied ‘social identity theory’ and ‘self-categorization theory.’ Under these theoretical frameworks, the social behaviors of a person and the way they organize themselves within cultural frames of reference in order to inform their social interactions “underscores the extent to which an individual feels a sense of belonging” and provides a “sense of self-identity and self-verification” in relation to the individual’s cultural surrounding (Burholt, 2010, p. 3-4). If this is true, then cultural identity is most forwardly expressed through the self-categorization into cultural groups enabled by the feeling of belonging to a cultural home (van Oudenhoven, Ward, & Masgoret, 2006), making culture and cultural identity more than simply something we ‘have,’ but also something we ‘do’ (Brubaker, 2006).

If cultural identity is both something we ‘have’ and ‘do,’ however, it becomes interesting to note that it is thought to not be activated in an individual until it rises to consciousness as a consequence to a ‘crisis.’ According to Sue and Sue (1999), the dynamic development of cultural identity is put into motion through the destabilization of an individual’s cultural self-concept. Only when thrown into flux through events that pose a threat to a cultural group, their social cohesion, or their cultural values (i.e. oppression, migration, intercultural contact, loss of cultural home) does an
individual become aware of cultural difference and begin to evaluate their unique cultural identity. In summary, the awakening of a ‘crisis’ leads to a period of deep self-exploration and culminates in the achievement of identity reconstruction through recommitment or adaptation to the surrounding culture (Lemzoudi, 2007).

While no model has been formulated to describe the development of cultural identity prior to the identified destabilizing ‘crisis,’ several models of cultural identity development have been theorized based on Erikson’s conceptual framework for psychosocial development. Phinney (1993), for example, proposed a simple three-stage model, beginning with the unexamined identity, followed by an identity search, and concluding with identity achievement. This model is conceptually similar to Marcia’s ‘identity status theory,’ which helps understand cultural identity formation in suggesting the reason identity begins in an unexamined form. Under Marcia’s theory, identity can be understood as initially unexamined because the individual either hasn’t explored it (identity diffusion) or has thoughtlessly accepted the one given to them (identity foreclosure) (Kasinath, 2013). In any case, it is the catalytic awakening or crisis that fires a person’s existential awareness of their cultural identity.

The Crisis of Relocation in a Globalized World

The concept of cultural identity is simultaneously affective, perceptual and cognitive and can therefore be conceptualized as “the image of the self and the culture intertwined in the individual’s total conception of reality” (Casmir, 1984, p. 2). In essence, an individual’s identity is so enmeshed within their culture that the two are one in the same and cannot be separated. Yet culture, notably characterized by its in-staticity and aptitude for change, is described as a “living organism…constantly changing, interacting, and adapting with every encounter” (Sajnani, 2012, p. 197 qtd. in Hunnewell, 2019). According to Thomas & Schwarzbaum (2006), “Since the concept of the self is closely tied to one’s role in society, a change of culture implies a redefinition of one’s role, one’s relation and identification with society and with oneself” (p. 3). Ultimately, the changes inherent to the process of ‘culture’ effectively disrupt our sense of who we are and where we belong,
thereby initiating an awakening of a culturally-bound search for identity and forcing us to confront the task of renegotiating our personal identity based upon self-insight into our cultural belonging.

**Migration & Intercultural Adaptation**

There are numerous forces that have historically and will continue to threaten formation of cultural identities, such as the experiences of oppression between groups and events of new intercultural contact. Due to the critical centrality of place and locality attached to the formation of cultural identity, however, the event of relocation carries with it potential of the highest degree of cataclysm for an individual in their existential need to maintain coherent self-concept. Migration, by whatever force or reason, involves the uprooting of an individual from their cultural home and relocation into a setting to which the individual must adapt within a majority culture in order to survive. It is “equivalent to a rupture from one’s culture, one’s conception of whom one is and what it means to be in this world” (Lemzoudi, 2007, p. 3). While the degree of change between cultural contexts in relocation can vary, the need to change aspects of one’s self-concept and renegotiate self-identity is considered a rather inevitable result of the exposure to new information and need to accommodate the unfamiliar cultural contexts of a new location (Hoerdting & Jenkings, 2011). The struggle faced by migrants is therefore the task of re-integrating their past and existing sense of self-identity and developing meaningful connection and a sense of belonging in a new home. Indeed, “a sense of location that previously existed must be recreated, rediscovered and re-organized within a very different cultural milieu” (Emberley, 2005, p. 10).

This process of intercultural adaptation which characterizes the identity negotiation of the crisis of relocation is described by Lyttle et al. (2011) as involving a series of four sub-processes with assimilation as the final product. The first sub-process is enculturation, or the process one undergoes in the initial socializing into and adoption of the frames of reference of their cultural home based upon their place and group of origin. The second sub-process of cultural learning and relearning occurs upon the exposure to the new culture, upon which the acculturation process is begun. Acculturation describes the process of modification and cultural changes that occur as a result to exposure to and/or contact with new or different cultures. It is defined as “a process by which
individuals, upon relocating into an unfamiliar cultural environment, establish (or reestablish) and maintain a relatively stable, reciprocal, and functional relationship with the [new] environment” (Kim, 2002, p. 260). Acculturation is a necessity in order to achieve competency and survive in the new environment of a new dominant culture.

Due to the significant barriers to maintaining ties with a cultural home and those left behind with it through long-distance communication or visitations, migration traditionally implies a permanent relocation and therefore a complete uprooting of life. In the process of adapting to the new location of ‘home,’ an individual is assumed to deculturate from their original cultural home and acculturate to host culture to the degree of assimilation as a final state of equilibrium (Lyttele et al., 2011). Simultaneously to the process of acculturation, as the individual begins to adopt new cultural norms of the dominant culture, they concurrently begin the third sub-process of deculturation, which involves the release of their encultured frames of reference of their original cultural home. Finally, as the coinciding interplay of acculturation and deculturation comes to a balance, the individual is thought to achieve assimilation into their new location as they take on the frames of reference of the cultural majority in exchange for that of their cultural place of origin and complete the four sub-process cycle (Lyttele et al., 2011). According to Lemzoudi (2007), “assimilation involves relinquishing one’s cultural heritage and distinctiveness and embracing the one of the dominant culture” (p. 4). Indeed, in discussion of intercultural adaptation, early theoretical frameworks argued that “assimilation into the dominant culture was inevitable, desirable, and culminated in the rupture of identification with the culture of origin” (Lemzoudi, 2007, p. 4). In essence, under this traditional perspective, migration was thought to involve full adoption of the cultural values and norms of the dominant culture to which the migrant is adapting, with an eventual but sure rejection of their original culture (Kasinath, 2013).

The Effects of Globalization

Yet the experience of the modern migrant is unique to this traditional perspective on the cultural adaptation process. As the phenomenon of globalization began to grow into the main descriptor of the modern era, a global mind-frame became the dominant logic of many people’s lives.
but held special effect on the logic of the modern migrant (Moore & Barker, 2010). The increased frequency and ease of travel and communication in the era of globalization changed the face of global immigration, slowly but surely increasing the interwovenness and interdependence between nations and cultures, and changing the world into the direction of “homogeneous global village” with a previously unparalleled sharing and mixing of cultures which jeopardize conclusive national identities (Garret, 2011; Moore & Barker, 2010; qtd. in Burholt, 2010, p. 8). Globalization is a modern phenomenon fundamentally defined as the close integration of people, cultures and nations around the world made possible by the exceptional advances of modern communication and information technologies, as well as the reduction of global transportation cost for international mobility (Garret, 2011). As a concept, globalization is acknowledged as relevant to and interconnected with the emergence and reconstruction of new cultural identities particular to a modern world (Esteban-Guitart & Vila, 2015). By metaphorically removing the geographical barriers once in place between nations, the force of globalization has enabled the process of migration to adopt a less rigid framing than as a single permanent cross-cultural geographic move with definitive deculturation from a home culture and eventual assimilation into a new host society.

While migration and international relocation was certainly not a new occurrence, and while migration did not mean a definitive cessation of all communication between a migrant and their cultural home of origin, the introduction of advanced communication information technologies and the radical new ease of international mobility drastically transformed the ability of the migrant to keep regular and sustained cross-cultural contact. As a result, the notions of acculturation, deculturation and assimilation within the process of migration and cultural adaptation transformed to include a greater leniency for migrants to position themselves in a place between both home and host society simultaneously (Garret, 2011). Rather than necessitating a full relinquishing of the cultural home of origin, successful assimilation in a globalized world has the potential to instead resemble the amalgamation of both home and host cultures in a balanced state of equilibrium with cultural attachment to both here and there rather than one over the other (Lyttle et al. 2011). Propelled by the phenomenon of globalization, migrants have been afforded the opportunity to acculturate without
force or pressure to assimilate fully. With this balancing act between cultures, the modern migrant becomes *bicultural* in their simultaneous maintenance of two independent yet coexisting cultural ties.

**Biculturalism & Transnationalism**

In the 1990s, as new trends of migration began to invite inquiry into the phenomenon of globalization as an influence on the modern migrant, a new term to describe the *bicultural* circumstance of people living in between two cultural frameworks and sustaining dual cultural ties emerged with sudden urgency: *transnationalism* (Garret, 2011). The most widely accepted definition of the term stems from the critical anthropological work of Nina Glick Schiller and her colleagues in their 1995 publication, “From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration,” which validated the cross-cultural state of transnationalism as a theoretical contribution to research and study of migration. Challenging the traditional sense of permanence in the process of migration and inevitability of assimilation, Glick Schiller, Basch and Blanc reconceptualized the adaptation process of the migrant by placing the modern migrant within the frame of transnationalism as the “process by which immigrants forge and sustain simultaneous multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement” (p. 48).

According to the authors, through the creation of cross-border and intercontinental networks, transnational migrants are uniquely able to balance active social and cultural participation in their host countries while “at the same time, they are engaged elsewhere in the sense that they maintain connections, build institutions, conduct transactions, and influence local and national events in the countries from which they emigrated” (Glick Schiller et al., 1995, p.48). This was recently examined in the Article 1 study, in which the researchers positively correlated the engagement in transnational relationships and interactions with the forging and sustaining of a bicultural transnational identity with a dual sense of belonging (Burholt, 2010). The ability to successfully navigate the acculturation process in a fashion which maintains strong links to both home and host culture is referred to as *bicultural competence* (Hoerdting & Jenkings, 2011). To synthesize, through a sustained dialogue between the country of origin “there” and the host country “here” emerged a cross-national existence not possible before the dawn of globalization and its’ introduction of modern communication and
mobility, allowing the modern transmigrant to develop bicultural competence and maintain strong engagement in the political, social and cultural components of two geographically separate yet emotionally significant “homes” (Garret, 2011).

There are several models theorizing the integrative process of modern transmigrant identity. According to the extensive quantitative research study *International Comparitive Study of Ethnocultural Youth* (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006 cited in Esteban-Guibart & Vila, 2015), the four adaptive strategies of immigrant identity construction are *diffusion* (characterized by role confusion), *national pattern* (characterized by preference of and assimilation to the host culture), *ethnic model* (characterized by preference of one’s own cultural home of origin), and *integration model* (characterized by a simultaneous commitment to both cultures and ethnic codes). Similarly, according to Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco (2003), there are three dominant strategies of immigrant identity construction. *Ethnic flight* refers to the weakening of ties and renouncement of identification with the ethnic/cultural home of origin in favor of the new dominant culture. *Active opposition* refers to a rejection of the new dominant culture in favor of the cultural home of origin and is often associated with experiences of prejudice and oppression. Finally, *biculturalism* refers to “the adaptive style situated between the extremes of opposition and ethnic flight” (Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco, 2003, p.193 cited in Esteban-Guibart & Vila, 2015). According to similarly veined research by Phinney, J. (1990), there are multiple approaches to biculturality. One could take on a chameleon-like adaptability characterized by seamless codeswitching between cultural codes according to environment, or instead fuse the diverse codes so fully that they merge into a new and complete whole entity.

Regardless of the chosen theoretical perspective, in all of the theories of immigrant identity construction, *bicultural identity* and the preservation of affective bonds with both home and host culture and creative fusion of the two as an adaptive coping tactic of relocation allows for the acquirement of necessary survival skills for successful functioning. Even more, they increase potential of optimal psychological and sociocultural adaption and personal well-being through successful integration and management of daily life (Esteban-Guitart & Vila, 2015). These findings are mirrored in the work of Marks, et al. (2011), which correlated successful bicultural identity
integration with higher self-esteem and achievement and fewer mental health dysfunctions. As such, an embrace of a *bicultural* transnational identity is the most adaptive and most ideal reaction to the crisis of relocation.

It is important to note that not all modern migrants embrace the modern opportunity of a bicultural transnational identity. While most migrants are at least occasionally participatory in transnational practices and involvement, the extent of transnationality is fluid and susceptible to change based upon the circumstances and stages of an individual’s life. As stated in Levitt (2004), transmigrants “climb two different social ladders, moving up, remaining steady, or experiencing downward mobility, in various combinations, with respect to both sites” (para. 9). At minimum, however, a transnational perspective reveals the compatibility possible between enduring ties with a cultural home of origin and growing attachments to the new home of a host society synchronously (Levitt, 2004).

**Transnational Identity Negotiation & Acculturative Stress**

With the modernizations of a highly globalized world surfaced a plurality in the notion of a cultural identity. For a bicultural transnational individual, multiple identities do not need to be oppositional and come at the expense of one another (Burholt, 2010). Rather, each fragment of the transmigrant’s personal history and sense of belonging to both their host society and cultural home of origin (whether by place and/or ethnic group) is an elemental part of the construction of their self-identity (Salazar, 2018). The complexity of conceptualizing transnational identity stems from this fundamental notion of multiple place-based attachments between more than one culture and cultural home (Garret, 2011). With this evolution in the understanding of cultural identity, however, comes a “growing need to understand how cultural transition affects the identity of immigrants and explore the factors that can potentially contribute to the [creation of new cultural homes and] development of a positive and coherent [bicultural] immigrant identity” (Szabo & Ward, 2015, p. 13).

Although there are obvious benefits to the potential of achieving bicultural transnationalism, in an increasingly geographically mobile world with ever-evolving cultural sharing, mixing and international living it becomes more and more critical to understand the developmental *hazards* of a
multicultural transnational experience, particularly in regard to identity construction (Vivero, 1999). Transnationality is described as a “fine balance [for the transmigrant] between who they were, or thought they were, and who they are becoming” (Garret, 2011, p. 36). As with the intercultural adaptation process for traditional migrants, that of the bicultural transnational is still similarly concerned with the process of acculturation, and consequently with the substantial process of identity negotiation and reconstruction due to newly adjusted cultural frames of reference. Indeed, cultural identity integration can be considered the central task of the adaptation process. The course of acculturating to new cultural contexts of a new majority culture is inherently more stressful on the acculturating migrant as they undergo a simultaneous deconstruction and reconstruction of their personal frames of reference in negotiating the social realms and norms of their cultural home of origin versus their new host environment and its majority culture (Lemzoudi, 2007). This often results in an experience of codeswitching confusion in regard to when and how to portray oneself according to diverse cultural frames (Salazar, 2018).

When bicultural transnationals struggle in identifying and sorting their group membership status, they often begin to experience identity abrasion as they lose a solid sense of belonging to a cultural home. (Szabo & Ward, 2015). Repercussions of interstitiality on the psychological well-being of the migrant in crisis of place identity reconstruction are common and expected, as the consequence of relocation is the invitation of a sense of not belonging and not feeling ‘at home’ therefore triggering emotional and mental distress (Lemzoudi, 2007). Since the emotional experience of migration effectively disrupts the process of belonging, the event of relocation frequently culminates in a normative acculturation identity crisis (Szabo & Ward, 2015). The task of navigating and adjusting to diverse and dissimilar cultural attitudes, perspectives, values, behaviors and practices as a natural component of living in-between two cultures/societies is challenging and requires both psychological and socio-cultural resiliency as the experience of ambivalence threatens a split in self-representation. The internal experience of the losses that come with cultural adaptation have even been referred to a process of grief and mourning due to the nostalgia of the phome left behind (Tummala-Narr, 2014). Ultimately, the acculturative distress generated has potential to negatively impact self-esteem, self-perception, perception of one’s own and competing cultural groups, and
overall mental health through an onset of “confusion, anxiety, depression, feelings of marginality and alienation, elevated levels of psychosomatic symptoms, and identity confusion” (Lemzoudi, 2007). This is especially true for involuntary migrants such as refugees (Ward 2001) yet relevant as a risk to all individuals experiencing relocation and cultural adaptation processes.

**Living in Between: Exploring Liminality in Intercultural Identity**

Research on transnational identity and the crisis of relocation has only risen in focus and production since the wave of academic inquiry into globalization and migration studies in the close of the twentieth century. The majority of research into the process of acculturation and intercultural adaptation, however, was developed under the assumption that acculturating individuals negotiating their cultural identity within multi-cultural contexts of home versus host identification are doing so under the circumstance of a single permanent cross-cultural geographic move (Hoerdting & Jenkings, 2011). However, as trends in globalization continue to shift the patterns of modern migration, more and more individuals embrace high mobility lifestyles characterized by movement between multiplicities of cultures (Lijadi, 2018). This is true of the frequent short-term traveler, but more importantly of the temporary migrant whom, in the fashion of a global nomad, makes the conscious voluntary choice to relocate and establish temporary residencies, whether for external or existential reasons (Madison, 2006). The underlying quality is that of an expectation to acculturate rather than an expectation of unattached transience (Cockburn, 2002). Most importantly, with the increase in familial migratory patterns, it became increasingly common for children and adolescents to experience multiple events of relocation and exposure to numerous cultures during their most impressionable years of development (Hoerdting & Jenkings, 2011). Indeed, “being raised internationally is not a new phenomenon, but an increasing fact of life” (Cockburn, 2002, p. 476). So how do these individuals, particularly those young migrants with deeply transnational experiences in their developmental years, negotiate their place-based identities through multiple crises of relocation?

As a further matter, the literature produced significantly concentrated on the characteristics, formation processes, practices and correlated benefits or consequences of cultural adaptation identity outcomes of either: (a) assimilation to the majority culture, (b) marginalization into the minority
culture, or (c) bicultural integration of both home and host culture. While identity models such as James Marcia’s identity status model (see subsection: “Identity Statuses & Formation Styles”) and that presented in Berry et al.’s 2006 *International Comparative Study of Ethnocultural Youth* (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006 cited in Esteban-Guitart & Vila, 2015) (see subsection: “Biculturalism & Transnationalism) do acknowledge the possibility of identity diffusion (characterized by a clouded sense of identity due to role confusion and commitment apprehension to an identity group), diffused identity is often mainly discussed in regards to negative psychological effects and the potential approaches to encourage cultural identity integration. But with a highly mobile developmental upbringing where the notion of “home” is constantly being recreated, the impression of a cultural home becomes muddied in the multiplicities of cultural experience. To which groups do these individuals belong? Do they belong in all as ‘world citizens’? To some by extension of choice? To none?

For the purposes of this research endeavor, such individuals within the transnational population will be described as *intercultural* (rather than multi-, cross-, or bi-cultural) due to their liminal occupancy in the interstices between cultures. They will be investigated in terms of their unique place identity construction, or lack thereof; the resultant cultural rootlessness experienced; and the ways in which they navigate cultural belongingness in their existential search for identity.

**Adolescence & Place-based Interstitiality**

Casey (2001) asserts that “there is no place without self and no self without place.” The locality of a cultural home and a *place* through which to develop encultured attachment serves as a significant anchor to one’s construction and protection of a cohesive cultural identity in the face of change throughout the lifespan (Liljadi & Van Schalkwyk, 2017). In the event of significant change in physical setting and people, there is a correspondingly significant modification of a person’s frame of reference and thereby an echoed change in their self-concept (Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff, 1983). A key influence on an individual’s ability to maintain emotional connectedness and sense of belongingness, *place identity* is a salient and integral component of self-identity and benchmark for future experiences (Lijadi & Schalkwyk, 2017) (see subsection: “Cultural Identity and the Locality
of a ‘Cultural Home’"). However, for interculturally liminal individuals, the application of place identity by pure definition is not entirely suitable due to the frequent relocations and rebuilding of ‘home’ during their impressionable developmental years and consequent strikingly early exposure to multiplicities of cultural codes (see Lijadi, 2018; Lijadi & Van Schalkwyk, 2017; Vivero, 1999). Indeed, “change was the only constant in their lives, and place identity had to be constructed in a different way as they could not establish a sense of belonging and attachment to any one place for long” (9.126). This is relevant both to the globetrotting young migrant experiencing continuous movement to new cultures, and to the potentially overwhelming and negative experience of repatriation into a society after the confusion of cultural exposure from an initial relocation(s) (Lijadi, 2018; Abe, 2018). As discerned by Lijadi & Schalkwyk (2017), this leaves us with the curious question of how children with high-mobility upbringing “make sense of the world and what meanings…they attribute to a place called home” (p. 121).

The consensus that adolescent years are characterized by a critical stage of intensive analysis, self-introspection and decision making related to crisis of role confusion and search for identity consolidation is widespread in the theoretical conceptualization of identity construction (Force, 2019) (see section: “Conceptualizing Identity”). This is especially relevant to interculturally liminal individuals with experiences of high mobility and multicultural exposure during their developmental years due to the particular risk of acculturative stress-related identity crises in young migrants (both within and without the demographic of interculturality) associated with the involuntary nature of their migration as a choice activated and actualized by their parental and family units (Lemzoudi, 2007).

Though migration is always influential and requires adaptation, acculturating adults are presumed to have already undergone and achieved resolution in their foundational sense of self-identity, with a solid sense of cultural home and place identity as anchor (Moore & Baker, 2010). However, childhood memories and experiences of social learning and enculturation are key components for achieving consolidation of identity development (Erikson, 1982; Phinney, 1990; Piaget, 1972; Pollock & Van Reken, 1999) as well as membership commitment to a cultural group. For that reason, commemorated memories or even current experiences of significant disruption (such as developmentally early exposure to divergent and contradictory cultural codes through cross-
cultural upbringing) may result in difficulty with finding a sense of belonging during adolescence, consequentially increasing vulnerability to a weak and clouded cultural identity and overall self-concept (Hoerdting & Jenkins, 2011). This is supported by studies that suggest that length of exposure to competing cultural codes is secondary to the age of exposure (see Lyttle et al., 2011).

The distinctly intercultural young migrant with a liminal and interstitial occupancy in cultural membership due to multiple relocations during developmental years is even more affected than the child migrant whom undergoes a single permanent cross-cultural geographic move (or otherwise multicultural child). In the words of Lijadi & Van Schalkwyk (2017), “moving across borders at regular intervals and having to time and again establish as sense of stability and belongingness in a new host country poses a threat to identity development, particularly as they continue the struggle to belong and to find acceptance of and affirmation for who they are” (p. 127). According to one such individual, “Having experienced this feeling [of not fully belonging anywhere in the world], even fleetingly, causes us to ask deep questions about identity” (qtd. in Cranston, 2017). It could be argued that young intercultural migrants have a sense of attachment to many places as potential cultural homes rather than the suggestion of attachment to no place at all, thereby embodying true transculturalism (Lijadi, 2018). Still, rather than being given the appropriate time to be socialized into a new culture and achieve biculturalism (Lijadi & Van Schalkwyk, 2017), children and adolescents of the liminal intercultural demographic in focus are continually relocated and forced to disrupt their processes of acculturation and identity integration in one location in order to begin again in yet another (Moore & Barker, 2010).

Cultural Homelessness

Research has identified five enabling modalities that can ease the construction of place identity. These modalities are: (1) sense of stability, (2) sense of belonging, (3) sense of direction, (4) sense of connectedness, (5) sense of community. In relation to the interculturally liminal individual with an upbringing characterized by high mobility and cultural exposure, these are more difficult to attain, yet not impossible. Stability can be maintained through nostalgic keepsakes and daily routine; belonging through an emphasis on positive socialization-based rather than place based attachment.
and membership to at least one cultural group; direction through long-term career commitments rather than short-term projects; connectedness through a sense of social support; and community through commitment to group membership – an especially hard task for this population. When these modalities are not met, however, the experience of intercultural liminality becomes a swirling concoction of identity-threatening circumstances that could affect later success (Lijadi, 2018). Indeed, the pervasive experience of cultural difference from the surrounding sociocultural environment and perceived lack of a cultural home, compounded with the structural marginality that results from the pressure to both acquire new cultural frames of reference and meet the demands of competing cultural codes through complex practices of codeswitching, is a bubbling recipe for chronic feelings of “not belonging” and corresponding emotions of shame, confusion, and self-blame (Navarette & Jenkins, 2011).

When meeting new people and introducing oneself, place-identity is often one of the initial points of inquiry within the conversation as it allows for conceptual placement of the individual within a perceptual construct of what their cultural home might say about them. For the interculturally liminal individual with a highly mobile upbringing and difficulty defining a definite sense of home, these questions carry the potential to become a source of anxiety. Not only may it be difficult to frame the response to the question of Where are you from? or Where is home? within the expected nationalistic frame, but the abstract explanation runs the risk of producing judgment due to, for example, perceived arrogance for international experience or physical disparity from the expected construct of the home identified (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009; Cranston, 2017). The inability to define home thereby alienates the individual both cognitively and socially.

Vivero (1999) developed a construct concept and defined this experience as cultural homelessness. Theoretically, a person is identified as culturally homeless when they meet all three necessary conceptual domains of (1) a lack of cultural membership and attachment, (2) lack of cultural home, and (3) need for a cultural home. The occurrence of cultural homelessness was uniquely conceptualized as the undesirable emotional response to identity abrasion and unconsolidated identity due to place based intercultural liminality, yet it is not limited to this population as it can be extended to and experienced by other multi-culturals. Still, it holds
distinctively different patterns than the experience of multicultural marginality as it is not a sense of *not being at home*, but rather a feeling of not *having* a home (Vivero, 1999). While partial identification with various cultures may form, the experience is fundamentally characterized by multiple rejections from and/or inability to commit to cultural group membership (Navarrete & Jenkins, 2011). As expressed by one such individual on the topic of *home*: “It’s never just one place. There are little things that you’ll pick up everywhere you live, whether it’s values or traditions that you take with you everywhere you go, so you’re not 100% entirely at home anywhere” (qtd. in Moore & Barker, p. 558). In a sense, for the culturally rootless person, despite partial attachments, all groups are outgroups.

Beyond the feeling of cultural homelessness as a negative response to the experience of living in the interstices of cultural belonging, for the young intercultural migrant struggling to reconcile the crisis of multiple relocations, the ontological insecurity of place-based liminality has been associated in literature as having the negative repercussions of emotional grief and insecurity, so much so that the state of cultural interstitiuality carries the potential to be perceived as a loss of potential “self” that could have come to form in a monocultural environment (Cranston, 2017). In reaction to this feeling of loss often comes a feeling of “longing for a safe, secure and, in some cases, idyllic place where [one] can be in a norm-free context, free of the demands of having to adapt and adjust” (Liljadi and Van Schalkwyk, 2017, p. 7).

**Inhabiting a “Third Culture”**

It has been proposed that the repetitive cycles of acculturation and deculturation, and the experience of having navigated the cultural adaptation and identity management required by these cycles, pushes the culturally interstitial individual to undergo an “intercultural evolution” (Kim, 2008) characterized by “a mental outlook that exhibits greater cognitive differentiation” with a capacity for “an increasingly inclusive and transcendental perception and awareness” (Gundykunst and Kim, 2003, p.365). This intercultural evolution leads to what is referred to as a *third-culture perspective* (Gundykunst and Kim, 2003). The concept is highly related to that of biculturalism but is unique in the sense that it views the capacity for bicultural integration as enabling the creation of a *new* culture.
rather than limited to a balanced joining of two separate but now reconciled cultures. “While the person who has been globally mobile as a child is argued not to feel as if they belong to the ‘first’ or ‘second’ culture, they find a sense of belonging in the ‘third’” (Cranston, 2017).

This unique third culture comprised of individuals whom have undergone the experience of navigating a theoretically similar intercultural liminality also proposes a capacity of interpersonal (social and emotional) sensitivity which enables intercultural communication competence, and consequently a uniquely shared universalized worldview (Lyttle et al., 2011). Although a rather scattered and not easily identified population (Lijadi, 2018), when interacting with other third culture individuals, this demographic will arguably feel a sense of shared experience and thereby produce a shared notion of acceptance and belonging – thus effectively affirming the notion of the third culture (Cranston, 2017; Lyttle et al., 2011). As expressed by one such individual, “There is something about growing up in and among many cultures that creates an emotional experience and bind that transcends the details” (qtd. in Cranston, 2017, p. 32). In this way, the creation of a third place-less international culture moves cultural identity formation beyond a solely place-based account and answers the search for a cultural home to which this demographic can feel a sense of belonging.

The idea that a perceived notion of shared liminality can provide an affirming context for feelings of belongingness (and therefore promote identity exploration and negotiation) is confirmed by Hoare’s 2019 research studies, which explored intra-ethnic migrant friendships in early adolescence as “provid[ing] a safe space and enabling context in which participants could explore identity enactments related to both heritage and… reference groups.” This study is based upon the concept of homophily, which describes the tendency for people to seek and form connections with those similar to themselves and is expressed to be a valuable identity-related function (Hoare, 2019). In essence, the concept of homophily fuels the search of a culture to be shared, or in other words, a search for home.

The Power of a Name

In the 1950s, sociologists Ruth Hill and John Useem spent time observing families temporarily stationed abroad for business, diplomacy, and religious missions and coined the term
“Third Culture Kids” to describe the homophylic creation, sharing and learning of a unique sense of culture defined by their highly mobile and cross-cultural experiences at such a young developmental age. They identified this interstitial “third culture” as having aspects of both home and host cultures, but essentially distinct from both (Lijadi, 2018; Moore & Barker, 2010; Useem et al., 1963). In the 1980s, however, David C. Pollock, the director of a support organization for children of missionaries temporarily moving abroad titled Interaction Inc., translated Hill and Useem’s term “Third Culture Kids” (TCK) from an academic idea to a full industry designed to emotionally support the demographic of his organization (Cranston, 2017). When author Ruth van Reken attended a conference of his as research for an autobiography on her globally mobile childhood, she was inspired by the self-discovery that the identification with a named “third culture” allowed her and set out to support Pollock in finding scientific evidence for his ideas. Through the resultant publication of the quintessential book on the demographic, *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Between Worlds* (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009; Cranston, 2017), Pollock and Reken stimulated an entire TCK industry through which they constructed and constituted its cultural members and labeled and shaped their identities.

The TCK industry, in the form of self-help, ‘surfaces’ a shared identity and creates a new interstitial cultural enclave to provide a sense of belonging for an otherwise theoretically culturally homeless population. The power of the industry lies in its’ assumption of expertise and acting as biopower in producing and providing a *name* for emotional responses with a previously unknown and unexplored description. Framed as a condition of liminality, the TCK is portrayed as suffering and in need of a cure from unique emotional problems directly related to the abnormality of their highly mobile and cross-cultural upbringing, and therefore fundamentally contrasted to their monoculturally-raised peers. The TCK industry then acts as manager of and expert on the TCK experience of place-based cultural identity crisis by directly naming *loss, grief and insecurity* as the appropriate emotional responses to the liminal experience of the TCK. By providing a narrative through which individuals of this demographic can finally *discover* themselves and their identity and surfacing a community with which they can identify and feel recognized and understood, the industry finally transforms the felt liminality of the TCK into a feeling of belonging to a third culture which
is uniquely their own. The validating discovery of oneself as a TCK becomes understood as a moment of euphoric self-realization, existential relief and overall comfort (Cranston, 2017).

Without a doubt, the power of the TCK industry lies in the therapeutic power of giving a name to an intensely experienced yet otherwise unexplored and undescribed condition. This is supported by the similar experience of “eureka” felt by individuals discovering the more academic concept of cultural homelessness and the ensuing sense of comfort provided by the realization that they are not alone in the experience. Here, the state of cultural homelessness becomes an identity in and of itself, rather than a confused state of lacking (Vivero, 1999). Still, by claiming ownership of the name, the TCK industry asserts authority over any dialogue on the demographic and becomes an obligatory passage point for discussing the crisis of identity experienced (Cranston, 2017).

However, despite the self-appointed expertise, the TCK industry is after all a self-help-based industry providing a simplified method for self-diagnosing and alleviating the emotional concerns resultant of an interculturally liminal upbringing characterized by high mobility and cross-cultural exposure. It is important to recognize that any “self-help” essentially serves as a guide to self-improvement, and so the success of the self-help industry is contingent upon readiness to accept external authority and willingness to work on oneself (Cranston, 2017). Even within the TCK industry, professional mental health counseling for individuals experiencing intense adjustment difficulties, feelings of alienation, confusion in self-concept, and cultural rootlessness is highly recommended (Lijadi & Van Schalkwyk, 2017).

**Art Therapy as Intervention for Identity Negotiation**

Identity abrasion, split self-concept, cultural homelessness and other psychologically destressing developmental hazards of the internal experience of acculturative stress cycles inherent in the multicultural transnational experience are important to navigate and resolve in order to construct (or re-construct) a healthy and cohesive self-identity (see subsection: “Transnational Identity Negotiations & Acculturative Stress”). However, the presenting concerns of intercultural liminality and cultural homelessness are rarely described by a troubled client with insight into the terminology, and so the symptoms are often vague and difficult to articulate. Instead, a client might
present with feelings of difference and abnormality in relation to their peers (resulting in social
difficulty of isolation), identity confusion or diffusion, shame and self-blame, weak self-esteem and
self-concept, feelings of inadequacy, commitment uncertainty, and an overall vague sense of sadness
or loss. While naming the experience of cultural homelessness is ideal due to the force of offering a
name in both assuring that they are not alone in the experience as well as identifying a presenting
concern on which to work on, in any case the therapeutic goals of treatment should be to ease the
mental distress of their experience by productively exploring the client’s history of interstitial living
and providing interventions directed at realistic and reachable goals of increasing factors which
positively contribute to identity cohesion. The ultimate goal of therapy is carefully guided self-
introspection, self-insight into personal history, self-awareness into emotional and mental states,
positive reconstruction of self-perceived life narrative, embrace of a unique experience of identity
formation, celebration of self-proclaimed difference, and ultimate achievement of a strength-focused
personal identity and positive self-regard (Vivero, 1999; Lemzoudi, 2007).

Due to the difficulty in definitively verbalizing the symptomatic feelings of intercultural
liminality and cultural homelessness, a nonverbal approach to exploring the associated emotions of
identity confusion with room for flexibility and adaptability is arguably ideal for therapy with this
client population, as argued by (Lemzoudi, 2007). Art therapy, an integrative therapeutic technique
which incorporates the creative process of visual art making to facilitate therapeutic reflection and
expression, is an effective and recommended approach to addressing the underdeveloped concept of
self of the culturally interstitial and thereby culturally rootless global nomad. Recognizing the
fragility of the process of psychotherapeutic self-exploration, within art therapeutic practice, a trained
and licensed art therapy professional serves as a support to the therapeutic journey with the utilization
of a mix of verbal communication and nonverbal creative art production using an array of artist
media to allow alternative outlets for self-discovery and self-expression (Weaver, 2019). The
limited emphasis on verbal expression is argued to non-threateningly establish therapeutic rapport
between the client and therapist (Vivero, 1999), thereby enabling the art therapist to help surface
unconscious feelings and experiences to awareness, and similarly enabling the client to verbalize
previously noncommunicable content using the created artwork as a form of visual voice (Emberley, 2005).

As the premise and foundational underpinning of art therapy, the therapeutic benefits of the creative process have been deeply investigated in literature of the field. The creation of a physical, tangible artistic product acts as an emotional container (Lemzoudi, 2007) and provides the client the opportunity to reabsorb a felt and/or lived experience in a creatively restructured form (Franklin, 2013) upon which to reflect and relocate a sense of self in an externalized manner (Emberley, 2005). In other words, it concretizes the internal self and promotes self-empowerment through assertive, self-directed art of making artistic choices (Franklin, 2013). The active decision-making process of artistic creation exercises socio-cognitive processing (Schwartz, 2001) and allows for self-awareness and acceptance, giving way to self-discovery (Moon, 1999) and the construction of a resilient and adaptable self-identity (Riley, 1999). This is seen in the inescapable process of acceptance and rejection and of success and failure in the creative process, which invites a comparison model for issues of self-esteem. The positive impact of the creative process of art making on self-esteem is asserted in Franklin (2013), which emphasizes self-esteem as equating to self-evaluation of personal worth, thereby contributing to self-concept and self-identity.

Identity holds a central position of focus in art therapeutic practice, as argued by Campbell et al. (1999), due to the powerfully charged self-discovery allowed by the therapeutically held symbol and image-based exploration of conscious and unconscious identity patterns. This makes art therapy particularly applicable to the interculturally liminal population faced with cultural difference in negotiation of place-based self-identity due to the mediation potential of the image-making process in exploring the presenting feelings of difference and fostering a sense of belonging (Emberley, 2005). For individuals whom have or are currently experiencing the crisis of relocation and cycles of acculturative distress, therapeutically intentional artistic production can serve as a stimulatory force for achieving self-awareness and positively integrating their lived experienced into their self-identity (Beaumont, 2012; Lemzoudi, 2007, Mauro, 1998). On a similar vein, according to Sit (1996), the symbolic language and creative freedom of the artistic process and support of the therapeutic relationship together has potential to generate a raised consciousness and foster self-insight, thus
making the approach fitting for immigrants in the bridging of internal experience and external expression of a poorly integrated self-concept (Weaver, 2019). After all, as argued by Lemzoudi (2019), “The fact that issues related to cultural identity loss and migration are mostly communicated symbolically substantiates the use of art therapy as a way to explore these issues more adequately than through verbal therapy only” (p. 7). All in all, for the interculturally liminal and culturally homeless individual, art therapy carries the potential to reconstruct a healthy sense of self by providing a context through which to explore and synthesize emotions, bridge experiences of two contradicting yet co-existing cultural frames of reference, and integrate psychological constructs (Beaumont, 2012).

**Theoretical Approaches to Art Therapy for Identity Negotiation**

Though there are numerous theoretical approaches possible within the practice of art therapy, expressive, cross-cultural, existential and narrative approaches offer the highest potential for identity exploration due to the emphasis on self-expression, multicultural sensitivity, symbolic meaning-making, and narrative reconstruction, respectively.

Expressive art therapy and cross-cultural art therapy are significant theoretical approaches in contemporary art therapy practice. Expressive art therapy emphasizes a free and open-ended approach to therapeutic art production, using the realm of possibility within the creative process to encourage self-expression, emotional awareness, and increased understanding of oneself. Here, the role of the art therapist is to promote free artistic expression by providing access to and encouraging the use of a wide range of materials, thereby creating a holding therapeutic space for the self-reflective creative process (Beaumont, 2012). Cross-cultural art therapy emphasizes multicultural competency and cultural sensitivity within its practice, the absence of which is countertherapeutic for the intercultural client (Thomas and Schwarzbau, 2006). It takes on the intersectional framework which views identity and difference as intertwined and encourages the therapist to empathetically acknowledge differences and related strengths – an essential quality to therapy for a positive outcome with culturally homeless individuals (Vivero, 1999). Overall, a cross-cultural approach in art therapy uses culturally appropriate and sensitive intervention to emphasize process, experience, and self-
subscribed meaning on symbolic depictions of a life experience unique to the cultural identity of the client (Parisian, 2015). It is therefore an absolute necessity for work with clients navigating multiculturally bound concerns, and especially intercultural liminality.

Particularly fitting for the therapeutic exploration of self-identity is the existential approach, which emphasizes the universal search for meaning in life through the focus on self-awareness, envisioning of future self, and movement towards self-actualization (Beaumont, 2012). According to Moon (1998), “all art has an existential quality, for its aim is to depict what is real and authentic in life. Art is intended to get below the surface and unmask hidden depths of life” (p. 223). Existential art therapy interventions often include symbol as metaphor to help guide internal ambiguities and explore the concept of identity. Ridley’s (2012) qualitative intergenerational research study, for example, investigates the process of self-reflection and existential use of mirrors in art therapy in answering the question *Who am I?* More specifically, the study positively correlates the effectiveness of both viewing and creating mirrors in providing clarity into self-perception and rediscovery of self-identity. Another existential art therapy intervention for promoting positive identity formation is the introspective and self-reflective tool of self-portraiture. Art therapy and self-portraiture are investigated in Muri (2007), which argues that through the therapeutic artistic representation of self, patterns of self-image may emerge, and new versions of aspired self can be communicated as encouragement for actualization.

Finally, the theoretical approach of narrative art therapy is concerned with the role of storytelling and narrative restructuring of a client’s personal history. According to Hutyrova (2016), “the basic ideas of [a narrative] approach are: (1) reality is socially construed, (2) reality is developed through language, (3) reality is structured and maintained through narration, (4) no unchangeable truths exist” (p. 285). Furthermore, the basic techniques are externalization of the problem, deconstruction of the existing narrative, and authorization of a new, transformed strength-based self-story (Hutyrova, 2016). A narrative approach in art therapy allows for the telling of the client’s account of their emotional distress and restructuring of the events for a more positive self-narrative, therefore serving as particularly powerful in identity exploration. Through the use of symbols and metaphors in the visual representation of those stories, the client can figuratively separate themselves
from their emotional states and gain new, more self-benefitting and empowering perspectives on their personal narratives (Beaumont, 2012). While art therapeutic practice emphasizes the active creation of artistic works, it has been argued that even the cognitive perception of art promotes narrative identity exploration (Garwolinska, 2019). The narrative approach therefore has heightened potential for the navigation of intercultural liminality and an incohesive self of belonging to a cultural home due to repeated acculturative cycles of relocation (Lemzoudi, 2007; Esteban-Guitart & Vila, 2015).

**Art Therapy Interventions for Identity Exploration for the Interculturally Liminal**

In 2012, Beaumont published a critical and integrative review of art therapy techniques particularly fit for exploration and resolution of identity crises and diffusions in adolescence. The article argues that adolescence is an especially ripe developmental age for art therapy due to their creative outlooks and concern with individualized self-expression. It goes on to suggest journaling, an inherently artistically expressive mixed media method for self-reflection, as an ideal intervention for adolescents:

The benefit of an art journaling approach for art therapy is the freedom that it offers in terms of materials and artistic “space” and the combination of art-making and reflective writing, which is important for self-exploration. In addition, art journaling provides a practice for learning to observe oneself and others in an open and objective way, which would be important for building self-acceptance and a flexible identity. Thus, art journaling is a comprehensive approach for increasing self-knowledge in adolescents. (p. 8).

Journaling as a proposed therapeutic technique is especially applicable for the young transmigrant raised in a highly mobile and interculturally immersed lifestyle due to the fluid integration of opportunities for story-telling and narrative reconstruction, existential questioning of self-identity, and integration of multiculturally sensitive frameworks and artistically expressive activities. Since the memories of adolescence have large effect on personal ideology and worldview, therapeutic artistic exploration by way of artistic journaling would hold a powerful and self-benefitting influence on the interculturally liminal adolescent, potentially curving the formation of cultural homelessness through the fostering of cohesive identity formation tools.
Beaumont (2012) goes on to review two fully structured programs – one designed for facilitators and the other for self-practice – for the use of artistic journaling for therapeutic self-reflection and fostering of self-insight. Even more, she surveys a number of art therapy interventions geared towards increasing and integrating self-awareness and building positive sense of self. Of these, a number can be applied to the interculturally liminal demographic discussed in this paper. Relevant interventions to increase and integrate self-knowledge include the Carpendale (2009) “Inside Outside Box” intervention, which involves creatively expressive externalization of internal emotions as juxtaposed with external self-presentation in the form of an altered box, thereby promoting narrative reflection; and the Darley and Heath (2008) “Polarities” intervention, which involves a metaphoric opening and closing of a door representative of positive and negative self-concepts, thereby promoting self-acceptance (as cited in Beaumont, 2012). Relevant interventions to build positive sense of self through positive reframing includes the Carpendale (2009) “Self-Mask and Superhero Mask Making” intervention, which involves self-reflection on the felt positive effects of symbolic superhero mask making and wearing (particularly relevant to the feeling of split identity common with interculturally liminal individuals), and the Darley and Heath (2008) “Dreams and Aspirations” intervention, which involves encouragement of future potential through guided imagery followed by free creative expression on the topic of future dreams (particularly relevant to the commitment diffusion common of interculturally liminal individuals) (as cited in Beaumont, 2012).

Discussion

The contents of this research endeavor presented a broad review of factors related to the complex intricacies of place-bound identity formation specific to the intercultural liminality, a phenomenon resultant of multiple crises of relocation and developmentally early exposure to multiplicities of cultures. Beyond a discussion of the developmental hazards of the described upbringing, art therapy is proposed as a fitting therapeutic technique for intervention due to the inherent qualities of this form of psychotherapy, thus filling a gap in literature within the field.

It is important to note that, for the purpose of this study, liminal identity negotiation stands in specific reference to place-based liminality. Indeed, there are many instances of liminal identity not
directly reviewed in this research, yet relevant and applicable to the discussion. Other dimensions beyond culture include the minority-based dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, social class, religion, sexual orientation, disability and more. For clarity, race involves genetic heritage, ethnicity involves sociocultural heritage, and culture involves current societal practices (Vivero, 1999). For example, even in the case of an individual living in a single place without any events of relocation, a minority individual vulnerable to marginalizing experiences of prejudice and oppression takes on a marked liminality to be negotiated in identity formation (Lemzoudi, 2007). Minority status in *multiple* identity dimensions places an individual in an even more complex position of liminality even within their own cultural groups and increases their potential vulnerability to structural marginality. This is especially true when a physical attribute creates intracultural tension, as is frequently the case for biracial individuals (Navarrete & Jenkins, 2011). Additionally, multi-ethnic individuals with parentage providing two frameworks of social and cultural codes of two ethnic origins are similarly vulnerable to liminality. It is interesting to note that these individuals have the earliest experience of and exposure to a need for codeswitching due to the nature of their family structure (Vivero, 1999). Lastly, international adoptees raised entirely separately from their racial and ethnic heritage have the task of negotiating identity without access to a personally significant reference group (see Weaver, 2019; Toledo, 2018). Further research into the liminality of all of the above such individuals, the inner process of their identity formations and negotiations, and the potential of art therapy as a therapeutic tool for fostering identity integration is recommended.

Regarding the specific demographic in focus in this research project, it would be beneficial to produce further research into the impact of transnational migration and cross-cultural immersion on specific developmental years. In this way, researchers could identify specific ages at which a cultural move could encourage the correlated benefits of intercultural liminality (Hoerdting & Jenkings, 2011). Indeed, although early literature on cultural adaptation is dominated by discussion of the psychologically detrimental consequences of migration on identity construction, more contemporary research reveals empirically based psychological and sociocultural benefits of bi-, multi-, and cross-culturalism (Abe, 2018). A positive outcome of intercultural exposure is bicultural integration and bicultural competency (Benet-Martinez et al., 2006; Moore & Baker, 2010), which is marked by
insight and understanding into the cultural attitudes, beliefs and values of two cultures, increased communication competency (Moore & Baker, 2010) and positive regard for both cultures. Bicultural competency enables cultural fluency (Lyttle et al., 2011), otherwise referred to as intercultural literacy and cultural intelligence (Moore & Baker, 2010), which describes the ability to successfully engage in cross-cultural interaction through conscious shifting of socio-cognitive perceptual schemas between cultural identities. This evidences an ability to appropriately and effectively navigate and respond to various cultural situations (Salazar, 2018), otherwise referred to as interpersonal sensitivity, interpersonal adjustment and socio-cultural adaptation (LaFromboise et al., 1993). It is further related to increased cognitive flexibility (Christmas and Barker, 2011), and richer cognitive resources such as improvisation and creativity (Vivero, 1999), complex independent thinking (Abe, 2018), and high problem-solving capacity. Finally, multicultural exposure is positively correlated with higher resiliency profiles, adaptability skills (Vivero, 1999), socio-cultural sensitivity (Lyttle et al., 2011), social perception and mimicry (Vivero, 1999), nonverbal competence, ethno-relative worldviews (Straffon, 2003), emotional sensitivity (Moore & Barker, 2010), cultural empathy (Dewaele, 2009), diversity tolerance, and open-mindedness (Abe, 2018). In agreement with these findings, Moore and Barker (2012) found that a majority of interculturally liminal individuals have overall high positive regard to their experience of international upbringing than expected, viewing the discussed positive effects on their psychology as ultimately outweighing the struggles and negatives of emotional instability, adaptive and acculturative stress, commitment uncertainty, and cultural homelessness.

The positive correlations made between art therapy intervention and identity consolidation in this research study implies that a preventative approach to intercultural liminality and cultural homelessness could be achieved through the early intervention of focused and therapeutically guided self-identity exploration through the use of art therapy. As argued in Lemzoudi (2007), art therapy carries the potential to ease the transitions between cultures in the event of relocation. Adolescents are particularly apt for self-expression and individuation through art and the creative process due to their developmental task of identity construction. As such, self-exploratory and self-reflective art therapy approaches may positively encourage strong emotional resiliency and coping and thereby
promote the formation of a cohesive *bicultural* identity as opposed to a confused cultural interstitiality. A possible avenue for proactive intervention is the creation of art programs for youth geared towards exploring self-concept, which literature shows to have positive results (Kaufman et al., 2014 + White K. & Allen, R., 1971). The creation of such programs is further supported by research indicating the positive results of self-concept interventions on children (O’Mara, A.J., 2006; Ellis-Hill, 2000; and Haney, P. 1998).
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