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COMING TO THE UNITED STATES: AN EXPLORATION OF THIRD CULTURE
BUILDING PROCESSES EMERGING FROM UNIVERSITY SPONSORED
INTERNATIONAL/HOST-NATIONAL STUDENT INTERACTIONS

by

Margaret E. Baker

A thesis submitted to the Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
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Margaret E. Baker, M.A.

Western Michigan University, 2017

International students studying in the United States encounter a number of challenges that affect their ability to achieve their academic and social goals. These changes and acculturative pressures often influence their psychosocial wellbeing and factor into their satisfaction in their experiences abroad. Forming relationships with host-national students aids international students in their adjustment to life in the U. S. and influences their satisfaction and success both in and out of the classroom. This qualitative study analyzes third culture relationships as well as the challenges to their formation and the negotiations necessary for the relationship's continued survival. This project explores the experiences of six international/host-national student dyads through individual and joint interviews. Subsequent analyses of this data generated a more substantial understanding of third culture building in international/host-national student relationships and the negotiations that occur as individuals learn of another culture and build a mutually beneficial relationship. Data not only provides further support of the third culture building model, but also gives insight into the experiences of students who interact in university sponsored cross-cultural programs, and how these experiences might be enhanced to facilitate more cross-cultural dialogue.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The student experience at U. S. American institutions of higher education has changed. Student populations attending college campuses today prove more diverse than those of previous generations both in terms of increasing minority enrollments as well as an influx of students with international backgrounds (Andrade, 2006). U. S. institutions of higher education reported 974,926 international students in attendance for the 2015-2016 academic year, and expect that number to continue to rise in the coming years (Institute of International Education, 2015). Academic institutions in the United States benefit both financially and culturally from this rise in international student enrollment as students bring globalized perspectives to the classroom, enhance the diversity of research pursued, and allow domestic¹ students to engage in intercultural experiences (Terrazas-Carrillo, Hong & Pace, 2014). This group of students, however, often finds themselves underserved, facing institutionalized systems that pressure them to assimilate into a new culture in order to remain successful abroad (Mori, 2000).

Academic institutions lacking the resources to adequately support international students and encourage international-domestic student relations fail both their international and domestic students. International students without strong support systems in their new communities may find themselves struggling in their academic pursuits and social lives, which in turn affects their personal well-being (Williams & Johnson, 2011). Similarly, failing to teach domestic students how to respectfully interact with individuals of different backgrounds leads to missed opportunities for those students to learn intercultural communication skills, and expand their worldviews (Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2013). In order to improve programs designed

for international students, institutions must better understand the processes international and domestic students take to forming relationships whether they remain solely acquaintances, work relationships, or develop into friendships. The next sections demonstrate the need for further research into the development of third culture relationships between international and host-national students and outlines the qualitative study completed to explore these relationships. In the next section, I provide a rationale illustrating the need for research in this topical area as well as describe the specific purpose of this study.

Rationale

The number of international students studying in the United States has risen dramatically over the last decade, and it is expected those numbers will continue to rise. In the 2015-2016 school year 974,926 international students attended U. S. academic institutions, a 10% increase over the previous year (Institute of International Education, 2015). According to the U. S. Department of Commerce (2015), international students contributed over 30 billion dollars to the U.S. economy through their educational and living expenses, over half of which was funded outside the U.S. While international sojourners continue to financially boost the economies within which they reside, they also significantly contribute by bringing diversity to the college classroom. International students bring differing, more globalized worldviews to classroom discussions and introduce other students to norms and experiences that differ from their own. In the age of globalization this exposure proves invaluable as employers actively seek out individuals with multicultural awareness, cultural sensitivity, and strong intercultural communication skills (Ward & Masgoret, 2006). International students not only expose domestic students to these experiences, but offer invaluable opportunities to learn intercultural skills and form relationships that may drastically expand their perspectives and help them to develop a

global understanding. Despite the wealth of experience, opportunities for multicultural understanding, and other benefits international students bring to U. S. higher education, international students “have always remained one of the most quiet, invisible, underserved groups on the American campus” (Mori, 2000, p. 143).

Studies have shown having a domestically based social support system proves crucial to a student’s successful adjustment to their new host culture (Yeh & Inose, 2003). International students who have minimal to no support from their peers report higher levels of acculturative stress, depression, and anxiety; something that often leads them to withdraw, further compounding feelings of alienation (Yeh & Inose). Conversely, relationships with domestic students have proven to lower stress and anxiety, improve academic performance, and increase the students’ satisfaction with their time abroad (Atri, Sharma & Cottrell, 2006; Klomegah, 2006). These studies illustrate how vital cross-cultural student relationships and meaningful cross-cultural interactions are not only for the international students’ well-being and success abroad, but also for the learning and development of host-national students. To ensure the development of mutually beneficial relationships, an examination of the third culture building processes, as well as the cultural contracts students assume, proves crucial to understanding positive intercultural interactions.

Purpose

One of the greatest complaints international students voice regarding their experiences at U. S. universities lies in their lack of friendships with host-national students (Gareis, Merkin & Goldman, 2011). Forming relationships with domestic students proves challenging for many international students who already face a multitude of changes and demands in their adjustment processes. International students may lack the language proficiency or understanding of social

norms, which falls short of national students' relationship expectations, making their attempts to connect with domestic students more difficult (Sidanius, Van Laar & Levin, 2004). Further, with the rise in the level of xenophobia that has occurred in the U. S. as a result September 11, as well as other recent global events, some international students may also face discrimination and harassment from host-national students (Williams & Johnson, 2011). Similarly, U. S. American students often prove disinterested in forming relationships with international students, although the reasoning behind students' apathy has yet to be identified (Brown, 2013; Davis & Garrod, 2013; Gareis, 2012; Tropp & Bianchi, 2006).

Beyond forming relationships on the interpersonal level, academic institutions often fail to adequately promote the interactions between international and host-national students. Institutions of higher education instead favor orientations that separate international and host-national students and focus on the assimilation of international students (Klomegah, 2006). These orientations often attempt to help students by introducing them to U.S. social norms such as 'dorm cooking' EasyMac and pizza rolls or 'binge watching' Netflix and video game marathons; however, these topics assume students will want, and choose, to act like their U. S. American peers (Eldaba, 2016). Other international student programs center around sporting activities, such as U.S. football, dances, or spring break trips designed to give students the "American" experience inadvertently positioning "Americanization" as the ultimate goal (Korobova & Starobin, 2015). Orientations prove helpful in deciphering cultural norms and expectations, but do not assist international students in the internal and external conflicts of balancing their own international identities with U.S. American culture (Khaled & Chiodo, 2006). For academic institutions to construct mutually engaging programs between host-national and international students, more knowledge is needed as to the processes that occur, and the

challenges that arise, when building successful intercultural student relationships (Williams & Johnson, 2011).

This study looks to explore the relationship building process from the perspectives of both international and domestic students, examining the barriers to development, as well as the actions taken by both parties to, ensure the relationship's continued success. The qualitative study also aims to unpack the definition of, and value placed on, friendship by both international and host-national students. Exploring the different cultural definitions of friendship may allow for the future of student satisfaction with the relationships formed from the perspectives of both international and host-national students. By understanding the actions taken, norms negotiated, and challenges overcome in the building of successful national-international student relationships, we can better design programs to facilitate cross-cultural dialogue and understanding within groups of students. This dialogue may expand worldviews and not only improve international student experiences, but also introduce domestic students to a globalized perspective and a better understanding of the skills needed for successful intercultural interactions. By examining this process through the third culture building model (Casmir, 1993) and cultural contracts theory (Jackson, 2002a), this study not only adopts a theoretical perspective on these student experiences but may also help to translate the frameworks into common behaviors and steps individuals may realistically use in their day-to-day lives. In addition, the triangulation of the two theoretical frameworks may help to extend both theories by enhancing their flexibility and applicability across multiple intercultural contexts and types of interactions. The relationship formation processes students employ prove inherently dialogic in nature as students move from surface level conversations to deeper discussions of their personal experiences and cultures, creating a new understanding of themselves and those with whom they

form these relationships (Arnett, Harden Fritz, & Bell, 2008; Norander & Galanes, 2014). These theories enhance the understanding of the dialogic processes students employ, potentially allowing for theoretically informed and practically applicable suggestions for mindful intercultural interactions and recommendations for future cross-cultural programs.

This qualitative study looks to analyze third culture relationships as well as the challenges, best understood as the ongoing negotiation of cultural contracts, to their formation and the negotiations necessary for their continued survival. In chapter two, I will review the current literature surrounding international student adjustment and the factors influencing the relationships they form. The review will look at studies focused on the pressures to assimilate as well as factors influencing their decision to reach out to, or remain segregated from, their host-national peers. Following that exploration, I will present two theoretical frameworks guiding this analysis, third culture building model (Casmir, 1993) and cultural contracts theory (Jackson, 2002a). In chapter three, I will describe the procedures used in collecting data and explain the methodology used to analyze collected data. Chapter four will detail findings and themes from the data set, concluding with a discussion of theoretical and practical implications of this study in chapter five.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter two reviews the current literature focusing on the challenges international students face in their adjustment to life in the United States. To start, this review will discuss current literature that explores academic and social barriers that affect international student's academic, social, and individual well-being. Following an examination of student barriers and their impact, I will synthesize literature on the attitudes domestic students have surrounding international sojourners, and the impact these attitudes have on the host-national reception. I conclude my review of the current research with a discussion of the factors that influence international students' decision to reach out to domestic students or the choice to remain segregated within groups of international students, or solely students from their home countries. Chapter two also presents two theoretical frameworks the third culture building model (Casmir, 1993) and cultural contracts theory (Jackson, 2002a) that I later use to develop a theoretically informed understanding of the student experiences surrounding cross-cultural relationship development.

Adjustment to the U.S. and College Life

As stated earlier, almost one million international students currently attend colleges and universities across the U.S. This group of students proves extremely diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, socio-economic status, behavioral norms and more, despite being uniformly generalized by host-nationals as 'foreign' or 'different' (Urban & Orbe, 2007). International students increase a university's academic excellence by broadening the diversity of the student body, enhancing the quality of classroom experiences by bringing new perspectives; helping domestic students to develop an international understanding and intercultural

competencies (Terrazas-Carrillo et al., 2014; Wadsworth, Hecht & Jung, 2008; Wu, Garza & Guzman, 2015). Despite their contributions to the college experience, both inside the classroom and out, international students often find their academic institutions lacking the programs and resources to adequately serve their specific needs, both in their initial adjustment and throughout their college careers (Misra & Castillo, 2004; Mori, 2000).

Challenges to International Student Adjustment

International students face many challenges in their adjustment to life abroad from formal systematic changes, differences in cultural norms, or reactions of host-national communities. In this section, I discuss the common challenges found in current research on international students. These sections include formal institutional challenges, such as academic and immigration systems, cultural challenges as students learn new societal norms and expectations, and individual challenges such as building personal support systems and adjusting to shifting gender roles. This section will conclude with an examination of the combination of challenges that push students to interact and build relationships with, or purposefully isolate themselves from, students and other members of the host-national communities.

English proficiency. English proficiency stands as one of the largest barriers international students work to overcome in their transition to life in the U.S. (Lindemann, 2005). While many international students have studied English for years; on arrival in the U.S. they often find their linguistic skills lacking the mastery required for academic achievement (Terrazas-Corillo et al., 2014). Similarly, poor language skills also hinder students socially due to the negative U.S. bias towards ‘broken’ English or a heavy accent linked to skin that is not white (Lindemann, 2005; Sidanius et al., 2004). Students with less developed language skills may face greater challenges and discrimination in completing day-to-day tasks such as using

transportation, taking care of health needs, resolving financial issues, or simply buying items from local stores (Lee & Rice, 2007; Wu et al., 2015). On campus, international students are often stereotyped by host-national students as deficient in linguistic, and therefore social, skills perceiving them as maladjusted or ‘socially undesirable;’ this makes it difficult for international students to form relationships with host-national students (Brown, 2013; Rajapaksa & Dundes, 2003). In addition, international students with or without a strong English fluency face many other challenges in their transition to life abroad and their adjustment to the U. S. educational system.

Systematic challenges. In their adjustment to college life, international students face many of the same struggles as domestic students, such as living away from home for the first time or learning to balance school, social, and work lives. However, international students encounter these changes in a foreign place, often in an unfamiliar language, while also confronting aspects of ‘culture shock’ such as adjusting to unfamiliar foods, learning new cultural norms, discerning implicit societal rules, dealing with financial or family issues, and the like (Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 2004; Wu et al., 2015). Similarly, many students must find part-time employment on campus, a task many domestic students struggle with due to a lack of education in job search procedures (Logan, Hughes, & Logan, 2016). Learning how to write a resume, fill out applications, and navigate interview processes may then appear daunting to international students who must already adapt to entirely new day-to-day practices (Sangganjanavanich, Lenz, & Cavazos, 2011). Further, campus positions fill quickly at the start of a new semester, often leaving international students underprepared and scrambling to find work (Gunawardena & Wilson, 2012).

International students also face concerns requiring immense time and effort that do not affect other domestic students such as navigating the immigration bureaucracy, maintaining visas, and sorting out financial aid from their home universities or sponsors (Gareis et al., 2011; Misra & Castillo, 2004). Adding to their frustrations, students navigate these tasks holding different worldviews and cultural norms than those with whom they interact, such as norms regarding wait times at government offices, further complicating already complex procedures and systems (Tseng & Newton, 2002).

Academic challenges. International students also experience challenges in the classroom as they adapt to new teaching styles and classroom expectations (Andrade, 2006). Students shifting from a more passive to a more active, participation focused classroom often report positive experiences; however, not all students share this impression of U.S. classrooms as these experiences often come with waves of anxiety and uncertainty (Gunawardena & Wilson, 2012). Faculty members may struggle to acknowledge and adjust course expectations for international students while maintaining a sense of fairness and equal opportunity for all of their students (Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 2004). This balance may leave students struggling to keep up with classes in an unfamiliar language with customs and expectations they are still striving to understand. A study examining the academic experiences of international students illustrated how a lack of English proficiency often hindered students' ability to participate in in-class discussions or complete written work at a level that meets instructor expectations (Wadsworth et. al., 2008). Another study illustrated the shift from passive to active learning and the anxiety it causes students as they transition from collectivistic learning environments (Poyrazli, Arbona, Nora, McPherson & Pisecco, 2002). Results show students struggle with approaching faculty for help, speaking up to ask questions, or completing class participation portions of grades. These

adjustments often clash with students' needs to maintain high grades to remain in their programs, maintain visa requirements, and satisfy family expectations back home. Similarly, high levels of stress and anxiety caused by these adjustment processes can affect students' academic performance and satisfaction with their courses or college experience as a whole (Misra & Castillo, 2004).

Assimilation pressure and relationships. Studies focusing on student adjustment demonstrate how international students receive pressure to act within dominant cultural norms, often presented as the only path to achieving their social and academic goals (Ye, 2005). Many students turn to television programming or social media as a way to study and adopt the culture around them (Somani, 2010; Ye, 2005; Yung, Wu, Zhu & Southwell, 2004). However, research reflects the importance of developing relationships with domestic students in raising international students' proficiency with English, understanding of cultural norms, and lowering international students emotional slump or homesickness after their initial 'honeymoon' period in the U.S. has passed (Gareis, et al., 2011; Rajapaksa & Dundes 2003).

With all of these social and academic changes, and the potential for these challenges to physically and psychologically affect a student's wellbeing, many institutions have developed orientation programs to ease the transition for international students (Andrade, 2006). However, as Andrade concludes, institutions typically expect international students to conform to majority norms and design their programs to "Americanize" international students. These programs often fail to adequately prepare students for the challenges and discrimination students may face throughout their time at their institutions. International students who face complex challenges, intercultural conflicts and discrimination in and out of the classroom, often seclude themselves within groups of other international students out of a sense of safety and shared experience

(Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2013). By focusing on “Americanizing” international students and failing to address their unique challenges, these institutions often contribute to the very factors that drive students to interact largely within groups of other culturally similar international students.

Shifting roles. Many international students encounter becoming a minority in a majority culture for the first time (Urban & Orbe, 2007), an experience that may challenge students’ deeply held ideas of self and their place in the world (Wadsworth et. al., 2008). This shift in societal roles may leave students vulnerable to, and unprepared for, acts of prejudice or discrimination that may occur in their host country (Hanassab, 2006). Similarly, students who come to the U.S. from a wealthy or privileged background, must negotiate a new socio-economic position in a society where they no longer hold the same level of privilege (Lueck & Wilson, 2010). These students negotiate new, often marginalized, identities in a society that often labels them as a minority and may discriminate against them as such (Arthur, 2004). Challenges to these students’ accustomed lifestyles can prove distressing to the student’s sense of identity, their academic success, and their satisfaction with their experiences (Tong & Cheung, 2011). Further, institutional trainings may not adequately prepare students for differences between their parent and host cultures surrounding gender roles and expectations, which may lead to conflict not only in their adjustment process but also when they return home. A study on international students’ adjustment in relation to gender found that females often suffer more adjustment challenges than their male counterparts due to adopting strong female roles abroad that clash with their home culture’s traditional expectations (Lee, Park & Kim, 2009). Lee, Park, and Kim (2009) explore the influence gender expectations have on relationship formation. Students from cultures where men are considered dominant and women are expected to be submissive may find U.S. American

students' approaches to cross sex friendships intimidating, often driving these international students to interact with others whose beliefs align more closely with their own.

Transitional programming proves beneficial in terms of broadly introducing students to U.S. American culture and life at a specific educational institution (Andrade, 2006; Rajapaksa & Dundes, 2003; Wu et al., 2015). Yet, other studies reflect the importance of international students experiencing the culture around them through the lenses of their own culture and experience. Terrazas-Carillo et al. (2014) recommends, "International students should be given the chance to experience places, reassign meanings, find outlets to reenact cultural rituals, and experience their emotions in the context of a new place" (p. 702). Providing support systems to help students negotiate life within a new culture, in relation to their own worldviews and cultural norms, may ease the students' adjustment process, increase their satisfaction with their experiences, and ensure their success in social and academic endeavors.

Host-national reception. One of the largest influences on international student adjustment and relationship formation lies in the reactions and the reception of the host community (Snell & Zhou, 2015). Studies indicate a low willingness for host-nationals to approach and converse with international students due to higher levels of anxiety and uncertainty surrounding the experience compared with intracultural encounters (Dunne, 2009; Imamura & Zhang, 2014; Russell, Rosenthal & Thompson, 2010). However, research also suggests this willingness to communicate proves crucial for international students' adjustment process (Zhang & Goodson, 2001), and their ability to form relationships with domestic students. In the age of globalization, intercultural communication skills prove desirable, influencing U.S. American students' desire to communicate with individuals whose cultures differ from their own (Imamura & Zhang, 2014). This willingness to interact, however, does not always indicate an openness to

learn about and accept the individual's home culture (Hello, Scheepers & Slegers, 2006). This divide between an eagerness to communicate and often the lack of consideration of another worldview may create tensions both inter- and intra-personally for host-national and international student interactions.

One of the most common complaints among international students relates to the lack of friendships with host-national students (Gareis et al., 2011). This dissatisfaction surrounding the social aspects of a sojourner's experience arises from various conflicting expectations of intercultural friendships and the value placed on those relationships. In a study comparing intercultural friendships by home region, Gareis (2012) found that European students easily made and maintained relationships with U.S. American students, followed by students from India, with students from Asian countries finding it the most difficult to form relationships, reporting the most dissatisfaction with their social lives². The differences in the number and quality of relationships formed can be attributed to perceived likeness (Glass, Gomez & Urzura, 2014) as well as differences between individualistic and collectivistic cultures (Gareis, 2012).

Defining friendship. Research suggests individuals prefer their friends to be similar to them in terms of norms and values, and if possible, sharing common in-group identities (Schug, Yuki, Horikawa & Takemura, 2009; West, Pearson, Dovidio, Shelton & Trail, 2009). Students from European countries often report finding it easy to form relationships with domestic students in the U.S. due to this perception of cultural similarities raising European international students' social attractiveness (Imamura & Zhang, 2014). Conversely, international students coming from cultures that domestic students perceive as differing more greatly from their own U. S. American culture, such as Asian countries, have lasting difficulties forming satisfactory friendships. This

may also, in part, arise from differences in the value each culture places on forming and maintaining relationships, specifically close friendships.

Collectivistic cultures are marked by their emphasis on social relationships and high obligation to one's community and social groups, whereas individualistic cultures rely on one's independence and self-sufficiency (Gareis, 2012). This contrast is reflected in the value placed upon relationships and impedes the development of, and level of satisfaction students from collectivistic home cultures receive from, their friendships with host-nationals. International students often bemoan the U. S. American students' unwillingness to form intimate relationships, instead desiring casual friendships with little obligation to one another (Hello et al., 2006). The cultural norms of individualistic cultures often lead to distress among East Asian students who place great value on spending time with friends and developing intimate connections (Gareis et al., 2011). The students who place greater value on social relationships may feel they entirely lack what they would consider friendship on their campuses, a report that may conflict with the perceptions of any U.S. American students who consider the relationship to be friendship (Andrade, 2006). Similarly, the set of social skills required in the United States to form social connections, such as small talk, may not be a part of a student's repertoire (Trice, 2007). These social skills prove difficult to learn without constant exposure and practice, further impeding the student's ability to communicate with domestic students in socially mandated ways (Glass et al., 2014).

Individual factors. Challenges to relationship formation do not always come from broadly conceptualized cultural differences, but also from individual student orientations to, and motivations for, studying abroad. External factors such as academic work load and work schedules often interfere with both domestic and international students' available time to

socialize and maintain relationships (Smith & Khawaja, 2011). Similarly, intrapersonal factors such as introversion, shyness, or anxiety also affect one's ability to reach out and establish interpersonal relationships (Brisset, Safdar, Lewis & Sabatier, 2010). Other factors such as the U.S. American students' preoccupation with sports, partying, or alcohol, and the importance of these activities in creating social networks, may also negatively influence the friendships built between host-national and international students. While some individuals avoid these activities due to lack of interest, other students' beliefs and values lead them to actively abstain from these social experiences to maintain their cultural or religious identities (Somani, 2010). This finding highlights the importance for host communities to understand these differences in social norms and provide other opportunities and experiences for students to interact and expand their social networks.

It is important to note that not all students wish to focus on the social aspects of college life abroad. Task-oriented students who view their time abroad as an academic opportunity are motivated by academic success, often focus on their studies and do not actively pursue friendships (Russell et al., 2010). Likewise, many students receive pressure from family and home institutions who view recreation and relationships as a distraction to their student's success, driving them away from social connections and the friendships that occur as a result of that socialization (Glass et al., 2014; Ward & Rana-Deuba, 2000). Problematically, a student's lack of relationships leaves them little support in their adjustment process, which may lead to a sense of loneliness or even depression (Yan & Berliner, 2011). As the previous research has illustrated, the formation of intercultural friendships, specifically with host-national students, stands as a crucial part of an international student's adjustment process. These friendships are often difficult to achieve, especially as host-national and international students hold differing

expectations about the processes to maintain the relationship (Russell et al., 2010). Similarly, the ability to balance one's cultural identity with the newly emerging relational identity is important for the success of the relationship (Lee, 2008). In order to encourage student relationships between host-national and international students it is important to minimize U.S. American students' ethnocentrism and expectations for sojourners to assimilate to the behaviors, beliefs, and opinions of the host culture.

Acculturative pressure. The institutional, social, and sometimes self-induced pressure to assimilate into majority culture in many host-national communities comes from an ethnocentric view that can drastically hinder a student's adjustment to the new culture. Acculturation refers to the changes in one's behaviors, norms, values, or identities as a result of cross-cultural interaction and pressure to imitate a host culture (Berry, 1980). Sojourners maintain their identities in different ways, some extensively assimilating into the host culture, some remaining notably distinct, while others strive to balance and integrate their home culture with the host culture (Berry, 1997). Snell and Zhou (2105) suggest an assimilation orientation is viewed most favorably by host-national peers and remains the expectation in many universities in order for international students to remain successful in their academic and social pursuits. Many U. S. American students have little exposure to cultures different from their own prior to their college experience and expect their international peers to mirror majority culture in order to maintain their friendship (Wu et al., 2015). These expectations place stress on international students as they strive to balance their place in the new host culture with their own cultural identities (Lee, 2008).

The pressure to adapt, or at a minimum integrate, may increase psychological and emotional distress within international students if they do not identify and utilize campus support

systems and personal coping mechanisms. International students who have formed social networks, or who have strong support from their networks back home, may turn to friends or family for support and guidance in times of duress or difficulties (Smith & Khawaja, 2010). Others reluctantly turn to campus counseling services, often viewing the need for counseling as weakness or as an indicator of their failure to connect and adjust to life abroad (Lee et al., 2009). With all of the challenges international students face, the pressure to conform may drive international students to actively separate themselves from their peers of the host culture and instead interact solely with other international students.

Self-segregation. Institutions typically view self-segregation as social isolation, therefore a serious barrier to an international student's success (Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2013). However, this perspective fails to acknowledge the social capital these students build in terms of networking with other students from their home countries, or other nearby countries, in order to ensure success in their career fields long after their educational experiences (Moore & Popadiuk, 2011). Students often turn to self-segregation after experiences of discrimination, either from host-national peers or faculty, and bond with other co-nationals who have faced similar challenges (Hanassab, 2006; Lee & Rice, 2007; Lee et al., 2009). This segregation may also arise out of historically assumed norms constructed out of a previously overt separation of individuals of differing races and ethnicities in U. S. society (Moore & Popadiuk, 2011). Rose-Redwood and Rose-Redwood (2013) also reported on factors such as the amount of discrimination experienced, one's language proficiency, and an individual's level of extroversion or introversion, influenced whether they interacted with solely culturally similar international students, or widened their social groups to include international students from any cultural background. However, this study also found very few students who had a significantly higher

number of interactions with domestic students than with other international students (Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2013).

The tendency to interact, and form relationships, with other international students over host-national students illustrates the desire for a support system of individuals with similar norms or shared experiences while students adjust to a foreign country (Klomegah, 2006). Similarly, students connecting with other international students build a support system of individuals who face the same challenges they do, allowing them to deal with these barriers collectively by sharing advice, working collaboratively on skills, or exploring their host country as a group (Poyrazli et al., 2002). This finding also highlights the stresses caused and opportunities missed when institutions and host-national students expect and demand assimilation from international students. Those looking to enhance both domestic and international student experiences might focus less on expanding social adjustment programs, and abandon assimilation doctrines and in focus of promoting programs that encourage mutual engagement and meaningful cross-cultural dialogue (Williams & Johnson, 2011).

International students face many changes and challenges in their adjustment to life abroad, making it important for them to build relationships with their host-national peers. These relationships prove beneficial not only for the international students, but also for domestic students experiencing other worldviews and building intercultural competencies. In the next section, I will review the two theories that prove most beneficial for this study of international student relationships.

Theoretical Descriptions

Third-culture building model and cultural contracts theory have both enhanced the study of intercultural communication. In these next pages, I will summarize the fundamental ideas, as

well as the strengths and weaknesses of each theory, before briefly outlining each theory's contributions to intercultural communication studies as a whole. These descriptions support my later incorporation of dual theoretical perspectives to best approach the exploration of third culture building and cultural contracts within student relationships between international and host-national students.

Third-Culture Building Model

Early foundations. The third-culture building model (TCB; Casmir, 1978) challenges the tendencies for intercultural communication scholars to view culture as a static phenomenon based on artifacts, and in place, focuses on intercultural communication events working towards specific endstates. Building on the concept of a “binational third culture” (Casmir, 1978, p. 131), first introduced by sociologists (Useem, Donahue, & Useem, 1963; Useem & Useem, 1967), communication scholars have since elaborated and expanded on the core concept to create a working model of third-culture building (Casmir, 1978, 1993; Casmir & Asuncion-Lande, 1989; Evanoff, 2000, 2006).

Useem and Useem (1967) defined third culture as, “the cultural patterns created, learned and shared by the members of different societies who are personally involved in relating their societies, or sections thereof, to each other” (p. 131). Further study of “men-in-the-middle” (p. 15) whose work and family roles place them at the center of intersecting cultures, refined the conceptualization of third culture and identified common features of third cultures (Useem, 1971). First, third cultures prove creative in that they adapt and compromise as needed to achieve success, rapidly changing with little experience to guide individuals. Second, society uses these third cultures to meet the needs of larger communities by selecting the pieces from each culture needed to accomplish specific goals (Useem, 1971). Lastly, third cultures rely on the larger

populations to designate meaning for the newly built working culture or relationship. This interpretation of the creation of third-cultures, while providing a starting definition to build upon, resolutely embodies the hindrances to intercultural communication Casmir later challenged in his TCB model.

Creation of the TCB model. Fred Casmir's TCB framework used Useem's early ideas of third cultures as a foundation from which to build a dialogue-centered model explaining how individuals from differing backgrounds work together to create a shared space and identity. Casmir (1978) saw shortcomings in intercultural work of the time, as it focused on documenting differences between cultures and on the outcomes of an intercultural event, rather than the communicative processes individuals continually undergo and negotiate in those interactions. A new definition of third culture suggested by Casmir and Asuncion-Lande (1989) reflected the desire to look at the ever-changing processes inherent to intercultural communication:

In the conjoining of their separate cultures, a third culture, more inclusive than the original ones, is created, which both of them now share. Third culture is not merely the result of the fusion of the two or more separate entities, but also the product of the harmonization of composite parts into a coherent whole. (p. 294)

By focusing on the processes of TCB from a communication lens, Casmir built his model from the viewpoint that "culture is in people" (Casmir, 1997, p. 111) rather than the early research looking at culture as a collection of artifacts.

Casmir's TCB model moves beyond the commonly accepted communication goals of adoption (taking on the culture of another) or adaption (modifying one's cultural norms to better fit another's culture) (Hopson, Hart, & Bell, 2012). Instead, this model strives to fit real-world situations as two cultures willingly work together to create common ground that incorporates

norms and elements from both cultures, yet itself remaining entirely distinct from either original culture. Individuals, or groups of individuals, build this new culture together through dialogue, developing mutually beneficial relationships and meaning (Casmir, 1997). For a communicative event to be considered a dialogue, the exchange must, “involve mutual learning, a cooperative dialogue and building experience rather than a one-sided attempt to be politically correct, or to simply assimilate” (Casmir & Muir-Packman, 1999, p. 485). Casmir and Muir-Packman (1999) further indicate these communicative events “[adjust or even forfeit] extant cultural norms and values [so that a new culture can be developed] where dialogue can freely exist and which is seen as beneficial to all of those involved” (Casmir & Muir-Packman, 1999, p. 486). Through this process, participants gain an understanding of, and appreciation for, the other while still maintaining their own separate culture throughout the dialogue.

Understanding that many intercultural interactions occur without either party having any prior experience with the other’s culture, Casmir later revised his model to employ chaos theory (Casmir & Kweskin, 2001; Gregersen & Sailer, 1993) to account for the uncertainty of dealing with a new, complex culture for the first time (Casmir, 1999). The addition of the aspects of chaos theory illustrated how systems grow through positive or negative feedback, with every interaction, every dialogic moment providing more material for the third culture to continually develop as its members evolve. The revision of the TCB model helped to create a framework detailing a more specified process individuals undergo when building third-cultures, resulting in a four phase process (Casmir, 1999).

Major assumptions. It is important to note that TCB operates off of a set of assumptions that act as a crucial foundation to the success of this model (Casmir, 1993). First, TCB is conscious and deliberate, with all individuals viewed as equals imparting mutual effort.

Second, TCB needs time, with trust, appreciation and understanding developing throughout the processes. TCB also requires openness towards another's worldview, and also self-knowledge and discovery (Casmir, 1999). Finally, third culture building relies on proactive action, with all members taking on a problem solving approach to communication to produce mutual satisfaction (Hopson et al., 2012). These assumptions paint an ideal scenario; however, individuals do not always view one another as equals, genuinely working towards a mutually beneficial agreement. As such, some critics argue that TCB fails to address the power dynamics that arise in intercultural communication, particularly the struggle for the upper hand that often occurs in a real world intercultural interactions (Uchida, 1997).

The four phase process. TCB asserts that individuals build third culture relationships through a set of four phases. Phase 1 involves initial contact between members of differing cultures, which may never occur again due to a lack of need, inadequate skills, outstanding cultural barriers, or an overabundance of fear (Casmir, 1999). Phase 2 occurs as individuals perceive their interaction in relation to some existing need. Again, the process may end at this stage if either individual does not perceive a need or mutually beneficial rewards from the encounter, or if either individual chooses on their own to adopt the other's cultural norms and communication styles (Casmir, 1997). Phase 3 in the ongoing process suggests both parties view the relationship as mutually beneficial and begin to depend on one another to achieve goals. In this stage rules for interactions, new norms and roles, conflict and resolution, and other aspects of organizing the third culture occur (Casmir, 1999). In Phase 4 the two cultures prove interdependent, having developed the third culture so entirely that each relies on the other. Neither culture in this phase dominates the other, ensuring mutual acceptance and security. The model shows no completion or end stage as the process of building and maintaining a third

culture continually remains in flux as individuals in the groups evolve and members leave or join the third culture sphere. Third cultures may de-evolve into earlier stages as conflicts arise and then rebuild as members resolve conflicts (Casmir, 1997).

Applications in intercultural communication. Intercultural communication research uses the TCB in primarily two areas of study, intercultural friendships and relationships, and intercultural ethics. A study³ by Pei-Wen Lee (2006) on the development of intercultural friendships applies the phases of TCB to friendship building processes where individuals create a third-culture relationship. Suman Lee (2006) created a quantitative scale for TCB in intercultural romantic relationships. This scale applies TCB to a type of relationship commonly ignored in the rest of TCB literature, showing not only TCB's versatility, but also pushing the theory to become more expansive in its applicability to any type of intercultural communication event.

The TCB model holds firm in its stance that both parties remain equal, without one culture dominating the other, and several scholars apply the model to explain and prevent ethical issues as they arise in the study of intercultural communication (Casmir, 1997; Evanoff, 2000, 2006). For example, Casmir (1997) promoted TCB as a way to celebrate the "other" rather than the Western view of self, in hopes of encouraging cultures to create acceptance and understanding together in an ethical, shared process. Other research in intercultural ethics combined the TCB model with a philosophical exploration of intercultural integration at three levels: personal, interpersonal/intercultural, and formal/societal (Evanoff, 2006). This triangulation provides further support for the TCB model across various contexts. A final area of intercultural ethics examined through the lens of the third-culture building model arose in Uchida's (1997) application of TCB to specifically women's intercultural communication. Her analysis of the model cites the experiences of women worldwide as one shared culture,

proposing a new approach to women's intercultural communication in an increasingly diverse world.

Strengths and weaknesses. TCB proves a strong model in placing dialogue at the center of intercultural events, focusing on the culture as people and striving for individuals to work together, as equals, to create a mutually beneficial relationship. However, the model lacks scholarly support as few research studies have been completed utilizing the theory. The lack of studies applying and validating the theoretical model creates a need for further support and critique as scholars fill in the gaps in literature surrounding intercultural relationships (Evanoff, 2006). All of the propositions and assumptions of TCB stand as strengths; however, real world intercultural scenarios do not always play out this peacefully and with the intent to work together on a level playing field. According to some, TCB fails to address the power dynamics that occur between cultures, particularly between majority and minority cultures, or when either individual's ethnocentric identities or misconceptions cloud the building process (Lee, 2006). This lack of acknowledgement of the role power plays in building a third culture stands as the model's largest weakness.

TCB also falls short in that it does not clearly illustrate a process or space where more than two cultures interact, neglecting multicultural individuals who identify with more than one specific culture (Lee, 2006). Lee argues these individuals have already created a third-culture within both their families and their own individual identities, changing the power dynamics of TCB by holding more experience in blending cultures. Multicultural individuals also bring two or more new cultures into a mix with someone who, potentially, may have no experience with any culture outside their own. These interactions may create a greater awareness of other cultures within the new third culture, yet the added complexity may also lead to higher conflict rates

(Lee, 2008). Third culture building model stands as a strong approach to the formation of intercultural relationship, but stands arguably limited in its failure to address the power negotiations that occur throughout intercultural interactions. To address these differences in power, I propose the addition of cultural contracts theory to this study as the theory examines how individuals negotiate power dynamics within intercultural relationships.

Cultural Contracts Theory

Every individual has metaphorically signed a cultural contract at some point in their life, either consciously or unconsciously, describing how they negotiate and interact in various relationships (Jackson & Crawley, 2003). Individuals construct cultural meanings and ways of behaving that permeate both individual identities and the relationships they form (Jackson, 2002a). Cultural contracts stand as “implicitly negotiated agreements to behave in conformity with social, cultural, and institutional standards” (Jackson, 2002b, p. 48). Individuals may unknowingly sign contracts dictating their interactions, while others willingly sign unaware of the deeper implications and influence those contracts will have over choices in their future relationships and identity negotiations (Drummond & Orbe, 2010). Cultural contracts theory (Jackson, 2002a) is based on the idea that dynamics such as power, cultural loyalty, and group identities affect the coordination of intercultural relationships. Jackson (2002a) created this theory as a way to make sense of difference in intercultural interactions, namely, how difference translates to conflict, and potentially, its eventual resolution.

Theoretical framework. Based on early work on identity negotiation as defined and expanded by Ting-Toomey (1986), this model positioned communication as a critical dimension of the “identity-negotiation processes between the self and relevant others” (Ting-Toomey, 1986, p. 123). Ting-Toomey’s later development, identity negotiation theory (Ting-Toomey, 2005),

asserts that identity forms over multiple negotiations between individuals of differing cultural backgrounds. Through dialogue, individuals build an understanding of another's culture only when that 'other' challenges the individual's own cultural identity. This forces the individual to assert their identity and therefore understand and acknowledge the cultural difference. Cultural contracts theory also gains some inspiration from uncertainty reduction theory, focusing on similar concerns with initial encounters and the outcomes stemming from those interactions (Jackson, 2002a).

Major assumptions. Cultural contracts theory defines the negotiation of cultural identity as “a process in which one considers the gain, loss, or exchange of his or her ability to interpret their own reality or worldview” (Jackson, 1999, p. 10). Jackson outlines multiple assumptions that inform the theory. The first five assumptions focus on the assertions that every individual possesses a culture, with necessary cultural contracts between persons lasting temporarily or long term as needed by those in the contractual relationship (Jackson, 2002a). Assumption one asserts human beings cannot exist without culture to organize their social processes, where assumption two explains individuals all possess at least one cultural contract due to the necessity of these contracts for defining and protecting one's self (Jackson, 2002a). Assumption three acknowledges contracts may be either temporary or enduring, with assumptions four and five asserting that cultural differences between peoples require coordination, although not necessarily requiring mutual interest or benefit, with cultural contracts manifesting as that method of coordination (Jackson, 2002a). Jackson explains how these contracts prove necessary for human interaction; however, he cautions those with marginalized identities assimilating to majority norms to be mindful of the implications these contracts may have, “because it reproduces the same anxieties and reinforcement of social positioning when their cultural identities are not

treated as normal, legitimate, or okay” (Jackson, 2002a, p. 263).

The remaining six assumptions (Jackson, 2002a) acknowledge the dynamic nature of identities, explaining how individuals hold multiple identities which all need negotiation. Assumption six and seven acknowledge the dynamic nature of identities and detail the communicative nature of those identities as they are expressed through relational communication (Jackson, 2002a). Assumption eight focuses on how personal histories influence an individual’s openness to entering into identity negotiations, cultural contracts, with other, paired with a reminder that multiple identities function simultaneously in communicative contexts and must also be negotiated in assumption nine. Addressing those who attempt to join another culture, assumption ten clarifies this shift does not always prove profitable or even achievable for individuals. Finally, assumption eleven asserts a contract may only be completed if there is a desire or perceived need for the contract from both individuals, acknowledging that this need may appear as a result of force or as a requirement for survival. These assumptions also posit factors influencing one’s openness to entering a contract such as personal history, perceived need, and degree of awareness of outcomes (Jackson & Crawley, 2003). Collectively these assumptions help to ground the theory’s propositions explaining when and in what ways these contracts are best negotiated.

Cultural contract types. The assumptions explaining the worldview of this theory illustrate the foundation of cultural contracts in assimilation, adaption, or in accepting the value of another. Cultural contracts appear in three forms: ready-to-sign, quasi-completed, or co-created (Jackson, 2002b). Individuals, often those of a dominant majority group, prenegotiate ready-to-sign contracts in order to maintain current identities and the status quo through power dynamics (Drummond & Orbe, 2010). These contracts do not allow for further negotiation,

placing the choice to assimilate or leave on the other individual. As a part of one's societal privilege, those in a position of power may not be aware of the implications and messages these contracts send (Jackson, 2002b); however, these contracts may also be used to control a marginalized group out of fear or lack of understanding.

The most common contract, quasi-completed, while partially prenegotiated, allows for limited input and negotiation. Individuals negotiating these contracts show a willingness to hear the other culture's identity and worldview, yet still assert their own identity to maintain a sense of control (Orbe, Harrison, Kauffman, & Laurent, 2015). With quasi-completed contracts, an individual recognizes the limitations in assuming one side will entirely assimilate, while still implying polarity is not a viable option either (Jackson, 2002b).

Co-created contracts stand as fully negotiated contracts, often allowing dialogue to continue well after the initial contract "signing" (Orbe et al., 2015). This form of contract stands as the ideal method of relationship coordination, as it gives both individuals a voice and acknowledgement ultimately creating valuation of the other culture (Jackson, 2002b). Individuals co-creating contracts base them on mutual satisfaction, rather than obligation, making them more successful and sustainable long term (Jackson & Crawley, 2003).

Theoretical propositions. Jackson introduces seven propositions to explain the rules making up the framework of cultural contracts. The first three explain parameters surrounding the decision to assimilate or adapt to a majority culture stating, "if one is strongly committed to and strongly values one's own culture, there will likely be a greater sense of self-efficacy and a reduced desire to assimilate or adapt" (Jackson, 2002a, p. 365). Namely, proposition one asserts that strategic communication takes place in interactions where there is unequal power. Proposition two furthers this power dynamic stating "There is a direct and proportionate

relationship between power and self-efficacy” (Jackson, 2002a, p. 365). The third proposition explains these power dynamics in relation to cultural contracts in that, if there is no perceived need for individuals to coordinate in a relationship they will resist the co-creation of contracts (Jackson, 2002a). These propositions draw on previous works (Orbe, 1998; Ting Toomey, 1999) exploring the relationships between power and strategic communication in intercultural communicative events. The remaining four propositions focus on cultural loyalty and its influences on contracts; they explain that as cultural loyalty increases, the chances of issuing a ready-to-sign contract increase while signing a ready-to-sign contract and assimilating decreases. Propositions four and five relate to directly to cultural contracts as the fourth affirms as power increases so does the preparation of ready-to-sign contracts, with the fifth presenting three types of cultural contracts: ready-to-sign, co-created, and quasi-completed. (Jackson, 2002b). These propositions also outline outcomes of broken contracts depending on the assessment of “damage” resulting in termination of the relationship or the creation of a new or revised contract (Jackson, 2002a). Propositions six and seven unpack the violation of these contracts. There are penalties for a violation of the contract’s rules, as introduced in proposition six (Jackson, 2003). These penalties vary in degree based on the severity of the rule broken and potentially require the revision of a contract, which is detailed in proposition seven (Jackson, 2002a). The three cultural contracts of this theory each regulate intercultural relationships differently and account for the various shifts or challenges to identity those interacting with an individual from a differing culture may face.

Application to intercultural communication. Communication scholars use cultural contracts theory most often to examine cultural group members’ experiences and interactions with others when they must negotiate their cultures, worldviews, and identities. Early research

looked to the experiences of Black men in academia (Jackson, 2002b; Jackson & Crawley, 2003) illustrating the drastic differences of their experiences in comparison to their White counterparts. More recent research explores the experiences of biracial and multicultural individuals in the dominant worldview of the U.S. (Drummond & Orbe, 2010; Orbe et al. 2015). These studies provide further support for this relatively new theory of identity and relationship negotiation, while also expanding our understanding of how cultural individuals situate and defend their place in a dominating majority worldview, as seen in the U.S. Work by Orbe et al. (2015) also contributes to existing research on the experiences of biracial women and the challenges they face, while also supporting the assumption that cultural contracts can negotiate more than one identity within a person, adding complexity to negotiations with other individuals. The experiences of biracial individuals demonstrate the complexity of identity negotiation within individuals which leads to complex interpersonal/interracial interactions. The application of cultural contracts theory to these events validates the applicability of the theory to real world interactions in an increasingly diversifying world.

Recent research also applies cultural contracts theory to interracial couples and the negotiation of priorities in raising a family and educational expectations (Lawton, Foeman, & Braz, 2013; Lawton, Foeman, & Brown, 2008). These studies demonstrate the application of cultural contracts in a familial, rather than social, setting and illustrate how contracts become more fluid as power in the relational roles proves more dynamic in the family setting. These studies examine settings where minority groups hold increased agency due to their stronger identification with a cultural group. In refutation of explanations of cultural contracts often being led by majority groups with power (Jackson, & Crawley, 2003), these studies reflect the opposite, with minority group members asserting their values with a reluctance to budge in hopes of

imparting their cultural loyalties to their children (Lawton et al., 2008). Co-created contracts in these families proved more difficult to negotiate as parents struggle to understand the needs of a child whose background and life experiences differ from their own (Lawton et al., 2013). These studies exemplify the relevance of this theory across multiple types of intercultural interactions explaining how the kinds of cultural contracts vary between contexts and individuals.

Strengths and weaknesses. Cultural contracts theory's major shortcoming lies in the fact that it is a relatively new theory, and has not yet been widely tested and supported. That being said, communication scholars have completed research using cultural contracts across multiple types of interactions proving the real world applicability and usefulness of this theory. The theory includes explorations of power dynamics, cultural history and loyalties, desired outcomes, and even accounts for misinformation or lack of mindfulness by either or both individuals. However, cultural contracts theory does not explicitly account for the management of power dynamics when co-cultural group members lead the interaction. Cultural contracts theory stands on a solid foundation, ready for further application in research to enhance credibility and extend its reach.

Blending Third Culture Building and Cultural Contracts

Third culture building model and cultural contracts theory stand out as the strongest theoretical perspectives for exploring the relationships built between international and domestic students. Both perspectives explore scenarios where two different cultures must work together and the processes that occur throughout these interactions. Third culture building model (Casmir, 1978) outlines an ultimate outcome, with both parties mutually creating a third, inclusive culture through dialogic moments (Hopson et al., 2012), while cultural contracts theory (Jackson, 1999) looks at the power dynamics negotiated throughout the experience.

It is important for international students adjusting to life in the U.S. to form relationships with host-national students to improve their understanding of cultural norms, language proficiency and build a support system for their personal well-being (Gareis et al., 2011). In the same way, host-national students benefit from building relationships with international students by gaining a better understanding of globalized perspectives and developing intercultural communication skills (Terrazas-Carrillo et al., 2014). TCB provides a theoretically supported model to study small communities at the start of, currently undergoing, and those maintaining negotiations intercultural relationship building. This application would not only provide descriptive data to further support the model and its applicability across various contexts, but would also allow researchers to refine what works and what does not in differing contexts where individuals build third cultures.

Although third culture building illustrates an ideal standard of two cultures working together, individuals do not always strive to accomplish mutually beneficial goals. All too often one group seeks to dominate and force assimilation on others, leaving the minority group to fight for a space in the existing power structure (Uchida, 1997). Unfortunately, many domestic students have never encountered situations that require them to consider and adjust to the norms of another cultural group and similarly, some international students encounter a new culture for the first time in their travels abroad (Imamura & Zhang, 2014). This lack of intercultural experience can lead to conflict as they assume a position of power and expect international students to assimilate and ‘become Americanized’ in order to maintain their relationships. These power struggles have the potential to turn into large-scale conflicts, alienating and marginalizing international students (Hanassab, 2006).

In light of this, cultural contracts theory (Jackson, 2002a) stands as an excellent theoretical complement to the ideals of TCB. Cultural contracts theory acknowledges that both groups do not always come to the table as equals and often power dynamics dictate intercultural interactions (Jackson, 1999). This theoretical perspective, when applied to international-domestic student relations, helps to explain the various types of interactions that may occur. Host-national students will stand at various levels of openness and willingness to interact with international students, some welcoming with open arms while others distrusting this new group with hostility (Grey, Devlin, & Goldsmith, 2009). Cultural contracts theory unpacks some of the processes individuals with varying levels of acceptance use in their intercultural interactions. The theory helps to verbalize how agreements and relationships, albeit unequal relationships, form through the three types of contracts issued by the majority group.

TCB provides a framework to understanding the phenomena of an integrated, mutually beneficial third culture; whereas, cultural contracts theory proves most productive in the study of the dialogic negotiation of that new emerging relationships. An infusion of the two creates an enhanced analysis of intercultural processes that occur in the formation of friendships between international and domestic students. The third culture building process best explains how contracts systematically flow with the power dynamics this context creates (Uchida, 1997). Cultural contracts theory presents three types of contracts, ready-to-sign, quasi-completed, and co-created (Orbe et al., 2015). The first two contracts describe various potential scenarios that may occur when an international student approaches host-national students in their campus endeavors. The third type of contract, co-created appears in definition very similar to the idea of building a third culture. The theory, however, does not provide any steps or processes to achieve this ideal co-created contractual interaction. Adding the four phases of TCB—namely, contact,

need, interaction, dependence leading to third culture interdependence (Casmir, 1999)—to cultural contracts theory allows for a fuller explanation of how members from differing co-cultural groups issue contracts and build mutually beneficial relationships.

Academic institutions, as well as host-national students, often place pressure on international students to assimilate into the dominant culture, a form of ready-to-sign contract. An article about issues immigrants faces explains the dynamic, “The racialization of immigrants defends white privilege and culture; recovers an imagined idealized place, past, and future; and establishes that belonging to the national and local community is conditional on immigrants conforming to white American values and norms” (Leitner, 2011, p. 828). This represents the ready-to-sign contracts issued to international students. A lack of understanding of differing worldviews lead dominant group members to assert their identity and power through these nonnegotiable, ready-to-sign contracts. Similarly, those more open to change or accepting of other cultures may start with quasi-completed or even co-created contracts. The contracts issued shape the relationships between students, whether the contracts and relationships reinforce positive or negative aspects of the working relationship.

Third culture building is not always a neat, straightforward process as described in the above process of building culture and the contracts that align with those stages. TCB can be a messy process, conflicts arise and are resolved, relationships form either out of need or interest in the other person; individuals move forward and then cycle backward in stages, then move forward again as individuals interact (Lee, 2006). The blending of TCB and cultural contracts theory allows for the best examination of friendship formation between host-national and international students as contracts are issued and re-issued over time depending on the stage of TCB. Cultural contracts align with stages of TCB accounting for the non-linear dialogue process

that creates third cultures. Intercultural interactions prove unique in the way relationships develop and understanding forms. Blending the two theoretical frameworks provides a foundation for the flexibility to these communication processes allowing me to focus on the communicative processes that create mutually beneficial relationships, and ultimately, third cultures.

Research Questions

Current communication research studies concentrating on international student adjustment in U. S. American universities focuses on two main areas of research. The first explores the levels of international student assimilation into the host culture from both the institutionalized, or host-national, perspective as well as the international student experience and well-being (Lindemann, 2005; Misra & Castillo, 2004; Urban & Orbe, 2007; Wu et al., 2015). The second examines the motivations and processes behind maintaining one's original culture away from home (Andrade, 2006; Moores & Popadiuk, 2011; Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2013). However, research on intercultural relationship building suggests a third option exists where international students may create new, blended, third cultures with host-national students; allowing both the international and national students to develop a new understanding and appreciation for the other culture while still maintaining their own cultural identities (Gareis et al., 2011; Russell et al., 2010; Tropp & Bianchi, 2006; Williams & Johnson, 2011). This study aims to examine the processes that occur throughout development of relationships between international students and national students first through the lenses of Casmir's third culture building model (1978) leading to my first research question:

RQ1: In what ways do international and host-national students build third culture relationships through university sponsored cross-cultural programs?

Third culture building acknowledges that intercultural interactions do not always lead to assimilation or segregation and explores the development of new cultures that arise as a result of the blending of two cultures, rather than the assimilation of the minority into the majority. However, these building processes do not always progress without conflict and power discrepancies between dominant and minority cultures (Jackson, 2002b). In response to the dynamic nature of power in newly forming intercultural relationships, this proposed research also utilizes Jackson's Cultural Contracts theory (1999) to better explain the contracts issued, negotiated and accepted in the formation of a relationship. This theory guides my second and third research questions:

RQ2: What types of contracts are issued throughout the third culture process?

RQ3: How are cultural contracts negotiated during the process of building a third culture relationship?

In this regard, the third culture building model and cultural contracts theory can be interwoven to triangulate a theoretical foundation that allows for not only the study of third cultures, but also the power dynamics and negotiation processes that occur in the development of intercultural relationships. In the next chapter, I present a qualitative research study, detailing the procedures the study followed, participants and instrumentation, as well as a method of data analysis.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

I present a qualitative research design as the strongest method for the study of international and host-national student experiences in forming cross-cultural relationships. Many of the concepts I explore, such as cultural perceptions of friendship and third culture building, cannot be easily quantified eliminating the ability to use scales in the form of surveys. Further, ascribing a set of numbers to the process a pair of students' undergo when developing a relationship fails to accurately represent the breadth and depth of emotions and experiences that students encounter when interacting with someone from a differing culture. Qualitative research not only allows for, but encourages researchers to analyze participant narratives for a richer, more holistic look at a phenomenon (Saldaña, 2013). This chapter describes the participants of this study, outlines the procedures followed to gather data, and details the methodology used to analyze the collected data.

Participants

This study called for pairs of students, one host-national and one international student, who had built, or were currently forming relationships through their college experiences through university sponsored programs. Student participation in this study was voluntary and all experiences shared have been, and will continue to be, kept confidential and anonymous. Data for this study was collected from a convenience sample (Frey, Botan & Kreps, 2000) of international and domestic students currently attending Western Michigan University. Due to the challenges of identifying student pairs through typical, university-wide recruitment methods, participants for this study were identified and recruited through the Center for English Learning

and Culture for International Students (CELCIS) program and the International Programs Council (IPC).

The CELCIS program is a year-round, intensive English program, providing instruction in English as a second language (ESL) for non-native students who will use English to study at a United States academic institution or work in the surrounding communities (Von Steinen, 2016). The CELCIS program offers a conversation circles program where international students may interact with and practice their language skills with host-national students who volunteer to meet with groups of 5-15 students weekly to discuss various topics that interest all students. These groups meet during the spring, fall, and both summer semesters with both international and host-national students coming and going as their schedule sees fit (Von Steinen, 2016). In this program typically international students commit to a full semester, or semesters, whereas host-national students often only commit to a certain number of meetings to fill a certain number of required volunteer hours.

The International Programs Council (IPC) is a student-led registered student organization that sponsors social events and short term excursions open to international and host-national students alike. The IPC holds weekly meet ups where international and host-national students can meet and get to know one another, but also coordinates holiday dances, opportunities for students to volunteer in the community, events to educate host-national students about international culture, as well as weekend getaways and spring break trips (Bond, 2016). While primarily a social organization, the IPC also coordinates a buddy program, matching international students with students who volunteer to be a buddy and meet with the international student a minimum of once a week (Force, 2016). Often the host-national students who volunteer

to be buddies have themselves been students who studied abroad prior to their participation in IPC; however, a number of the buddies have no previous international experiences (Force, 2016).

Working with the CELCIS activities coordinator, I emailed a list of identified student pairs who have participated, or were currently participating, in the department's conversation partners program. In the same way, I coordinated with the IPC advisor to email a mix of students who have participated in the program throughout their college experience as well as international and U. S. American students who are new to the program. Identified students were sent a recruitment email (Appendix A) inviting them to participate in the study through their participation in two interview sessions, which took approximately two to three hours of their time. This email contained a project summary, clearly explaining the purpose and procedures of the study, a copy of the informed consent form, as well as scheduling information and contact information for the student investigator for any additional questions or further clarification purposes.

Emails were sent out until six student pairs agreed to share their experiences. All of the participants were in some way connected to either the CELCIS program or IPC. Two of the pairs did not initially meet through these programs, however did not actively form a relationship until after re-encountering one another through CELCIS or IPC. Participants ranged in the length of time they had known one another, two weeks to three years, and included both same-sex, male-male and female-female, and cross-sex pairs. International participants came from various home countries (i.e. Spain, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, India, the Philippines and Ghana) and host-national students connected with their partners most often through International Programs Council activities (see Appendix B for further participant information). After interviewing six student pairs it was found that data was reflecting similar experiences and it was decided saturation was

met, meaning no new or relevant data emerged regarding a category and new pieces added little, if any, new value to the emergent analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Tracy, 2013).

Procedures

Data for this study was collected through interviews with both individuals of the student pair separately, as well as one interview with the pair together. I obtained Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (Appendix C) before contacting any students with a recruitment email and gathering participants. As participants agreed to share their experiences and participate in the interviews via email, I worked with them to schedule interview times both individually and as a dyad. Interviews were scheduled between the student(s) and myself at mutually agreeable times in a public place on campus, usually a conference room or classroom I reserved prior to the interview day.

Participants who agreed to participate in the study were emailed a one-sheet project summary (Appendix D) of the study as well as an informed consent form to view prior to their scheduled interview time. Emailing the consent form allowed students to take the necessary amount of time to translate the document, or request clarification from me about any portion of the study's procedures or consent form that was unclear or unfamiliar to them. All students received my contact information to ensure they had the ability to request further information should they need it.

When students arrived for their scheduled interview time, I reviewed the study summary and the informed consent form with them again to ensure understanding and provide an opportunity to answer any questions they may have had. Prior to the start of their interview conversations, students were given two copies of the consent form, one they were asked to sign and return to the investigator, the other they were given to keep for their records. At this time, I

also gained their permission to audio record the interview sessions for later transcription. The participants were informed that they may choose not to take part, or leave the study at any time without penalty. Further, students were told they may choose not to answer any questions that make them uncomfortable.

The use of interviews fits the exploratory nature of this study and was chosen over other methods such as observations, written surveys, focus groups, or case studies so that the researcher could use additional questions to gather details about each student's unique experiences. In particular, this method allowed students to freely discuss their perceptions and experiences, including the range of emotions that come with adjusting to a new culture, the challenges either student in the dyad may work through, as well as any shifts in either student's adjustment or worldviews that may occur. Forming relationships stands as a complex process, further complicated when adding various aspects of cross-cultural interaction, leading intercultural research to often use interviews as the best method to reflect the complex nature of a phenomenon (Terrazas-Carillo, Hong & Pace, 2014). When working with international students specifically, interviews often prove a strong method in that the researcher may clarify or reword questions on-the-spot during the interview to ensure a participant understands, or use probing questions to gather a more complete, detailed narrative from a participant (Andrade, 2006; Moores & Popadiuk, 2011; Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2013). This flexibility often allows for a more complete data set that more accurately reflects the phenomenon under study (Moores & Popadiuk, 2011). This use of interviews, combined with a member-checking strategy of emailing the students transcriptions of their interviews to confirm the accuracy of their responses and ensuring the responses fully reflect what they wished to communicate added a sense of clarity to my data.

I asked participants to commit to two interviews: first, an individual interview to discuss their experiences and expectations with forming a relationship with someone from a different culture; and second, one dyadic interview with their partner and the researcher to explore the processes that occurred in forming the relationship. Each of the semi-structured interviews were conducted in English and lasted between 15 and 45 minutes each as the interviews aimed to elicit narratives about the students' opinions and experiences surrounding the formation of working relationships and friendships. Individual interviews occurred either immediately before, or immediately after, the small group interview in order to be mindful of the participant's time commitment. I transcribed the audio recordings of the interview sessions as close to the completion of each session as possible to ensure the interviews were fresh in my mind when going through the recordings.

Instruments

This study used a semi-structured interview guide (see Appendices E & F) made up of open-ended questions to encourage participants to provide narratives about their experiences in building an intercultural relationship. These questions probed for the events, dialogues and shared experiences that led to the formation of the relationship, as well as any traditions or norms that formed throughout the relationship. The interviews also asked for students' expectations prior to the formation of the relationship as well as their current expectations and views surrounding friendship, exploring whether they consider their partner a friend. As stated earlier, each interview lasted between 15-35 minutes, collecting almost six hours of interview data or 50 pages of single spaced typed transcripts.

After each interview was transcribed, the written transcription of the interview was sent to the student who participated in that interview. This copy of the transcription allowed students

to review their answers to each interview question, to ensure their responses remained true and accurate to what they expressed. Students were asked to edit anything they felt did not fit with what they intended to communicate and were invited to add any additional information in the form of written narratives at the end of the transcription if they wished to further clarify a response or provide additional clarification. This not only provided a form of member-checking to ensure the quality and accuracy of the interview data, but also offered students a way to add information in writing which might have been a more comfortable channel of expression for some students, both international and host-national. All participants reviewed their interviews and responded they felt the transcripts were accurate; none of them wished to make any changes or add additional information after the interviews.

Data Analysis

In order to allow themes to organically emerge from the data collected, rather than imposing a set of pre-determined criteria on the data, I used a grounded approach when analyzing the transcript data (Tracy, 2013). This analytical method allowed me to best fracture the data, highlighting areas where I lacked needed data, before comparing descriptive codes and synthesizing them in to larger analytical themes (Charmaz, 2006). In my exploration of third culture relationships, a grounded approach stood as the best approach to understand the real-world processes from within the data, rather than forcing them into the stages of a theoretical processes with which I am already familiar.

By blending two theoretical frameworks, TCB and cultural contracts theory, this study attempted to triangulate a theoretical framework to explore connections between the two. This examination may allow for further validation of the models and extensions of the theories increasing the applicability for future research. To truly explore the integration of the two

theories, any connections must be solidly entrenched in the data. By focusing on these experiences from the data to the theoretical, I may best understand not only the student experiences themselves, but any applications to theory then will be firmly rooted in the data, bringing the real-world experiences to the theoretical explanations. Using a grounded approach helped to build strong analytical connections from the ground-up and any findings fitting with my theoretical frameworks will then stand as further support for the theories they explore.

The transcribed data went through an initial review, where I used my research questions as a guide (Saldaña, 2013) to categorize the interview data, creating in vivo and descriptive codes to best fracture and sort the student narratives. This allowed me to explore the breadth and depth of the data. In vivo codes arose from the language used within the data to describe the participant's experiences in their own words, creating categories based on the emergent language (Charmaz, 2006). I continued to fracture the data into small pieces, marking portions of narrative under different descriptive thematic subsets, known as descriptive codes, that described specific types of events, emotions, perceptions and behaviors (Saldaña, 2013). During this initial review, I worked to remain open to all possible directions that could be discerned from the data and focused solely on the descriptive and in vivo codes that arose from the data, rather than making conceptual leaps (Charmaz, 2006).

Throughout the initial coding stages, I looked to see which areas of my data were missing or requiring further data in order to maintain qualitative quality and saturation (Tracy, 2013). I noticed I was lacking participants who had recently met, who were at the initial stages of third culture building and I was fortunate enough to connect with and interview a pair who had met recently through their internship and who both attended IPC events. This additional information

allowed me to round out the breadth of experiences and explore early phases of TCB as well as later stages.

Once I had sufficiently completed my initial review and had collected enough data to reach saturation, I began a second review of the data, combining the descriptive and in vivo codes into larger thematic insights, or what is also called focused coding (Saldaña, 2013). The purpose of this second stage was to pinpoint the most common, or strongest, descriptive and in vivo codes and group these codes into larger related themes or insights. This categorization allowed me to further develop common or notable events, perceptions, or feelings into larger analytic themes (Charmaz, 2006). The focused nature of this second review allowed me to connect the detailed descriptive codes to create themes, explore insights, and discover the broader meanings as they arose from the data. The smaller fractures of the data from the initial review allowed me to thoroughly explore the data from its most detailed form before piecing it back together in understandable, meaningful ways (Saldaña, 2013). In order to remain consistent with the purposes of grounded theory, these larger themes arose through connecting the most salient codes and comparing and contrasting the data with itself, not from the overarching theoretical frameworks I have described (Tracy, 2013).

By focusing on the data without the immediate application of theory, I could explore the data freely, without forcing the data into a pre-determined set of themes, to best understand the natural processes third culture relationships follow. However, in order to best examine these experiences, the themes must also be theoretically informed. After completing both cycles of coding to thoroughly explore the data, I compared the emergent themes with the core concepts of the third culture building model and cultural contracts theory to draw theoretically grounded connections between the data, theory, and the phenomenon they represent. My final round of

analysis examined these connections to interpret how these students' experiences fit with the models I have chosen to study this phenomenon.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The previous chapter explained the methodology and procedures used to explore third culture building in international-host-national relationships at institutions of higher education, specifically within university sponsored programs. Existing research has shown the importance of international/host-national student relationships and the influence these relationships have on international students' academic success and psychosocial wellbeing (Atri et al., 2006; Klomegah, 2006; Yeh & Inose, 2003). In order to explore the development of international/host-national relationships, and better understand the third culture building processes these students experience, six pairs of international/host-national students who participated in university sponsored programs were interviewed both individually and as a pair. These interviews provided generous insights into the ways in which international and host-national students form relationships, specifically in response to the following research question:

RQ1: In what ways do international and host-national students build third culture relationships through university sponsored cross-cultural programs?

Further, one major theme, and many notable findings, emerged from the data improving the understanding of how students negotiate cultural contracts within these relationships. These themes arise in response to the following research questions.

RQ2: What types of contracts are issued throughout the third culture process?

RQ3: How are cultural contracts negotiated when building a third culture relationship?

This chapter presents the findings of all three research questions by identifying common themes from the interview data. First, I explore the meaning of friendship for international and host-national students, which provides a background to these students' understanding of

relationship development and friendship goals. Following this background, I will explicate themes related to third culture relationship development, specifically how the student's approach to intercultural relationships sets the stage for future interactions and common behaviors found within each phase of TCB (Casmir, 1999). This explanation of findings will also identify types of turning points and their influence on relational development. In examining cultural contracts and their negotiation, I will present a major theme that illustrates how a host-national students' motivations for reaching out to international students informs and shapes the negotiation of cultural contracts. Interview data suggests students who volunteer, approaching intercultural friendships on their own terms as opposed to those who approach intercultural relationships out of requirement, may be more open to specific types of cultural contracts. These students may also prove more willing to negotiating their expectations and relational norms than students who approach these relationships to fulfill requirements for coursework or extra credit opportunities.

Third Culture Relationship Development

In order to explore cultural contracts in the context of third culture building it is important to first understand how students initiate and develop intercultural relationships. Interview data reflected a number of noteworthy observations in terms of student's conceptualization of intercultural relationships, relational turning points, and barriers that arise due to the nature of third culture relationships. These insights allow us to better understand the processes students undergo when building third culture relationships, insights I will build upon in a later exploration of cultural contracts.

The meaning of friendship. When asked to describe what the term friendship means to them, both international and host-national students defined friendship similarly with only a few notable differences. All students described friendship in terms of trust, support, and reliance on

one another, with a majority of students also describing friendship as a mutual give and take relationship. One host-national student described this kind of relationship as, “someone you can count on, somebody that you can trust, somebody that would do the same for you as you would do for them, it’s a two-way street.” Similarly, an international student from Ghana defined their understanding of friendship as “someone who you can trust and that you know will be there for what you need, someone who helps carry you, but you carry them also.” Across the number of cultures and backgrounds interviewed (see Appendix B for participant demographics), the attributes of friendship remained the same; often worded differently, but boiling down to themes of trust and support. Further, the ability to rely on one another in a ‘two-way street’ give-and-take relationship proved important for all students. Only one international student from Sudan uniquely expanded on these themes in way that differed from the other participants stating:

The term friendship means to bring others into your life. You have good connection, you trust, you help each other. Not only just a friendship but a network to me, in my culture you treat somebody that you don’t even know, treat them like the way they can treat you.

This Sudanese international student shared throughout both interviews how his culture views friendship and social relationships as a collective network, continually growing one’s network to share resources and continually help one another across a large united group. This collectivistic understanding of relationships places an emphasis on social relationships with high levels of obligation and an orientation towards the other (Hofstede, 2001). Collectivism appeared to play a role in this student’s desire to form a network of close mutually beneficial relationships, rather than one or two close relationships or a series of transient ‘loose tie’ (Hofstede, 2001) relationships. This collective approach to friendship still reflected similar ideals of the give and

take relationships described in other student narratives. Similarly, this definition of friendship includes relationships built on trust, allowing individuals to rely on one another as they provide support and assistance throughout the network.

Within many of these relationships a theme of protection also emerged from the interview data. Students described wanting to protect their partner either in a physical or social sense. One African American male student described wanting to protect his partner from Sudan from the stereotyping he may face in the United States:

I don't want people to see us and think those things about him. I don't want them to see him as just another black male you know? I just want to combat all the stereotypes about him. I mean I'm used to it and it sucks, but he saw people die and horrible stuff like that, I just, I don't want people to treat him like the way they treat the rest of us. He's a good guy, and I mean I am too, but I know how to deal with it, he shouldn't have to.

This student's concern about his partner's social well-being also appeared in other student narratives. One international student from Saudi Arabia described defending his host-national friend to his family:

She [mother] doesn't like the showing of the skin when she sees it on my Facebook. I tell her, mother she's a nice girl trust me, and she goes 'no no no it is scandalous.' They may never meet but I don't want her to think of Julia that way.

Protective themes also arose in response to maintaining physical safety. One U.S. American woman mentioned future travel plans in the dyadic interview, to which her partner asked about the airline she had chosen and who she was traveling with. The host-national student had playfully asked, "do you approve? He has to approve of my travel partners and plans." She

later clarified she appreciated his concern because she felt that he was watching out for her.

“He’s a good friend, he’s always got my back, making sure I’m safe and I, I really appreciate it.”

In many of the interviews concern for the other and their well-being appeared as protective comments or gestures among pairs whom self-identified as friends. These examples illustrate the relationships that have developed to the final phase of TCB, dependence (Casmir, 1993), where both individuals consider themselves friends, rather than a school relationship or other casual friendship. Students who identified as friends in their interviews reflected feeling a sense of responsibility for the other’s well-being and acted on those concerns in ways they felt appropriate. Students identifying their relationships as work-based or casual did not reflect these same concerns for the other’s well-being, suggesting these students had not moved into later stages of third culture development. These casual relationships based on school or work may occur without the development of a third culture; however, these students have the capability to create a third-culture as they are currently moving through the early phases of TCB-contact, need, and in some pairs interaction-and may potentially progress through the final phases of TCB, interaction and dependence (Casmir, 1999).

Interview data highlighted similarities in both international and host-national students’ ideas of friendship and the give and take nature of friendship relationships. This background to students’ ideas of what constitutes friendship helps to inform how students form, and later perceive, the different type of intercultural relationships they may participate in on campus.

Host-national approach to initiating relationships. Students, specifically host-national students, hold differing motivations for reaching out to international students and initiating intercultural relationships. Of the pairs interviewed, half of the host-national students, three students, approached international students through university programs out of an interest in

other cultures and a desire to connect and develop relationships with international students. The other half of the host-national students interviewed, three students, initiated contact with international students as a response to a course requirement, required volunteer hours, or extra credit opportunities.

Within these collected student narratives, the differences in motivation for beginning the relationship influenced the type of initial relationship the pair formed and, within these pairs, appeared to ultimately shape the course of the relationship. For example, one host-national student attended international programs council events to fulfill a diversity requirement for her on-campus internship, where she and her partner both work. She described the relationship she had with her partner as a working relationship explaining, “we work together a lot, I mean I see him at IPC events as well, but we’re not close. I don’t see him outside of our internship or anything, it’s not like I invite him out with my friends.” Her partner voiced similar views of the relationship, “we do not stay so much time together, we only stay two to three hours a week so at least we know each other, but we do not know much.” The pairs descriptions of their relationship indicate they have moved through the initial two phases of TCB, contact and need, and may have just entered the third phase, interaction, where they might establish norms and begin to develop an understanding of one another.

Host-national students who approached IPC events or volunteering with CELCIS due to an interest in, and desire to learn about, other cultures appeared to have stronger relationships that both individuals classified as friendship. Within the pairs interviewed, only those who had voluntarily initiated relationships had reached the final dependence phase of TCB and developed a third culture, suggesting students with a volunteer approach are more likely to move entirely through the model and build third culture relationships. One pair who had been friends for eight

months described their relationship as closer than their longer-held friendships, an international student from Spain described the relationship, “I’m closer to Sylvie than I am with friends I have at home, we talk about deeper things and I think she knows more about my life now better than they do, maybe better than anyone.” Another student from the Philippines reflected similar sentiments about her relationship with her partner, “oh we’re friends, definitely friends, I’m closer to her than some of my other friends. I don’t have to wear a mask around her.” These student narratives suggest the motives for participating in intercultural events or other university programs may significantly influence the types of relationships formed, the relationship’s progress through TCB phases, and later the student’s perceptions of that relationship.

International student approach to initiating relationships. Existing research indicates international students may struggle with forming relationships with host-national students due to language barriers, stereotyping, and other cultural differences (Lindemann, 2005; Misra & Castillo, 2004; Urban & Orbe, 2007; Wu et al., 2015). This struggle was reflected in a few of the international students’ experiences. One male student from India recounted, “I was looking for friendships and things like that but I could never find any, I always get rejected or something.” Another international woman from the Philippines shared her understanding of her experiences with forming cross-cultural friendships on campus:

Like [U.S.] American students, their first language is English, and my first language [Filipino] is different and it takes time for us to translate our speaking in our heads. It takes time to feel comfortable enough to reach out. It’s not that we’re mean or stuck up, it just means we don’t feel comfortable and we fear they’ll judge us. But if they reach out to us, just even say ‘hi’ we will definitely try to get to know you.

Not all of the international students interviewed found forming relationships difficult. One of international student from Sudan shared he found it easy to make friends on campus, “because if I see somebody lonely I try to be friend to him, so I just go and I just make him a friend.” Most of the international students, however, voiced a struggle to connect with host-nationals. This speaks to the observation that in most of the pairs interviewed, the host-national student was the one to initiate the relationship, whether the relationship was work based or of a more social nature. One host-national student shared, “I’ve lived in another country, I’m very sensitive to what that’s like, so I naturally approach people from other places and am very curious about other cultures.”

While some host-national students actively seek out international friends, students approaching cross-cultural interactions as a requirement interacted differently, “I just walked in, just greeted him you know just the first person I saw. So I said hello to him and I just stuck with him, I needed someone.” The various factors influencing relationship formation between international and host-national students places the ball in host-national students’ court; an opportunity some students appear to eagerly and enthusiastically use to connect with international students. However, half of the interview narratives reflected a lack of host-national interest to be the one to reach out, unless explicitly required to do so. These students unfortunately displayed a further lack of effort in developing that relationship beyond what was required of them. Host-national student apathy may prevent these intercultural relationships from progressing past the early contact or need TCB phases (Casmir, 1993), keeping them from moving through the crucial interaction phase necessary to move into that final dependence phase and build third cultures.

Turning points. Various kinds of turning points proved common throughout the interview narratives surrounding these students' interactions. Students regardless of their relationship identification, friendship, casual, or working, spoke of certain types of turning points that played a role in the development of their relationship and understanding of the other individual. Turning points commonly appeared in the data as a discovery of shared interests or learning moments, particularly learning moments shared over food.

Discovering shared interests emerged as the most common turning point in participant narratives. Shared interests acted as a shift from the initial contact phase of TCB to the need phase, where both members perceive a need or desire to continue the relationship with the other. One pair initially connected over their shared interest in the Pokémon television show and card game, an interest that served as a foundation from which the pair built a friendship.

We found out we both enjoyed Pokémon a lot...and then later I saw him at the next IPC thing and I was like hey Pokémon! I couldn't remember how to pronounce his name so I called him Pokémon for like the next month.

Other students spoke to discovering shared political and religious views with their partners as a moment that strengthened their relationship, "political views and religious [overlap yeah, and religious and Christianity] yeah we were talking about that for quite some time, political and religious views especially of late." For this pair, those discussions helped them progress from the need phase of TCB into the interaction phase, as these conversations peaked their interest to interact more often and gain a deeper understanding of the other. Other common shared interests, appearing in both volunteer and voluntold narratives, arose in the form of shared ideals or taste in food. One voluntold pair shared how discovering their shared love of flaming hot peanuts during a study session strengthened their school relationship. Similarly, another volunteer pair

discovered they were both vegan at an event, which created an opportunity for the international student to briefly share a little more about himself and his culture with his partner for the first time, moving them into the interaction phase of their relationship.

Shared interests were not the only turning points in the process of relationship formation for these participants. Sharing food appeared as a common attempt to bridge the gap between cultures and often served as a springboard into learning about the other's culture. These gestures appear as examples of turning points that may occur within the interaction phase of the third culture model, as each member attempts to learn about the other and, in some cases, attempt to incorporate pieces of each culture (Casmir, 1993). One student made 'nacho' cheese for her Spanish friend as an attempt to make him feel more at home, an event both of them laugh about now as they re-told the story.

Gio: What is that you made that I thought strange?

Sylvie: Oh the cheese? [laughs] I made him nacho cheese with Velveeta and salsa
[laughs] yeah he didn't like it.

Gio: That's not even cheese [smiles] it's just not.

Sylvie: I wanted him to feel at home! [laughs] I tried!

This host-national student's attempt to combine her cultural foods with her partner's, albeit poorly, stands as an example of how partners may incorporate aspects of each culture as they move through the interaction phase and closer to developing a third culture. An additional example of the learning that occurs as students move through the interaction phase appears in one pair's "food share." One pair of students described their exchange of food from their home cultures in what they call a "food share." Romeo brings items like different teas and dates back from Saudi Arabia, in return Julia makes chocolate chip cookies or other baked goods for his

trips so that he may share them with his family. She comments, “We’d talk about his grandma and his family that lives with him and his brothers and I just thought it’d be nice because he’s always bringing us food, it’s almost a game now.” The pair shared they have fun finding new foods to send back and forth to teach the other about their backgrounds as little “cultural gifts.”

Food emerged as a starting point to open discussions about culture, spirituality, or other beliefs for multiple pairs. These experiences often occurred as interactions moving the students towards the third interaction phase of third culture building. For example, one host-national student asked her partner to teach her how to cook some of his native food, due to shared diets and a love of Indian food. The pair laments they have not yet had the chance to actually complete this goal, but her request allowed them to talk briefly about his spirituality and her environmental beliefs in relation to veganism. Food related experiences, for some pairs, also held the power to progress students through third phase and onto the fourth phase of third culture building. One host-national woman made dinner for her partner to try to welcome him and introduce him to more students on campus, an event that led her to learning more about her partner’s culture. The pair explained how the dinner led to a conversation about the symbolism of food in Saudi Arabia and its role in indicating social class and the roles related to those socio-economic backgrounds.

Julia: You told me I served you beef, which was bad, because apparently didn’t you say beef was not a good thing to serve? Like you wouldn’t give that to somebody, you’d pick camel or something better.

Romeo: Yeah you said you didn’t have camel!! [laughs]

Julia: I didn’t have camel. I was fresh out!

Julia explained how while the dinner was ‘a cultural disaster,’ the ‘beef blunder’ humorously opened the conversation about each of their respective socio-economic

backgrounds and how those backgrounds have shaped their individual experiences. The pair describes this moment as creating a deeper understanding of one another, as the international student from Saudi Arabia came from a significantly higher socio-economic background than the host-national student, which had caused some misunderstandings earlier in their relationship. The host-national student explained, “we’d talk of travel and experience and life-and he’s a first class kind of guy, I’m a back of the plane kind of gal. He just didn’t entirely understand how money limits the types of experiences you have.” The pair recall this event as a turning point for them. The communicative exchange, and the understanding gained from the dialogue, stands as a critical conversation moving them through an already developed interaction phase, onward towards a dependence phase and the creation of a third culture.

The students interviewed spoke about turning points, both large and small, most commonly describing the discovery of a shared interest or an attempt to share food as a way to explore and learn about the other’s background and culture. However, for half of the pairs the interview itself was the first time the two had participated in a dialogue that went deeper than surface level disclosures. One host-national student learned in the dyadic interview itself the details of his partner’s journey from Sudan to the United States.

Gael: Two month and we don’t even have job.

Glenn: Wait what? They just left you guys to fend for yourself?

Gael: Yeah and the government need 848 from us. It wasn’t a free ticket either.

Glenn: Dollars to get here?

Gael: Dollars, yeah for homeland security and it was really culture shock so thank god grocery gave us job even though it wasn’t that great.

Glenn: Did you really have to pay that?

Gael: Yeah yeah I did, I did

Glenn: Wow, I can't, I, wow, that's harsh. I'm sorry man.

The pair continued to discuss for a few minutes the lack of diagnosis and PTSD support for Gael and his peers leaving the war zones, something that appeared to show Glenn another side of Gael. Sharing of personal experiences or beliefs appeared commonly throughout the data as events occurring with the interaction phase of TCB, laying the ground work and building upon the relationship as it moves closer to third culture building. Another pair discussed religion and spiritual views for the first time during the interview when the host-national student attempted to correct her partner.

Megan: It's a Christian church?

Videl: Yeah, it's a Christian church.

Megan: But your Hindu.

Videl: In childhood I used to go, my teachers were Christians and-

Megan: Wait Christians or Krishna?

Videl: [laughs hard] Krishna is a god, so it's, no [laughs].

Megan: But the Hari Krishnas?

Videl: It's different you know? But they are following the same, if you read both of them you will feel the same things. When I came here I wanted to know more and just wanting to understand culture of the West. When you go to temple and you meet people who are believing about something, you know more about how they think.

Student pairs who met as a result of some type of requirement all ended up participating in some sort of dialogue, defined as mutual learning through the exchange of ideas and experiences (Casmir & Muir-Packman, 1999), surrounding one or both of their experiences and beliefs during their dyadic interview. For two of the pairs, multiple dialogues occurred within their interview. These voluntold pairs on average had known each other for a shorter length of time, three weeks to eight months, than their volunteer counterparts, suggesting their relationships may have not yet entered into laying the groundwork for later phases of TCB. However, this finding might also indicate a lack effort by either individual towards any type of relationship building.

While this theme was unexpected, the narratives and dialogues proved insightful for myself as a researcher, and appeared rewarding for all of the individuals involved. The dialogues stand as examples of the types of communicative events that occur as students advance from phase to phase within the TCB model. These respectful exchanges and beginnings of deeper dialogues appeared to give the participating students a deeper understanding of their partners and, in some cases, students verbally expressed viewing their partners in a new light. One host-national student shared a shift in his perception of his partner after learning of the struggles his partner had faced in leaving Sudan and adjusting to life in the U.S. The host-national student reflected, “[the discussion] was eye opening. To him it’s so normal and just like another thing he’s lived through and I’m like yeah wow I couldn’t do that you know? Like I don’t think I’d have made it.” These conversations emerged as a notable finding, occurring naturally within the interview, acting as a type of turning point these students may not have had otherwise. These conversations provide examples of the types of conversations that may occur as students progress from the need to the interaction phase as they build third culture relationships.

Reflections such as the one given by the Sudanese student's host-national partner suggest these discussions may have further impacted and enhanced those pair's relationships, moving them along in the process of third culture building.

Establishing norms. The various types of turning points that emerged from interview data give examples of events that moved students through the stages of third culture relationship formation; however, establishing norms, both working and social, proved equally insightful to the third culture building process. Students spoke of creating 'working norms' out of study habits or work related tasks and basing more personal or social norms off of shared interests or other relational developments. These norms may develop as a result of moving from the second need phase and into the third interaction phase, which is characterized as the phase where individuals establish multiple norms, learn about one another, and begin to integrate aspects of each of their respective cultures (Casmir, 1999).

One host-national student and a student from Sudan had met through an IPC event and later learned they were both taking the same communication course, leading them to develop a working relationship to help one another be successful in the course. "We've come to an agreement that we're probably going to help each other study at some point for this class. He's going to help me practice the speeches and I'm going to help edit his work." One international student from Ghana and his host-national partner described meeting on campus a few times a week to practice language skills and study together for each of their individual courses, "after both of our classes-if they have nothing to do- we just go up and study and practice [English] and do all of our work, we motivate each other." Narratives from students who classify themselves as having a working style relationship reflected norms and routines that focus on task completion, such as studying for a course or practicing language skills, with little to no socialization or

attempt to get to know one another on a deeper level. These experiences suggest the students had not progressed past the initial need phase of third culture building, or were in the very early stages of the interaction phase.

One ‘working’ pair discussed a task oriented tradition that illustrates early stages of the interaction phase. The host-national woman described how her international partner from India has routinely assisted her after work, “he has been kind enough to drive me over to my car after work because I park off campus,” still focusing on task rather than relational, or social norms. The types of norms established inform what stages of third culture building the relationship is at, with simplistic, task-oriented norms, such as meeting to fulfill volunteer hours, fitting within the second need phase of the TCB model (Casmir, 1993) as these norms solely fulfill the need aspect of the relationship. Norms such as driving a partner to their car after work however, suggest early stages of the interaction phase of TCB as these do not directly fulfill a relational requirement and organically occurred as the individuals begin to interact and get to know one another.

Participant pairs who identify as friends did identify task related norms or working traditions as they pertained to their specific relationship; however, these pairs focused more on personal and social norms in their interview narratives. These social and personal norms provide examples of events and behaviors found within the third and fourth phases of the third culture building model. All of the pairs mentioned small norms such as waving or making faces at one another when they cross paths on campus. Many of the norms described centered on inside jokes or other idiosyncratic modes of communication. One student from Spain described an unusual trip to get frozen yogurt that had become an inside joke between his partner and himself. Another host-national woman described using humor and developing a joking relationship that has shaped her relationship with her friend from Saudi Arabia, “I know the word ‘habibi’ which means

darling or sweetheart, so we started calling each other sweetheart and making stupid jokes like that and we've been joking since, we do it all the time, we've developed a very joke-y friendship." These examples of relational or social norms highlight the types of behaviors that occur as students' relationships develop and they move through the interaction phase. Students shared how other common traditions arose out of those initial discoveries of shared interests in earlier TCB contact and need phases. Examples such as participating in weekly Pokémon games together, or buying a coffee drink both partners love when they know they'll meet illustrate how partners often turned shared likes or interests into a relational norm. The establishment of these types of norms indicate the relationship is developing in the interaction phase.

One interesting example came from a pair of friends establishing language norms within their friendship. Sylvie studied Spanish in her coursework and Gio's home is in Spain, leading the two to speak "Spanglish" within their relationship as a way to bridge the language barriers they faced. She explained, "sometimes now he tells me what words I am trying to think of when I can't remember. He laughs because he knows English so much better than I know Spanish even though I've studied it [Spanish] longer." The incorporation of the two languages within their relationships suggests the pair are moving towards, or have recently entered, the final third culture phase of dependence as they have interwoven aspects of each of their cultures, in this case language, to mutually create a new third culture between them.

Whether establishing working, social or personal norms and routines, students shared multiple narratives reflecting that despite the type of relationship, some form of routine was established between each of the partners. Some partners focused solely on tasks, setting norms and creating a shared understanding that helped them complete their work, remaining in the need or early stages of the interaction phase, while others used humor and shared interests to develop

traditions more personalized to their specific relationships, moving through interaction and on to the dependence phase of the TCB model.

Overcoming barriers. In the formation of both working and friendship intercultural relationships, three common barriers to the relationship emerged from the participant narratives. Students shared their experiences with working through language barriers, combating stereotypes, and overcoming media portrayals of both the United States as well as international student's home countries. Students described these barriers to differing degrees within their relationship, yet almost all of the participants described working through these barriers as pivotal moments in their relational development. Navigating these barriers stands as another example of the types of events that occur within the third interaction phase of the third culture building model.

The largest and most immediate barrier students, both host-national and international, encountered in developing their relationships was the language barrier, or learning to understand meaning through an accent. Students approached this obstacle in differing ways, for some it became a new and exciting challenge. Others described the accent or language barriers as an annoyance, but one they dealt with out of necessity. One host-national woman described the challenge of understanding her partner as a learning experience, "but it wasn't a barrier it was something I enjoyed because I learned from him and he learned from me." Other students saw the language barrier as a motivator to key in and learn more about their partners and their experiences. One host-national student explained, "that's the unique thing about him. It's a bit of a struggle to understand him so you want to listen in even more to hear every little bit of his stories. He has a lot to say." Host-national students were not the only students who spoke about learning to understand their partner's accent. One international student explained how he had

learned British English and was learning to adapt to U.S. American English on campus. “I have a hard time with their pronunciation and the way English is my second language. Sometimes I have to be careful and listen really to what they say, I learned British English so it is different than here.” The language barrier contributed to some students’ uncertainty in reaching out and speaking with host-national students:

It takes me time in my head, like 'how are you' - 'kamusta ka in my language and then I go 'ok lang ako' and translate that to 'ok' so it's hard for me to put my own thought out there, and I don't always know if it's good enough to put out there, especially like in a group or in class.

This student’s partner explained how she shifted her own communication to accommodate her partner and work thorough the barrier, “I just never really thought about it, you think in that language, you dream in that language, but I’ve definitely seen myself become more patient and slow down, and I check for clarity a lot now.” This example of not only successfully negotiating the language barrier, but actively shifting to accommodate the other illustrates later stages of the interaction phase of TCB, adopting norms and shifting behaviors to mutually benefit both parties (Casmir, 1993).

Not all students approached language barriers between themselves and their partner with the same consideration. One pair who identified themselves as having a working relationship shared the accent differences may be a strain to their relationship. The host-national student commented:

I mean the accent sucks but I guess it's just how it is. I have to tell him to repeat things, and he can't say it right so it takes a while. Sometimes I just give up and act like I heard him because it's frustrating.

This student's partner from India shared similar frustrations in communicating and maintaining their working relationship, "[language is] something she's told me I need to learn and work on because she can't work with me when I can't speak, but I work to do better so we work better."

Each student's approach to, and goals for, the relationship with their partner, here again appear to influence the ways in which they interact with their partners, and in turn influencing the direction of their relationship. Both host-national and international students approaching the relationship out of a desire to learn about other cultures reflected an openness to working together to overcome the language barrier, reflecting their positions in the later stages of interaction or their progress in the dependence phase towards a fully build third culture. On the other side, students who approached the relationship out of necessity or requirement shared experiences full of conflict and struggle surrounding the language barriers that arose.

Other common barriers to relationship development also emerged from the interview data. Many students discussed combating stereotypes both within their relationships and with those outside of their relationship. One African American host-national student described his purposeful actions to combat stereotypes about him to his partner, "I'm trying to show him that it's not how he's been told. I don't come from Chicago and shoot people and all the stereotypes people put on me in general. I'm just like trying to break off those stereotypes." He later described not only working to disprove stereotypes about himself to his partner, but also wishing to protect his partner from the stereotypes his Sudanese partner may face during his time in the U.S. Similarly, one host-national student felt it important to refute the stereotype that white males are not open to those from different cultures to his partner from Ghana. He explained, "I would hope that he would not absorb the stereotype of conservative white males after meeting me, but I don't think he takes those stereotypes. I think he's more resistant to the stereotypes

than most people who live here.” Negotiating stereotypes within relationships appeared as a common theme for those who participated; however, stereotypes outside of the relationship appeared more difficult to overcome.

Overcoming stereotypes outside of international-host-national student relationships proved more common throughout the data. One host-national student described combating stereotypes from other students on campus:

I think a lot of people, I think when they see us together they’re like oh who’s the white guy? Who’s the white guy hanging out with my buddy? You know, we walk around the library they seem like they think this is unusual. It’s a stereotype that’s been fed to them and it’s apparent to me that other people feel that way, but it’s not the case with us.

A few of the international students mentioned being criticized for spending time with their host-national friends, saying they were not upholding their responsibility to their culture. One student commented, “my Indian friends give me weird looks when I talk to her [his partner] at IPC events, you know? They act weird around me after because she’s different from us. I don’t think they understand.” While not facing the same criticism or exclusion from their cultural groups, some of the host-national students also mentioned having to correct misperceptions in other friend groups. One host-national woman commented:

I mean the relationship we have is very lighthearted and some people just don’t get it. They take everything we say very seriously. So they think I’m only friends with him because I’m trying to date someone exotic and that’s just not the case at all.

Overcoming stereotypes appeared as a barrier students worked to overcome in almost all of the pairs interviewed. Whether within or outside of the relationship students worked through these stereotypes either through continued conversations and interactions between the pair.

The last type of barrier students mentioned overcoming was working through media representations of the other's culture. Both international and host-national students continually mentioned the poor portrayal of their country and their culture in mainstream news outlets. Most of the students mentioned fearing that these news outlets tainted their relationship in the individual interviews; however, a few of the close friend relationships openly discussed how they worked through these false perceptions. One international student from India shared in his individual interview how his ideas of the United States learned from the media influenced his actions upon arrival in the U.S. "I mean the media is always give us [Indians] the bad side. When I came here, I was careful and not talking to people you know to keep away from that, but after you meet people they're friendly it's opposite." Another international student voiced similar concerns about the media's portrayal of specifically Sudan, his home country, but also Africa in general:

The media they say Africa is like this. It's not how Africa is, they just go in the bad part. Even in Kalamazoo there are bad neighborhood, it's not how Africa is... just go to Africa there are cities like Kalamazoo, Chicago, LA but there are some places that are real poor yes, I'm not denying it. People here, they do not understand that it is not like that, I worry they see me like a third world person. But I am here, I am smart, I work hard, I am not what they think I am.

International and host-national students both voiced many concerns individually that their partner would take in media images and perceive them differently. Host-national students continually verbalized both in individual and dyadic interviews that they were different than the “anti-culture” images the media portrays. One White host-national woman summarized what many of the host-national participants shared:

Not everyone in [U. S.] America is like how the media portrays us, especially of late. We aren't all white supremacists who hate anyone who's different. I fear that they [different cultures] will hate us and fear us because of what is shown politically and on the news. There are so many of us trying to reach out and I feel like there is so much fear and it hurts me to think this is how they see us

Student narratives also reflected using these media images and subsequent perceptions as a springboard for discussion, a way to learn the truth behind news stories and cultures from the source. A host-national student voiced a sense of assurance about having a direct information source, in the form of his partner, to learn about news stories from different worldviews, “it's nice to be able to learn from a source about other cultures instead of the media, like U.S. policy, I've learned so much about what is actually going on from him.” Another student eagerly learned from her partner about the drastic differences between cultures in the United States and the culture in Saudi Arabia. She shared she held prior interest in Middle Eastern culture prior to meeting her partner but had previously only read about various Middle Eastern cultures from web sources. She mentioned feeling this research had been a good start but was lacking in terms of developing a real world understanding and skills to respectfully interact with those from Middle Eastern countries:

I knew enough to be dangerous in terms of Middle Eastern culture. I find it fascinating because, you know, some people here look at the way men and women are separated and the laws there as being really strict, and they are, but there are things about that society that work better than the way our society works, and vice versa. There's pros and cons in both places, but hearing it from him it really sheds light on a different way of life. It's not a right-wrong, black-white thing like the media tries to tell us.

Throughout the student narratives, overcoming stereotypes and hegemonic media representations continually arose as barrier students had to work together to overcome. While functioning as barriers, students with closer relationships continually recalled working through these misconceptions as events leading to insightful discussion. Working through misconceptions, stereotypes, and other barriers made students' relationships stronger, illustrating how various events within the interaction phase of TCB shape a relationship. In many of these examples students discussed their perceptions of themselves and their partner, or worked together to overcome a barrier and develop a new understanding of the other. All serve as key indicators that the pair is moving through the interaction phase and towards the final phase, dependence, and a co-developed third culture (Casmir, 1997).

Those that identified themselves as having a friendship type relationship often concluded their interview discussions with ideas of unity and a deeper understanding of how differing cultures may work together. One host-national student concluded the interview with a comment to his partner, "you've given me a different perspective on life you know that? If people could understand, just because someone is a different culture doesn't mean that you guys can't relate. People are still people even if they're from different places." When participants were asked if

they would like to make any concluding remarks, both host-national and international students closed their interviews with some variation of these remarks, with themes of unity, understanding, and appreciation of the other's culture arising in many of the interviews.

The students who participated in these interviews shared many experiences and perceptions that shed a great deal of insight into how students form cross-cultural relationships through university programs. The examples from these narratives help to illustrate the third culture processes students undergo within these relationships. These findings provide examples throughout the entire TCB process including: experiences that illustrate the initial contact phase, early norms and events that make up the second need phase, and turning points, pivotal conversations, and other events that guide students through the interaction phase. Further, some of the students' experiences highlight behaviors or conversations that indicate a pair has entered, or fully resides in, the final dependence stage and, therefore, have built a third culture relationship.

The experiences these students shared provide answers to my questions of how third culture relationships are formed on campuses, giving multiple examples of behaviors that occur within each phase. This section has provided narratives illustrating initial interactions that occur in the contact and need phases, such as meeting at an event (contact) and discovering a shared interest (need) in Pokémon, or talking to the first person one sees (contact) and forming a relationship necessary for a course requirement (need). The bulk of the experiences in the student narratives reflect differing events and behaviors occurring throughout the interaction phase, from early developments such as waving at one another on campus, driving a partner to their car, or sharing a favorite food, to making meals or having discussions on socio-economic status or stereotypes in later stages of the interaction phase. These themes and notable insights have also

indicated behaviors that suggest a pair has moved past interaction into a dependence stage such as speaking ‘Spanglish’ or shifting one’s conversational style to best accommodate both parties.

Looking at these experiences in relation to the phases of third culture building allow for the exploration of what behaviors, events, or conversations move a relationship towards the development of a third culture. For example, developing small relational norms such as waving to one another on campus, or holding conversations about cultural backgrounds and experiences move a relationship towards TCB. These narratives also highlight particular behaviors, or a lack of certain communicative events may leave a relationship stagnant in its progression through each phase. Namely, pretending to understand the other instead of working through a language barrier, or failing to ask questions that lead to sharing personal details or experiences stagnate or may even reverse the progress towards TCB. Together these narratives allow for a deeper understanding of what behaviors and events help, and what behaviors and events hinder, students initiate, develop, and maintain third culture relationships on campus.

Cultural Contracts and Their Negotiation

After gaining a deeper understanding of third culture relationships from international and host-national student experiences, I move to further explore the narratives in terms of the cultural contracts students issue, negotiate, and sign within their relationship processes. In the next section I will detail notable findings that unpack students’ willingness to learn, student expectations and reactions to violations of those expectations, and the contractual negotiations that occur throughout relationship development. These themes arise from the data in response to research questions two and three exploring the contracts issued and how students negotiate, or fail to negotiate, these contracts.

Student motivations and relationship development. As detailed in the previous section, student motivations for initiating and maintaining relationships appeared to influence the types of interactions the pair had, the direction of the relationship, and ultimately their commitment to building third cultures. These motivations which I classify as ‘volunteer’, meaning students who willingly approach IPC or CELCIS events out of a desire to learn about other cultures and form intercultural relationships, and ‘voluntold,’ meaning students who participate in these activities and relationships to fulfill a requirement for a course, internship, or to receive extra credit, appear to influence the ways students negotiate cultural contracts within their relationships. Within the pairs interviewed, all of the international students described themselves in participating in the relationship voluntarily. Even international students participating in student pairs where the host-national student was fulfilling a requirement, the international student described maintaining the relationship out of a desire to learn about U.S. American culture and to develop friendships on campus. In the coming presentation of findings, I include international students generally in findings pertaining to volunteer students; however, when discussing specifically voluntold pairs, I refer to the motivations of the host-national student paired with the international student’s volunteer approach and the subsequent influences on those relationships.

Various themes related to cultural contracts emerged from the student narratives, namely the degree of openness to learn about the other, the expectations partners hold for one another, and the ways in which the pair negotiate contracts. In the next sections, I will illustrate these themes as they arose in the data using examples from student narratives. Each section will compare and contrast these themes in terms of volunteer and voluntold relationships as these

experiences proved similar within the two groups, yet appeared drastically different between groups.

It is important to note in this study that the approach to the relationship, volunteer or voluntold, appeared to influence the direction and stage of the relationship outside of other traditional indicators of relationship progress such as the length of time the pair had spent in the relationship (Moore & Popadiuk, 2011). Voluntold student relationships remained in early stages of third culture building, namely contact and need (Casmir, 1993) building working relationships with little to no communication of shared understanding or the integration of cultural norms required for the later two TCB phases. Volunteer students, who knew each other longer than some of the voluntold students, recounted experiences that depicted early stages of third culture building, need or early stages of interaction, in comparison to the volunteer relationships who fell within later stages of interaction or dependence. Volunteer students shared experiences reflecting a faster movement through the phases of third culture building, sharing information about themselves and their culture more frequently and openly. One pair of volunteer students, an international student from Ghana who had met his host-national friend through IPC, had known each other for three weeks at the time of their interview and that pair reflected a deeper understanding of one another's culture than the longest voluntold relationship which had lasted eight months. The ranges in time known also differed between the two groups, voluntold relationships ranged from a month to eight months, with many describing not seeing the relationship continuing once requirements were met. Volunteer groups ranged from three weeks to three years, and even the host-national individual who was part of the three-week relationship mentioned, "when we take this relationship further as time progresses, I hope to meet their other friends and they'll meet mine. I see us being friends for quite some time." In

these interviews, student motivations determined the type and quality of the relationship more so than the length of time the partners had known one another.

Openness to cross-cultural learning. Student narratives reflected differences in host-national openness to learning about their partners' cultures related to their motivations for initiating the relationship. Reversely, in all of the interviews international students proved eager to learning all that they could about life and culture in the United States. An international student from Ghana who had been in the U.S. for less than a month explained, "I trying to learn a lot while I'm here, like everything, so I'm always asking things and always learning." Similarly, a student from India who had been in the U.S. for a few years shared complementary views, "I mean of course I put in more [to the relationship]. I'm trying to learn the language and the culture even though I'm part of the culture now. There's always something, always more to learn."

Host-national approaches to learning about their partner's culture and traditions varied. Volunteer students repeatedly throughout the data proved eager to learn about their partner. Volunteer students actively sought out more information: "I've always been very interested in middle eastern culture and things like that...I have a lot of questions for Romeo about what it was like for him to come, because obviously our cultures are so different." Other host-national students exhibited similar inquisitiveness, "when he talks he is so interesting and just-I could listen to him all day- I was just tell me more and he wouldn't! He thought he was boring! [laughs] I just kept bugging him until he told me more."

Not every host-national student shared this thirst for knowledge and cultural openness. Some voluntold students mentioned a lack of learning from their partner under the assumption they already had knowledge about their partner's culture. One host-national student explained, "I

mean I study Spanish this isn't really new, I know what they eat, I know how they talk, I know the history of Spain, so like I know a lot and don't need him to tell me." Another student responded similarly when asked if she'd learned anything about or from her partner, "Nothing, I mean I'm from a small town but I've always been open. It's not like I lived under a rock, it was a really white area, but I'm culturally aware so I haven't needed to learn anything." Despite the lack of previous learning about either partner's culture, all three voluntold pairs engaged in some sort of larger cultural discussion for the first time during the dyadic interviews. One international student from India initiated a discussion of spirituality, another student from Ghana shared about his decision to study in the U.S. One international student from India explained how there were multiple languages in his country, which shocked his host-national partner.

Molly: What language do you speak then?

Videl: Hinglish, it's a mixture of Hindi and English it is like sometimes English and sometimes Hindi.

Molly: So how many languages do you know then?

Videl: English, Hindi, Marathi, Sanskrit, Punjabi, five languages like nearby languages.

Molly: Um ok...so you just like look at people and know what language to speak?

Videl: Yeah, yeah you read them and you just, you know what language they want.

Students varied in their degrees of openness to learning about their partner, which provides a background to what influences their perceptions of the relationship and the expectations they have for the future of the relationship.

Students varied in their degrees of openness to learning about their partner, which provides a background to what influences the contracts these students issue, the way they approach negotiation, and ultimately their willingness to sign cultural contracts. In these relationships, host-national students often expected to be the one to issue contracts within the relationship, with international students sharing the assumption that the host-national student would lead the relationship and expecting to sign any type of contract issued.

In response to my second research question about the types of contracts issued, host-national students with a voluntold approach to the relationship, with a volunteer oriented international student, often entered the relationship with ready-to-sign contracts prepared. These host-national students expected the international student to assimilate to their assumptions until the host-national's requirement was met and the relationship dissolved. Further exploration of research question three pertaining to the negotiation of these contracts found that international students reflected a different perception of negotiation. In these students' relationships, the international student perceived enough benefit to entering and maintaining these relationships, even under ready-to-sign contracts, signing the contracts with almost no attempt to discuss or modify them. This lack of negotiation can be further seen in one Indian student's reflection of putting more into the relationship because he desired to learn all he could about U.S. American culture. International students voiced assumptions that they needed to assimilate into U.S. American culture and therefore agree to whatever the host-national student presented, in these cases signing ready-to-sign contracts with no negotiation.

Relationships where both the international and host-national student volunteer to initiate and develop a relationship revealed a different approach to issuing and negotiating contracts. In these relationships host-national students offered quasi-completed contracts, or in some cases co-

created contracts, to their international partner. Many of these students recounted desiring to learn about their partner's culture, continually asking them to share their experiences. This suggests these students prove more open to negotiating the quasi-completed contracts offered, or moving to the used of co-created contracts to determine roles and norms within their friendships. International students approached these relationships as volunteers, yet proved willing to sign any of the three types of contracts offered. This initial look into each type of students' willingness to learn about the other suggests the types of contracts most commonly used by each group, ready-to-sign for voluntold students, and quasi-completed or co-created for volunteer students. Further exploration of student expectations and the negotiation of day-to-day norms provide deeper insight into how cultural contracts are used in cross-cultural student relationships.

Expectations, expectation violations, and cultural contracts. Host-national and international student expectations surrounding their relationships emerged from the data as an influence on the types of contracts students issued, as well as providing insight into the types of contracts students were willing to sign. Volunteer student expectations varied from task to personal expectations of their partners, whereas voluntold students commonly held expectations solely related to the task or project the pair set out to accomplish. The student pair who met through IPC and worked in the same internship program described their expectations of one another as task-oriented. The host-national student described her expectations of her partner, which reflected a ready-to-sign contract, sharing, "I expect him to be like the rest of us because he's in the internship, so he's going to be task oriented and assertive. Why should he be any different? If he's in the program, he should act like us." Her partner reflected similar expectations of himself in his discussion of their relationship, "people here are very smart and goal oriented, very time conscious, multitasking things. Yeah I just go along with the goal

orientation thing, I expect I have to be that.” In this pair, the international student signed the ready-to-sign contract, expecting to follow his partner’s lead. Similar responses occurred in interviews with other voluntold pairs, with both partners expecting to simply accomplish a task such as studying for a test, completing volunteer hours, or practicing language skills. In each of these narratives, host-national students issued a ready-to-sign contract, with international students signing without question, in turn shaping the future interactions and negotiations in those relationships.

Volunteer pairs held differing expectations of their partner. Some volunteer pairs held task-oriented expectations such as helping one another out for a class, “I think we expect to help each other out and make sure that we’re being accountable for what we’re doing, or even making sure that we’re doing our best, or improving things we’re doing.” Although similar in some of the task oriented goals, volunteer pairs approached task goals with themes of helping one another succeed or encouragement, rather than simply completing a task. The desire to mutually help one another and hold the other accountable suggests the issuance of a quasi-completed contract. These contracts still are still led by host-national students who hold greater control of the contract than in co-created, but indicate a willingness to negotiate the terms of that contract.

Personal or relational expectations also emerged from the student narratives. One international student shared an expectation they had mutually created as their relationship progressed, expecting to always be available when the other needed a friend, “We always talk and check up on one another, like see how the other’s doing, not just school but how are you personally and mentally, you alright? You good?” Her host-national partner added to this expectation, “literally any time, just call, even if it’s 3 am I’d still be there for her.” These students’ comments reflect a co-created contract (Jackson & Crawley, 2003), as both have

mutually negotiated the terms within that cultural contract. By mutually establishing the expectation to be available for the other, the pair has co-created their expected behaviors and roles within the relationship.

While discussing expectations proves insightful to connecting the types of contracts students issued within their relationships, a number of expectancy violations (Burgoon & Hale, 1988), namely how students reacted when new information, an event, or a behavior violated their preexisting expectations for that person or event, arose from the data. How students negotiated violations within their relationships provided an insightful look into how students negotiate cultural contracts. Volunteer pairs proved more open to altering their expectations, and discussed fondly how their initial impressions or expectations have shifted. One host-national student commented about their friend from Sudan, “I just had an assumption that you’d be like more shy but your totally not shy you’re really funny and like outgoing.” Other students reflected similar shifts one international student from Spain shared, “I’m a quiet person, even in my country I’m a quiet person. She thought Spaniards are loud and colorful and I’m not like that I’m more quiet, but she accepted that even though it surprised her.” International students often described having their expectations violated positively by their host-national partners:

I thought she would be less open you know to learning about my culture because you know, ideas about Americans, but she’s wants to learn so much and I just, I teach her as much as she teaches me.

Showing a willingness to alter initial expectations within the relationships suggests that these international and host-national students may be more likely to issue and negotiate quasi-completed or co-created contracts. By negotiating a shift in one’s expectations, and therefore a

shift in initial contracts, these students negotiate revised quasi-completed contracts or issue new mutually negotiated co-created contracts surrounding new expectations for the relationship.

Voluntold pairs repeatedly had differing reactions to expectancy violations throughout the interview data. One host-national student repeatedly corrected their partner throughout the interview to fit within their expectations:

Videl: When I speak to my friends in my language like in Punjabi.

Molly: You speak Hindi, not Punjabi.

Videl: Well sort of...

Molly: No, you're Indian you speak Hindi.

Videl: I do speak Punjabi but it's like a mixture of the languages

Molly: What language do you speak then?

Videl: Hinglish, it's a mixture of Hindi and English it is like sometimes English and sometimes Hindi.

When expectancy violations are poorly negotiated, or simply not negotiated at all, as in the previous examples, there appeared to be a similar lack of negotiation of cultural contracts. These pairs commonly shared experiences of issuing and signing ready-to-sign cultural contracts matching with the reluctance to negotiate expectations, roles and other norms within the relationship.

Other voluntold host-national students encouraged their international partners to change to fit their expectations or perceptions of how the international student should spend their time in the U.S. One host-national student encouraged her partner from Spain to break out of his introverted nature in their dyadic interview, "if you got out there and talked to more people you'd have a lot more friends and, you know, a social life. You should really make the most of

your time here.” The international students in working-type relationships also talked of changing their behaviors to appease their partner, “he told me about those kind of shows laughing shows and said I’d have more friends if I was funny like him. I’ve realized that has come into me and I try to implement those things.” Forcing himself to assimilate to fit the expectations of this student’s host-national friend provides an example of the lack of negotiation that occurs in the issuing of ready-to-sign cultural contracts. Striving to assimilate or conform to the host-national students’ expectations appeared as a common theme, particularly among voluntold pairs. In response to being told he was too loud and boisterous by his host-national peer, one participant from India shared, “I just try to be reserved and act like an American person. Even with my [Indian] roommates and I totally changed my nature you know?” How student pairs managed their expectations and respond to expectation violations speaks to the types of contracts they issue, their willingness to negotiate those contracts, and ultimately which contracts they sign.

Negotiation of norms. While the discussion of expectations within the relationship proves insightful to the contracts issued, how students negotiate norms and routines within their working or social relationships provides greater insights into how they choose which contracts to serve, and their willingness to negotiate within those cultural contracts. The narratives from the two types of international-host-national student pairs, volunteer and voluntold, reflected differing negotiation patterns within a pair’s day-to-day routines and other relational norms.

Voluntold students’ experiences reflected less negotiation between host-national and international students about relational norms, providing further examples of how students use ready-to-sign contracts in the development of relationships. Within these relationships host-national students often shared their expectations of their partners and their actions through narratives reflecting a lack of communication about those assumptions. These shared experiences

similarly lacked communication about if those expectations acceptable, or even achievable, to their partner. A notable observation among voluntold host-national students was the assertions of privilege within these relationships, with the host-national student directing the norms and actions of the international student. For example, one student shared, “I mean, he’ll have questions and I tell him what to do because otherwise we won’t get our work done. I don’t think he picks up on a lot of things.”

What proved troubling within working relationships where the host-national student served ready-to-sign contracts and dominated the negotiation was that none of the international students questioned or resisted the domineering nature of the relationship. Instead, many international students worked harder to align with their partner’s expectations, “You have to follow where you are, she’s told me I need to learn more and be more so I work to do better.” Another student mentions similar thoughts about the lack of negotiation of norms, “to make friend you have to do what they say you see? You do what they want and you make friend with them, it not bad. It bad to not have friends.” While not entirely surprising due to the findings of previous intercultural studies (Somani, 2010; Ye, 2005; Yung et al., 2004), these patterns reflect the types of contracts host-national students issue in these relationships, and subsequently the ready-to-sign contracts international students accept whether or not they understand the deeper implications these contracts may have for their future interactions and even their personal identities.

Volunteer host-national student narratives more open to the negotiation of norms and routines within their relationships, appeared to issue quasi-completed contracts, often even asking the international student to take the lead on determining the direction of the relationship, illustrating the use of co-created contracts. Quasi-completed contracts appeared in the data as the

host-national student suggesting a norm, such as meeting at a coffee shop or a place on campus to practice skills or study, or simply starting a tradition such as making a funny face at the other when they pass on campus. One host-national student who met to study with his international partner from Ghana to practice language skills explained, “I suggested we meet on the tenth floor of Sprau every week to practice, but I mean once we met at Bigby [coffee shop] because they were really tired and wanted coffee.” In these relationships, host-national students lead the encounter, presenting the contract to their partner, but remaining open to negotiating the terms of those contracts.

Co-created contracts appeared commonly in two of the close friendship pairs. One host-national student explained her relationship with a woman from the Philippines, “I would say it’s pretty close to 50/50, ok actually probably like 75/25 with me following her, just because I want to make sure she’s comfortable and I’m not like bothering her or making her feel like she doesn’t belong.” Another host-national student shared how he checked in with his partner from Sudan to ensure they both are in agreement about norms or behaviors in the relationship, “I check in with him, you know just to see that we’re on the same page. I don’t want to assume; I would hope he would speak up if something bothered him but I check anyway.” Checking in with one’s partner to ensure the relationship is mutually benefiting each party, and everyone is in agreement with the norms and expectations stands as an indicator of co-created cultural contracts. Students checking in and continually negotiating and re-negotiating co-created contracts as necessary use this contract type to maintain a mutually constructed relationship, in turn maintaining a third culture relationship.

Similarly, international students in these volunteer relationships often mentioned feeling heard and included in decision making, “she’s been really open I never feel, I never feel like I

don't belong. She includes me and my ideas and she's definitely made changes to make me feel more comfortable." Volunteer pairs established norms that reflected the host-national student putting in effort to try to meet the international student halfway, if not entirely meet them at their level through moments like making them food, inviting the student to join their friend group, or attending a religious service with their international partner. Adapting behaviors or social norms to assist the international student provides another example of how host-national students may employ co-created contracts in the development of their cross-cultural relationships.

Both host-national and international students made comments to a theme of becoming a cultural ambassador uniting both cultures within the relationship. One exemplary example of a co-created cultural contract that an international student from Saudi Arabia and a host-national student negotiated, signed, and continue to negotiate and revise as necessary in their relationship arose in the host-national woman's description of the shifts in her view of her partner and his culture:

I feel like for the rest of my life when I hear Saudi Arabia I'm going to think of him. You, you've been an ambassador for your culture, and I have nothing but good feelings towards your country as a result. Like everyone else may be idiots, [both laugh] they could be total idiots, but in my mind they're all like Romeo. It's a country full of Romeos.

International students within these volunteer pairs shared similar sentiments, like this participant from Sudan:

I learn more like the negative stuff that they say about American culture is not true, it's not true. Even though they just say this is what you are going to face, here there are some that do, but not to the point that they were talking about. He's

shown me how good American can be, he's changed that for me. We make a new unity between U.S. and Africa.

These experiences reflect a different approach to cultural contracts and how both students play a role in negotiating and co-creating those contracts within their relationships. Where volunteer students recount being open to negotiating existing, or even co-creating norms for the relationship, voluntold host-national students in these interviews shared perspectives where they expect the other to conform, with international students rising to meet those expectations and follow those determined norms.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

The previous chapter detailed various notable findings that emerged from the interview data, describing trends and themes found throughout the student narratives. These findings illustrate various events, behaviors, and dialogues that occur as students develop third culture relationships through university sponsored programs. Further, findings from the experiences and perceptions students shared allow for deeper understanding of what contracts students employ in various types relationships and how they negotiate those cultural contracts within the development and maintenance of third culture relationships. This chapter draws connections between the collected student narratives and both the third culture building model and cultural contracts theory, allowing for both a deeper understanding of these relationships themselves, but also these theoretical frameworks in the context of international-host-national student relationships. This chapter also outlines some of the practical implications of these findings for university programs and student experiences. This chapter will conclude by addressing limitations of this study and provide some direction for future research in this area of study.

Theoretical Implications

Major findings and themes occurring throughout the student narratives connect to both Casmir's (1993) third culture building model and Jackson's (2002) cultural contracts theory in three major ways. First, the processes students described undergoing when developing cross-cultural relationships directly connect to the four stages of third culture building, providing further support of the model, allowing these relationships to be considered third-culture relationships, or working within the model. Second, the motivations behind one's approach to relationship formation and third culture building speaks to the cultural contracts used within that

relationship. Finally, the interview data suggests that specific cultural contracts are used in conjunction with the specific stages of third culture building.

Relationship formation and third culture building. My first research question sought to explore the ways in which international and host-national students build third culture relationships. Findings arising from the collected student experiences in developing cross-cultural relationships illustrate how third culture building occurs naturally in international-host-national student relationships, findings that are consistent with findings of previous studies exploring third cultures in intercultural friendships (Lee, 2006). Despite the motivations for initially approaching a cross-cultural relationship, each of these students completed the first stage of TCB, contact, by participating and meeting their partners through events or programs sponsored by the university (Casmir, 1999). The next stage of TCB, need, requires both individuals to perceive the interaction in relation to some sort of existing need (Casmir, 1993). Within voluntold pairs, host-national students commonly perceived the relationship in relation to a necessary diversity requirement or extra credit opportunity, whereas international students perceived the relationship as desirable or beneficial to their academic or social well-being. These perceptions of need by both international and host-national students fit within existing research on international student adjustment where international students strive to fulfill their social goals by forming any type of relationship offered (Arthur, 2004; Davis & Garrod, 2013; Gareis et al., 2011). In contrast, half of the host-national students in this study indicated solely initiating the relationship out of requirement and did not wish to continue the relationship beyond those requirements, a common theme in studies examining host-national student cultural competencies, international student adjustment and relationship formation (Khaled & Chiodo, 2006; Imamura & Zhang, 2014; Wu et al., 2015). International students in this study desiring to make friends, or

practice their language skills, with U.S. American students frequently voiced feeling that entering these relationships fulfilled some sort of personal goal. For the students interviewed, the benefits of these relationships then far outweighed not developing relationships, despite the quality of some of these relationships. These narratives also echo common perceptions of international students in other studies focus on adjustment and acculturation, where making a U.S. American ‘friend’, or forming U.S. American relationship, is perceived as making more acculturative progress, and moving to a higher social status, than if the student solely interacted with other international students (Glass et al., 2014; Russell et al., 2010; Snell & Zhou, 2015).

In volunteer pairs, both students commonly approached the interaction with a desire to make friends and/or learn about other cultures. Both students then perceived the relationship as desirable and beneficial to achieving those desired goals. Volunteer based relationships pass quickly through the initial contact and need phases (Casmir, 1999) due to a more equitable balance of desire for, and perceived benefit, of forming the relationship than when one member is voluntold. Previous studies (Lee, 2006) attempting to develop a measurement of third culture aptitude and the likelihood of a relationship forming a third culture suggested when both parties are desiring to develop the relationship due to personal or social goals the individuals move through each phase quickly. Volunteer pairs in this study moving quickly through the early stages of TCB and into the interaction phase provides additional experiences supporting the faster rate of relationship development when both individuals not only perceive a need for, but also desire, the relationship.

One type of turning point, discovering shared interests, discussed throughout the narratives highlights moments that may serve as the shift from the second need phase to the next phase, interaction (Casmir, 1997). Identifying shared interests often indicated to students the

relationship was worth pursuing, indicating a need of sorts and moving them along in the third culture model. Students tended to form relationships with those they felt they were in some way similar to, or held some sort of shared interest following perceptions that influence traditional relationship formation (Schug et al., 2009; West et al., 2009). Student pairs who had not discovered some sort of shared interest in these narratives appeared to have more distance in their relationships. As suggested in previous studies, this distance may be the result of the uncertainty surrounding the other's culture as students fear either offending their partner or potential discrimination within the relationship (Hello et al., 2006; Lee & Rice, 2007). Discovering these shared interests stand as a crucial moment not only allowing the pair to progress to later stages of TCB but opening the pair up to continue to identify similarities between themselves and their cultures (Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2013).

The majority of the findings within these interviews shed light on phase three of third culture building, namely the interaction phase (Casmir, 1999). Interaction stands as an ongoing process with both parties viewing the relationship as beneficial, developing norms and defining roles to best achieve their goals whether task related, personal, or social (Casmir, 1993). Student narratives provided deeper insight into how a student's motivations and approach to third culture relationships shape this interaction phase. Examples of establishing norms, whether work related norms or personal and social norms, such as developing inside jokes or routinely meeting to study, illustrate how this interaction phase of TCB occurs in these students' day-to-day interactions with their partners. Students discussed overcoming language barriers, stereotypes and media influences illustrating how conflict arises and is resolved in these relationships allowing them to grow and develop through their interactions. Overcoming language barriers or other relational obstacles proves a common turning point in many cross-cultural relationships

(Lindemann, 2005; Mori, 2000). In these narratives these events often strengthened the relationship and allowed the relationship to progress towards the development of a third culture. All of the working relationships, or voluntold pairs, and one of the friendship, volunteer pairs, currently fell within this interaction phase, as they continued to establish and negotiate norms, overcome barriers, and achieve their goals. For the voluntold pairs, their TCB relationship may stay in this stage until the relationship ends and the goal or class requirement is met (Casmir, 1999), as some students verbalized not seeing themselves staying in contact with their partner.

Two of the volunteer student pairs shared stories and experiences that suggest they have reached the fourth and final TCB phase, dependence, where both parties have mutually established and negotiated norms and developed roles that rely on one another (Casmir, 1993). Developing relationships with host-national students in general often proves difficult for international students (Andrade, 2006; Gunawardena & Wilson, 2012; Rajapaksa & Dundes, 2003). These international students expressed similar struggles in their experiences, yet despite those struggles two of the pairs developed a functioning third culture. In this study, building those third culture relationships was reflected in the pairs who initially identified shared interests, overcame language barriers and misperceptions, and used true dialogue to develop an understanding of one another's culture and experiences. What appeared most important in the success of these students' third culture building efforts was a mutual desire, beyond a mutual need, to form a relationship and both students' willingness to work together to create norms, assess expectations, and negotiate roles within that relationship. This finding aligns with Casmir's (1993) early discussions concerning the paradigm shifts needed for successful intercultural communication.

Casmir (1993) presented ‘culture as people’ and described intercultural relationships as founded on communicative events that build mutual understanding and fully integrate the cultures of both parties within the relationship (Hopson et al., 2012). The friendship between a host-national woman and a woman from the Philippines described experiences that illustrate their position in the final phase of TCB (Casmir, 1999) in that they mutually created their relational roles through dialogues that gave them a deeper understanding of the other, their backgrounds and struggles. This led the pair to identify the other as a support system, mutually creating the expectation to be available should the other need help or someone to talk to, with both individuals continually checking in with their partner to continually evaluate the relationship, their roles, and their expectations. Similarly, the friendship between an international student from Saudi Arabia and a host-national woman described pivotal dialogues that allowed for each of them to learn and understand the other’s backgrounds. These dialogues, and the continuous mutual negotiation of the relationship stand as crucial pieces necessary to develop true third cultures (Casmir, 1978; Evanoff, 2006; Lee, 2006;). This constant evaluation of the relationships and mutual adjustments reflect the TCB model’s assertions that third cultures continually evolve, with both members continually working to maintain a mutually beneficial relationship (Hopson et al., 2012).

Aligning these students’ experiences with the TCB model provides further support of the model’s descriptive power in describing the development of cross-cultural relationships. This model also provides deeper insight into these student relationships by providing context and behaviors that occur at each stage. By comparing student experiences with the four phase mode, we may discern both the phases the students have passed through as well as the phase the relationship is currently in. These comparisons have allowed me to pinpoint common behaviors

and communicative events that commonly occur in each stage, as well as turning points that assist in shifting students from one phase to the next. Connecting student experiences to the theoretical framework allows for a deeper understanding of these behaviors and their role in creating third cultures to help students improve how they build upon these relationships.

TCB approach and cultural contracts. Interview data also reflects themes that provide greater insight into the types of cultural contracts students issue, as well as how they negotiate, or fail to negotiate these contracts. As discovered in the findings, students' motivation for initiating a relationship appears to influence the direction of the relationship and the speed at which they move through TCB phases. The students who had voluntarily met three weeks prior, seemingly had progressed through the contact, need, and progressed deeper into the interaction phase faster, and created more mutually agreed upon norms, compared to the voluntold student pairs interviewed. The student's motivation further appears to influence the kind of cultural contract issued.

Voluntold host-national students commonly issued ready-to-sign contracts (Jackson, 2002a) to their partners. These contracts often appeared in interview data as non-negotiated expectations and host-national regulation of relational roles. In these narratives the international students accepted and signed those contracts, often without discussion or disagreement, unknowingly agreeing to a less mutually constructed relationship. Volunteer students commonly described behaviors that moved past those non-negotiated ready-to-sign contracts, and offered quasi-completed or even co-created cultural contracts (Jackson, 2002b). In early stages of the volunteer relationships, many host-national students offered quasi-completed contracts as a starting point, often appearing when host-national students offered to help an international

student study or in early stages of norm development as host-national students suggested norms they thought mutually beneficial, but remaining open to negotiate those norms with their partner. Students may serve quasi-competed contracts due to the uncertainty of how to proceed in cross-cultural interactions fearing inadvertently offending the international student (Dunne, 2009; Imamura & Zhang, 2014; Korobova & Starobin, 2015). However, within the narratives describing these quasi-signed contracts students described moving to co-created contracts (Jackson, 2002a) as they developed an understanding of their partner and their relationship progressed.

Some host-national and international students issued co-created cultural contracts (Jackson, 2002b) from the very start of the relationship. Students recounted these discussions of culture and relational roles, attributing their openness to either previous experience abroad or their desire and eagerness to learn about the other's culture. As indicated in previous studies, students with experience traveling abroad prove more likely to reach out to international students than students with fewer intercultural experiences (Hello et al., 2006; Ward & Msgoret, 2006). In these interviews one of the host-national students who participated in a fully constructed third culture relationship had studied abroad, peaking her interest to reach out to her international partner. The other friend pair whose relationship fell within the final phase of TCB had a mutual interest in reaching out, as the host-national student studied sociology, specifically within intercultural relationships, and the international student had traveled to various other countries leading her to decide to study abroad. These types of experiences or preexisting desire to learn of other cultures appeared as an indicator the student may issue and negotiate co-created contracts (Jackson, 2002a; Ting-Toomey, 1999; Snell & Zhou, 2015).

Student motivations and approaches to third culture relationships influenced their initial issuance of various cultural contracts and these approaches appeared to influence the student's willingness to further negotiate contracts throughout the relationship. As described in the findings, volunteer student pairs shared narratives that proved deeply tied to their initial expectations and less open to discussing norms, violations of expectations, or learning about their partner and their culture. Within the narratives, these students' behaviors suggest these same students may be less open, if open at all, to negotiating contracts within these relationships, leaving them with only ready-to-sign contracts (Jackson & Crawley, 2003). The implications for both host-national and international students in these relationships prove similar to those of other relationships using ready-to-sign contracts, an uneven power-based relationship where the majority culture views themselves as dominant and uses behaviors to maintain the status quo (Lawton et al., 2013; Orbe et al., 2015; Uchida, 1997). For host-national students, this means a missed opportunity for learning and growth from that relationship, and even arguably a missed opportunity to learn intercultural communication skills they could benefit from in the workforce. For international students, this may translate to a loss of identity, as verbalized by some of the students changing to assimilate to their partner's expectations. Volunteer student pairs shared experiences with themes of discussion and open communication and learning which indicate they may continue to use quasi-completed or co-created contracts, for some perhaps even moving from quasi-completed contracts at the start of a relationship to co-created contracts as the relationship progresses. Student narratives reflected that these students learned more from one another than their ready-to-sign counterparts, and appeared to have developed deeper understanding of other cultures and worldviews.

Cultural contracts and the TCB model. As reflected throughout the student narratives, the process of building cross-cultural relationships does not always follow the neat and mutually agreed upon processes of the third culture building models. Yes, some students prove open to learning in a give-and-take relationship, co-constructing mutually beneficial relationships for all of those involved. Other students, however, approach the process with a pre-determined goal in mind, leading them to dominate the relationship leaving the other to continually fight for acceptance and assurance within that relationship.

Arguably, all of these students are moving through the phases and associated processes of third culture building that may lead to a co-created third culture, whether or not they actually reach that final dependence goal. As it currently stands, the TCB model includes four phases with all parties contributing to the relationship until they reach the final dependence stage, indicating that individuals who ‘fall out’ of the model in early stages had not participated in third culture relationships (Casmir, 1993; Casmir, 1999; Casmir & Kweskin, 2001). These findings suggest a re-examination of the model may prove beneficial, as individuals who participate in the early groundwork phases of the model still build towards a fully integrated third culture relationship. For example, student pairs in the interaction phases shared developing integrated norms such as speaking ‘Spanglish,’ or creating new food dishes that combines each individual culture, yet had not reached full dependence and mutual understanding of the other required to be defined a true third culture (Casmir, 1997). These individuals still appear to experience aspects of a third culture regardless of if the relationship fully develops the interdependence called for in the final phase of the model and therefore can be classified as a third culture (Casmir, 1999).

What proves theoretically interesting when looking at the interview data through the lenses of both TCB and cultural contracts, is how these contracts align with specific stages of the

third culture processes. In the initial contact phase, both students are in reality issuing ready-to-sign contracts (Jackson & Crawley, 2003) to decide if the relationship progresses, namely does each party have the relationship skills the other desires. In this initial phase, students feel out if the other has the language and relational skills necessary for the continuation of the relationship. A ready-to-sign contract then is a more mental note of whether or not the other is willing and able to even connect. The second need phase also revolves around ready-to-sign contracts as each party assesses whether the other may help them fulfill a certain goal (Jackson, 2002a), whether that goal is to practice English speaking skills, help to fulfill a course requirement, or learn about another culture. Again, this assessment by both parties often appears in this data as a ready-to-sign contract (Jackson, 2002b). Students perceiving that they may reach their goals by initiating the relationship accept the relationship in turn accepting that ready-to-sign contract (Jackson & Crawley, 2003). None of the students interviewed spoke to experiences of sitting down and explaining their personal goals and how they might help each other meet them. Instead students mentally assessed and accepted the relationship.

Similarly, the fourth and final phase of the TCB model, dependence, appeared in student narratives as a number of continually co-created contracts as students establish and update norms and roles within the relationship. Students who had reached a level of interdependence and reliance on one another spoke to continually discussing their needs and described willingly adapting their behaviors to complement one another's cultural norms and roles. These experiences illustrate the use of co-created cultural contracts in the dependence phase of TCB. By the very definition a co-created contract (Jackson & Crawley, 2003), contracts that are fully negotiated and allow for a continuous dialog long after they are signed, stand as the very epitome of the final phase of third culture building (Casmir & Asuncion-Lande, 1989) with individuals

co-creating and continually negotiating a mutually beneficial relationship. Findings from the pairs of students who had reached that dependence phase suggest that co-created contracts are the only contracts used in this final phase. In order to mutually construct a relationship beneficial for all parties and therefore be considered a third culture (Casmir, 1978) their contracts must also be mutually negotiated and co-constructed (Jackson, 2002a).

Cultural contracts neatly fit with the first two and the fourth final phase of third culture buildings as described above. Matching cultural contracts becomes more complex in the interaction phase as this phase covers a wide range of experiences, behaviors and negotiations (Casmir, 1999). Arguably, all three types of contracts may be encountered during the interaction phase depending on the individual's approach to, and goals for the relationship. Emergent themes from the student interviews suggests that ready-to-sign or quasi-completed interactions (Jackson, 2002b) are most commonly used early in the interaction phase. As students establish early norms, such as completing early tasks or determining working relational roles, they may issue ready-to-sign contracts to complete tasks or fulfill requirements. Students moving through interaction and encountering turning points, such as discovering shared interests, sharing humorous moments, or early conversations about the other's culture, often appeared as issuing quasi-completed contracts. In serving these contracts the student in the majority culture often appeared open to negotiation, but still maintained a level of control, perhaps informed by larger hegemonic forces, over the relationships aligning with Jackson's (2002a) definition of quasi-signed contracts. Some pairs showed instances of moving through these contracts one by one, ready-to-sign, to quasi-completed, eventually coming to co-created contracts as the relationship progresses and both individuals learn more about the other. Other students, specifically those looking to learn about and understand another's culture, began interactions through co-created

contracts (Jackson, 2002a) by continually communicating with their partner and adapting to fit both their own and their partner's needs. Some students appeared to move between the three linearly, while others changed the type of contract depending on their goal. For example, one friend pair issued different contracts for differing relational contexts, serving co-created contracts in relation to their relational norms, but in the coursework they shared the host-national student held control in a ready-to-sign contract.

The interaction phase of third culture building covers a wide range of behaviors and discussions. Initial interactions focus on surface level disclosures and establishing of basic norms, where later interactions may include deeper disclosures, overcoming conflict and barriers to the relationship, and establishing more meaningful norms. The experiences students shared within this interaction phase, and the contracts connected to those experiences follow the shifts from early to later interactions accordingly. Should third culture break apart this wide range of interactions into smaller distinct phases, early interactions as one phase and later more meaningful interactions focused on understanding as another, the contracts could be more neatly pinpointed. As the student narratives reflect, it cannot be specifically determined as the linear model currently stands.

Findings from this study suggest different aspects of a relationship may develop at different rates, as seen in the pair whose social relationship had progressed further towards third culture than their working relationship focused on coursework. I suggest third culture building may occur in student relationships as a cyclical process, moving from need to early and late interactions, which develop a dependence in that relational aspect or norm, creating new needs and relational aspects that must continue to cycle through the model. Casmir and Kweskin (2001) suggested in their exploration of communicative chaos theory, third culture building was

never a complete process as both members must continually negotiate and maintain the relationship. Findings from these student narratives support that claim of an ever shifting third culture, yet suggest a cyclical process may better describe intercultural relationships.

Practical Implications

The findings and themes found throughout the data set hold a number of practical implications for universities looking to improve the experiences of their international students and better promote cross-cultural interactions. The first relates to implications for diversity requirements or other required volunteer hours and courses for promoting diversity on college campuses. The second involves cross-cultural events and interactions put on by university sponsored programs. The third implication applies to both international and host-national student preparation.

Encouraging students to step outside their comfort zones to connect with and form relationships with those who differ from themselves is no easy feat. Instructors motivating students to actively seek out other cultures to learn of differing ways of life and worldviews do so with the best intentions. Findings related to voluntold student behaviors suggest these intentions may, however, reinforce cultural stereotypes within cross-cultural relationships. Often in the process of requiring culturally enriching activities the intent gets lost and students view the task as just another expectation of them and strive to check the box off their to-do list as quickly as possible (Ward & Rana-Deuba, 2000; Williams & Johnson, 2011). Yes, many students may begrudgingly approach the task and come out with a new perspective on life and a good friend (Dunne, 2009, Eldaba, 2016). The experiences of the student pairs in this study, paired with findings in the existing literature, reflect that those outcomes are optimistic, and perhaps few and far between (Brown, 2013; Hanassab, 2006). While host-national students may never reach out

to international students on their own (Hello et al., 2006), the forced nature of voluntold relationships in this study did not have the intended effect. For some of these students, the challenges experienced, such as struggling with language barriers or having to fight stereotypes within the relationships, could in fact deter host-national or international students from forming future cross-cultural relationships if they perceive them to be too much work (Khaled & Chiodo, 2006). Further, student pairs who poorly negotiated, or failed to negotiate at all, contracts within their relationship may shy away from future relationships where they may receive further discrimination and challenges to their cultural identities (Jackson, 1999; Leitner, 2011). Instructors should find other ways of encouraging and creating opportunities for students to learn about diverse individuals and worldviews, perhaps through in-class dialogue and activities that peak students interest and lead them to seek out these opportunities of their own accord.

Within this study, international and host-national students met through either a conversation circle program to practice English speaking proficiency or through social events put on by a student organization that focuses on sponsoring events for international students. In order to improve international student experiences abroad and encourage cross-cultural relationships, these programs may consider increasing awareness of their events and that both international and host-national students may attend. Multiple host-national students interviewed mentioned they were unaware they could attend social events through the student organization, thinking they were only for international students. To encourage more cross-cultural interaction these programs should still focus on serving international students, but also find ways to let host-national students about their events and their eligibility to participate.

Finally, as described by one international woman from the Philippines, not all international students feel comfortable reaching out to host-national students due to self-consciousness about language, social processes in the U.S., and other cultural norms. She shared:

I wanted to speak something on behalf of all the international students to get my word out. It's not because we aren't being friendly with you guys [host-national students], it's just that we don't know how to start a friendship with someone who isn't like us, who doesn't speak our language. We wait until we are comfortable, and sometimes that takes a while, sometimes our experiences here mean we are never comfortable. But if you reach out to us we will always try to be your friend.

Host-national students may avoid reaching out to international students for many the same reasons, fearing saying the wrong thing or inadvertently doing something offensive towards the international student. Universities may benefit from not only better preparing international students in ways that make them more comfortable approaching host-national students, but also in preparing host-national students. Many universities hold separate orientation and 'welcome week' style programs for host-national and international students (Eldaba, 2016; Gunawardena & Wilson, 2012; Klomegah, 2006). Notable findings throughout these students' experiences and narratives suggest that separate orientation experiences may contribute to the lack of cross-cultural interaction between the two groups. International students do have differing needs in terms of orientation content (Smith & Khawja, 2011; Somani, 2010); however, creating diverse orientation experiences that include both groups may decrease the uncertainty surrounding initiating cross-cultural relationships. Universities may add an additional day prior to the start of the orientation to address international student needs, then create orientation materials and

programs that are accessible to both groups so that they start their academic experiences together as equal groups who all enter new experiences.

While orientation programs that address the needs of both groups of students appear an optimal choice, entirely re-designing these experiences may not prove immediately feasible for some academic institutions. In working towards a more inclusive orientation experience, universities might consider creating a presentation during welcome week, or other orientation events, to focus on general diversity training. This initial diversity training may decrease the uncertainty of host-national students and make them more willing to reach out to international students out of a desire to learn and connect with them. By better preparing host-national students and holding various activities throughout the year to encourage cross-cultural interactions, host-national students may take more initiative and work to bridge the gap between the two groups of students.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Despite its significant contributions, this study has a few major limitations regarding the sample of participants. This study focused solely on students who were currently participating in one of two university sponsored programs supporting international students. While I believe the students interviewed shared authentic experiences, this study can only speak to the experience of students who connected and utilized these programs as a starting point for relationship development. These relationships may differ from relationships formed organically through average student experiences such as meeting through mutual friends, class encounters, social events not sponsored by the university, and other day-to-day interactions. By recruiting participants from these programs, and these programs alone, I gathered experiences from students who did not entirely choose to reach out and form these relationships. This approach

did, however, provide a deeper understanding of the experiences of some international students who network and attempt to form relationships through these types of programs. Without this focus, much of the work looking at voluntold students would have been missed. Future research should strive to collect the experiences and perceptions of students who met through experiences outside of programs aimed at connecting international and host-national students to gain a more complete understanding of the international student experience.

A second limitation of this study is the convenience sample of six pairs from the same large Midwestern university and the length of the relationships. In collecting international pairs, some students only study in the U.S. for a semester before returning to their home countries, and not all of those students begin friendships right at the start of their time in the U.S. While some of these pairs length of relationship seems short in terms of a study exploring relationships, this length of time may be accurate for the experiences of some of these students. The variety in length of relationship helped to illustrate student relationships at various stages in this study. A student may not feel comfortable reaching out to host-national students until their second or third month abroad, leaving them only a few months to develop those relationships. Future studies should collect more student experiences to understand international/host-national student relationships, both short-term and long-term, to best understand the experiences and processes these students go through. Research extending the understanding of international student relationships may also benefit by considering students from community colleges, small private colleges and large universities, across multiple regions to compare and contrast student experiences and relationship formation processes at various institutions of higher education. Further, additional exploration of gender's influence on international/host-national relationship development may prove both interesting and insightful to gain an understanding of factors

shaping these third culture processes. Due to the limited number of pairs interviewed in this study, not enough data was collected to fully explore gender and its influence on cross-cultural relationships. Same-sex and cross-sex pairs in this study varied drastically from pair to pair, one cross-sex pair proved reserved while another reflected a very close and tight knit relationship. Further studies may interview more pairs to analyze gendered patterns within third culture relationships.

Future research may consider cultural contracts (Jackson, 2002a) and third culture building (Casmir, 1993) in similar pairs of host-national and international students when U.S. American students study abroad. U.S. American study abroad students, especially those who have no previous experience abroad (Gareis, 2012), may hold differing expectations and perceptions than international students studying in the United States. Exploring the reversal of this study may find the power dynamics differ in countries with differing social and cultural norms, or differences in host-national students' receptivity of international U.S. American students.

An additional limitation of this study lies in its methodology in gathering data. Interviews ask students to share their experiences and allow the researcher to ask additional questions to gather full narratives and a snapshot of each students' experiences. These narratives do not always allow researchers to ascertain the entirety of the student's experiences and perceptions, and may work only with the information the participants choose to share. Other methods of data collection such as reflective journals may allow students to document a more detailed narrative about the formation of their relationships. This level of detail could allow researchers to better discern what behaviors and communicative events fall within each phase of TCB (Casmir, 1993) or act as catalysts shifting the students from one phase to the next. Other methods such as

observation of events or cross-cultural programs may provide deeper insight into the initiation of cross-cultural relationships and the early stages of relationship formation. Further, surveys of both international and host-national students may allow for a detailed examination of what influences students to willingly volunteer to reach out and initiate intercultural relationships, and what influences students to refrain from initiating cross-cultural relationships.

Further exploration of cultural contracts in relation to the third culture building model stands as another area that may prove interesting in future research. This study begins to examine how the two theoretical ideas may be combined to explore how individuals approach, initiate, and develop cross-cultural relationships. By adding a critical element to the third culture framework, the model may better explain, and therefore better understand the formation of third culture relationships as they happen in today's workplaces, institutions of higher education, communities and beyond.

Another area future research may consider is the third-culture building model (Casmir, 1993) itself. As it currently stands, the models' four phases (Casmir, 1999) prove clear and follow the processes for a number of different relationship types. However, in comparison to the other three phases, the third interaction phase covers far more time than its counterparts and with it a wide range of behaviors, dialogues, and other monumental events. Further study may break the third interaction phase into two more specific phases that more closely follow the stages of relationship building and the processes of learning about, and developing an understanding of, another culture.

Conclusion

The previous chapters have drawn many connections between notable findings and themes as they emerged from the collected student narratives and the theoretical frameworks that

aid in the understanding of the development of relationships between international and host-national students in university sponsored cross-cultural programs. Findings in this study provided further support of both theoretical frameworks while also complementing trends in previous research focusing on the international student experience.

This study extends intercultural communication research surrounding international student experiences in developing relationships with host-national students, and furthers our understanding of the various host-national approaches to connecting with international students through university programs. This research has explored the third culture building process in relation to cross-cultural relationship development, as well as the contracts issued and negotiated throughout this process. Most notably, this study identified the ways in which student motivations for initiating cross-cultural relationships influence the direction of the relationship and both students' experiences within that relationship.

This work has also suggested the potential benefit of blending the third culture building model with cultural contracts theory to gain a more holistic and complete understanding of third culture processes as they occur in day-to-day interactions. This work in the future could prove beneficial across a multitude of intercultural interactions and studies.

Finally, I have outlined some practical applications of these findings that universities, academic and social programs, and instructors may use in improving the ways in which they support international students and promote cross-cultural interactions. Improving international student experiences may help students develop skills and create connections they may have for the rest of their lives. Further, by having a better understanding of what works, and what does not, in facilitating cross-cultural interactions, universities may find new ways to educate and connect students of differing backgrounds and truly promote diversity on their campuses. By

preparing all students for interactions in an increasingly globalized world, they foster not only diversity and cultural awareness, but set their students up to build a more inclusive and informed society.

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ENDNOTES

¹The terms ‘domestic’ and ‘host-national’ are both used throughout this manuscript in reference to U.S. American college students. The use of either term is selected to match the terminology used in the research discussed in that specific sentence or section of the literature review. In the later discussion of findings, ‘host-national’ will be used to describe U.S. American college students.

² This study lacked information from African or Middle Eastern students, who may also report high levels of social dissatisfaction due to the challenge of forming relationships in a culture that largely differs from their own.

³Lee’s (2006) study relates to this study in its exploration of the processes individuals undergo when developing third culture relationships. Lee’s study, however, focuses on identity management theory and the phases of identity management within intercultural relationships. The study applies the phases of third culture building to identity management theory to solidify the understanding of each phase of identity management. Lee concludes the study with a call for a deeper look into the events that help students transition from one identity management phase, and thus third culture phase, to the next.

⁴All names have been altered to allow participants to remain anonymous. Students were given the choice to choose their own pseudonyms, some students deferred to the researcher to choose their alternative name.

Appendix A

Recruitment Email

November/December __, 2016

Hello Students,

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled “Coming to the United States: An Exploration of the Third Culture Building Processes that Emerge from University Sponsored International/Host-National Student Interactions.” Margaret Baker, a master’s student from the School of Communication at Western Michigan University, is the student investigator. She will conduct this research as a part of her thesis research project.

Study Description

This project will identify and explore the processes that occur in the development of relationships between international and domestic students on college campuses. Study findings will be analyzed and findings reported as a part of the investigators’ master thesis.

Participant Involvement

If you are an International student or a U.S. student or who frequently interacts with a student who is not from your home country (a minimum of two interactions per month) you are invited to participate in this study. If you would like to take part in the study, both you and the other student you interact with must be willing to participate in two interviews about your experiences in those interactions. You and your partner must both agree to be interviewed both individually and as a pair. You and your partner must both respond to this email in order to participate.

The first interview will last for 30-45 minutes one-on-one between you and the student investigator. The second interview will consist of a small group interview with you, the student investigator, and your partner who has agreed to participate in this study, which will last 45-60 minutes. Total time required will range 1.5 hours-2 hours. You will be sent typed copies of your individual responses after the interview, and a copy of the dyadic interview to ensure the accuracy of the interview data. Your partner NOT receive a copy of your individual interview, those responses will be kept strictly confidential.

To Learn More about the Study

- 1 Please email Margaret Baker, student investigator, margaret.e.baker@wmich.edu with:
 - a. Your name, and Western e-mail address.
 - b. In the body of the email identify that you are interested in learning more about the study
 - c. Please also identify whether you participate in any of the CELCIS, International Programs Council, or International Student Buddy programs at Western Michigan University.
 - d. Please list only the name of your partner for matching purposes. The name is only used to identify if both you and your partner have responded showing interest in the

study.

- 2 Attached is a Project Summary Form – for you to review prior to participating. You will be asked by the research team to sign a consent form at a later date if you wish to be involved.
- 3 Margaret will email you information about potential interview days/times along with the informed consent form. The consent form should be reviewed prior to participating in an interview. You may ask questions about the study or the informed consent form at any time prior to, or during the study. You will also receive a consent form at the time of the observation to sign and return to the research team.

If you have any questions about the project please contact Margaret Baker at margaret.e.baker@wmich.edu.

Sincerely,

Margaret Baker
Graduate Teaching Assistant
212 Sprau Tower
School of Communication
Western Michigan University

Appendix B

Participant Descriptions⁴

Gael	A male international student from Sudan studying communication Partner: Glenn
Glenn	An African American male student from Chicago, Illinois studying sports management Partner: Gael
Julia	A White female student from Eastern Michigan studying anthropology Partner: Romeo
Romeo	A male international student from Saudi Arabia studying mechanical engineering Partner: Julia
Sylvie	A White female student from Spring Grove, Minnesota studying Spanish Partner: Gio
Gio	A male international student from Spain studying chemistry Partner: Sylvie
Molly	A White female student from Lansing, Michigan studying holistic health Partner: Videl
Videl	A male international student from India studying chemical engineering. Partner: Molly
Jade	An African American female student from Gary, Indiana studying sociology. Partner: Sara
Sara	A female international student from the Philippines studying elementary education. Partner: Jade
Gabriel	A male international student from Ghana studying sociology Partner: James
James	A White male student from Kalamazoo, Michigan studying political science. Partner: Gabriel

Appendix C

HSIRB Approval Letter

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY



Human Subjects Institutional Review Board

Date: November 8, 2016

To: Mark Orbe, Principal Investigator
Margaret Baker, Student Investigator for thesis

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number 16-10-60

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project titled “Coming to the United States: An Exploration of the Third Culture Building Processes that Emerge from University Sponsored International/Host-National Student Interactions” has been **approved** under the **expedited** category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note: This research may **only** be conducted exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project (e.g., ***you must request a post approval change to enroll subjects beyond the number stated in your application under “Number of subjects you want to complete the study.”*** Failure to obtain approval for changes will result in a protocol deviation. In addition, if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

Reapproval of the project is required if it extends beyond the termination date stated below.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: November 7, 2017

Appendix D

Project Summary

Coming to the United States: An Exploration of the Third Culture Building Processes that Emerge from University Sponsored International/Host-National Student Interactions

Purpose

You are being asked to participate in a research study to identify and explore the processes that occur in the development of relationships (working, friendship, etc.) between international and host-national students on college campuses. This study looks for pairs of students who interact with one another often (a minimum of two interactions per month) to explore the development of third culture between individuals from different cultural backgrounds.

Study Procedures

Should you and your partner choose to participate, you will participate in two interviews. You will review the informed consent document prior to the start of any interviews. The student investigator will work with you and your partner to set up days and times for interviews. You will receive an email from the student investigator reminding you of the scheduled interview 24 hours before the scheduled interview. International/host-national pairs must both agree to be interviewed both individually and as a pair (dyad).

The first interview will last for 30-45 minutes one-on-one between you and the student investigator. The second interview will consist of a small group interview with you, the student investigator, and your partner who has agreed to participate in this study, which will last 45-60 minutes. Total time required will range 1.5 hours-2 hours.

Benefits

Student friend pairs may benefit by becoming more aware of their intercultural communication competencies, as well as gain a deeper insight into the importance of cross-cultural working relationships and intercultural friendships.

Risks

There are no known risks at this time to participation in this study. Pseudo names will be used in the interview process and in data analysis. Participants will be asked to use pseudonyms when referring to others in interviews to protect the privacy of all participants.

Costs

There will be no costs to you for participation in this research study.

Compensation

This study may be counted as 2 research credits or 10 points of extra credit in applicable courses as approved by your instructor.

Confidentiality

All information collected about you during the course of this study will be kept strictly confidential.

Voluntary Participation /Withdrawals

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You are free to refrain from answering any questions or withdraw from the study at any time. Your decision will not change any present or future relationships with Western Michigan University, CELCIS, the International Programs Council or any other university or community organization.

Questions:

If you have any questions about this study now or in the future, you may contact Margaret Baker at margaret.e.baker@wmich.edu.

Thank you!

Appendix E

Individual Interview Guide

Priority Questions*Opening Questions*

1. Tell me a little about where you are from.
2. How long have you known your partner?
3. Tell me about how you met your partner [probe for whether it was Conversation Circles, CELCIS or IPC social events, IPC buddy program]

Relationship Building

1. What does the term friendship mean to you? [probe for what constitutes a friend, what friendship means to them, do they value friendship etc]
2. Have you had anything in your relationship that you struggled with or you felt was a barrier to continuing the relationship? [probes: If so, what were they? How did you deal with the struggle or barrier? If not, have you had any misunderstandings or things that took you off guard?]
3. Tell me a little about an experience that stands out to you, that you and your friend shared. [probe: Why does this moment stand out to you? Importance? How did this impact your later interactions?]

Expectations and Norms

1. What were your expectations about working with your partner when you first met them? [probe for details] How have those expectations changed now?
2. What have you learned about your partner's culture/traditions?
3. Do you and your partner have any traditions or routines between the two of you? Describe them?

Reflections on the Relationship

1. Tell me about something that surprised you about your partner or their culture. [probes: If so what? If not, are there anything they do that you didn't understand?]
2. Is there anything else you would like to add or tell me?

Potential Questions (use only if needed for additional clarification/information)*Relationship Building*

1. Tell me about some of the events that led to you and your partner forming a relationship.
2. Were there any moments, events, experiences that happened when you knew you and this person would be friends outside of working together? [probe for additional details/narratives]
3. Have you had any conflict or misunderstandings in your relationship? [probe-What were they? probe for if they were cultural differences, misunderstandings, or personality quirks]

Expectations and Norms

1. Did you focus on learning about their culture or telling them about your own?
2. Have you adopted any traditions, phrases, or ways of doing things from your friend? Have they taken on anything from you?
3. How did you teach your friend about your culture?
4. Describe how your friendship has changed over time?

Appendix F

Dyadic Interview Guide

Priority Questions*Opening Question*

1. Tell me about one of your favorite memories you both share.
2. What was your first impression of your partner?

Relationship Building Over time

1. Describe a learning moment you had with your partner that stands out in your mind.
[Probe as to why this moment was significant and important]
2. Has your relationship changed over time? How so? [Probe for multiple events that shaped the friendship]

Communicating Contracts

1. Did you expect your partner to adapt to what you were used to? Or were you open to learning about their experiences?
2. How do you come to agreement about what to do, what is 'normal' for your relationship, etc?

Reflection Question

1. How has your relationship changed how you see yourself? Other cultures?
2. If you could tell your partner one thing, what would you want them to know?

Potential Questions (use only if needed for additional clarification/information)*Relationship Building*

1. What were some of your expectations for working with each other when you first met?
How have those changed now?

Communicating Contracts

1. Were you nervous to start talking with your partner? If so why, or why not?
2. Have you dealt with conflict or misunderstandings? [Probes: What were they? How did you work out the conflict?]