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Ming-Tso Chien
University of Maine, chien.mingtso@gmail.com

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IDENTITY AND LANGUAGE SOCIALIZATION OF ASIAN TRANSNATIONAL ADOLESCENTS

ACROSS COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE: A CRITICAL NARRATIVE STUDY

By

Ming-Tso Chien

B.A. National Chiao Tung University, 2004
M.A. National Chengchi University, 2010

A DISSERTATION
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
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(in Education)

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Advisory Committee:

Timothy Reagan, Professor of Foreign Language Education, Co-Advisor
Susan Bennett-Armistead, Associate Professor of Literacy, Co-Advisor
Dylan Dryer, Associate Professor of Composition Studies
Tammy Mills, Assistant Professor of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
Ming-Hsuan Wu, Associate Professor, Adelphi University
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A large percentage of the international secondary students in the United States come from Asian countries. Their enrollments are closely connected to the cultural, curricular, and extracurricular diversity of their American schools. Despite their contribution, stereotypical depictions of these students and deficit-informed research still abound in educational settings, leaving serious consequences for the social and academic well-being of the students.

These problematic educational framings about Asian international students and the majoritarian narratives about them are mutually informative. Therefore, to counter the dominant discourses, this multimodal critical narrative study set out to recruit stories from a group of Asian transnational adolescent students to illustrate an alternative reality. Specifically, five transnational youths attending high schools in Maine shared their perspectives and experiences of identity construction and transformation as well as language learning and use in the context of navigating across their communities of practice (CoPs), i.e., the social, academic, and extracurricular communities they belonged to.

With narrative inquiry guided by methodological pluralism, I collected a series of found and produced narrative artifacts as data from the five core informants and analyzed the data set through the following approaches: narrative positioning analysis, Labovian analysis, visual/multimodal analysis,
portrait analysis, and thematic analysis. The outcome of these analyses are findings presented as a series of positioning profiles and thematic connections.

Overall, the findings indicate a connection between these adolescent students’ social networks, CoP participation, and personal transformations. They position themselves as multifaceted, dynamic, dilemmatic, and oftentimes, in relation to the other members in their CoPs. In terms of language socialization, there is a shared understanding of communicative competence as multimodal and situated, and of CoP participation as conducive to the acquisition of the symbolic capital of English. When examined in context, these findings, though not meant to be one-size-fits-all, yield significant implications for educational research and practice targeted at this student population. Specifically, educators need to acknowledge the unequal access to participation and learning among students with different identity configurations. They will also benefit from tapping into the students’ CoP practice as well as transnational funds of knowledge as symbolic resources. This will allow them to develop a more diverse conception of competence, which in turn helps them provide affirming educational experiences to the transnational adolescents.

Despite some limitations and barriers resulting from COVID-related circumstances during the data collection phase, this study is significant because the processes of the adolescent students’ storytelling in different modalities added complexity to the stories told by them and ended up being as important as the stories themselves when it came to illustrating an alternative reality of Asian transnational adolescent students’ identities and language socialization.
DEDICATION

This dissertation endeavor would not have been accomplished without the transnational adolescent students, who took part in this study, generously contributing their time and valuable insights. Thereby, I dedicate this dissertation to each one of them.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the spirit of narrative inquiry, adopted as the methodology in this study, allow me to take you back to the beginning of this journey where I discovered and started to develop personal interests in the experiences of international students. I arrived in the United States (U.S.) in the summer of 2015 through the Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant (FLTA) program\(^1\). The program’s goal is for its participants, most of whom are educators from around the world, to teach their languages and introduce their cultures to the students in colleges and universities across the U.S. At the same time, they can improve their English and learn about the different aspects of the American culture. That was my primary task from 2015 to 2016 when I taught Chinese and took classes that broadened and deepened my knowledge about the U.S.

Before I moved to the U.S., I had many images and ideas about the country, but my understanding about it was superficial. I had learned, through the different stages of my education in Taiwan, that the U.S. is a country of immigrants, and that ethnic and racial relations are often at the forefront of national debates. With a profound interest in the communication across cultures, I knew I wanted to gain a deeper understanding of immigration and ethnic relations in the U.S., so I took a class on the history of U.S. immigration during my first year at the University of Maine. The class enriched my knowledge about the topics, and more importantly, it challenged me to view immigration history through different perspectives, not just the history depicted by the colonizers, but also the personal accounts from the colonized and those who were enslaved. I started to contemplate the significance of counter-narratives and their role in counteracting the master narrative.

\(^1\) The Fulbright FLTA program is sponsored by the Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. government. More information about the program can be found at the following website: https://foreign.fulbrightonline.org/about/fulbright-flta
At that time, through conversations and news, I learned that a number of secondary schools in Maine have a history of recruiting international students, especially among private schools and town academies. Predominantly, the narratives surrounding international student recruitment seemed to center around how such recruitment could increase enrollment and supplement school revenues as well as how integrating international students could enrich the experiences of local students. For example, a public state affairs program on Maine Public\(^2\), *Maine Watch with Jennifer Rooks* (2011), broadcast a discussion on international student recruitment. The discussion was accompanied with a video clip that showed a reporter traveling to two town academies, Lee Academy and Thornton Academy, as well as a public school in Millinocket to interview students and administrators. This program initiated my interest in exploring the experiences of international secondary students for two reasons.

First of all, I did not hear much from the international students themselves. Perspectives from international students were few and far between, and the international students’ views that did make it into the program were fragmented, much shorter than those from the local students and educators. Depiction of the students and the issue was still very much focused on the essentialized aspects of students’ experiences that rarely moved beyond cultural differences. Some students were portrayed as lacking English proficiency, and their translingual capacity as well as transcultural funds of knowledge were left unaddressed. Furthermore, even though the host did ask about local opposition to such recruitment at one point, the majority of the discussion focused on the benefits of recruiting international students.

Specifically, many schools, such as Lee Academy, were on the brink of closing down, but with international students, who paid around $40,000 a year per person for tuition and fees, the schools could thrive and offer many programs, such as additional Advanced Placement (AP) classes and language courses, to all students. In addition, one educator interviewed in the video also claimed a win-win

\(^2\) Maine Public is a broadcasting network of radio and television stations located in the state of Maine. For more information about the network, visit its website: [https://www.mainepublic.org/](https://www.mainepublic.org/)
situation where the local students could benefit from broadening their cultural horizons and gain global perspectives, and the international students could enjoy an academic environment that emphasizes creativity and individuality and a living environment that is safe and clean, something that is different from what some international students are used to in their home countries. Although the reporter did interview some international students, there was not really an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding from the students themselves of what it meant for them to study in Maine.

Another feature of the program that caught my attention was the images depicting the wide array of curricular and extracurricular activities in the schools that recruit international students. I saw video footage of international students engaged in different activities, interacting with their American peers and teachers but did not hear them describing the interactions, which left me wondering about the nature of their interactions and the role these interactions play in shaping their self-conceptions both personally and socially as well as their experiences with language learning and communication across cultures.

In short, I wanted to hear more from the students themselves, so with an assignment from the immigration history class, I reached out to a public school in a town located in the Penobscot County, Maine. Via Skype, I had an opportunity to converse with six Chinese students enrolled in the school at that time. They all came from a school in China that established a cooperative program with the public school in Penobscot County, Maine. These students shared their experiences with me, talking mostly about adjustment challenges of relocating from urban areas in China to a rural town in Maine as well as language barriers. The conversation was short but did afford me a first-hand account of the lived experiences from these international secondary students.

Years later, I had completed my PhD coursework and decided to return to this population of students for my dissertation research to further explore the questions and concerns from watching the Maine Watch program that are still unresolved for me today. As an international student myself, I have
experienced many similar adjustment challenges in linguistic, social, and academic contexts. Therefore, I understand the significance for researchers to explore the challenges encountered by international students and the urgency for educators to design programs to address these challenges in order to improve international students’ educational experiences and academic performance. However, as an international student myself, I have noticed that my experiences are not solely defined by my identity as an international student because I play many roles in different contexts. My self-efficacy varies across these various contexts in my life. I wonder if this is also the case with the international secondary students, some of whom may wear multiple hats in school. For example, one student can be a star player in the school basketball team and simultaneously play instruments excellently in the school orchestra. Therefore, by exploring his experiences in the different contexts, or the communities of practice (CoPs henceforth), they are involved in, I hope to diversify the unidimensional conception of international students solely as English learners (ELs).

In the following sections of this chapter, I will first introduce the conceptual framework, the overarching argument for this work. Next, I will situate this study by presenting an overview of international education and student mobility, on both the global and local scales. With this overview as a context, I state the research problem and my purpose in conducting this study as well as the primary topics of inquiry for this study. I will end the chapter with a statement of significance and potential beneficiaries of this research.

**Conceptual Framework**

There is some variation in the definition of conceptual framework, with some scholars and researchers treating it simply as the visual representation of a study’s organization, others using the term and theoretical framework interchangeably, and still others considering it a way to connect the essential components in the research process (Ravitch & Riggan, 2017). It is this last view that is most compatible to my use of the term in this study.
Effectively conceptualizing and articulating the connections among the components is essential for a solid empirical study because not only does it make the research work conceptually clear to its audiences, but it also grounds the methodological rationale for the research design and allows the researcher to stay grounded even as they make new choices to make modifications or adjustments to their design in the course of their work (Ravitch & Riggan, 2017). The following is a definition of conceptual framework provided by Ravitch and Riggan (2017):

We define the conceptual framework as the overarching argument for the work—both why it is worth doing and how it should be done. The genesis of that argument lies in the researcher’s personal interests and goals, which in turn are shaped by the researcher’s identity and positionality. The argument is formed and bolstered through literature review, a process of learning from the work of others. Much of the literature that informs the conceptual framework is what we call topical research; that is, work that focuses on a similar topic or question to that of the researcher. A second critical function of the literature is to provide the researcher with theoretical frameworks to advance the argument beyond where previous researchers have taken it, or to introduce new questions, considerations, hypotheses, or explanations into the inquiry. (p. 30)

Maxwell (2013) proposed some similar elements for conceptual framework, including researcher’s experiential knowledge, existing theory and research, the pilot and exploratory research, and thought experiments. Additionally, he also addressed the value of considering the philosophical positions or research paradigms.

In this study, I draw from both definitions (Maxwell, 2013; Ravitch & Riggan, 2017) and will address key elements adapted from the definitions throughout the first three chapters. For example, the

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3 The concept of paradigm largely comes from Kuhn's (2012) work. In the 1969 Postscript included in the 50th Anniversary Edition, he defines paradigm as constituting two senses, with one representing “the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given community,” and the other denoting “one sort of element in that constellation, the concrete puzzle-solutions which, employed as models or examples, can replace explicit rules as a basis for the solution of the remaining puzzles of normal science” (p. 173).
narrative with which I open this chapter is basically a statement of personal interests and intellectual goals, which Ravitch and Riggan (2017) defined as what drives the researchers to take up their projects in the first place or what motivates them to ask questions and seek knowledge. These interests and goals are often shaped by personal experience, and this is no exception in my own case.

Chapter 2, the literature review, provides a review of topical research, including the exploratory study from which this current study derives inspirations for research concepts and methods. The chapter also covers the theoretical framework, which is based on the philosophical orientations, or paradigms, that I will employ to guide the (1) construction of research questions, (2) incorporation of theoretical perspectives, and (3) selection of methodological and analytical approaches. Chapter 3 will be devoted to the introduction of the research design, with a focus on the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of narrative inquiry. The chapter will also introduce the methods of data collection.

The following sections and sub-sections will provide some contextual information both in the U.S. and around the world about international education and student mobility.

**Context: International Education & Student Mobility**

In the past few decades, the world has seen increasing student mobility across the world. This trend has been mostly reflected in the number of degree-seeking students in tertiary education (de Wit et al., 2013). According to the latest release of *Project Atlas*, a publication of Institute of International Education (IIE henceforth), over 5.6 million international students are enrolled in tertiary education programs across the world (Institute of International Education, 2020). Among the top five hosting countries, four are English-speaking countries: the U.S. (20%), the U.K. (10%), Canada (9%), and Australia (8%). China (9%) is the only country among the top five that does not use English as its dominant academic language.
International Students in U.S. Postsecondary Institutions

The U.S. has been the most popular choice as a destination for international students pursuing postsecondary education. According to Institute of International Education (2020), the U.S. hosts 1,075,496 students from around the globe in the academic year of 2019/20. And in the academic year of 2020/21, among the top ten leading places of origin of international students in the U.S., five are in Asia (Institute of International Education, 2021). Table 1.1 shows these leading places of origin, their respective rank, number of students, and percentage of total number.

Table 1.1. Leading Places of Origin 2020/21

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Place of Origin</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>317,299</td>
<td>34.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>167,582</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>39,491</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>25,143</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>21,933</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>21,631</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>19,673</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>12,986</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>12,860</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Representing the largest group of international students in the U.S., Asian international students contribute significantly to the U.S. economy. While they are enrolled in their institutions, they contribute via tuition payment, fees, and living expenses. For instance, according to IIE’s Open Doors: Report, China’s International Student Economic Impact in 2017 was worth $13,889,000,000, the highest among leading countries of origin. After they graduate, those who choose to stay in the U.S. continue to contribute to the U.S. economy with their intellectual capital by working for companies in different sectors (Bevis & Lucas, 2007, as cited in Yan & Berliner, 2011).

Conversely, Asian countries have not been reciprocally popular with American students as study-abroad destinations. In 2016/17, only China and Japan made it into the top ten U.S. study abroad destinations, ranking 6th with 11,910 individuals and 10th with 7,531 individuals respectively (IIE, 2018).
This asymmetrical exchange of students is a phenomenon found in many countries of origin for Asian students, such as India, South Korea, and Vietnam. This disproportionate student flow between the U.S. and Asian countries is representative of the power asymmetry in international education, with most of the prestigious institutions of higher education located in Western industrialized countries, such as the U.S. (Ma, 2018). This power asymmetry, along with the tremendous cultural distance between the U.S. and China, constitutes a fundamental social context in which many majoritarian narratives or dominant discourses about Chinese students are derived. I will elaborate on these narratives and discourses in the problem statement.

**International Students in U.S. Secondary Schools**

A number of English-speaking countries, such as the U.S., the U.K., and Australia, have also begun to recruit fee-paying secondary students from other regions of the world (Resnik, 2012). In the U.S., there are some noteworthy differences between secondary and postsecondary international students. First, U.S. immigration regulations restrict international secondary students to one year of study in public schools; therefore, those who plan to stay for longer periods of time to obtain their high school diplomas usually choose to attend private schools, which are not bound by the same immigration regulations (Farrugia, 2014). Those who choose to attend public schools must either return to their home countries after their year of study or transfer to a private school to continue their study in the U.S. If it is their senior year, they can apply to colleges or universities in the U.S. or other countries if they do not plan on returning home for higher education (Farrugia, 2017). Compared to secondary students, those who have arrived in the U.S. for postsecondary education are mostly enrolled in public institutions.

The second difference lies in international students’ places of origin. Countries such as Germany, Brazil, Thailand, and Italy that ranked outside of top ten places for postsecondary students, were among the ten leading senders of secondary students to the U.S. (Farrugia, 2014). Notably, China occupied the
first place on both lists. It is also worth noting that a large percentage of students from China and other Asian countries, such as South Korea and Japan, were enrolled as F-1 students with the intention to gain high school diplomas and be better prepared academically and linguistically, so they became more competitive applicants to U.S. universities and colleges upon graduation (Farrugia, 2014, 2017).

**International Student Recruitment in Maine’s Secondary Schools**

The information outlined above provides a context for the current study of Maine’s Asian international students. Similar to schools in other states, in response to declining enrollments and in hopes of increasing revenues, many schools in Maine, especially the private town academies, which have lost a large portion of students in the last decade or so, have traveled overseas to recruit students (Feinberg, 2018). Private schools have a long history of bringing students in from abroad. A few years ago, some public schools, from Farmington to Boothbay and Orono, started recruiting international students as well, but this recruitment is not without challenges (Feinberg, 2017). Public schools, for example, find it hard to compete with private schools, which can provide F-1 visas for students to stay for up to four years. Some public schools may also find it a challenge to justify the expenses associated with overseas recruitment, especially when budgets are being cut from other programs.

However, the trend seems to be slowing down due to the current presidential administration’s immigration policies as well as growing competition both within the state and across the nation (Pendharkar, 2019). Internationally, countries such as the U.K. and Australia, that are becoming more and more popular with international students, are also a threat to international student recruitment (Pendharkar, 2019).

**Statement of Problem**

When local governments are cutting budgets, and birth rates are declining in communities across the U.S., international students and their financial contributions are seen by school districts as valuable resources. Further, in the eyes of some school administrators, international students also
contribute to “international understanding and global mindfulness” because of the different cultures and languages they bring into schools (Resnik, 2012, p. 298). Despite these positive impacts, there remains a number of issues that need tackling in order to achieve theoretical and practical progress with regard to this population of students.

First of all, most current research on international students is still focused on those attending higher education institutions (Winton, 2013). In contrast, “the younger, more vulnerable” and often “unaccompanied international students” have received much less attention from researchers (Popadiuk, 2010, p. 1524). As a result, research about this particular segment of international students is an important gap to fill if we want to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the “processes of internationalization” and the “aspirations, experiences, and outcomes for international students” (Rahimi et al., 2017, p. 300).

Furthermore, problematic mainstream representations that contribute to the majoritarian narratives or dominant discourses of Chinese or other Asian international students remain prevalent and stereotypical in educational settings (Heng, 2018; Ruble & Zhang, 2013; Zhang, 2015). These representations are based on raciolinguistic ideologies that portray Chinese or other Asian individuals in the U.S. as the “model minority” or the “perpetual foreigners” (Chun, 2016; Lo, 2016). In this study, I use the terms from the research literature of critical race methodology (e.g., Peréz Huber, 2008, 2009; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Yosso, 2013)—majoritarian narratives or stories and majoritarian storytelling or dominant discourses—to refer to stereotypical or biased representations and the process of creating such representations of minoritized communities.

Sometimes, these majoritarian narratives also manifest as problematic assumptions in research framing. For example, Yao and colleagues (2019) pointed out that even though their number has been

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4 Raciolinguistic ideologies are ideas and beliefs that associate certain linguistic practices with specific racialized bodies. For instance, Flores and Rosa’s (2015) conception of raciolinguistic ideologies “link the white speaking and listening subject to monoglossic language ideologies, which position idealized monolingualism in a standardized national language as the norm to which all national subjects should aspire” (p. 151).
growing in the past few decades, international students are still susceptible to negative influences from experiences of racism, nativism, and other forms of discrimination in the U.S. and that in response to these issues, most current research literature focuses on how international students should adjust and assimilate as a solution instead of interrogating the systems of oppression that result in the negative experiences. Furthermore, according to a review of research on Chinese international student (Zhang-Wu, 2018), many studies adopt the deficit perspective and approach these students as linguistically incompetent, neglecting the heterogeneity in their language learning backgrounds and their multilingual capacity. In addition, most studies are based on the theory of acculturation (Berry, 1997), which emphasizes the unidirectional socialization into the host society. However, international students are transnationals, simultaneously connected to their host and home countries and may have different levels of investment in the host society than their immigrant peers, making their socialization trajectories more diverse. These problematic majoritarian narratives have serious implications for the social and academic well-being of the students and thus should be addressed through research that provides alternative perspectives, especially perspectives from the students themselves.

**Statement of Purpose & Topics of Inquiry**

Recognizing this gap in research about a particular age group of international students and the need for personal accounts and stories based on authentic lived experience to counter, complement, and inform the majoritarian narratives, I set out to conduct a critical narrative study about the lived experiences of Asian transnational adolescent students in Maine’s secondary schools. My goal was to promote a deeper and broader understanding of the ways in which these students perceive and experience participation across different communities of practice (CoPs). Specifically, I aimed to explore and describe how they perceive and experience interactions with other members of their CoPs, members such as their American peers, teachers, host family, other international students, etc. Additionally, I hoped to discover how these interactions influence their language socialization and
identity formation and transformation. To achieve this, I employed the narrative approach, inspired and informed by the critical race methodology of counter-storytelling (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002), to recruit and analyze these students’ stories of CoP memberships and participation as a means of countering deficit storytelling in the dominant discourses about Asian international students in the U.S. Furthermore, the narrative inquiry of counterstorytelling in this study extended beyond what stories were recruited and analyzed. Counterstorytelling also manifested in the alternative acts of representation. In other words, besides oral storytelling during the interview, the participants in this study engaged in multimodal narrativizing, tapping into their graphic, pictorial, and written stories as counterstorytelling.

Terms & Definitions

I defined communities of practice (CoPs) in the context of this study as groups of people affiliated with the school in this study that (a) share a common passion or concern and (b) interact on a regular basis to learn and improve upon any practice related to the passion or concern (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2015). These groups can be social, academic, and/or extracurricular in nature. Some examples of these groups include but are not limited to the dorm community, a sports team, an AP class, a foreign language class, a book club, an international student group, etc. In Chapter 2, I will discuss the origins and the theoretical underpinnings of this concept.

For the purpose of this research, I borrowed Duff and Talmor's (2011) definition of language socialization as “the development of linguistic, cultural, and communicative competence through interaction with others who are more knowledgeable or proficient” in the target language (p. 95). In the context of this study, the target language is American English, and speaking a language other than English as one of the first languages was one of the criteria for participant selection. I used “language learning” to refer to the general process of acquiring English as the target language, or the common language used for communication in the target CoPs. When I used the term “language socialization”, I
used it to emphasize not just the linguistic aspect but also the sociocultural aspects of communication. In addition, unless specified differently, whenever I refer to “language”, for example in phrases such as “language learning and use”, “language acquisition”, or “language socialization”, I am using it to refer to English as a target language while recognizing its diverse definitions for each of my participants, as a second, foreign, or additional language. Therefore, language socialization in the context of this study refers to socialization into English as the target language, either as a second, foreign, or additional language.

I borrowed Norton’s (2000) definition of identity as “how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future” (p.5). Norton’s (2000) definition is grounded in the poststructuralist view to language and thus highlights identity as evolving over time, as multiple and non-unitary, and as a site of struggle (Norton & McKinney, 2011). In Chapter 2, there will be further discussion on these two concepts, language socialization and identity, as well as their theoretical foundations.

In this study, I use the term, “dominant discourse”, interchangeably with the terms, “master narrative” (Montecinos, 1995) and “majoritarian story” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002), to refer to the kind of depiction of a community of marginalized individuals that essentializes and eradicates the complexity and richness of their collective culture and lived experiences, often the culprit for stereotypes and misrepresentations in educational contexts (Montecinos, 1995). One example is the deficit storytelling in education and social science research that blames educational inequality on the lack of certain biological or cultural traits among students from Communities of Color (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). By contrast, counter-narratives are the stories told by those from the margins of the society to “expose and understand how race, racism, and other forms of oppression are strategically used to subordinate People of Color” (Pérez Huber, 2008, p. 165), and I would argue, individuals from other marginalized
communities. Chapter 2 will contain a section that elaborates on the tenets of critical race theory, the theoretical framework, on which critical race methodologies are based.

**Significance of Study**

There are several reasons why international secondary students in the U.S. should warrant focused scholarly attention. First of all, their number more than tripled between 2004 and 2016. In 2016, a total of 81,981 students from various countries were enrolled in U.S. high schools (Farrugia, 2017). Since then, even though the number of students with an F-1 visa declined steadily from 59,392 in 2016 to 47,306 in 2019, the number of students with a J-1 visa remained relatively stable (Mason & Andrejko, 2020). Secondly, the majority of the international secondary students attend private schools with an F-1 visa. The significance of this is that compared to those who attend public schools, they contribute to the revenues of their schools by paying tuition, and compared to those who are on a cultural exchange program through a J-1 visa, their main goal is to obtain a high school diploma, which they believe will be beneficial when applying to colleges and universities in the U.S. later (Farrugia, 2017). In other words, their educational journey, which encompasses secondary, undergraduate, and even postgraduate education, can potentially be much longer compared to those who arrive in the U.S. only for universities or colleges. This, in turn, allows them to contribute more to the economy of the host society.

In addition to their economic contribution, many of these students, as a result of their long-term educational trajectory, become integral members of their schools and communities. Not only can critical qualitative research about this population of students diversify our understanding of the socialization and acculturation processes as well as the human experiences associated with these processes, but it also can shed light on the systemic barriers within these processes. Finally, research focused on international secondary students also has important implications for higher education, as discussed below (Farrugia, 2017).
Many U.S. higher education institutions are now entering U.S. high schools to recruit international students. Even though these international secondary students only account for a small proportion, around 14% of all international students enrolled in U.S. undergraduate education (Farrugia, 2017), their unique position sets them apart from other international and domestic applicants. It is important to recognize that as transnational youth, these students are often simultaneously connected to their home countries as well as the U.S. (Hornberger, 2007). Therefore, their approaches to university and college application may be influenced by many people. For example, while their U.S. high school counselors may urge them to choose a school that is the best fit, they often are pressured by their families back home to aim for the highest ranked institutions (Farrugia, 2017). Furthermore, while applying to U.S. high schools, many international students have already established a relationship with private agents in their home countries. Thus, while they may work with teachers and counselors in their schools, they often also turn to agents for help with the university or college application process (Farrugia, 2017). These are two examples where these youths are connected to individuals not only in the U.S. but also in their home countries. Therefore, when considering their experiences and the decisions they make with regard to academic and language learning, it is important to take into account this trait of dual connection (Hornberger, 2007).

At a time of declining student enrollments on both secondary and postsecondary levels, students’ sense of belonging is essential to their retention and recruitment, and international students’ sense of belonging is reliant on whether or not educators are able and willing to acknowledge students’ experiences and trajectories and celebrate their competences in diverse contexts and whether or not they are able and willing to tackle systemic barriers to learning, barriers such as raciolinguistic marginalization faced by some international students. The findings from this study can help educators gain a more nuanced, situated understanding of their international students, which makes them better equipped to support these students.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

My purpose in conducting this study was to gain a deeper and broader understanding about the experiences of Asian transnational adolescents in the communities of practice (CoPs) of their American high schools. Specifically, I aimed to explore how they perceive and experience interactions with other members in their CoPs and how these interactions influence their perspectives and experiences of language socialization as well as the formation and transformation of their identities. Through this exploration, it was my hope to contribute to the counter-storytelling in theory and practice regarding issues of identities as well as language learning and use in the study-abroad context.

The overall goal of this chapter is twofold. In the first half of this chapter, I will review current and previous topical research, focusing on empirical studies about international students in general and Chinese as well as Asian transnational adolescents in particular, in order to identify gaps and developments in theory and methodology. I will start by introducing an exploratory study that I conducted on a similar topic and student population. In the second half of this chapter, I will identify my philosophical positions, i.e., paradigms, and discuss how they interact to guide my selection of substantive theoretical perspectives as well as methodological and analytic approaches. Together, the paradigms along with the perspectives and approaches will form the theoretical framework for this study, based on which I posed the specific research questions to answer through this study.

The Exploratory Study

This current qualitative study grew out of an exploratory study I conducted in order to gain some preliminary understandings of the experiences and identities of three Asian transnational youths in a high school in Maine (Chien, 2019). In this section, I will describe the exploratory study, summarize its main findings, and explain how the findings informed the design of this current study.
In May 2019, I conducted an exploratory study (Chien, 2019) at [anonymized school]\(^5\), with an eye to gaining some preliminary understanding of the experiences of international secondary students enrolled in schools that are located in new destination communities, i.e., communities with less experience with immigrants or cultural and linguistic diversity (S. J. Lee & Hawkins, 2015; Marrow, 2011; Zúñiga & Hernández-León, 2006). New destination communities make an especially important context for exploring the perspectives and experiences of international students because most international students in the U.S. come from large fast-growing cities in emergent economies and are mostly concentrated in metropolitan areas when they come to the U.S. to pursue education (Ruiz, 2014). Therefore, exploring the perspectives and experiences of those who opt for the new destination communities has the potential to broaden and deepen current study-abroad research.

To that end, after gaining approval from the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB)\(^6\), I reached out to an administrator at [anonymized school], to recruit Asian international students for my pilot study. I chose Asian international students because I was interested in the role their racialized experience plays in their interactions with teachers and peers as well as their language learning and use in a predominantly white and English-speaking school and community.

In total, four participants signed up to take part in the study, but only three of them completed the entire process, which consisted of an individual interview with each participant and a group discussion with all of them. Two of the remaining participants are male students from China, and the third is a female student from Vietnam. I analyzed the data from the three participants who completed both the individual interview and the group discussion. Below, I summarize the procedures of data collection and analysis before presenting the main findings and their implications for this current study.

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\(^5\) The schools have been anonymized to protect the confidentiality of the participants in this study.

\(^6\) Application # 2019-05-33
**Procedures of Data Collection**

There were two stages of data collection. Each stage elicited two narratives from each participant, one visual and one oral. Figure 2.1 illustrates the design of multimodal data collection in this study. The visual narratives were derived from two mapping activities: identity mapping and education journey mapping. Mapping has been used by qualitative researchers as a mediational methodology to explore topics around identity and experiences (Annamma, 2016; Futch & Fine, 2014; Katsiaficas et al., 2011). It was used in the exploratory study as a way to recruit both visual and oral narratives from the youths.

**Figure 2.1. Two Stages of Data Collection**

![Diagram of data collection stages]

**Individual Interview & Identity Mapping.** First, I interviewed each participant in person at a private location in their school building. Each interview lasted for approximately 45 minutes. At the beginning of the interview, each participant was provided a prompt (see Table 2.1) to produce an identity map, a visual representation of their multiple identities. Following that, each participant was asked to verbally introduce him- or herself to me by describing what he or she had included in the map. I then asked follow-up questions based on his or her verbal responses. I chose to interview the participants individually first because I wanted to establish one-on-one relationship with each one of them before the group discussion. This, I believed, would allow them to be more comfortable sharing aspects of
personal information which they would potentially shy away from had we done this in a group setting at our first meeting.

Table 2.1. Prompts for the Mapping Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Prompt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - Identity Mapping</td>
<td>To start, I would like you to introduce yourself by answering the question, “Who am I?” Make a list of words that best describe or define you, either from your own perspective or from how you perceive what other people think of you. These words can represent the qualities or characteristics you have, the different roles you play in your life, or anything you think best represents who you are. You can also include information about your social identities like race, gender, ethnicity, language, socioeconomic background, sexual orientation, etc. Then, please draw a map to illustrate the relationship among these qualities, roles, and identities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2 - Education Journey Mapping | Similar to the individual interviews, today we will begin with another mapping activity. Last time, you created an identity map to tell me who you are. Today, you will create a map to represent your education journey. This map can take any form, not necessarily in the linear format. You have total freedom in terms of the format, but please include the following information in your map:  
  - What are the major phases of your education journey?  
  - Did anything happen in each phase that had and still has an impact on how you have become who you are today? If so, please include it in the map. |

**Group Discussion & Education Journey Mapping.** After I had interviewed all participants individually, I then gathered them for a group discussion. This discussion, which lasted for about 90 minutes, began with the participants creating their education journey maps based on a prompt (also presented in Table 2.1). The maps are the visual representation of different phases of their education journeys as well as the critical incidents in each phase. After they had completed the task, they took turns describing their map. I followed their verbal description with questions, and I also invited them to ask each other questions or make comments based on what they heard from each other. I chose the group discussion format for Stage 2 because the participants had had the shared experience of attending the same high school as East Asian international students. This shared experience is portrayed on all three maps. By listening to each other, questioning, and commenting, they had an opportunity to negotiate a collective story that represents their shared identity and experiences.
Procedures of Data Analysis

I transcribed the audio-recorded individual interviews and group discussion for data analysis. I approached data analysis through narrative inquiry because of my goal to explore the collective identity and experiences of transnational youths. Some narrative scholars (e.g., Sfard & Prusak, 2005) define identities of persons as stories they tell; therefore, it was my hope that by examining the narratives of the youths, I could learn more about their identities.

I adopted multiple narrative approaches to analyzing the data I collected. Accompanied with the group discussion, participants’ narratives have a shared storied form that is centered around the topic of education journey and sequenced temporally from birth to the present time and then to the near future.

Analytic Framework. There are several typologies of narrative analysis methods. To examine the students’ narratives, I constructed an analytic framework by consulting the works of various scholars of narrative inquiry (Andrews, 2004; N. Frost, 2009; Riessman, 2005, 2008; van den Hoonoord, 2013). The framework consists of three approaches to narrative analysis: thematic, structural, and visual. In response to Frost’s (2009) call for analytic pluralism, I adopted the three different approaches to analyzing the youths’ narratives in order to “gain the broadest and deepest understanding of the accounts” I had collected (Frost, 2009, p. 13).

Overall Procedures. I coded both the transcripts and the maps to identify the main themes. Visual analysis of the map helped to inform thematic analysis of both the transcripts and maps. Visual analysis also helped to inform structural analysis when I searched for the differences in linguistic devices used in both types of narratives to describe the time and space, two orientation elements in structural analysis (N. Frost, 2009; Johnstone, 2016; Labov, 1972).
Main Findings from the Exploratory Study

Using multiple methods, I collected the three students’ visual narratives from mapping activities and their verbal narratives through interviews and a group discussion. Then, utilizing a pluralistic analytic approach, I analyzed these narratives thematically, structurally, and visually. I found that the youths’ narratives of selves and education journeys are in fact about their personal transformation and interpersonal relationships and that there is a close relationship between their relationships with others and their personal transformation. Below, I summarize the key findings from the exploratory study.

1. Participants’ narratives about their future plans were characterized with uncertainty. This is illustrative of the distinction between immigrant students and transnational students. The latter often have attachments to two or more nation states and have “experiences, understandings, and frames of reference across (‘trans’) two nations” (Sánchez, 2009, p. 50). In other words, when considering their future plans, these transnational youths are often influenced by their affiliations in the U.S. as well as those in their home countries, which makes decision-making a more complex process.

2. Transnational students, usually multilingual and multicultural, often participate simultaneously in multiple communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). Thus, they embody multiple trajectories of socialization (Langman et al., 2015). The youths in the exploratory study, for example, occupied different CoPs, such as host families, the boarding community, extracurricular activities, such as the track team, etc., and each CoP had a different impact on them depending on the quality of their interactions with others in each respective CoP.

3. Both time and space were salient components in these transnational young people’s narratives of selves and education journeys, in both their visual and verbal narratives. The orientation elements of time and space play an essential role in negotiating and establishing mutual understandings of transnational experiences between the narrators and their interlocutors (De
Fina, 2003b). Time and space, along with other orientation elements in narratives, are linguistic resources that narrators with transnational experiences can make use of to connect their interlocutors to the social contexts in which their narratives are situated (De Fina, 2003).

Implications for this Current Study

The main findings from the pilot study confirmed the following when it comes to the design of this study. First of all, substantively, it is essential that the current study explore how each CoP in the participants’ lives plays a role in their language socialization as well as identity construction and transformation. Second, methodologically, narratives allow transnational students to make sense of their dual affiliations and to communicate this sense of dually linked identity to their audience by tapping into certain narrative resources, such as the orientation elements of space and time. Finally, methodological pluralism employed in the design and analysis of the exploratory study has the potential to allow individuals who live with double consciousness (Du Bois, 1989) to speak through “multiplicity, conflict, and splitting” as well as to allow researchers to hear the complexity of the individuals’ dynamic and multifaceted lives (Katsiaficas et al., 2011). To sum up, this current study will continue to adopt multimodal narrative inquiry as the methodology. I will describe the design in Chapter 3.

Review of Topical Research

In the following sub-sections, I will present a review of empirical studies to identify the scope and recent developments in research about Asian international students.

Identities, Experiences, & Relationships in Transnational Spaces

With processes of globalization, it is not uncommon for people to live their lives in multiple places, sometimes even across national borders, and with this migration from country to country, people also come into contact with diverse national and cultural traditions and establish meaningful relationships in more than one country (W. Li & Zhu, 2013), as a result of which, transnational individuals often merge two societies into one single social field. This process in which transnational
migrants build social fields to link together their country of origin and their country of settlement is referred to by Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton (1992) as transnationalism.

Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton’s (1992) have identified six fundamental principles that underpin the conceptualization of transnationalism: (1) tribe, ethnic group, nation, society, or culture are all bounded social science concepts, which can constrain researchers’ perception and analysis of the transnationalism phenomenon; (2) the evolving global capitalism conditions are closely connected to the experience of transnational migrants, so the development of transnational experience should be analyzed within the world context; (3) transnationalism is based on migrants’ everyday lives, their activities and social relationships; (4) the existence of transnational migrants is complex; migrants are constantly forced to “confront, draw upon, and rework” their national, ethnic, and racial identities; (5) being aware of the fluid and complex existence of transnational people, researchers need to reconceptualize categories of nationalism, ethnicity, and race and reformulate their understanding of culture, class, and society; and (6) on both national and global levels, migrants are faced with and have to deal with multiple hegemonic circumstances (p. 5).

Some of these premises guiding Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton’s (1992) conceptualization of transnationalism also underpin the contextual factors that influence the experiences of Chinese adolescents studying in the U.S. For instance, a unidimensional conception of culture and cultural identity is no longer sufficient in exploring the identities and experiences of transnational adolescents, most of whom live with bicultural identities. This concept of bicultural identities is not only what Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (2003) mean by “the creative fusion between their [immigrant children’s] family tradition and the new culture, combining the two systems through the development of multicultural and multilingual skills, which become part of their identity” (as cited in Esteban-Guitart & Vila, 2015, p. 18), but it can also be a psychological consequence of globalization on adolescents. Arnett (2002) argues that most people nowadays, especially the youth, are
developing bicultural identities, where “part of their identity is rooted in their local culture while another part stems from an awareness of their relation to the global culture” (p. 777). In other words, prior to their arrival in the U.S., the Chinese adolescents in this study may have already developed a bicultural identity that consists of a local identity as well as a global identity that provides them with a sense of belonging to a worldwide culture, due to different processes of globalization, such as the global media and information technology. The development of this local plus global bicultural identity continues after their arrival in the U.S. but is further complicated when they come into contact with the new culture of their host community. This intersection of two levels of bicultural identities is illustrative of the complex and fluid nature of transnational existence and thus requires researchers to reconsider their understanding of bounded social science notions such as culture, national, society, and so on.

Two other concepts in Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton’s (1992) conceptualization of transnationalism that connect important contextual information to this study are global capitalism and hegemony. In the introductory chapter to the book Understanding International Students from Asia in American Universities, Yingyi Ma (2018) argues that there is power asymmetry between Asian international students and the universities they attend, and she advocates for a paradigm shift in research around Asian international students in the U.S. The power asymmetry Ma refers to is a result of disproportionate student flow between the U.S. and Asian societies. While the U.S. is a popular destination for students from Asia, many fewer American students choose Asian countries as their study-abroad destinations. For instance, the top three countries of origin for international students in U.S. higher education in 2020/21 were China, India, and South Korea (Institute of International Education, 2021), and the top three countries of origin for international secondary students on F-1 visas in 2016-2017 were China, South Korea, and Vietnam (Farrugia, 2017). On the contrary, among all Asian countries, only Japan made it to the top ten destinations for U.S. students, accounting for only 2% of the total U.S. study-abroad student population in 2019/20 (Institute of International Education, 2021).
Ma (2018) cites the World-System Theory to explain this phenomenon. According to the theory, people from countries in the periphery are more likely to move toward core nations, and higher education produced in a core country is often considered to be of much higher value than that produced in a periphery country. Even though some Asian countries, such as Japan, South Korea, and China, are becoming increasingly important in the world’s geopolitical and economic systems, world order in higher education remains unchanged (Ma, 2018). Most of the world-class institutions of higher learning are still located in North America and Europe, and the higher status and prestige of these two regions’ universities confirm and reinforce the legitimacy of “American-centric and Euro-centric standards” (Ma, 2018, p. 5).

A diploma from a developed country is regarded as valuable cultural capital that can be transformed into monetary income in a developing country. For example, in China, people who fluently speak foreign languages from the developed nations and/or who have returned from oversea studies in those countries usually have access to more and better employment opportunities (Fong, 2011). This is the foundation to the power asymmetry described by Ma (2018). She argues that this power asymmetry offers a significant social context where Asian international students in the U.S. are situated. This power asymmetry structures what American students, teachers, and administrators perceive and expect of Asian international students, especially in terms of the direction of language socialization. At the same time, it also influences how Asian international students perceive their own experiences. Furthermore, the power asymmetry also becomes a basis for a deficit framework that emphasizes the adjustment and adaptation needs of international students by focusing on the cultural, academic, and linguistic barriers Asian international students have to overcome rather than challenges the assumption that international students should bear the sole responsibility of dealing with these challenges (Ma, 2018). Based on this, Ma calls for a shift from focusing on Asian international students’ one-way adjustment and adaptation to mutual learning between the Asian international students and their American peers. This current
study on Chinese transnational adolescents is a response to Ma’s call because its overall goal is to elicit the adolescents’ perspectives on the various aspects of their participation in different CoPs. Their perspectives can serve as counter-narratives (Andrews, 2004; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) to challenge misconceptions and inform further understanding about Chinese transnational adolescent learners in the U.S.

**Transnationals vs. Immigrants.** A quote from Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton (1992) depicts the distinction between immigrant experiences and transnational experiences:

> Our earlier conceptions of immigrant and migrant no longer suffice. The word immigrant evokes images of permanent rupture, of the uprooted, the abandonment of old patterns and the painful learning of a new language and culture. Now, a new kind of migrating population is emerging, composed of those whose networks, activities, and patterns of life encompass both their host and home societies. Their lives cut across national boundaries and bring two societies into a single social field. (p. 1)

While immigrants tend to maintain long-term, or even permanent, affiliations with the countries that adopt them, transnational individuals’ residence in their host countries may be more variable, often depending on economic opportunities (Hornberger, 2007). Transnational migrants often keep their options open by continuously translating “the economic and social position gained in one political setting into political, social and economic capital in another” (Glick Schiller, Basch & Blanc-Szanton, 1992). They do so because they realize not a single place is completely secure in global economy, and also because they have access to many places. This general attitude of keeping options open is a potential contextual factor when transnational adolescents discuss their future plans.

Another way transnationalism shapes young people’s identity and experiences is through their relationships with others. As transnational individuals, although these youths move across national borders, they maintain affinity ties and social networks in both their home countries and the U.S. (Hornberger, 2007). The ties are maintained both virtually, for example through social media, and/or
physically, for example through international visits during summer vacations. Through these channels of contact, transnational adolescents remain partly present in multiple locations (De Fina & Perrino, 2013).

In terms of language and literacy practices, Song’s (2010) study of two groups of South Korean families in the U.S. also provides some insights into how transnational experiences and perceptions of how language and literacy works may be different from those of immigrants. Song interviewed two groups of South Korean mothers about their attitudes and strategies for their children’s language education. The two categories of South Korean families are South Korean immigrants, who have established roots in the U.S., and early study-abroad South Korean sojourners, who will eventually return to Korea. “Early study-abroad” here refers to an increasingly popular trend in South Korea, where middle-class families tap into transnational education migration before college, in order to gain symbolic capital for upward mobility in the society (Song, 2010). This is because in South Korea, and most other Asian countries, western educational credentials and the English language are seen as symbolic capital that can be transformed into actual economic capital in the global market, and this ideology of language as economic commodity still remains influential in the community of early study-abroad families but is no longer taken for granted by the immigrant families. This illustrates a distinction in language education ideologies between transnational and immigrant families.

There has been contested variation in the conceptualization and theorization in the scholarship of transnationalism (Warriner, 2007). I am aware of the multifaceted nature of transnationalism. I am also aware that the dichotomous distinction between immigrants and transnational migrants may not always be appropriate, since every migrant may exist at a different point on the continuum, due to a complex set of social, cultural, political, and historical factors. For instance, many immigrants maintain strong ties with their families and relatives in their home countries and make frequent visits home even after living in their host countries for many decades. Their experiences are thus characterized with a fusion of immigration and transnationalism.
However, in her review of research studies about Chinese international students in American universities, Zhang-Wu (2018) found that many studies focusing on the acculturation of Chinese international students adopt immigration-oriented frameworks, and the underlying assumption by adopting such kind of frameworks to study transnationals is that they are no different from immigrants, while the truth is to the contrary. For example, from her review of studies, Zhang-Wu found that international students tend to come from backgrounds of higher socioeconomic status, and therefore, the pursuit of a better life in a foreign country is often not the primary reason for their study in and relocation to the U.S. In addition, many international students do not plan to or are now allowed to stay in the host country beyond what their student visas allow; consequently, they often convert their oversea educational experience into social capital and monetary income in their home countries (Zhang-Wu, 2018.) In this study, I adopt the classic conceptualization from Schiller and her colleagues in order to explore why transnational students’ experiences warrant distinctive attention from their domestic and immigrant peers and how doing so may contribute new insights into theory, practice, and policy that target transnational youths for their unique identities and experiences.

**Transnational Learners in the Borderzones.** In a study about how two Mexican transnational adolescents in the U.S. drew from their languages and border-crossing experiences as resources for engaging with literacy practices in school, Skerrett and Bomer (2013) describe these youths as living in multiple overlapping borderzones. In their words:

> As transnational people, they [the two Mexican youths] and their families frequently and purposefully cross the geopolitical borders between the U.S. and Mexico for work, education, family connections, and civic participation. As adolescents, they occupy the liminal space between childhood and adulthood... As users of literacy, they participate in academic practices within school and in everyday practices both in and out of school. Throughout these practices, they draw upon multiple languages, modalities, purposes, text forms, and conventions, and so
their texts are as hybrid as their everyday lives, at the borderzones of sign systems, cultures, discourses, community practices, and ideological systems. (Skerrett & Bomer, 2013, p. 313)

The Asian transnational adolescents in my study are similar to the Mexican youths in Skerrett and Bomer’s research in that they also cross multiple borderzones every day, and with this border-crossing, they also embody hybrid identities (Anzaldúa, 2012) that shift and mix depending on the audiences, interactions, and discourses with which they come into contact (Skerrett & Bomer, 2013). The dynamic spaces transnational students occupy are full of contradictions and complexities, but at the same time, they are also where new knowledge is produced and continuously revised because of the challenges and opportunities that arise from the two sides of the border. Skerrett and Bomer (2013) found that by tapping into a more complete range of students’ language resources and their experiences of border crossing, educators can better support these students’ development in academic writing.

In an ethnographic study, Sánchez (2009) worked with three young Latinas who live with their families in northern California but are continuously connected to families and friends in some rural communities in Mexico. She involved these young women as participatory co-researchers about their transnational communities. Together, they worked on a project of creating children’s books that are based on culturally authentic counter-narratives of U.S.-Mexico transnational experiences. These books become a “countertext”, one that stands in contrast to what is commonly believed by teachers about transnational students’ annual visits back to Mexico (p. 277). In addition to serving as a counter-story, their continual interactions and communication with communities in Mexico also become cultural and linguistic resources that are often overlooked in their U.S. schools.

These two studies show that adolescents acquire transnational funds of knowledge (González et al., 2005) with their border-crossing experiences and transnational social ties. Not only does the transnational funds of knowledge provide resources the adolescents can draw on in acquiring academic language and literacy skills, but it also serves as a collective counter-story that disrupts the myths and
misrepresentations of border-crossing youths. The two studies (Sánchez, 2009; Skerrett & Bomer, 2013) cited above illustrate the potential and significance of research on transnational adolescents in presenting narratives that counter deficit storytelling in education.

**International Students as Transnational Learners**

The studies referenced above were informed by the experiences of border-crossing immigrant youths who live with their families in the U.S. while maintaining social connections with relatives and friends in their home countries. Research on these young people is increasingly recognizing their strengths because of the cultural and linguistic resources they can tap into. On the contrary, another group of transnational adolescents—the international adolescents who have come to the U.S. to study, often unaccompanied by their parents or other family members—have received much less scholarly attention. The focus of research about international students remains on the level of higher education, and very little is known about international secondary students, their transnational identities, experiences, and relationships.

To provide a context for my study on Asian transnational adolescents in U.S. high schools, I reviewed two lines of research on international students to allow their intersection to inform the design and implementation of my study. I reviewed studies about the Chinese international students in U.S. higher education since the majority of current research is on this segment of international students. Additionally, because existing research focusing on non-immigrant Asian transnational youths in U.S. schools is limited, I also review several studies whose subjects are transnational young people studying in various contexts in different countries.

**Chinese International Students in U.S. Higher Education.** The U.S. attracts a large number of international students every year, and the highest percentage of these students have come from China in recent years. In a study about Chinese students’ motivations for studying in the U.S., Chao and colleagues (2017) derived a list of factors influencing Chinese students’ decision for studying in the U.S.
from the literature. These include educational factors such as students’ ability to enter their ideal schools, the availability of fields they want to enter, the rigor of educational system, etc. Other factors on the list are cost of education and living expenses, parents’ wishes, their own wishes, living environments, etc. Chao and associates then surveyed Chinese international students from two universities in the northeastern U.S. From the survey, two major factors were identified. First, the Chinese students come to the U.S. to study in order to gain a new perspective about their own country. Second, students deem the U.S. educational system to be superior. In the follow-up interviews, the survey respondents explain that there is a lack of innovation in the Chinese educational system, which tends to emphasize memorization, and this makes the U.S. an ideal destination for those who desire innovation in their educational training.

Compared to the survey study from Chao et al. (2017), Rafi (2018) conducted a qualitative study, interviewing twelve Chinese students enrolled in different U.S. colleges and universities about their college decision-making experience. Four findings emerged from her research. First, parents play the most influential role in the Chinese students’ decision to study in the U.S. Second, Chinese students attribute tremendous significance to rankings when deciding on colleges and universities. Third, in retrospect, Chinese students wish they had focused less on rankings. And finally, Chinese students wish they had not allocated finances on hiring agents to assist with application processes. The findings from these two studies once again highlight the transnational nature of these students’ experiences. The findings show that the students’ decision-making is highly influenced by relationships at home, especially by their parents. The findings also reinstate the preference for education from the West, where education is considered superior and more innovative.

In the following parts of this chapter, I summarize some critical comments on the underlying assumptions in the recent research about Chinese international students in American higher education from Zhang-Wu (2018), who reviewed and organized 21 studies into three themes based on their
research focus: language barriers, acculturation, and social networking. Some studies cover more than one research focus. Before she presented the research findings from each theme, she explored the underlying assumptions related to each research focus. The assumptions are summarized here because they are useful in terms of locating the gaps in and identifying future directions for research on Chinese international students.

**Language Barriers.** The first theme of research focus is the different language barriers faced by Chinese international students. The underlying assumption shared by the studies in this category, according to Zhang-Wu (2018), is the general perception of Chinese international students as being linguistically incompetent in the U.S., where English is the dominant language. Even though it is true that some Chinese students do encounter challenges in acquiring and using English, especially spoken English, the assumption is still problematic for two reasons. First, while focusing on language barriers, most of the studies fail to acknowledge these students’ bilingual and biliterate capabilities. In other words, they approach the topic of Chinese students’ communicative competence with a deficit rather than asset perspective. Second, the Chinese students are a diverse group even when it comes to their English proficiency. Some of them have studied in the U.S. or other English-speaking countries or have attended international programs in high schools in China before being enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities. As a result, they may be more proficient in English compared to some of their peers who have not gone through the same educational trajectories.

**Acculturation.** The second theme of research focus revolves around Chinese international students’ extents of acculturation and acculturative stress. Zhang-Wu (2018) found that most studies in this category adopt acculturation theories developed by John Berry (1997) and Jean Phinney (1990, 1996) as their guiding frameworks, which is problematic in her view because these theories were originally devised to explore the adaptation and acculturation of immigrants. In Zhang-Wu’s opinion, there exist notable differences between international students and immigrants, and the assumption
behind adopting an immigrant-oriented framework is that international students and immigrants are the same and experience the same acculturation processes and goals. Even though they are similar in certain aspects, especially regarding their border-crossing experiences, there are also some between-group distinctions. For example, for many international students, their educational sojourn in the U.S. is merely one way for them to gain new educational experiences and to “enhance their social capitals in the home country”, which means their acculturation into the host society is less of a priority (Park, 2016, as cited in Zhang-Wu, 2018, p. 1184). Furthermore, since most international students have to finance their own education, relying on support from families mostly, compared to immigrant students in general, the self-financed international students tend to have higher socioeconomic statuses in their home countries, and therefore, assimilating into the host country to pursue “a better life” is usually not a priority for them as it is for most immigrants (Zhang-Wu, 2018, p. 1184).

Social Networking. The third theme of research focus is Chinese international students’ usage of media and their social networking. When addressing the underlying assumption for this research focus, Zhang-Wu (2018) cautions that international students’ social media usage needs to be contextualized based on their geographical locations and transnational experiences. For example, when critiquing Li and Chen’s (2014) study of students’ usage of two social networking sites, Facebook and Renren (an equivalent of Facebook in China), Zhang-Wu (2018) pointed out that their finding of Renren being used for home country connectedness more than Facebook “seems obvious and even redundant” (p. 1188), since Facebook is banned and hence not available in China. As a result, students will have to use another site that is similar but accessible in China to engage in networking with family and friends at home. Another example of underlying assumption provided by Zhang-Wu (2018) is Yang and associates’ (2004) comparison of TV and the Internet with regard to acculturation motives. Yang and her colleagues reported that students tend to use the Internet to retrieve information about the happenings in China rather than in the U.S. Zhang-Wu (2018) commented that this is another obvious finding. Since most TV
content in the host country is about the current events in the host country, international students who wish to receive the latest information about what is going on at home have to turn to the Internet.

**Summary & Implications.** This critical review of studies on Chinese international students in American higher education by Zhang-Wu (2018) provides many contextual insights for my study on Chinese adolescents’ participation in CoPs in an American high school. First of all, in terms of communicative competences, it will be important to uncover whether students’ own conceptions are influenced by the dominant deficit ideology and whether they mobilize their multicultural and multilingual resources in various CoPs by tapping into their transnational funds of knowledge (González, Moll & Amanti, 2005). Secondly, in terms of social networking or interactions across cultures, it will be important to recognize these students’ use of multimodal media in maintaining and establishing social ties as well as in mobilizing the aforementioned linguistic and cultural resources.

**Transnational Adolescents as International Students.** Nowadays, more and more young people are crossing borders to pursue education. Among these young people, a large proportion that are enrolled in North American secondary schools are trans-Pacific migrant students. Even though current research on international students in secondary schools is limited and often showcases the experiences of Asian students as a group (e.g., Popadiuk, 2009, 2010; Popadiuk & Marshall, 2011; Yin, 2013), there is significance in highlighting the distinct experiences within this group of students (e.g., Alexander, 2016; Kim & Okazaki, 2014; Shin, 2014, 2015). Most studies were approached from the counseling perspectives, focusing on the social, psychological, and academic adjustment of international secondary students (Alexander, 2016; Kim & Okazaki, 2014; Popadiuk, 2009, 2010; Popadiuk & Marshall, 2011; Yin, 2013), and even though language is included in the discussion of all these studies, it does not take center stage, except in Shin’s (2014, 2015) investigation of the South Korean early study-abroad students, where she explored the relationship between social class, racial, and linguistic marginalization,
as well as identity construction among Korean international students in Toronto schools. Below, I summarize some findings from these studies.

In a series of research studies of Asian students’ transition to Canadian high schools, Natalee Popadiuk conducted semi-structured interviews with 21 Asian adolescents attending public schools in the Vancouver School District as tuition-paying international students (Popadiuk, 2009, 2010; Popadiuk & Marshall, 2011). With the Critical Incident Technique (CIT), Popadiuk elicited their narratives about critical incidents that had an impact on their adjustment and transition to high schools in Canada using the following questions: (1) What happened before the event? (2) What was the event? (3) What was the outcome of the event? (4) Is there anything else that you would like to add? (Popadiuk, 2010, p. 1529). In total, she identified 352 critical events, 17 themes, and three categories from students’ narrative data. She reported the three categories of findings in three papers (Popadiuk, 2009, 2010; Popadiuk & Marshall, 2011) in order to present more in-depth information about the data.

Popadiuk (2010) identified three categories of themes from the students’ narratives of critical incidents: (1) general transition experiences, (2) relationships, and (3) language and academic issues. This series of studies covered the experiences of international secondary students rather extensively; below I summarize findings from her papers, but at the same time, I also compare and contrast her findings with those from other researchers to paint a more holistic picture of the experiences of international secondary students.

Aspects of Transitional Adjustments. Transnational adolescents, especially those not accompanied by their parents or other family members, usually have complex, multifaceted experiences while transitioning to the new social and academic fields in the host country. For example, the Asian students in Popadiuk’s (2010) study reported positive and negative experiences with regard to making decisions, experiencing dilemma, receiving advice or information, gaining assistance, feeling impressed with the environment, coping with annoyances resulting from differences in culture and customs, and
participating in extracurricular activities. Findings from this study highlight the strengths of the students, showing that despite their “younger age, fewer coping strategies, and more vulnerable status”, the students learned to deal with their challenges and took a proactive approach in seeking information and support when they needed guidance (Popadiuk, 2010, p. 1542). Their transnational experiences allowed them to develop resiliency and to grow in ways that may have been impossible had they stayed in their own countries (Popadiuk, 2010).

Aspects of Relationships. In terms of relationships, the students talked about their interactions with their classmates, home-stay families, friends and family in their home countries as well as people they met in their daily life, and the findings showed that these interactions played an influential role in the students’ well-being and their ability to adjust to the new culture (Popadiuk, 2009). For example, the students reported “feelings of depression, anxiety, or homesickness” when they had trouble establishing relationships or when they had conflicts with others (Popadiuk, 2009, p. 239) On the other hand, they felt supported and encouraged when the adults showed empathy and understanding of how their challenges are closely related to their experiences of cultural transition and language acquisition rather than disregard those factors (Popadiuk, 2009). Furthermore, the students talked about what they appreciated in their relationships with others. For example, they appreciated when people showed concern for their well-being and respect for their culture, when people gave them a hand at times of hardship, when teachers used humor and ensured fairness in class (Popadiuk, 2009). Besides appreciation, the students also reported times when they felt accepted or rejected by those around them or by people in general. When they felt accepted, they reported being more outspoken in class and more outgoing socially, but when they felt rejected, they withdrew socially (Popadiuk, 2009).

Aspects of Language & Academics. In terms of English learning, students reported extensive exposure to the target language as well as working hard and persevering to be the key to successful English learning. In these students’ opinion, “being forced to speak English, working hard at learning the
new language, speaking to others in English, living with an English-speaking home-stay family, attending English as a Second Language classes, watching TV programs, and practicing new words and concepts” are how they can improve their English (Popadiuk & Marshall, 2011, p. 228). In addition, when communicating with others, students found that those who talked more slowly to be more comprehensible and that lack of vocabulary and not understanding expressions of idioms and slangs to be the main hinderance of effective communication (Popadiuk & Marshall, 2011). Students also reported use of their first languages when “receiving a translation of a teacher’s lesson, communicating problems and feelings to friends, talking and having fun with friends of the same nationality, and enjoying living in a home-stay where everyone spoke the first language” (Popadiuk & Marshall, 2011, p. 231). Being able to communicate in their first languages increased their confidence and gave them a sense of belonging and connectedness. They also felt they could be understood more easily. In contrast, when these students were warned against speaking in their primary languages, they reported feeling angry, ashamed, and embarrassed (Popadiuk & Marshall, 2011). Finally, competence in English was found to play an important role in students’ academic performance as well. It allowed the students to perform the identity of a competent and successful learner, which in turn boosted their confidence and pride in themselves (Popadiuk & Marshall, 2011).

Sociocultural Factors. Even though the series of studies conducted by Popadiuk and Marshall (Popadiuk, 2009, 2010; Popadiuk & Marshall, 2011) provided a wide-ranging overview of the experiences of Asian students transitioning to high schools in the North American context, these experiences surrounding transitional adjustment, interpersonal relationships, as well as language and academic issues should also be examined through sociocultural perspectives, such as in the following studies.

Shin (2014, 2015) conducted an ethnographic study with Korean early study-abroad (ESA) students in Toronto to examine how race, class, language, culture, and citizenship intersect in the way
these students construct their identities and learn languages. These ESA students are pre-college-age adolescents from South Korea. They usually come from middle-class families who aim to access “valuable forms of global English capital” by engaging in transnational educational migration to English-speaking countries (Shin, 2014, p. 100). Some of these families are referred to as the wild-goose families where the mothers live with the children in an English-speaking country where the children receive education, and the fathers continue to work in Korea in order to provide financial support to the family (Shin, 2014, 2015). Shin (2014, 2015) found that complex socio-economic factors characterize the identities and experiences of these ESA students. ESA allows students from middle-class families to gain “high-status Western educational and linguistic capital” without having to compete with the elites in the Korean education system, but at the same time, when they migrate to a Western country, they also enter another “social hierarchy” where they are “marginalized as ethnoracial minorities” (Shin, 2014, p. 100).

Shin’s ethnography (Shin, 2010, 2014, 2015) with the ESA students provides some insights for reconsidering some findings from Popadiuk’s series of studies (Popadiuk, 2009, 2010; Popadiuk & Marshall, 2011), especially in terms of how students’ experiences of language learning are complicated by their ethnoracial identities and immigration status. For instance, the Asian students in Popadiuk’s study (Popadiuk & Marshall, 2011) reported that extensive exposure to English is the key to successfully acquiring the target language. They believed that practicing by conversing with native speakers would help them to improve their English. This does not seem like a problematic idea until issues of class, race and ethnicity are factored in. In Shin’s studies (2010, 2014, 2015), the ESA students’ access to authentic English was seriously impacted by the discrimination as well as racial and linguistic stigmatization they experienced. For example, one participant in the studies reported being called racial slurs and being mocked for her accent when speaking English. These experiences made her withdraw herself from social and academic endeavors in the school. The student said she would socialize mostly with other
international students, since it was difficult to make friends with white Canadian students, who often made small talks and laughed with teachers in class while the international students sat in silence. She also said it was difficult to build relationships with the Korean immigrant students, who were reluctant to share their linguistic and social capital with the newcomers.

Furthermore, these ESA transnational adolescents’ linguistic identities and experiences were also complicated by the multiple trajectories in the linguistic markets to which they were exposed (Shin, 2014). For example, in their Western schools, they often received “ridicule, laughter, disrespect, lack of recognition” for their linguistic production, which made them reluctant to speak English (Shin, 2014, p. 101). However, when they interacted with other Koreans in their home country, they were often awarded for their bilingual knowledge and skills in English and Korean. These two findings from Shin’s studies (2010, 2014, 2015) highlight the fact that transnational adolescents often simultaneously occupy multiple CoPs, in some of which their communicative competence in English is marginalized, while in others, it is appreciated. Thus, exploring their memberships in different CoPs can yield a more complete picture of their identities and experiences in their Western schools.

Summary & Implications. The research studies cited in this section provide some important insights about the population of Asian transnational adolescent students in North America, some accompanied by their parents, others living and studying in their host countries by themselves. Findings from these studies illustrate the significance of challenging some preconceptions about international secondary students. First of all, most research has adopted the deficit perspective that focuses narrowly on students’ lack of English proficiency. There is a need to consider communicative competences from more culturally and linguistically relevant and diverse perspectives, that is, to recognize students’ translingual and transcultural capacities and assets.

Secondly, there is a diversity of experiences even for students who originate from the same world region. This diversity is represented with their family structures, their educational trajectories, or
their interactions with others. For example, some of the ESA students in Shin’s studies live in Canada with their parents, usually their mothers, while most students in Popadiuk’s studies are unaccompanied by their parents. In terms of educational trajectories, not all transnational adolescents view staying in their host countries for higher education as their sole goal. Alexander (2016), for instance, described a group of Japanese high school students in the U.S. that have very unique academic experiences and trajectories because of their parents’ transnational employment. These Japanese parents are sent to the U.S. by transnational corporations. Forced to relocate with their parents, these young people are uprooted from their home country’s education system and then transplanted into a drastically different system. Sometimes, they may experience a second-time involuntary rupture when their parents are suddenly sent back home from the U.S. by their employers. This involuntary relocation exposes the youths to additional academic vulnerability and forces them to negotiate future educational paths that cross borders (Alexander, 2016). These students, in the face of uncertainty, adopt a high-stakes strategy of graduating one year early from their U.S. schools to secure access to higher education in Japan, lest they get trapped between two education systems (Alexander, 2016). Their experiences, even though also transnational, are different from those described in Shin’s or Popadiuk’s studies. In other words, these students do not cross borders voluntarily to seek access into Western education system in order to gain upward mobility in their home society. Instead, they are bound by corporate transnationalism, so they need to strategize to modify the educational time frames in order not to jeopardize their educational prospects (Alexander, 2016).

The final implication from the findings of the studies reviewed in this section is that transnational adolescents’ communicative competences and practices should be considered along with their ethnoracial identities and experiences. As shown in Shin’s studies, racial discrimination and ethnic marginalization seriously impacted the students’ affordances to acquire and practice English. This co-consideration of race and language echoes Crump's (2014) conceptualization of LangCrit, the Critical
Language and Race Theory, which I will return to below in the discussion of the guiding theoretical perspectives for my study.

**Guiding Paradigms & Theoretical Perspectives**

There are five phases in the process of conceptualizing qualitative research, including “the researcher and the researched as multicultural subjects, major paradigms and interpretive perspectives, research strategies, methods of collecting and analyzing empirical materials, and the art of interpretation” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 52). Creswell and Poth (2018) used the terms “philosophical assumptions” and “interpretive frameworks” to refer to the concepts of paradigms and perspectives in Denzin and Lincoln’s description of the process. These philosophical assumptions and interpretive frameworks play significant roles. For example, researcher’s philosophy often shapes his or her “direction of research goals and outcomes”, his or her philosophical assumptions are often rooted in his or her “scope of training and research experiences”, and these assumptions are often the “basis of evaluative criteria for research-related decisions” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 19).

These philosophical assumptions, also known as the axiomatic issues of qualitative research, are the researcher’s beliefs about “ontology (the nature of reality), epistemology (what counts as knowledge and how knowledge claims are justified), axiology (the role of values in research), and methodology (the process of research)” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, pp. 19-20). These assumptions can sometimes be implicit, but they can also manifest in the researcher’s choice of paradigms, some examples including postpositivism, social constructivism, transformative frameworks, postmodern perspectives, pragmatism, feminist perspectives, critical theory and critical race theory, queer theory, disability theory, etc. (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this study, I am guided with a paradigmatic synthesis of poststructuralism, postmodernism, and critical theory. I made this paradigmatic choice not only because of my personal beliefs for identities as dynamic, fluid, and multiple; learning as interactive and situated;
and education as means for social justice, but more importantly because the review of topical research has pointed me to a framework that is a synthesis of these paradigms (Pavlenko, 2001, 2002a).

**Locating Paradigms**

With the review of topical research, I derived the following characteristics of transnational adolescent students that my participants may share as Asian international secondary students. First of all, even though they share an identity as a raciolinguistic minority in the context of American high schools, they are a heterogeneous group, each embodying a different educational trajectory and each possessing different affordances for language learning and use as a result of his or her own configuration of other identities, such as gender, social class, sexual orientation, (dis)ability, and so forth. This configuration can promote or inhibit his or her interactions with other people in their social and academic spaces and hence their access to language learning and use. Therefore, it is important for this current research to explore the relationship between the students’ language learning and use and the construction and transformation of their multiple identities.

In addition, the research review also sheds light on transnational students’ unique process of socialization that may operate differently from the acculturation and adaptation processes usually associated with immigrant students. First, transnational students occupy multiple overlapping borderzones, and they constantly experience border-crossing from one social or academic space to another, drawing on multimodalities of discursive practice as communicative resources. Second, unlike their immigrant peers, their ultimate goal may not necessarily be assimilation into the American society. Therefore, in order to challenge the deficit storytelling of international students as lacking English proficiency, it is critical that this current research view socialization as embodying multiple trajectories due to the various social and academic spaces that transnational students occupy. With attention focused on the resources they can draw on, in other words, their funds of knowledge, an opportunity
emerges to broaden the conceptualization of the communicative competences of transnational students.

The characteristics summarized above are centered around ideas such as “multiplicity” of competence, experiences, trajectories, identities, borderzones, and modalities of communication; “identity” as raciolinguistic minority; trajectories of “socialization”; and affordances for “interactions” and language learning. These ideas have pointed me to a framework Pavlenko (2001, 2002) constructed by drawing upon paradigms such as poststructuralism, postmodernism, and critical theory. This synergy of multiple paradigmatic perspectives is the manifestation of what Denzin and Lincoln (2018) referred to as “a historical moment marked by multivocality, contested meanings, paradigmatic controversies, and new textual forms” and “an age of emancipation, freedom from the confines of a single regime of truth, emancipation from seeing the world in one color” (p. 210). Among the three paradigms in Pavlenko’s (2001, 2002) framework, critical theory informed the development of critical race theory and critical race methodologies, which along with other theoretical perspectives discussed in the next sub-section, form the theoretical framework for this study.

**Theoretical Perspectives**

In this sub-section, I will summarize key ideas for each theoretical perspective before presenting the theoretical framework for this study to explain how the perspectives relate to each other and to the main topic of inquiry: Chinese students’ experiences in their communities of practice at school in the context of this study.

**Poststructuralist Theory of Second Language Acquisition.** Pavlenko proposed a framework that she called Poststructuralist Theory of Second Language Acquisition (Pavlenko 2001, 2002), acknowledging that the term “poststructuralism” was used interchangeably with “postmodernism” and “critical inquiry” to emphasize the similarities among these three paradigms (Pavlenko, 2001, p. 318). As long as paradigms share similar axiomatic elements that resonate with each other, it is possible that the
paradigms become commensurable at the philosophical level (Lincoln et al., 2018). This framework is informed by the postmodernist’s skeptical inquisition of authority, assumption, and convention as well as the poststructuralist’s focus on language as the locus of inquiry. In this poststructuralist theory of language learning and use, language is viewed as symbolic capital and the site of identity construction; language acquisition is viewed as language socialization; second language (L2) users are viewed as agents with multiple dynamic and fluid identities (Pavlenko, 2002). The emphasis on identity and language socialization and the focus on multiplicity and empowerment in the paradigms are compatible to the research questions and purpose of this current study.

One important similarity among postmodernism, poststructuralism, and critical theory is their critique of positivism. All three paradigms “reject presuppositionless representation” because such representation is “politically undesirable and philosophically impossible” (Agger, 1991). As critiques of positivism, these three theories make significant sociological contributions, both methodologically and substantively (Agger, 1991). These paradigms advocate for multiple methodologies as well as multiple perspectives on problems based on class, race, and gender, hence empowering the “muted speakers” in the society to join discussions about social issues, “legitimating their noncredentialled interventions into the scientific field and deprivileging the mainstream positivist voice” (Agger, 1991, p. 121). This is the foundation for my choice of the critical race methodology of counter-storytelling, which I will introduce along with the critical race theory in the next sub-section.

**Critical Theory Perspectives.** While critical theory is often closely associated with the Frankfurt School philosophers such as Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse, and Habermas, other philosophical approaches with similar practical aims, such as feminism, critical race theory, and some forms of post-colonial criticism, can also be referred to critical theories (Bohman, 2021). A critical theory has to meet the following three criteria: explanatory, practical, and normative; that is, it must explain what is wrong with current social reality, identify the actors that can change this reality; provide clear norms for criticism as
well as attainable goals that are practical for social transformation (Bohman, 2021). In addition, critical theorists, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2018), critique normalized notions of democracy, freedom, opportunity structures, and social justice. They denounce systems of power and domination, including the transnational capital class and the political structures that support them. Critical theorists pursue questions of racism, sexism, heteronormativity, gender oppression, religious intolerance, and other systems of oppression. (p. 203) Critical race theory, outlined as follows, is an example of a critical theory because it critiques systems of oppression based on race and other social identities; it identifies individuals from the marginalized communities as creators and holders of knowledge and potentially agents of change; and it also proposes tools such as counter-storytelling that can be used to challenge the problematic majoritarian narrative based on a set of clear principles to guide social action.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) in Education7. Initiated within legal scholarship, CRT explores “the ways that so-called race-neutral laws and policies perpetuate racial and/or ethnic and gender subordination” (Delgado Bernal, 2002, p. 108). In other words, it challenges dominant liberal ideas, such as meritocracy and colorblindness and illustrates how these ideas keep the marginalized at disadvantage while privileging those in power (Delgado Bernal, 2002). Solórzano and Yosso (2002, pp. 25-26) provided five tenets for CRT:

1. The intercentricity of race and racism with other forms of subordination;
2. The challenge to dominant ideology;
3. The commitment to social justice;
4. The centrality of experiential knowledge; and
5. The transdisciplinary perspective.

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7 In 2021, CRT came under the educational spotlight when the legislature of many states purported to outlaw it in schools based on the argument that CRT creates contentious group dynamics, is divisive, and urges intolerance. However, there remains a great deal of confusion over what CRT actually means in K-12 schools, and the term is often conflated with other terms, such as social justice and anti-racism, that often appear in efforts centered around equity, diversity, and inclusion (Sawchuk, 2021).
CRT not only recognizes the experiential knowledge of people of color as “legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination”, but more importantly, it views such knowledge as strength and explicitly draws upon the lived experiences of people of color through listening to their voice and their realities. In legal studies, and subsequently in educational studies, there is an emphasis on “voice” or “naming one’s own realities” through storytelling. Stories provide the essential context for understanding, feeling, and interpreting, and this gives voice to those who are muted by the laws or sciences that are ahistorical and acontexual (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Delgado (1989, as cited in Ladson-Billings, 1998) provided three reasons for “naming one’s own reality” in legal discourse, which I believe are equally important within the educational context: a great deal of “reality” is socially constructed; stories are a means of psychic self-preservation for the members of the marginalized groups; the exchange of stories can prevent ethnocentrism and the desire to see the world from a singular perspective. Critical race methodologies such as counter-storytelling allow educational research to fulfill these same purposes for student populations at the margins of the educational system.

In their seminal article, Toward A Critical Race Theory of Education, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) pioneered the use of CRT to critique traditional forms of multicultural education and to shed light on systemic educational inequities in the U.S. Crump (2014) extended this dedication of CRT to the analysis of educational experiences when she proposed LangCrit, the Critical Language and Race Theory. She argues that language alone cannot effectively or even sufficiently capture and account for the experiences and politics of identity and that membership in a mainstream community is based on a person’s belonging that is determined by “the intersection of two axes: the subject-as-seen and the subject-as-heard” (p. 217). Crump (2014) defined LangCrit as a critical theoretical framework that “recognizes intersections of audible and visible identity in shaping possibilities for being and becoming” (p. 219), “challenges fixed assumptions related to categories such as language, identity, and race and
argues that these categories are socially and locally constructed” (p. 220). In other words, exploring how transnational adolescent students experience their memberships and participation in multiple CoPs through the lens of LangCrit allows for the possibility of uncovering the nuances of international students’ identities and experiences, especially international students who simultaneously belong to racial and linguistic minorities, like the students in this study.

Critical Race Theory & Transnationalism. In addition to education, CRT also has some significant intersection with transnationalism. In the study-abroad research area, Yao and associates (2019) argued that in addition to the current focus on international students’ adjustment and coping mechanism, it is essential that researchers also investigate how structural systems, especially the systems of oppression, impact international students’ experiences, especially their experiences with racism, nativism, and other forms of marginalization. CRT serves as a framework for researchers to interrogate not only these systems of oppression but also how international students’ experiences are depicted in the literature. They proposed that CRT must advance beyond “the rigid confinement within the US borders and expand to consider how transnationalism and global exchange contributes to the fluidity and applicability of this theory” (Yao et al., 2019).

They based this argument on the concept of “a world racial system” which they borrowed from Winant (2004, as cited in Yao et al., 2019, p. 39). The concept emphasizes that in the history of the U.S., internationalization and migration have always intersected with racism and nativism, as manifested in the historical events of “yellow peril of Chinese workers, internment of Japanese citizens during World War II, and the transatlantic slave trade” (p. 39). Although CRT originally emerged as a critique of neglecting race in the studies of legal systems in the U.S., Yao and her colleagues advocated that CRT in education be expanded beyond merely the U.S. context that often only emphasizes the domestic racial groups. Educators and researchers can also consult CRT in education to inform their understanding of
international students, in particular those from non-White and non-English speaking countries (Yao et al., 2019).

**Critical Race Methodology—Counter-Storytelling.** As a critique to positivism, critical theory targets social theories that “reduce the social world to patterns of cause and effect”, positivist social science is often attacked by critical theory for “lacking the sort of dialectical imagination that enables social scientists to look beyond the appearance of given social facts toward (and as a way of achieving) new social facts—the end of class society, patriarchy, racism, and the domination of nature” (Agger, 1991, p. 109). In other words, the “dialectical imagination” allows researchers to transcend what is believed to be factual in the social world and to strive for new social facts that can potentially achieve a more just society. Much of this dialectical imagination originates from the individuals marginalized in the society due to their race, gender, socioeconomic status, and other aspects of social identity. To access this dialectical imagination, or in Delgado Bernal’s (2002) words, the knowledge created and held by students of color, researchers need effective tools to draw from the forms of knowledge in the marginalized communities.

In education research, many researchers use CRT as a theoretical framework to identify racial inequities and to understand the contexts that produce those inequitable conditions in the society, but they use methodologies that are unrelated to CRT (Pérez Huber, 2008). To draw from the knowledge and experiences from communities of color, there is a need to advance the development of CRT methodologies (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). CRT methodologies, according to Pérez Huber (2008), “explicitly utilize a CRT lens which reveals experiences with and responses to racism, classism, sexism and other forms of oppression in education” (p. 166).

One of the most commonly applied CRT methodologies is counter-storytelling. It is a method of telling the stories of people at the margins of society whose experiences are rarely brought to the attention of the mainstream society; it can also be used as a tool to expose, analyze, and challenge the
majoritarian stories of racial privilege (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). More importantly, counter-storytelling can also “humanize the struggles and injustices faced by People of Color within academic research, calling attention to racist structures, policies, and practices in education” (Perez Huber, 2008, p. 167).

Counter-stories or narratives can serve at least the following four functions. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) explained that counter-stories or narratives can be applied to:

1. build community among those at the margins of society by putting a human and familiar face to educational theory and practice;
2. challenge the perceived wisdom of those at society’s center by providing a context to understand and transform established belief systems;
3. open new windows into the reality of those at the margins of society by showing possibilities beyond the ones they live and demonstrating that they are not alone in their position; and
4. teach others that by combining elements from both the story and the current reality, one can construct another world that is richer than either the story or the reality alone.

(p. 36)

In the following sub-sections, I first introduce a main concept described in my research purpose and questions as a context for exploring Chinese transnational adolescent students’ experiences: communities of practice. Then, I summarize the key tenets for the two concepts described in the research purpose and questions as the aspects of CoP participation that this study is focused on, namely identities and language socialization.

**Communities of Practice.** The concept of communities of practice (CoPs), mainly developed by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), focuses on a situated approach to learning and has gained prominence in different fields, such as education and management, as a conceptual tool to explore how learning is achieved. As defined in Chapter 1, a community of practice is a group of
people who gather for a common purpose. There are three essential features of a CoP: mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998). First, members of the CoP interact with each other on a regular basis in different ways. Second, as a community, they aim to achieve a common purpose or endeavor. Third, they develop and have access to a common collection of languages, styles, and routines, with which participants express their identities as members of the CoP (Barton & Tusting, 2005). These are the features I aim to explore in the Asian students’ participation in their CoPs, and because the students’ CoPs exist across academic, social, and/or extracurricular contexts, exploring learning from the perspective of CoP allows me to address identity formation and transformation as well as language socialization beyond the confines of the classroom.

The concept of CoPs along with its perspectives on learning is central to the overarching inquiry of this study. Essentially, I am curious about how and to what extent participants’ experiences in the CoPs are connected to their interactions with other CoP members; whether and how these experiences contribute to or interfere with learning (language socialization in the context of this study); and whether their sense of selves (identities) varies across the different CoPs in which they are members due to the varying nature of their interactions with others. These questions are based on the following fundamental principles of learning in CoPs derived from DaSilva Iddings’ (2005, p.166) synthesis of CoP literature. First, learning is situated in culture, context, and activity. Second, learning is viewed as a process where members of a CoP become socialized in that community and adopt the jargon, behavior, norms and belief systems of that social group. Third, through engaging in the community’s practices, the members not only learn new concepts and skills related to the community’s practices, but they also form and transform identities in new contexts.

Within different configurations of CoPs, living and learning take place (Wenger, 1998); therefore, by investigating and analyzing the mechanism of these CoPs, we can gain some insights into the processes through which broader social structures are constructed and sustained (Barton & Tusting,
In other words, there is a relationship between interactions in CoPs and broader social structures, and this relationship can help us understand the role various social factors, such as racial and linguistic subordination, play in students’ learning through interactions with their peers and educators.

**Language Socialization.** Language socialization is a branch of linguistic anthropology, and according to (Duff & Talmy, 2011), it “represents a broad framework for understanding the development of linguistic, cultural, and communicative competence through interaction with others who are more knowledgeable or proficient” (p. 96). In contrast to the cognitivist approach to language acquisition, language socialization explores language learning not only in terms of the development of linguistic knowledge but also with regard to sociocultural knowledge as well as ideologies, epistemologies, subjectivities, and affect; additionally, it focuses on the following aspects of language learning and use: the local sociopolitical contexts, the historical perspectives, and the cultural components of linguistic structures and practices (Duff, 2007; Duff & Talmy, 2011). Language is thus considered one aspect of particular communities of social practice and learned through social interactions with the more proficient interlocutors, along with the knowledge of the community’s values, identities, practices, standpoints, and ideologies (Duff, 2007; Duff & Talmy, 2011). Further, language socialization is a lifelong process, and as we enter new communities of practice, we also give priority to the new ways of acting, communicating, and thinking as well as new codes, registers, genres, or literacies (Duff, 2007).

**Second Language Socialization.** Second language socialization, according to Duff and Talmy (2011), “represents a process by which non-native speakers of a language, or people returning to a language they may have once understood or spoken but have since lost proficiency in, seek competence in the language and, typically, membership and the ability to participate in the practices of communities in which that language is spoken” (p. 564). The modifier “second” in second language socialization is considered controversial in multilingual contexts where people may learn several languages simultaneously or in different sequences, so the distinction between first and second is not always clear.
(Duff, 2011). In this current study, I use second language (L2) and additional language interchangeably to refer to any languages learned beyond a person’s first (L1) or most dominant language.

Similar to L1 socialization, the members of a L2 community who are more proficient in L2 and more knowledgeable about the L2 culture play an important role in socializing the L2 learners. These agents of socialization in the study-abroad-in-the-U.S. context normally include teachers, tutors, classmates, personnel in the school such as coaches, librarians, staff, etc., host family, dorm parents, or anyone who wishes to help the international students to become proficient in English and knowledgeable about the values, ideologies, standpoints, practices, etc., in the local community and/or in the U.S.

Implications. Second language socialization has several characteristics that have implications for this study on Chinese transnational adolescent students. First of all, in terms of additional languages (e.g., L2), socialization does not necessarily result in the exact reproduction of discursive and cultural practices; on the other hand, it may produce hybrid forms of identities, practices, and values or lead to partial appropriation of the target language, especially in the context of globalization, migration, multilingualism, and transnationalism (Duff, 2007, 2011). In some cases, it may even result in the rejection of the norms and practices to be learned in the target language community (Duff, 2007; Duff, 2011). In other words, although some L2 learners may achieve a high level of L2 language and culture, others may become ambivalent, defiant, resistant when it comes to the language and culture of the target community, and some may even terminate their L2 learning but may resume years later (Duff, 2011). In some situations, learners may exhibit strong motivation to receive language socialization but are denied opportunities for interaction with or lack support from their socializing interlocutors (Duff, 2011). Recent developments in the field show that second language socialization is considered to be bi- or multidirectional; in other words, sometimes, it is the more experienced, knowledgeable members of the community that exhibit power when acting as the source of expertise and as the socializers, but at
other times, the novices also demonstrate power when contesting the practices and expertise of their mentors (Duff & Talmy, 2011).

**Research Methods.** Studies exploring topics related to language socialization usually make use of the ethnographic methods, which aim to produce a broad description of the sociocultural settings in which language is learned and used, and these methods can entail longitudinal engagement as well as extensive observation in order to obtain the knowledge of contextual dimensions and to document and analyze the changes and developments of participants’ communicative competencies over a period of time (Duff & Talmy, 2011). Typically, data in these studies come from researchers’ fieldnotes, site artifacts, interviews, audio- or video-recordings of site interactions, etc. Even though language socialization is a topic of inquiry in this study, my purpose is not to document and analyze the changes and developments of my participants’ communicative competencies; rather, in the spirit of critical race theory and the critical race methodology of counter-storytelling, I am interested in how my participants perceive and experience language socialization in their CoPs. In other words, my emphasis is on their perspectives and their voice. As a result, as further delineated in the next chapter, I will make use of methods of data collection such as language learning autobiography as well as interview because of their capacity to offer the participants an opportunity to tell their own stories of language socialization.

**Identity & Language Learning.** Identity is another topic of inquiry in this study. Norton and McKinney (2011) argued that the significance of an identity approach to second language acquisition (SLA) is twofold. First, SLA needs a theory of identity that is comprehensive and integrates the individual learner and the social world he or she lives in. Second, in this theory of identity, there is a need to address how power relations in the social world influence learners’ access to the target language community. This focus on systemic factors echoes what was discussed above in the section about the relationship between social structures and CoP participation as well as the theoretical underpinnings of critical race theory. Identity theorists are concerned about the ways in which learners’ opportunities to practice
using the target language are socially constructed not only in formal sites of learning, such as the classroom, but also in informal settings, such as extracurricular activities; therefore, exploring learning in the context of multiple CoPs, i.e., both formal and informal sites of learning, offers a more dynamic and comprehensive view of learner identities. Further, identity theorists are skeptical about the binary view that defines a learner as either motivated or unmotivated, either introverted or extroverted, either inhibited or uninhibited without examining how power relations structure these affective factors (Norton & McKinney, 2011).

**Investment.** In this study, I use Norton’s identity theory to understand the factors that may influence the Asian adolescent students’ involvement and participation in their CoPs. In particular, I plan to apply Norton’s construct of “investment” (Norton Pierce, 1995) to understand the variability in learners’ engagement in social interaction and community practices. Informed and inspired by Bourdieu’s work (1977, 2009), “investment” indicates learners’ socially and historically constructed relationship to the target language and their ambivalent feelings about learning and practicing it (Norton, 2013). Learners invest in the target language because they know doing so will afford them a wide range of symbolic resources such as language, education, and friendship, as well as material resources such as real estate and capital goods, and both types of resources will increase their cultural capital and social power (Norton, 2013). Further, learners’ identities and desires for the future are reevaluated when the value of their cultural capital appreciates; therefore, Norton (2013) argued that there is a fundamental relationship between investment and identity. As a result, it is important to explore the Chinese students’ plans or aspirations for the future as I try to understand how their identities form and transform via participation in CoPs.

**Imagined Communities & Identities.** On the notion of aspirations for the future, there are also imagined communities that learners aspire to when learning a language (Norton, 2013). As mentioned above in the sub-section about communities of practice, mutual engagement is one of the three
essential features of a CoP (Wenger, 1998). However, according to Wenger, direct involvement is not
the only way with which people can become members of a community; imagination is another way to
community membership. In imagined communities, future relationships or affiliations with national or
even transnational communities can extend beyond current immediate sets of relationships (Warriner,
2007). The impact and authenticity of these imagined communities is just as strong as the learners’
current investment and actions if not stronger (Norton, 2013).

**Implications.** Therefore, in this study, I aim to explore the relationship between CoP
participation and identity as well as language socialization and identity through taking a close look at
how the Chinese adolescent perceive and even engage in investment across different CoPs, including
the imagined ones.

**Theoretical Framework & Research Questions**

According to Ravitch and Riggan (2017), the purpose of literature review is twofold. First, review
of topical research is a process through which we can learn from the research of others and also form
and strengthen the argument we want to make through our own research. Second, through reviewing
literature, we can derive important theoretical perspectives that form a framework, with which we can
advance our argument further than previous researchers have taken it, or we can formulate “new
questions, considerations, hypotheses, or explanations into the inquiry” (p. 30).

Drawing upon Ravitch and Riggan’s (2017) conceptualization of literature review, I created a
theoretical framework (Figure 2.2), part of which was based on the review of topical research outlined in
the first half of this chapter. This part, specifically the part on the right of the framework, consists of the
main theoretical perspectives that informed my understanding of the key areas of research related to
this study. In the center of the framework is the target population for this study: Asian transnational
adolescent students.
Figure 2.2. Theoretical Framework
Additionally, there are three lenses situated at the ends of three axes. On the paradigmatic axis is the lens of poststructuralist and critical perspectives. On the methodological axis is the lens of narrative inquiry. And on the substantive axis is the lens of identities and language socialization. I made use of dash lines rather than solid lines to represent the three axes in order to highlight the fluidity of the concepts in each area and their capacity to be mutually informative.

The concept of theories as lenses is nothing innovative, but what this theoretical framework highlights is the capability of multiple theoretical intersections when we examine the lived experiences of a marginalized collective through multiple lenses instantaneously. This was the rationale behind the conceptualization of axes in this theoretical framework, which became an effective and comprehensive way when I examined the multi-layered and nuanced meanings of the informants’ transnational lives.

On the right-hand side of the framework are the theoretical perspectives based partially on poststructuralism and partially on critical perspectives. Together, they informed my understanding about the identities and language socialization of the Asian students in my study. These include Pavlenko’s (2001, 2002) poststructuralist view of second language, language learning, and language learners; critical race theory and LangCrit (Crump, 2014); communities of practice (Barton & Tusting, 2005; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998); and Norton’s concepts of investment as well as imagined identities and communities (Norton, 2013; Norton Pierce, 1995).

On the left-hand side, I located two theoretical perspectives that are based on critical race theory for one and poststructuralist view of identities as multiple, fluid, and situated, for the other. The critical race methodology of counter-storytelling (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) and counter narratives (Bamberg & Andrews, 2004) not only provided the rationale for narrative inquiry as research design for this study, but it also underlined this study’s commitment to social justice by eliciting and presenting a counter force against the master narrative about Asian international students. Additionally, as later explicated in Chapter 3, the use of multiple data collection and analysis methods constituted
methodological and analytic pluralism advocated by several scholars (Frost, 2009; Frost et al., 2011; Katsiaficas et al., 2011) for the study of lives on the margins because these individuals, such as the transnational youths in this study, “cross borders” in their landscape of practice (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2015) on a regular basis; therefore, their identities are often fluid and malleable, dependent on their multiple memberships in particular communities of practice.

Finally, also elaborated in Chapter 3 is the intersection between narrative inquiry and the two topics of this research: identities and language socialization. At the bottom of the theoretical framework are two theoretical perspectives that illustrate how learning manifests as knowledging through narratives (Barkhuizen, 2011) and how identities are constructed through narratives (Bamberg, 2011, 2012; McAdams, 1988, 1993; McLean et al., 2010), hence illustrating narrative inquiry’s capacity for not only eliciting counter-stories from the participants but also addressing the two core topics of inquiry in this study.

The various theoretical perspectives are represented by boxes that partially overlap, again with the intention to emphasize the efficacy of intersectionality as a theoretical and methodological approach to inequality, especially in marginalized communities (Choo & Ferree, 2010). This framework served as the bridge between the literature review and research design and methodology for this study, thus playing the important role of framing and situating this study for the audience in the field.

Research Questions

In Chapter 1, I provided a current context for research on international secondary students to set the stage for this study. I also outlined the research problem and its urgency. I further proposed to address the problem by exploring transnational adolescent students’ experiences in their communities of practice as a way to elicit their counter-stories. In this Chapter, through a review of previous research and key theoretical perspectives on race, language, identities, and communities of practice, I honed in on two specific aspects of the adolescents’ CoP experiences: identity formation and transformation as
well as language socialization. I posed the following overarching research question: In what ways do a group of Asian transnational adolescent students perceive and experience identities and language socialization as they navigate their participation across different communities of practice (CoPs) in their American high schools? I further posed the following sub-questions:

1. How do these students perceive and experience interactions with the other members from their CoPs?
2. How do these students perceive and experience language socialization across different CoPs?
3. How do their identities form and transform across different CoPs and through the language socialization processes?

In the following chapter, I will present a discussion of the research design, including participant selection and recruitment, as well as the methods I adopted to collect the data for this study.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Grounded in the qualitative research tradition, this multimodal critical narrative study of five Asian transnational adolescent students aimed to explore their perceptions and experiences with regard to language socialization as well as identity formation and transformation via a close examination of their multimodal narratives of participation across different communities of practice (CoPs) in their American high schools, all located in Maine. The emphasis on their perceptions and experiences prompted a research design that allowed me to achieve the overarching goal of this study, that is, to foreground the voices from the five informants and to explore the relationship between the stories they told about their CoP participation and the dominant cultural storylines that have produced the “normative experiences” which international students are expected to identify with or even conform to. In other words, the goal was to explore the power of their stories as counter-narratives to oppose the dominant cultural storylines (Andrews, 2004).

In the following sections, I will first discuss my choice of methodology as well as the concept of methodological and analytic pluralism and how it informed the research design and data analysis. Then, I will describe the procedures of participant identification and recruitment. Following that, I will introduce the types of data collected in this study. Finally, I will briefly introduce the conceptual background of the data analysis in this study. The specific data analytic approaches and procedures will be described in detail in Chapter 5.

Qualitative Research

In The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research, the editors Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (2018) defined qualitative research as follows:
Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means the qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p.43)

This definition highlights the situated nature of qualitative research as well as the role participants and their sense-making play in the research process. These two characteristics of qualitative research were prominent in my study, as my goal was to explore the perspectives and experiences of the students that belonged to a specific raciolinguistic and immigration background in schools located in communities that had had less exposure to the same raciolinguistic diversity in student populations compared to the metropolitan areas in the U.S. In addition to this situated nature, I also aimed to involve my participants in the process of research. As further elaborated below, the main means to this end was the multimodal data collected for this study. The participants selected, shared, and created various representations of their perspectives and experiences and had an opportunity to interpret these representations during an interview even before I conducted the analysis of their representations and interpretations.

Research Design: Narrative Inquiry

The study was primarily a project of narrative inquiry, but it was designed with two elements taken into account: social justice and the need for multiple methods to suit research participants with multiple identities. In this section, I first address how these two elements were incorporated into my research design through the concepts of counter-storytelling as well as methodological and analytic pluralism before moving on to explaining the rationale behind narrative inquiry as the methodology of
choice. I end this section with a statement of narrative identity in adolescence as a way to situate the next section on participant selection and recruitment.

**Nexus of Critical & Multimodal Narrative Research**

**The Critical Element.** Informed by the critical race methodology of counter-storytelling, this study was designed to elicit counter-narratives, or “the stories which people tell and live which offer resistance, either implicitly or explicitly, to dominant cultural narratives” (Andrews, 2004, p.1). Dominant cultural narratives are pervasive in the social world. They facilitate people’s identification with what is assumed to be a normative experience; they serve as the design plan for all stories; they are the means by which we understand not only stories of others but importantly, stories of ourselves (Andrews, 2004). These master narratives become especially powerful when we internalize them, when we become the stories we know (Andrew, 2004). However, the narratives from the margins of the society, the counter-stories told by members of the outgroups, also have a significant function: to document or even validate what Delgado (2013) referred to as counter-reality. This counter-reality presents new possibilities because we have to make meaning of our stories outside of the ordinary plot of the master narrative. It is based on this foundation of counter-storytelling and counter-narratives that I set out to employ narrative inquiry to explore the Asian students’ perceptions and experiences of participating in their CoPs.

**The Multimodal Element.** As illustrated in the following sub-section about narratives and identity, when individuals narrate an experience, they are in fact trying to make meaning or make sense of that experience and to achieve a better understanding of themselves. According to Pavlenko’s (2001, 2002) poststructuralist view of second language learning and use, language is the site of identity construction. Second language learners and users are agents with multiple, dynamic, and fluid identities. On top of their language learner identity, the participants in this study also had unique experiences related to their identities as part of a racial minority in their host communities, as teenagers, as unaccompanied transnational minors, among many other identities.
Responding to this multiplicity in identity, I looked to a group of scholars whose research also focuses on the youth from marginalized communities (e.g., Annamma, 2016; Ní Laoire, 2016; Sirin & Fine, 2008) and gained the inspiration for concurrently tapping into multiple methods of data collection and analysis, a process known as methodological and analytic pluralism (Frost, 2009; Frost et al., 2011; Katsiaficas et al., 2011). Specifically, I collected various types of data, including found objects recruited from the participants, such as their written personal narratives, their photos of CoP participation, the artworks which they had produced and considered to be representative of themselves, as well as a language identity portrait which was produced during the interview with my facilitation.

This methodological pluralism not only served a similar purpose as triangulation to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, but more importantly, it allowed the adolescent informants, who experienced conflicts in positionings and relationships on a regular basis, to speak through dynamic multiplicity, which was characteristic of their multifaceted lives (Katsiaficas, et al., 2011). As Ní Laoire (2016) illustrated with her study on young people in return migrant families, multimodal data collection methods not only allowed research participants to articulate different narratives of self, but these methods also helped the researcher to better understand the complexities of multiple identities and experiences of the migrant youths in the study who occupy multiple social and cultural positions in both home and host countries.

Similarly, I undertook multiple approaches to data analysis, in response to the different types of data collected. This analytic pluralism allowed me to gain a more nuanced but also more holistic understanding of the adolescents’ multilayered lives (Frost, 2009; Frost et al., 2011; Katsiaficas et al., 2011).

**Narrative Inquiry: Conceptualization, Scope, & Features**

**Conceptualization.** There are no clear boundaries that define the scholarly field of narrative inquiry because the field is inherently interdisciplinary (Riessman, 1993). There is even divergence in the name
chosen to represent the field. While some researchers have a clear preference and stick to one consistent term such as narrative inquiry, others, me included, use the term interchangeably with narrative study or narrative research. Despite this inconsistency in the use of terminology, narrative inquiry, to me and in the context of this current study, was a process of narrative knowledging.

Barkhuizen (2011) conceptualized narrative as a sense-making activity and narrative knowledging as “an umbrella term to refer to the meaning making, learning, and knowledge construction that takes place at all stages of a narrative research project,” including “(co)constructing narratives, analyzing narratives, reporting the findings, and reading/writing/listening to research reports” (p. 395). To Barkhuizen, narrative knowledging is considered a cognitive activity, hence knowledging in its verb form. Specifically, when people are engaged in this process of narrating an experience, they understand the experience, i.e., they generate knowledge (Barkhuizen, 2011), but the knowledge created through this process does not remain unchanged; rather, through the activities of retelling personal experiences, narrators may achieve a different understanding each time. This recognition of meaning-making as active and fluid aligns with the poststructuralist view of identity and language learning reviewed in Chapter 2 and is conceptually compatible to this study.

**Scope.** What stories can count as research depends on how they are produced and what we want to learn from them, but through narrative inquiry, storytelling and research can be brought together to allow the researchers to either use stories as data or use storytelling as a means of data analysis and/or the presentation of the findings (Barkhuizen et al., 2014) or to adopt both in the research process.

Another distinction that is often made in narrative research is concerned with the relationship between the researcher and the participants. A researcher takes a biographical approach if he or she recounts and analyzes the participants’ stories; on the other hand, a researcher takes an autobiographical approach if he or she recounts and analyzes their own stories. Despite this distinction, most narrative research, to some degree, involves the co-construction of stories between the researcher and the
participants (Barkhuizen, 2011). This categorization shares a resemblance with Solórzano and Yosso’s (2002) discussion of three forms of counter-stories or narratives: personal stories or narratives, other people’s stories or narratives, and composite stories or narratives. Throughout this study, I reflected on my own identities and positionings during the stages of the research design, data collection and analysis, and finally the reporting and presentation of findings from this study. However, even with this sustained reflexivity on my positionality, the focus remained on the stories told by the five transnational adolescent informants.

**Features.** Creswell and Poth (2018) synthesized research findings and derived seven defining features of narrative studies. I categorized them based their methodological or substantive implications for this study in Table 3.1. The assignment of the implications was not part of the original text (pp. 68-69).

**Table 3.1. Key Features of Narrative Studies & Implications**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methodological Implications</th>
<th>Substantive Implications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Narrative researchers collect stories about lived experiences. These stories can emerge from a story a participant tells the researcher, or a story co-constructed by the researcher and the participant; hence, narrative can have a collaborative feature.</td>
<td>1. Narratives about personal lived experiences can reveal how an individual sees him or herself, his or her identities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Narrative stories can be gathered through a variety of methods, such as interviews, observations, documents, pictures, and other sources of qualitative data.</td>
<td>2. Descriptions of contextual details, such as temporal, spatial, physical, emotional, and social situations, are important when the researcher tries to tell a story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. There are varied approaches to narrative analysis, with focus on the structure, the theme, the visuals, the performance, or other aspects.</td>
<td>3. When telling the stories, researchers often highlight the incidents that mark the turning points as a way to organize the structures when recounting the stories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Narrative stories are often organized by the researcher into chronology based on temporality even though the participant may not have presented the stories that way.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Narrative & Identity Construction in Adolescence**

The five Asian transnational adolescent students for this study are in their adolescence, during which time, one of the foremost tasks is the construction of a personal identity (Erikson, 1994). The majority of earlier research on identity development emphasized individuation, a process where
individuals establish “an autonomous sense of self” while simultaneously “developing and sustaining close relationships with others,” according to McLean, Breen, and Fournier (2010), but these three scholars advocate for the narrative approach as a co-consideration of identity development because narrative has dual functions when it comes to identity development. Not only is narrative an effective tool for exploring identity development, but identity is also constructed as one reflects on past experiences as related to the self in present and future times (McLean et al., 2010).

Echoing Barkhuizen’s (2011) conceptualization of narrative knowledging, the narrative approach to identity development is also grounded theoretically in the idea that through narrative processes, we can achieve an understanding of ourselves, other people, and the world in our surroundings (McLean et al., 2010). The construction of a life story (McAdams, 1988, 1993), for instance, is considered an activity for “developing a sense of personal coherence and continuity through time” (McLean et al., 2010, p. 168). It was based on this significant relationship between narrative and identity in adolescence, along with the need for counter-stories from raciolinguistically minoritized students, that I made the design choice of narrative inquiry. In this study, I made use of multiple data collection strategies to encourage a reflection of identities and language socialization in CoPs and to recruit narratives of the participants’ experiences.

**Participant Identification & Recruitment**

This study was originally intended to take place within one coed, nonsectarian, independent college preparatory high school and focused on students whose country of origin is China. However, due to a low number of students signing up for and completing the whole process of data collection, as well as other COVID-related challenges, I modified the research design, specifically focusing on expanding the potential participant pool by identifying and recruiting not just the Chinese students in one school, but the Asian students from the schools that are similar when considering the selection criteria: sizable
international student population as well as the schools' wide array of curricular and extracurricular activities.

**Research Sites**

In the end, a total of six schools were selected. There are several reasons why these schools were selected as the sites for this study. First of all, they are located in new destination communities, i.e., communities having minimal experience with racial, linguistic, cultural, and immigration diversity. Among all the towns and cities where the schools the final five informants came from, Bangor is the largest of them and perhaps the most diverse. And even though Bangor is currently ranked as the third largest city in Maine, following Portland (first) and Lewiston (second), according to US2010 (Lee et al., 2012), a project about racial and ethnic diversity in communities across the U.S., Bangor placed fifth from the bottom by diversity among all the metropolitan areas in the U.S. in 2010. This makes the perspectives and experiences of the transnational high school students who studied in Maine a meaningful addition to the current research about international students who often cluster in more raciolinguistically diverse American cities. Second, the schools have sizable international student populations, and most of the schools’ graduates continue to pursue post-secondary education. And the final five focal informants in this study all ended up continuing their education journey in the U.S.; therefore, it was important to explore the role of their high school education in their overall U.S. educational trajectory as well as their future aspirations as related to their present education through the notion of investment (Norton Pierce, 1995) reviewed in Chapter 2. Finally, corresponding to this study’s focus on the perspectives and experiences of participating in different CoPs, the schools provide a wide variety of student clubs, organizations, music ensembles, and fine art programs in addition to a number of Advanced Placement courses, and some even offer English as a Second Language (ESL) programs for the international students. Furthermore, most of the schools have their own boarding programs, which usually provide these two options: on-campus boarding and homestay. Based on these
factors the participants were recruited from the six schools. Because this study was not meant as a site-
specific case study, I will be focusing, to a greater extent, on the descriptions of the individual
informants below.

**Participant Identification**

Originally, I aimed to recruit ten Chinese international students from one of the six schools,
located in Bangor Maine. Due to the challenges described above, I modified the plan and aimed at
recruiting Asian students from the six schools, specifically students from China, Taiwan, Hong Kong,
South Korea, Thailand, Japan, and Vietnam. These were selected because they are usually the top
countries or places of origin for international students in the U.S. (Institute of International Education,
2021). I targeted Asian international students because I was interested in exploring how race and
language intersect in the students’ experiences of CoP participation.

**Sampling.** I adopted the purposeful sampling method in order to recruit individuals that could
purposefully inform my understanding of the research problem and the central phenomenon in the
study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Specifically, I used both criterion and maximum variation sampling
strategies. First, interested students had to meet a number of criteria to take part in the study, criteria
pertaining to their place of origin, visa status, age, length of study in the U.S. up to the time of study,
first language, previous English learning experience, residential and CoP participation experience in their
schools in Maine, and willingness to commit themselves to all requirements and time needed for
completing the data collection procedures.

**Sample Size.** Originally, I aimed to recruit ten participants. I arrived at this decision after considering the
number of international students in Maine’s high schools and the following two factors. First, I referred
to two recent dissertation studies of similar topics and found that one study (Winton, 2013) recruited
ten participants from multiple schools, and the other (Bihn, 2014) recruited 21 participants from one
single school. Both studies included student participants of different nationalities, just like my study.
However, the purpose of my study was not to compare across national origins, much less to generalize among all transnational students, but instead, my goal was to present my participants’ collective lived experience “in compelling enough detail and in sufficient depth so that those who read the study can connect to that experience, learn how it is constituted, and deepen their understanding of the issues it reflects” (Seidman, 2013, p. 51). Second, as laid out in the next section, I aimed to collect multiple types of data from each participant, which would allow for a more in-depth and multilayered exploration of each participant’s perspectives and experiences. Therefore, the total amount of data collected for this study would be quite substantial, compared to studies in which only one kind of data was collected, e.g., interview data, and from only a single interview. For these two reasons, I planned on recruiting ten students to participate in the study.

In the end, a total of ten students responded to the call for participants and, to various extents, completed the questionnaire. From these ten respondents, I selected five as the focal informants based on the maximum variation principle and the completeness of their respective data set. The participants will be introduced below.

**Participant Recruitment**

**Access.** Before modifying the research design due to the emerging needs, I accessed the potential participants at one of the six schools through a gatekeeper, with whom I had established contact when I conducted the exploratory study (reviewed in Chapter 2) in preparation for this study. Following the modification of the design, I contacted the admission office in each of the other five schools.

**Recruitment Procedures.** I emailed the admission office of each school, except for the first one, to introduce myself and the study, explaining my intent to recruit their students as participants.

Attached to the email was an invitation message, which they forwarded to the students who met the criteria. In the message was a brief introduction of myself as the principal investigator of the study as well as a weblink to the informed consent form followed by a questionnaire.
Students interested in participating accessed the informed consent form via the link, and their continuation to the questionnaire after reading the information on the form indicated their consent to participate. The questionnaire is provided in Appendix A.

**Focal Informants.** As explained above, I selected five focal informants from a group of ten respondents based on the maximum variation sampling strategy as well as the completeness of their respective data set. Table 3.2 provides an overview of the background information of each informant.

Table 3.2. Participant Background & CoP Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focal Informant</th>
<th>Kim</th>
<th>Martha</th>
<th>James</th>
<th>Rose</th>
<th>Helen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Origin</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Experience</td>
<td>Dorm</td>
<td>Dorm</td>
<td>Dorm</td>
<td>Dorm &amp; Host Family</td>
<td>Dorm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education Plan</td>
<td>U.S. College or University</td>
<td>U.S. College or University</td>
<td>U.S. College or University</td>
<td>U.S. College or University</td>
<td>U.S. College or University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Optometry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous Study-Abroad</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Singapore, Philippines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AP Chemistry</td>
<td>4. Dorm</td>
<td>4. Tennis Team</td>
<td>4. Envirothon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5. Book Club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most Significant CoP</td>
<td>Music Club</td>
<td>Dorm</td>
<td>Basketball Team</td>
<td>Host Family</td>
<td>Math Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most Interacted CoP</td>
<td>Music Club</td>
<td>Key Club</td>
<td>Basketball Team</td>
<td>Chinese Club</td>
<td>Math Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Role in CoP</td>
<td>Music Club</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Chinese Club &amp; Concert Band</td>
<td>Math Team &amp; Envirothon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes. *With piano as concentration **One of Helen’s CoPs in Vietnam ***Another one of Helen’s CoPs in Vietnam</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Collection**

The Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) dominated the world in 2020. Its effect has lingered through 2021 and can still be felt in almost all domains of any society in 2022. This is no exception for the
educational sector of the U.S. society. This study was originally designed as an ethnographically focused participant participatory study with a component of on-site workshops and observation in a secondary school, but with the advent of the pandemic, the on-site component was no longer possible, and many international students also chose to return to their home country. As a result of these developments, I had to modify the original design. In what follows, I will present the modified research design.

Data Collection Procedures

In response to COVID-19, data collection took place remotely via Google Forms and Zoom in compliance with the Guidelines for Researchers published by the University of Maine. In this study, data were collected from two sources: questionnaire and interview.

First, participants filled out a four-part questionnaire (see Appendix A). The first part collected basic information about the participants’ educational backgrounds and future plans. The second part invited them to list the different social, academic, and extracurricular groups they had been affiliated with in school. They were also instructed to upload up to five photos that they thought best represented their experiences in those groups. The photos were used as prompts during the interview. The next part invited them to list all the languages as well as ways of communication and self-expression that were important to them. In the final part of the questionnaire, the participants were asked to upload up to three samples of written work, specifically their college essays and/or other previous writing assignments as well as up to three samples of the visual representations of artwork they have created as assignments for different classes. They were asked to select the samples best representative of who they were and/or how they had experienced life in their high school.

At the end of the questionnaire was a link directing participants to a scheduling site, where participants were prompted to select a time and date for an individual Zoom interview (90 minutes). The interview also included some time for the participants to create a language identity portrait with my facilitation. The portrait, along with other written and visual artifacts previously uploaded via the
questionnaire, were used during the interview to allow the participants to elaborate on and make connections of their responses. This constituted the other data source. Please see Appendix B for the interview protocol.

On the scheduling site, after the participants chose the interview time and date, they were asked to enter the pseudonym they had chosen for themselves while filling out the questionnaire as a way to connect their questionnaire responses and their interview. The link to the Zoom interview was generated and presented to them on calendly.com when they completed the interview sign-up. All the individual interviews were recorded via Zoom for transcription and analysis.

**Data Types & Data Sources**

In the following sub-sections, I will introduce the types of data collected for this study. Each data type contained one or more data sources. Table 3.3 lists these types and sources of data.

Table 3.3. Data Types & Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Found &amp; Produced Artifacts Collected as Data</th>
<th>Found</th>
<th>Produced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visual</td>
<td>- Photos of CoPs - Graphic Artworks</td>
<td>- N/A*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>- Personal Narratives</td>
<td>- Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multimodal</td>
<td>- Videos</td>
<td>- Language Identity Portraits</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*No visual artifact was produced as part of this study.*

**Data Types.** Drawing from a conceptual framework for the visual and other creative methods often used in social sciences research (Mannay, 2016; Pauwels, 2010, 2011), I collected various types of artifacts from the participants as data. Although the framework I referenced contained three categories, including found materials, researcher-initiated productions, and participatory productions, in my study, I merely categorized them into found artifacts versus produced artifacts, with a focus on the found
materials selected and shared by the participants as well as a language identity portrait production participatorily facilitated by me during the interview.

My decision to incorporate these two categories of artifacts was motivated by the commitment to methodological pluralism that guided this study. Researchers of social sciences are positioned differently in relation to these two categories of artifacts (Mannay, 2016). While interacting with found materials, social scientists are positioned as “image collectors,” and in this context, the knowledge and skills of art historians and archeologists in terms of analysis and interpretation have contributed a great deal to the contemporary visual studies (p.5). On the other hand, participatory productions position the social scientists as participatory facilitators, who involve the participants, to varying degrees, in the research process. And there is often the intention of producing research with participants, instead of merely treating them as a source of data.

**Found Artifacts.** The found artifacts were those already existing in the participants’ daily life. They were merely prompted by me to find these artifacts that, in their view, best represented how they saw themselves and/or their overall experiences of CoP participation. These included their photos of CoP participation, the artworks they had produced as assignments for classes, and personal narratives or writings that represented who they were.

**Produced Artifacts.** The produced artifacts were created during the interactive engagement of the interview. One was the language identity portrait each participant made on their own during the interview with my facilitation. The other was not so much a tangible artifact but rather the narrative artifacts, the stories told by the informants to respond to my questions and/or to illustrate a point they were making during the interview. At the same time, I also categorized these artifacts into visual, verbal, and multimodal types of data to align them with the methodological underpinnings of this study: multimodality and pluralism.
Data Sources. There was some variation in terms of the quantity and types of found artifacts across the five focal informants. Table 3.4 shows the numbers of visual, verbal, or multimodal artifacts each informant submitted via the questionnaire as well as whether they participated in the interview and created their language identity portrait. In the following sub-sections, I will introduce each data source and end this section with a statement of data management.

Table 3.4. Data Sources by Informant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focal Informant</th>
<th>Questionnaire</th>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Language Identity Portrait</th>
<th>Personal Narratives</th>
<th>CoP Photos</th>
<th>Graphic Artworks</th>
<th>Video Artworks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kim</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martha</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Found Visual & Multimodal Artifacts. The found visual artifacts collected in this study included photographs depicting participants’ participation and interactions in their CoPs as well as works of art the participants had created either for themselves or for class assignments that they considered representative of some aspects of themselves. Except for Rose, the other four focal informants all uploaded at least one CoP photo via the questionnaire. Noteworthy is that even though Helen shared five photos, all the photos she shared were of her participation and interactions in the CoPs from her high school in Vietnam. I will explore and discuss this in Chapter 4 and 5. In terms of artworks, except for Kim, everyone else uploaded at least one piece. Martha and James each shared a video artwork.

These found artifacts mostly served the function of elicitation during the interview. Most but not all were incorporated in the semi-structured interviews. The inclusion was dependent on the flow and direction of each interview. Often, more time was dedicated during the interview to certain artifacts which had unique significance for an informant or to the artifacts that corresponded to significant lived
experiences or critical incidents in their life. The found artifacts that were incorporated during the interview and later for analysis are presented in Table 4.7 in Chapter 4 for the convenience of reading and interpreting the findings.

**Found Verbal Artifacts.** These artifacts are the textual representations of self. The participants were invited to upload personal narratives, namely pieces of writings that they considered to be illustrative of their self-perceptions and CoP experiences. Everyone shared at least one piece of writing, with Rose submitting up to four pieces. Some of these narrative artifacts were the essays the informants produced for the purpose of college admission application, and some were from the writing assignments in different classes.

Autobiographic narratives have long been an important source of data in applied linguistics, where language learners’ narrative texts, such as diaries and journals, linguistic biographies and autobiographies, language memoirs, etc., are examined to identify influential factors in the process of learning additional languages as well as how learners experience language learning and make sense of that experience (Pavlenko, 2007). Although I did not collect or initiate the production of personal narratives specific to language learning, but rather, I provided the participant with the freedom to interpret my invitation as how they understood it, based on which, they selected representative pieces to share with me. As revealed as findings in Chapter 4 and discussed in Chapter 5, these personal narratives, although not intentionally elicited as language- or language learning-themed texts, turned out to shed important light on not just the identity aspects of the informants but also, to various extents, how they perceived and experienced language learning, especially in the sense of language socialization.

**Language Identity Portraits.** There were only two data sources in the category of the produced artifacts. One of them was the participatorily produced language identity portraits, a multimodal (visual plus textual) representation of the participants’ identities and communicative resources. Specifically,
following a sequence of directions from me, during the interview, each participant first represented all
the languages and means of communication and self-expression by coloring different parts of a
silhouette (Figure 3.1) on a piece of paper. Alternatively, they could also choose to do this digitally on
the Google Drawing application. They were encouraged to tap into their knowledge of the symbolic
meanings of colors and body parts in the silhouette to represent the significance of each communicative
resource and the role it played in their life. They were reminded to notice the contour or boundary of
the silhouette and to think about the space within and the space outside and whether placing a specific
communicative resource in one of the spaces meant anything to them. They were also prompted to
recall specific experiences and interlocutors associated with the languages or means of communication
and self-expression.

Figure 3.1. Language Identity Portrait Silhouette
Then, they moved on to the identity aspect of the portrait. I invited them to think of identity as how they saw themselves at the time of the research as well as how they thought others saw them. In other words, they would represent their self-positionings and the positions imposed by others, especially those from their CoPs. This time, instead of coloring, they were encouraged to use words, icons/emoticons, drawing, illustrations, or any type of images to indicate their self-perceptions and positionings within the contour of the silhouette, and to indicate the positions from others outside the silhouette. Many of them also made use of the contour or the boundary between the inside space and the outside space to represent positionings shared between others and themselves.

I gained the inspiration for this method of data collection from two other visual methods: mapping and collage portraiture. Therefore, there are elements of these two methods than can be identify in the language identity portraits produced by the informants. Mapping as a method of data collection was innovated in the 1960s as a way to investigate the experiences of city dwellers in Paris. The researchers were interested in the relationship between the residents’ personal experiences of the city and their visual representations and found that factors such as race and class influenced residents’ experiences and the way they represented the city’s structures (Milgram & Jodelet, 1976, as cited in Futch & Fine, 2014). A number of studies have since employed mapping, along with other methods, to explore topics pertaining to identities and experiences, especially of those from the marginalized communities (e.g., Annamma, 2016; Fine et al., 2005; Ní Laoire, 2016; Sirin & Fine, 2008). Mapping in this line of inquiry does not mean an accurate geographical representation of a place but rather the spatial and relational representation of concepts, which in the context of this study were the participants’ positionings from self and others and the spatial representation of these positionings on the silhouette.

Mapping does not simply serve as elicitation for interviews, even though it certainly fulfills that purpose. More importantly, mapping allows participants to explore and produce visual narratives, which
are often more fluid and less overdetermined than the verbal narratives presented during the interviews (Futch & Fine, 2014), and because of this feature, mapping works well for adolescent students, who oftentimes live in the transnational, transcultural, and translingual borderzones teeming with tension or other conflicting experiences.

The other method from which I derived the inspiration was the collage portraiture. This method is based on the theoretical rationales from both portraiture and collage, both of which are arts-based visual methods that can add to the dynamics of the discursive data. Collage, rather than offering one uniform reality conventionally represented by a holistic painting, “fragments space and repurposes objects to contextualize multiple realities” (Gerstenblatt, 2013, p. 295). This emphasis on contexts and multiple realities resonates with the poststructuralist view of a language learner (Pavlenko, 2002a, 2007) as having multiple identities. In addition, collage allows the researcher to explore the different facets of the data in order to gain a more nuanced understanding (Butler-Kisber & Poldma, 2010). More importantly, collage portraits allow those from the marginalized communities to voice their experiences and the researcher to represent authentic lived experiences through both linguistic and non-linguistic means (Gerstenblatt, 2013).

These paradigmatic and methodological foundations from mapping and collage portraiture ensured that the multimodal method of language identity portraits was an effective tool in the context of this research and was not adopted simply for art’s sake.

Individual Semi-Structured Interviews. Stories are powerful because through them, people can make sense of social reality as well as their own lives, and interviews are an effective site for eliciting narratives that provide rich information about the human world (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). According to Brinkmann and Kvale (2015), qualitative research interviewing “attempts to understand the world from the subject’s points of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations” (p. 3). Therefore, interviewing is not only an appropriate method
to access personal viewpoints on language learning (Barkhuizen et al., 2014), but it also privileges participants’ own perspectives, hence serving the purpose of counter-storytelling of this study.

This research was a multimodal critical narrative study. In addition to the found visual, multimodal, and verbal artifacts as well as the language identity portrait, I also met with each informant individually on Zoom for an interview lasting approximately 90 minutes8. The purpose of the interview was to further recruit participants’ oral narratives. Specifically, I conducted a semi-structured interview, commonly used in research about language learning (Barkhuizen et al., 2014), with each participant. These semi-structured interviews allowed the participants to have ample space and sufficient flexibility to narrate while referring to the found artifacts and the portrait.

I derived the interview questions through a series of careful considerations, and they had undergone several rounds of revision with the continuous fine-tuning of my purpose statement and research questions. See Appendix G for the interview protocol. Generally, I made every effort to align the interview questions with the three main themes in my research questions: interactions, identity, and language socialization. Besides lessons learned from the exploratory study, I also benefitted from Dr. Janet Fairman’s feedback when I audited her course on qualitative interviewing methods in the fall semester of 2019.

Aside from a small number of factual and conceptual questions, most interview questions in this study were designed to elicit narratives. Although many questions were a direct request for stories, I also tried to work with each participant to structure the different happenings they recounted into coherent stories (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). I did this by tapping into the narrative structure often used in Labovian analysis of narratives (Johnstone, 2016; Labov & Waletzky, 1997). I asked follow-up questions related to the core components in the Labovian narrative structure, specifically the orientation (the people, action, place, time, etc.), complicating action (the event taking place in the

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8 The only exception was Rose, who agreed to meet a second time to answer some clarifying questions. This second interview lasted approximately 60 minutes. For Kim, the questions were addressed in two sessions that combined to be one interview.
story), resolution (the result of the event), and evaluation (the value, meaning, and significance of the event). But aside from these questions, I was mostly a listener, trying my best not to interrupt, only posing the clarifying questions to help the participant to expand and extend his or her story.

**Introduction to Analysis of Data from the Study**

Just as narrative inquiry guided my data collection, it equally informed how I approached data analysis. Research studies claiming to adopt narrative inquiry can turn out to be very diverse in their theoretical orientations, research question formulations, and methods (Mishler, 1986). This diversity, likewise, exists in the number of approaches that a researcher can take to analyze their narrative data. Some of these approaches are unique to narrative inquiry, but most can usually be applied in other types of qualitative research (Barkhuizen et al., 2014).

“Narrative” is most often thought of as “to be in story form” (Barkhuizen et al., 2014). Data sources in this study such as the personal narratives and interview responses based on the informants’ experiences are narrative data in this traditional sense because they were elicited as “stories” of events and lived experiences. In addition to these traditionally conceptualized narrative data, I also generally treated visual and multimodal data, such as the CoP photos, artworks, and language identity portraits as narratives as well because of the role they played during the interviews in eliciting and supplementing stories. Therefore, even though some data are already in story form, and others are not, they are all considered narratives within the context of this study.

**Analytic Approaches**

One of the commonly referenced categorization of narrative analysis is Polkinghorne’s (1995) definition of narrative research: when stories are used as data for research, analysis of the research data is “analysis of narratives”; on the contrary, when storytelling is used as a means of analyzing data and/or presenting findings, the term “narrative analysis” is used. Polkinghorne (1995) based this distinction on the two kinds of knowing proposed by Bruner (2006): paradigmatic cognition as opposed to narrative
cognition. Paradigmatic cognition involves “classifying a particular instance as belonging to a category or concept” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 9), and narrative cognition involves temporal organization of an experience and seeks explanations that are sensitive to the context (Barkhuizen, 2011). The former is similar to Polkinghorne’s analysis of narratives, in which data analysis follows a procedure of coding and categorization for themes, while the latter is similar to Polkinghorne’s narrative analysis, where different parts of data content are configured into a coherent story (Barkhuizen, 2011).

According to Benson (2014), the most commonly used method of data analysis in narrative research in the field of language learning and teaching is what Polkinghorne (1995) referred to as analysis of narratives. In this case, “narratives” are data that are already in story form, and the narratives are analyzed through coding and categorization for themes. However, there have been innovations in methods of analysis in language learning and teaching, methods such as discourse analysis and narrative analysis. Discourse analysis, according to Benson (2014), sees narratives “not as factual accounts of experience, but as sources of insight into the discursive construction of experience” and usually focuses on “the study of the structure, language, or use of narratives in the context of interaction” (pp. 161-162), whereas narrative analysis refers to “the use of narrative writing as a tool for the analysis of nonnarrative data” to achieve more narratives, composed by the researcher in order to address the research issues.

In this study, I answered Frost and associates’ (Frost, 2009; Frost et al., 2011) call for pluralism in qualitative research and adopted several approaches to data analysis, including narrative positioning analysis (M. Bamberg, 1997; M. Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008; De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2008), Labovian analysis of narrative structure (Johnstone, 2016; Labov & Waletzky, 1997), visual and multimodal analysis (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006; Serafini, 2014), portrait analysis, and thematic analysis (Saldaña, 2013). The detailed analytic procedures and approaches will be introduced at the beginning of Chapter 5 as a bridge to the research findings from this study.
CHAPTER 4
DATA ANALYSIS AND POSITIONING PROFILES

The purpose of this critical narrative study was to promote a more nuanced understanding of the lived experiences of Asian transnational adolescent students in Maine by eliciting their stories of identities as well as language learning across different communities of practice (CoPs) as counter-narratives. The first three chapters of this dissertation offered an introduction to the research problem and its context, a review of topical research and theoretical frameworks as well as the methodological design utilized for this study. In this chapter, I will present the findings derived from the data that I analyzed using a framework consisting of the following: poststructuralist view of second language learning and use (Pavlenko, 2002); narrative positioning (Bamberg, 1997; Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008; De Fina, 2003a, 2003b, 2013; Kayi-Aydar, 2019); William Labov’s work on the structure of narrative (Johnstone, 2016; Labov & Waletzky, 1997); elements of visual grammar (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006); and the research questions of this study.

A qualitative study employing the methodology of narrative inquiry was conducted, and data in various forms of narrative artifacts were initially collected from ten youths through a questionnaire and interview. These included a range of visual, verbal, and multimodal found as well as produced artifacts. In the end, five of the ten adolescent students were chosen as the focal informants because of the relative comprehensiveness of their respective data set. Any identifying information was either anonymized or replaced with pseudonyms to ensure all participants’ privacy.

In the following parts of this chapter, I will first present a description of the specific procedures in each stage of the data analytic process that I followed to derive the findings. Then, I will present the research findings in two formats based on the logic of Polkinghorne's (1995) narrative configuration and Seidman's (2013) recommendations. First, I present a series of positioning profiles that I have developed of the informants through the narrative analysis of the data sources from each of them. According to
Polkinghorne, a researcher adopts narrative analysis in order to produce emplotted narratives as the outcome of the research from the data that are originally not in storied forms. My purpose of presenting findings as/in these positioning profiles is to contextualize them as the positioning stories of the informants. Following the profiles, I will present the findings from the analyses of visual and multimodal data. In the following chapter, I will begin with a presentation of findings from a thematic analysis, followed by a discussion of connections and themes from the findings of all analytic processes. These profiles and connections/themes each bring to the forefront a different type of knowledge. The former, grounded in narrative cognition, emphasizes “knowledge of particular situations”, and the latter, grounded in paradigmatic cognition, emphasizes “knowledge of concepts” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 21). Both contribute significantly to the holistic understanding of the identities and experiences of the transnational young people in this study.

**Data Analytic Process**

The data analytic and write-up process of this study consisted of four main stages. Each stage entailed separate steps and a number of specific procedures. Below, I provide a description of each stage, along with the steps and procedures that were involved. In addition to the descriptions, the data analytic process is also presented in Figure 4.1.

**Stage One: Becoming Familiar with Data**

**Data Immersion.** The analytic process began with my iterative multisensory processing of all data. Specifically, I engaged in repeated listening to the interview recordings before, during, and after the transcriptions; repeated reading of the interview transcripts and the informants’ personal narratives; repeated viewing of the language identity portraits, the informants’ photographs, graphic artworks, as well as videos. The purpose of this reiterative data processing through listening, reading, and viewing was not only to gain an initial understanding of the emerging topical themes across the five informants
but also to facilitate the subsequent processes of data arrangement, code system development, and data analyses.

Figure 4.1. Data Analytic Process

**Memo Writing.** During this recursive multisensory processing of data, I also simultaneously practiced memo writing (Miyahara, 2015) to add notes about my thoughts and observations as well as the connections with relevant theoretical frameworks and topical research.

**Stage Two: Preparing Data for Analysis**

**Data Presentation.** With certain familiarity with all data sources, using the Google Sheets application, I first presented all non-interview data sources under each of the five focal informants. The scope and variety of the data sources varied across the five participants. All included a language identity portrait and at least one personal narrative. Some had chosen to share more visual and/or multimodal artifacts,
while others shared additional personal narratives. Please refer to Table 3.4 for the specific data sources from each informant.

**Data Alignment.** Next, I matched each data source from each informant with any corresponding and/or relevant segment(s) from the interview, where the participant was invited to describe, explain, and/or elaborate on the meanings, processes, and/or rationales relevant to selecting and sharing (for found artifacts) or creating (for produced artifacts) the data source.

**Narrative Selection.** After aligning all data sources, I went on to select a particular set of data sources most relevant to the research questions and my topic of inquiry. It was also in this step that I decided to feature one particular data source from the informants as the anchor of exploration: their individual personal narrative(s).

**Narrative Anchoring.** There are two main reasons behind my decision to select my informants’ personal narratives as the anchor of my analysis. First, considering from both the perspective of production and that of elicitation, the personal narrative serves both of these narrative functions: autobiographical and interactional. The former follows the tradition of canonical stories with a “big-story” approach to narrative inquiry, while the latter is more concerned with the social functions and actions of narratives, an orientation commonly associated with the more situated and contextualized “small-story” narrative research (Järvensivu & von Bonsdorff, 2022). Specifically, these personal narratives were originally created and submitted by the informants as either college application materials or English class writing assignments. Subsequently, in the context of this study, they were invited to select particular personal narratives that they deemed best representative of how they see themselves. In both contexts, the informants created their personal narratives as an autobiographical account of a specific or a series of memorable events, but at the same time, they created and selected these particular pieces to share, with an audience and context in mind. In other words, the creation and/or selection of these narratives became a performative act done to an audience (Törrönen, 2022). Because of this, their personal
narratives can be considered to contain both big-story and small-story elements, which is ideal for the narrative positioning analysis this study adopted to investigate the topics of identity construction, negotiation, and transformation.

**Narrative Alignment.** With the personal narratives as the anchor, I set out to locate segments from other relevant data sources that correspond to the anchoring personal narrative(s). I presented this data alignment with a table in a digital space. And I created a positioning profile data set for each of the informant. These positioning profile data sets are available both digitally and as appendices at the end of this manuscript.

**Stage Three: Coding & Analyzing the Data**

**Code System Development.** After gaining familiarity with and arranging the data, I began developing an initial code system that came to comprise a series of structural and other provisional codes derived from the research questions as well as a number of relevant theoretical and analytic frameworks (Saldaña, 2013). Table 4.1 shows the initial code system.

**Coding for Narrative Structure & Positioning.** This is the first round of coding, where I labeled each informant’s positioning profile data set with the structural and provisional codes from the initial code system. The purpose of this round of coding was to label and identify, in the data set, any narrative structural and functional components from the first category of codes as well as any positioning level components from the second category of codes. This round of coding facilitated the Labovian analysis of all personal narratives as well as the narrative positioning analysis of the whole data set, which made the creation of the positioning files possible.

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9 The table presenting the data alignment is available digitally at [https://bit.ly/3OR8mat](https://bit.ly/3OR8mat)
### Table 4.1. Initial Code System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Labovian Analysis</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>NARRATIVE STRUCTURE</td>
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<tr>
<td>1-1</td>
<td>Narrative Components</td>
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<tr>
<td>1-1-1</td>
<td>abstract</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-1-2</td>
<td>orientation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1-1-3</td>
<td>complicated action</td>
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<tr>
<td>1-1-4</td>
<td>resolution</td>
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<tr>
<td>1-1-5</td>
<td>evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>1-1-6</td>
<td>coda</td>
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<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>Narrative Functions</td>
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<tr>
<td>1-2-1</td>
<td>evaluative narrative function</td>
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<tr>
<td>1-2-2</td>
<td>referential narrative function</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Narrative Positioning Analysis</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>THREE LEVELS OF POSITIONING</td>
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<td>Level 1 Positioning</td>
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<td>positioning of story-world space and time</td>
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<td>Identity Navigation Spaces</td>
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<tr>
<td>2-2-1</td>
<td>constant vs. evolving</td>
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<td>agentive vs. passive</td>
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<tr>
<td>2-2-3</td>
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<td>Level 2 Positioning</td>
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<tr>
<td>2-3-2</td>
<td>why was the story told</td>
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<tr>
<td>2-3-3</td>
<td>how was the question answered</td>
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Table 4.1. Continued

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<td>3-2 CoP Interactions</td>
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<tr>
<td>3-3 CoP Participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 LANGUAGE SOCIALIZATION &amp; COMMUNICATION</td>
</tr>
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<td>4-1 Language Learning as Language Socialization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-2 Language as Symbolic Capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-3 Language as Site of Identity Construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 IDENTITY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-1 Multiple &amp; Dynamic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-2 Subject to Change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Labovian Analysis.** The first round of analysis entailed applying the model of structural analysis proposed by Labov and Waletzky (1997, henceforth Labovian model of narrative analysis or Labovian analysis) to the personal narratives of each informant. Specifically, I coded each narrative with the six narrative components from the initial code system to identify the corresponding data segments. Then, I analyzed the segments by answering the following questions: (1) Does the story begin with a summary that forecasts its development? If so, what is it? (2) How does the narrator orient the audience? What information does the narrator provide to orient the audience to the story? (3) What are the actions, events, or conflicts in the story? Do they build on each other and reach a climax? (4) What is the narrator’s evaluation of the actions, events, or conflicts? (5) How do the actions and events come to an end (if they did)? How are the conflicts resolved (if they are)? (6) Does the narrator signal the end of the story? If so, how? The findings from this structural analysis were documented in a series of analytic memos and were incorporated as part of the positioning profiles.

**Narrative Positioning Analysis.** Following the Labovian analysis, I tapped into an analytic framework that is interactionally-oriented and especially conducive to the analysis of small stories (Bamberg, 1997;
Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008; De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2008). Small stories are a variety of narratives that are non-prototypical and may include “tellings of ongoing, future, hypothetical, or already-shared events; allusions to previous tellings; deferrals of tellings; retellings; and refusals to tell” (Johnstone, 2016, p. 551-552).

Positioning analysis allows for the possibility of exploring identity not as something people have but as something people are continuously constructing. In the context of narrative identity, while telling stories, narrators are also continuously constructing or co-constructing narrative versions of themselves while interacting with their interlocutors and while referring to other characters in their stories, to past or future events, or to broader sociocultural discourses (Blix et al., 2015). Based on this understanding, narrative positioning analysis has its focus not only in the “told”, i.e., the referential world of the story or more generally what the story is about, but also the “telling”, i.e., how the referential world is constructed in an interactional engagement (p. 171).

Scholars have taken slightly different approaches to narrative positioning analysis by asking different questions, but in general, most of them follow a three-level analytic framework proposed by Bamberg (1997) and refined by him and his colleagues (e.g., Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008). Level 1 positioning focuses on the story being told and the world within, including the story characters and how they are positioned in relation to each other and in relation to the time and space in the story. Level 2 positioning shifts the focus to the storytelling world, that is the interactive setting (the interview between each informant and the interviewer in the context of this study). It explores the reason why a story is told a particular way at a particular time as well as what the interactive accomplishment is. Finally, Level 3 positioning is concerned about how narrators position themselves in relation to the dominant discourses or master narratives.

For coding, I applied relevant codes from the initial code system to the entire data set, including all the personal narratives and the corresponding and/or relevant interview segments. Then, I answered
a series of questions to analyze the data and develop the narrative positioning profiles that I will present below. These questions, which correspond to each of the three levels, include the following. Level 1: Who are the characters in the story world? How are they positioned in relation to one another? How are they positioned in time and space? How does the narrator position him or herself in the story? Level 2: How does the narrator position him or herself in relation to the audience (the interviewer)? How is the question answered with the story told? Why is the story told to this audience in this engagement? What is the interactional accomplishment, if any? Finally for level 3: What are some relevant dominant discourses or master narratives? How does the narrator position him or herself in relation to dominant discourses/master narratives? Like the previous step, a number of analytic memos were produced to document the positionings within the story world and the storytelling world as well as between the informants and the dominant discourses about them. These memos became the basis for the positioning profiles.

**Visual & Multimodal Analyses.** More or less concurrent to the Labovian and narrative positioning analyses of the positioning profile data sets were the analyses conducted on the language identity portraits as well as the visual and multimodal artifacts submitted by the informants, including their CoP photographs and some graphic and video artworks. I made this analytic design choice because I would like the two sets of analyses to be mutually informative. More importantly, this also would allow the transition to the thematic analysis that occurred at the end of the analytic process more efficient and effective.

I partially drew upon the framework of Elements of Visual Grammar, which Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) developed based on Systemic Functional Linguistics’ ideas of language’s metafunctions (Halliday, 1978). Applied to the study of images, these metafunctions represent the following: (1) the representational structures represent how meanings are expressed, (2) the interpersonal structures represent how the viewer relates to an image, and (3) the compositional structures represent how visual
elements are organized spatially (Serafini, 2014). Specifically, I analyzed the particular photos and artworks referenced in or associated with the personal narratives and/or interview segments along the three metafunctional aspects and in correspondence to the narratives and/or interview segments that referenced them. In order to operate from the same unit of analysis, I extracted the ten frames from a video submitted by one informant, James, and analyzed the ten frames as still images, along with the CoP photos. In total, I analyzed 8 CoP photos across three participants and 7 pieces of artwork from three participants.

In terms of the language identity portraits, due to their multimodal nature and the idiosyncratic representations of each participant, I approached the analysis through taking inventory of the various components in each portrait. I created a table to facilitate the inventory-taking of the various components of language and identity for each informant. Table 4.2 details the inventory-taking analysis of the portraits.

Table 4.2. Analysis of Language Identity Portraits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kim</th>
<th>Which &quot;language&quot;?</th>
<th>Which color?</th>
<th>Linguistic?</th>
<th>Which body part?</th>
<th>Which &quot;identity&quot;?</th>
<th>In or out?</th>
<th>Characteristic or role?</th>
<th>Positive, negative, or both/neither?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>red</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>heart</td>
<td>talkative</td>
<td>in</td>
<td>characteristic</td>
<td>pos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>green</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>mouth</td>
<td>talent</td>
<td>in</td>
<td>characteristic</td>
<td>pos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>pink</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>head</td>
<td>pressure</td>
<td>out</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piano</td>
<td>blue</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>hands</td>
<td>positive</td>
<td>in</td>
<td>characteristic</td>
<td>pos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooking</td>
<td>yellow</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>feet</td>
<td>independent</td>
<td>in</td>
<td>characteristic</td>
<td>pos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>hard-working</td>
<td>both</td>
<td>characteristic</td>
<td>pos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>energetic</td>
<td>out</td>
<td>characteristic</td>
<td>pos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>good girl</td>
<td>out</td>
<td>role</td>
<td>pos</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Which “language”?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Which color?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Linguistic?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Which body part?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Which “identity”?</strong></td>
<td><strong>In or out?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Characteristic or role?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Positive, negative, or both/neither?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>国语 (Mandarin Chinese)</td>
<td>red</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>chest (left)</td>
<td>犬 (aggressive)</td>
<td>out</td>
<td>characteristic</td>
<td>neg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>台语 (Taiwanese)</td>
<td>orange</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>chest (right)</td>
<td>serious</td>
<td>out</td>
<td>characteristic</td>
<td>neg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic English</td>
<td>green</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>arm (raised)</td>
<td>frugal</td>
<td>both</td>
<td>characteristic</td>
<td>both</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martha</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>green</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>leg (left)</td>
<td>mature</td>
<td>both</td>
<td>characteristic</td>
<td>pos</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culinary</td>
<td>purple</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>leg (right)</td>
<td>outgoing</td>
<td>both</td>
<td>characteristic</td>
<td>pos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spoken English</td>
<td>orange</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>feet</td>
<td>empathy</td>
<td>both</td>
<td>characteristic</td>
<td>pos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>green</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>neck/throat</td>
<td>ambitious</td>
<td>in or out?</td>
<td>characteristic</td>
<td>pos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>independent</td>
<td>both</td>
<td>characteristic</td>
<td>pos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>daughter</td>
<td>both</td>
<td>role</td>
<td>pos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>sentimentality</td>
<td>out</td>
<td>characteristic</td>
<td>neg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>red</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>arms, thighs, head (top)</td>
<td>brother</td>
<td>shoulder</td>
<td>role</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>国语 (Mandarin Chinese)</td>
<td>orange</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>heart</td>
<td>family</td>
<td>chest (right)</td>
<td>role</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>purple</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>feet</td>
<td>hardworking</td>
<td>calves</td>
<td>characteristic</td>
<td>pos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>red</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>eyes, mouth, stomach</td>
<td>dorm friends</td>
<td>chest (center)</td>
<td>role</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>American friend</td>
<td>chest (center)</td>
<td>role</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>best friends in Taiwan</td>
<td>chest (lower)</td>
<td>role</td>
<td>pos</td>
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Table 4.2. Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rose</th>
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<th>Which color?</th>
<th>Linguistic?</th>
<th>Which body part?</th>
<th>Which “identity”?</th>
<th>In or out?</th>
<th>Characteristic or role?</th>
<th>Positive, negative, or both/neither?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>blue &amp; red</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>arm (raised), heart &amp; leg (left)</td>
<td>teammate</td>
<td>out</td>
<td>role</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>blue &amp; brown</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>arm (raised) &amp; leg (right)</td>
<td>friend</td>
<td>out</td>
<td>role</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>blue &amp; pink</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>arm (raised) &amp; feet</td>
<td>president</td>
<td>out</td>
<td>role</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>turquoise</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>fingers (raised hand)</td>
<td>girlfriend</td>
<td>out</td>
<td>role</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>purple</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>fingers (lowered hand)</td>
<td>flute player</td>
<td>out</td>
<td>role</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>turquoise</td>
<td>maybe</td>
<td>fingers (raised hand)</td>
<td>student</td>
<td>out</td>
<td>role</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cartoon</td>
<td>yellow</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>heart (around)</td>
<td>daughter</td>
<td>out</td>
<td>role</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Art</td>
<td>dark gray</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>torso (left)</td>
<td>only child</td>
<td>out</td>
<td>role</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video Game</td>
<td>light gray</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>torso (right)</td>
<td>self-abused</td>
<td>in</td>
<td>characteristic</td>
<td>neg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>not confident</td>
<td>in</td>
<td>characteristic</td>
<td>neg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>sentimental</td>
<td>in</td>
<td>characteristic</td>
<td>neg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>leadership</td>
<td>both</td>
<td>characteristic</td>
<td>pos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>friendly</td>
<td>out</td>
<td>characteristic</td>
<td>pos</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>helpful</td>
<td>out</td>
<td>characteristic</td>
<td>pos</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>pretty</td>
<td>out</td>
<td>characteristic</td>
<td>pos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>thoughtful</td>
<td>out</td>
<td>characteristic</td>
<td>pos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>nice</td>
<td>out</td>
<td>characteristic</td>
<td>pos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>talented</td>
<td>out</td>
<td>characteristic</td>
<td>pos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.2. Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Which &quot;language&quot;?</th>
<th>Which color?</th>
<th>Linguistic?</th>
<th>Which body part?</th>
<th>Which &quot;identity&quot;?</th>
<th>In or out?</th>
<th>Characteristic or role?</th>
<th>Positive, negative, or both/neither?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>blue (dark)</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>hand (raised)</td>
<td>thoughtful</td>
<td>in</td>
<td>characteristic</td>
<td>pos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>red</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>hand (raised)</td>
<td>daughter</td>
<td>both</td>
<td>role</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>pink (dark)</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>arm (raised)</td>
<td>protective</td>
<td>both</td>
<td>characteristic</td>
<td>pos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>blue (dark)</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>arm (raised)</td>
<td>careful</td>
<td>both</td>
<td>characteristic</td>
<td>pos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion</td>
<td>green (light)</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>chest (left)</td>
<td>strong-willed</td>
<td>in</td>
<td>characteristic</td>
<td>pos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotions</td>
<td>green (dark)</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>chest (right)</td>
<td>grand child</td>
<td>in</td>
<td>role</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>brown</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>stomach</td>
<td>determined</td>
<td>both</td>
<td>characteristic</td>
<td>pos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Art</td>
<td>pink (light)</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>leg (right)</td>
<td>smart</td>
<td>out</td>
<td>characteristic</td>
<td>pos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body Language</td>
<td>orange</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>arm (lowered)</td>
<td>hardworking</td>
<td>out</td>
<td>characteristic</td>
<td>pos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facial Expressions</td>
<td>yellow</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>head (face)</td>
<td>good leadership</td>
<td>out</td>
<td>characteristic</td>
<td>pos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>black</td>
<td>maybe</td>
<td>ears</td>
<td>reliable</td>
<td>out</td>
<td>characteristic</td>
<td>pos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye Contact</td>
<td>purple</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>eyes</td>
<td>friendly</td>
<td>out</td>
<td>characteristic</td>
<td>pos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writings</td>
<td>green (dark)</td>
<td>maybe</td>
<td>head (top)</td>
<td>best friend</td>
<td>out</td>
<td>role</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smiles</td>
<td>yellow</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>face</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>out</td>
<td>role</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>blue (light)</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>mouth</td>
<td>student</td>
<td>out</td>
<td>role</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In terms of language, I asked, “Which languages or means of communication and self-expression are represented? With what colors are they represented? On which parts of the body silhouette are they represented?” In terms of identity, I asked, “Which identities are represented? Are they represented within the body silhouette to signify self-positionings or outside of the silhouette to signify positionings from others? Are they characteristic positionings, mostly in the form of adjectives, or role positionings, mostly as nouns? Are they considered to be positive or negative positionings according to the informant, as judged from the intertextual analysis of the same positionings in their personal narrative(s) and interview segments?”

The outcome for these analyses of images and portraits was a series of analytic memos, which I referred to, along with the memos from Labovian and narrative positioning analyses, while creating the positioning profiles.

**Coding for Themes.** Next, I conducted the second round of coding. In addition to applying the structural and provisional codes in the last category of the initial code system to the whole data set, I also added additional labels to segments of the texts in the data set, following an open coding process (Saldaña, 2013). These new labels were topical codes that represented the emergent ideas and concepts. They were incorporated into the last part of the initial code system to create the expanded code system for thematic analysis (Table 4.3).
Table 4.3. Expanded Code System for Thematic Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Thematic Analysis</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE</td>
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<td>3-1</td>
<td>Cultural Differences in Educational and CoP Experiences</td>
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<td>3-2</td>
<td>CoP Interactions</td>
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<td>3-3</td>
<td>CoP Participation</td>
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<td>CoP Membership</td>
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<td>Gaining Membership through Social Networks</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>LANGUAGE SOCIALIZATION &amp; COMMUNICATION</td>
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<td>4-1</td>
<td>Positionings of Languages and Languaging</td>
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<td>positionings of communicative competence</td>
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<td>communicative competence as situated</td>
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<td>positionings of language socializers</td>
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<td>positionings of communicative burden</td>
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<td>Language Learning as Language Socialization</td>
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<td>4-3</td>
<td>Communication as Multimodal</td>
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<td>4-4</td>
<td>Language as Symbolic Capital</td>
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<td>4-5</td>
<td>Language as Site of Identity Construction</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>IDENTITY</td>
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<td>Responses to Asian Hate &amp; Discrimination</td>
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<td>Strategic Cultivation Aspirational Capital &amp; Imagined Identity</td>
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<td>Positioning</td>
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<td>congruence or disparity of positionings</td>
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Following that, I arranged the codes in the expanded code system for thematic analysis into categories based on a general inductive approach to qualitative data analysis (Thomas, 2006). Then, I removed the overlapping and redundant categories to arrive at the core themes of findings. These core themes of findings will be connected with the core findings from other analyses and presented as thematic connections in the next chapter.

Stage Four: Writing Up

Due to the substantial quantity of data and a myriad of analytic approaches in this study, the presentation of findings will be structured as the following based on an inspiration gained from (Seidman, 2013). Findings from the narrative positioning and Labovian analyses will be presented as positioning profiles. These are then followed by descriptions of findings from the language identity portrait as well as visual and multimodal analyses at the end of this chapter. The findings from the thematic analysis will begin the next chapter as an integral part of the thematic connections, followed by a discussion of these connections and themes.

**Methodological Pluralism.** The decision of presenting the findings in these two distinctive formats is grounded in the idea of methodological pluralism, which has guided the whole study, from design to analysis and now to presentation. Methodological pluralism in this study plays the essential role of triangulation and is critical for enhancing the credibility of interpretations (Stahl & King, 2020a). In addition, the positioning profiles and thematic connections are also aligned with Polkinghorne’s (1995) configuration of narrative inquiry, which informed the design of this study. Specifically, the positioning profiles are the embodiment of narrative analysis rooted in narrative cognition, whereas the thematic connections are the result from the analysis of narratives rooted in paradigmatic cognition.

**Positioning Profiles.** As mentioned earlier, I got the inspiration for these positioning profiles from Seidman’s (2013) work in presenting findings from interview data, particularly in terms of the

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10 In Chapter 5, there will be further discussion about the measures I have taken to enhance the trustworthiness of this study’s findings.
process of extracting segments from the data sources to structure the profiles. However, I deviated from Seidman’s practices of using the first-person point of view and predominantly the participants’ own words to construct the profiles. Instead, when creating the positioning profiles below, I adopted the role of a narrator and chose to tell the participants’ stories from the third-person perspective. This is because of the need to incorporate all perspectives from the three levels of positioning, among which, I, as the audience during the interactive engagement of the interview, also contributed to the participants’ construction of narratives. Therefore, even though I initially gained inspiration for these positioning profiles from Seidman’s work, the way I eventually chose to represent the narratives of my informants actually followed more closely what (McCormack, 2000a, 2000b) termed as interpretive stories, for which the participant and the researcher are considered co-authors of the final narrative outcome. In these interpretive stories, both authors’ voices play a role of contributing to the readers’ overall understanding of the topic of inquiry. As a result of this rationale, I present the following positioning profiles as co-authored narratives about how these five transnational adolescent students perceived and experienced identity construction and transformation as well as language socialization from the perspectives of narrative positioning.

Findings from Portrait & Visual/Multimodal Analyses. In this part, I first present findings from an inventory-taking analysis of the two main aspects of the language identity portrait: language and identity. Then, I present the findings from analyses done on a series of visual/multimodal data, such as the informants’ CoP photos and artworks.

Thematic Connections. This part will begin the following chapter and will contain findings from the thematic analysis as well as how they are connected to findings presented in the remaining of this chapter. These thematic connections will be presented in categories related to the structural concepts of the research questions. Following this part in Chapter 5, I will discuss whether and how these thematic connections are associated with previous research in the same line of inquiry. I will also draw
from these connections to make recommendations to educators working with international secondary students.

**Findings: Positioning Profiles**

The last two parts of this chapter are dedicated to the presentation of the findings derived from the analyses described above. This part consists of five positioning profiles. These positioning profiles were created as the situated representations of the five focal informants: Kim (Vietnam), Martha (Taiwan), James (Taiwan), Rose (China), and Helen (Vietnam). These profiles were created with reference to the findings from the various analyses. These may appear to be individual representations of these youths, with the headings dedicated to particular informants. In fact, across the five informants are many threads that connect their positionings. The findings used to construct these profiles did not just come from narrative positioning analysis and Labovian analysis. Some of them also emerged from the visual and multimodal analyses. Therefore, these profiles are mutually informative, and many of the positionings found salient in one youth’s narratives also play an essential part in at least another youth’s narratives. In fact, the heading created for each profile below represents the positionings beyond the focal informant depicted in the particular profile. The main reasons behind this interconnectedness are not only an emerging collective identity as Asian transnational adolescent students in Maine but more importantly also my involvement as a researcher and a co-creator of their positioning profile. In other words, since each profile is considered to be co-constructed between each of them and myself (see the part about how I chose profiles to present findings above), there are traces of my meaning-making in one profile that can often be found in the other four profiles.

Also important to mention about these profiles is the fact that I do not always present the three levels of positioning separately or in a sequential manner but have incorporated signposts throughout when I feel it is important to draw the readers’ attention to particular levels of positioning. I have
adopted this decision because in narratives, the three levels of positionings are often interconnected and occur concurrently (cf. Blix et al., 2015).

Kim: Cultivating an Aspirational Self through Transnational Education

“Is that okay, if, like, I just have 30 minutes and like next time, like it can be this weekend. I can spend, like the rest. Is that okay? Because, like about 4:30 to 4:40, like, I have to go somewhere else. Is that okay?” Kim, a participant from Vietnam, and I had gone back and forth via email, negotiating a time and date for this interview, so that we could finish it in one go, but minutes into the interview, she announced that she had somewhere else to go soon, leaving me half an hour to spontaneously restructure the interview, picking and choosing how I wanted to start. She went on to add, “You can send me by email,” reminding me I could schedule a second interview with her via email. This interaction forms a partial first impression of Kim for me: proactive, outspoken, opinionated, outgoing, diplomatic yet firm, and most relevantly, strategic.

Kim had submitted one personal narrative (lines 4-41, Kim: Positioning Profile Data Set11) that she considered representative of herself. In this personal narrative as well as other corresponding and relevant interview excerpts, a theme of strategic and intentional cultivation of aspirational capital (Yosso, 2005; Yosso & García, 2007) and an imagined identity (Pavlenko & Norton, 2007) is evident, and her parents have played an important role in this process. Kim positions herself as an aspiring musician, or a pianist, to be specific. Before relocating to Maine to attend [anonymized school], Kim was a student in the Ho Chi Minh Conservatory of Music in her home country of Vietnam. This musician identity has been weaved through her multiple narratives, including her language identity portrait and a CoP photo (see Figure 4.2 and 4.3), mostly to highlight how she stands out from her peers in Maine.

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More importantly, traces and pieces from her multiple narratives indicate that pianist or piano educator is an identity that she strives to achieve, and it has been strategically and intentionally cultivated. Lines 17-29 of Kim’s personal narrative shows how her parents may have been involved in this cultivation. In this personal narrative, they are positioned as providers of an opportunity for Kim to practice teaching something she feels passionate about: playing the piano and music in general. Through them as a connection, Kim was able to teach the two children of their friends. And these two children, Kim’s first students, are positioned as a responsibility that she refuses to give up on. Kim worked out a number of strategies to motivate these two students. They are positioned to have experienced a trajectory of learning (lines 17-29), from being “nice and dutiful” to being “naughty and playful” to being “all ears” and from “knowing nothing about piano” to being able to “read and understand the pieces”
and playing “Minuet in G” by Bach as well as “the Swan” and “Surprise Symphony” rewritten by Haydn for piano.

Figure 4.3. Kim’s CoP Photo

In this context, teaching can be interpreted as an instrument that Kim’s parents have chosen to propel Kim forward in her long-term music career. The evaluation component from the Labovian analysis of Kim’s personal narrative further reveals that Kim’s accomplishment in teaching these two children, along with her accomplishment from various piano performances and competitions, brought about significant emotional responses of feeling touched and happy and in turn a significant transformation of identity from a student pianist to an accomplished and recognized teacher and performer. The strategic involvement of Kim’s parents also plays a part in Kim’s decision of attending [anonymized school] in Maine for one year, during the senior year, before applying to colleges in the U.S. Again, through her parents’ connections, Kim learned about the renowned dance and music programs at the [anonymized school] and decided that she could learn and accumulate more experience at the music program. These programs, according to Kim, are not very common in American high schools. Then, from there, she would be able to attend a music program at the college level, much more prepared. Finally, Kim has chosen to apply for a two-year college at the advice of her parents. This is also
a strategic decision because it will allow the family to reduce the expenses for Kim to complete the university education in the U.S. if she attends a community college to obtain the required credits before transferring to a university where she can focus on her music training. The relatively less stringent academic demands at the community college will also allow Kim to dedicate more time to practicing and improving upon her piano skills.

Exploring this theme of strategically cultivating aspirational capital and imagined identity reveals not only the positionings of the other characters in Kim’s story world (first level positioning), such as her parents and the two students, but also her own positioning in the storytelling world (second level positioning). Specifically, from the discussion above, it is easy to read Kim as a passive recipient of her parents’ strategic cultivation. However, in the interview segment about her future plans (lines 202-218), when explicitly asked about the decision-making process, Kim positions herself as an agentive negotiator. To the interviewer question about whether the decision to attend the community college is her parents’ or her own, Kim responded:

Um, I think like... both. I think, because, like, at first, I want to stay in U.S., I really wanted to stay in U.S., but my mom was like... you have to choose the university that is like... the tuition like as low as possible, like that, so I was thinking like if I choose a university with a low tuition, maybe it has a bad condition and like security and all stuff, so I think about like the college community and I found out the [anonymized college], it is like one of the big college and it's cheap and it's like, it has a good quality and all the stuff, so I think [anonymized college] may be a good opportunity for me.

This quote illustrates a self-positioning in the context of an interactive engagement with the interviewer. Kim projects an identity of growing independence and agency by recruiting a narrative of negotiation with her parents. In order to continue to stay in the U.S. after high school to pursue higher education and to appease her parents who were concerned with the associated expenses, Kim did her research
and found a large community college that charges relatively lower tuition fees and still offers quality education.

Finally, in terms of the third-level positioning, i.e., how Kim positions herself in relation to how the dominant discourses or master narratives position her, Kim’s deployment of agency during her negotiation with her parents as cited above effectively illustrates a counter-narrative of the commonly referenced social scripts of parenting relationships among Asian transnational and Asian-heritage families, that is the social scripts that follow the narrative of tiger parenting (Juang et al., 2013), the narrative of Asian individuals being conflict avoidant, and the narrative of Asian youngsters being uncritically compliant to their parents, i.e., a misinterpretation of the concept of “filial piety” (NAMI: National Alliance on Mental Illness, n.d.). In fact, Kim’s act of negotiation with her parents to achieve her goal of remaining in the U.S. should not be read as egoistic, but rather, it is grounded in an idea similar to the Chinese indigenous concept of qin (親), which literally translates to “being close to” and has a positive connotation of a child responding to the benevolence of her or his parents with love and intimacy (Wu & Chao, 2017). Therefore, Kim’s search for colleges with lower tuition fees is not only a means to her ends, but it is also an act of responding to her parents’ benevolence of financially supporting her academic pursuits in the U.S.

Martha: Seeking & Discovering a Self within a Transnational Collective

Martha, one of the two Taiwanese participants, who had studied and lived in the U.S. since 10th grade, shared two personal narratives that she considered to be representative of her. The fact that she selected these two personal narratives to submit as a pair is as noteworthy as either of the two narratives. The first narrative (lines 3-48, Martha: Positioning Profile Data Set12) is mainly concerned with a journey she took herself on in quest of the answer to an inner predicament: whether inheriting the management role of the family business from her father was a right decision for herself. The second

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12 Martha’s positioning profile data set is available as Appendix D and also accessible digitally at https://bit.ly/3RItzX1
narrative is also about a quest, but this time, it wasn’t as much a negotiation with herself to find out what was best for her but rather a struggle against some systemic barriers. The evaluation and resolution components from the Labovian analysis of Martha’s two personal narratives reveal that in both scenarios, Martha arrived at a satisfactory outcome for her quests.

In her first personal narrative, there appears to be several concerns that feed into Martha’s inner conflict. First, she was worried about not being able to ever reach the success of her parents, whom she had positioned to be “superhumans” (line 15). Second, she regarded herself as a passive individual not having any particular passions and clarity for her future. Meanwhile, countless livelihoods depended on the family business, and the family heritage in the business would end with her, should she decide not to take on this mission because without her assistance, her only sibling would not be able to take care of all aspects of the business. She wondered to herself, “Do I really have what it takes? (lines 22-23)” This is the moment when her self-positioning in the story world begins to transition from a relatively passive recipient self to a slightly more proactive agentive self.

With the transition in self-positioning, Martha set out to answer the question she posed for herself. She visited the factory of the family, sitting down to observe the workflow of the factory, being toured around the different departments of the company and shown the various technical aspects of the work by a seasoned employee, Aunt Hu, who had been with the company for a long time. With the knowledge she was able to convey about the technical components of the work while she showed Martha around the factory, Aunt Hu was positioned to represent how the knowledge base of the factory’s work had evolved over the years. At the same time, it was also through Aunt Hu’s eyes that Martha came to the realize that the company owed its success to the collective effort from all the employees, each of whom had an essential role to play and had something to teach her. This realization was also the pivotal moment where Martha “resolved [her] inner conflicts” and “expressed [her] interest in the management role of [her] father” (lines 39-40).
During the interview, I invited Martha to elaborate on the significance of the family business with regard to her personal identity and why it is important for her to return to Taiwan to take over the family business in the future. In this interactive engagement in the storytelling world, Martha chose to highlight the fact that she does not have “specific interests” (line 57) in life once again, and when unsure about which major to pick, she turned to her parents, who suggested optometry. Even though Martha had no particular interest in studying optometry, she was concerned that the family business would disappear should she not choose the path her parents had hoped for. Now, on the surface, this is not new information because the same story had been told within the first personal narrative. However, an analysis of the second-level positioning reveals what this interaction between Martha and me during the interview has accomplished: to illustrate a self-positioning of empathy that was brought up when discussing her language identity portrait (Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.4. Martha’s Language Identity Portrait
The second personal narrative, when paired with the first one, creates an interesting juxtaposition, one that is characterized by transnational affiliations of the adolescent students in this study. Where Martha’s first personal narrative describes her resolving an inner conflict rooted in a matter at “home”, her second narrative tells a story of how she was pitted against an educational system she was not familiar with and how she managed damage control rescued herself out of the system, another narrative of her gaining agency in the process.

In this second narrative, Martha enrolled herself in the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program (IB program henceforth), a two-year program that provides an internationally recognized qualification for entry into higher education. Later, she found the program to be too challenging and tried to quit. However, she was not able to leave the program till later due to some structural barriers, and hence, her grades suffered tremendously. In this narrative, Martha positions herself to be a victim. First, she blamed her decision on lack of familiarity with the IB system and on listening to some friends’ suggestions to join in the first place. Then, she blamed her inability to switch out of the program on administrative barriers. Similar to the first narrative, Martha positioned herself as a recipient of outside forces, but upon realizing her predicament, she did take some measures to ameliorate the situation. Specifically, she studied harder in response to the more demanding IB coursework. She also attempted further negotiation with her teachers about quitting the program. Eventually, seeing that Martha was not able to catch up, the teachers “gave in and allowed” (line 96) her to switch out of the IB program.

From the corresponding interview segment, more layers of self-positioning are evident. First, Martha reinforced the self-positioning as a victim, a recipient of forces outside of her control, just like in the personal narrative. To do that, she provided additional reasoning for her poor academic performance in the IB program. She attributed such poor performance to her lack of English proficiency (line 111), lack of familiarity with subject terminology in English (line 113), and lack of prior learning of certain subjects, such as American History (lines 115-118). In addition to providing a more explicit
rationale for failing to achieve ideal results for the IB program, Martha also demonstrated relatively comprehensive knowledge of the IB system and how it operates, distinctively more confident than she was as described in the personal narrative. Much of this knowledge most likely comes from having gone through the program herself. She was able to describe in detail how the program works in her school as well as the skills and knowledge required for successful completion.

Even though, on the surface, both of the narratives from Martha seem to be centered around a personal quest, there is actually something embedded in both narratives that is in dialogue with the dominant discourses about cultural patterns and communicative competence. In the first personal narrative, the cultural pattern of collectivism (Halualani, 2019; Hofstede, 2013) is a salient dominant discourse. It is the force behind Martha’s first quest. She prioritizes the collective good of the family by choosing to study optometry, a subject of no interest to her, so she can take over the responsibility of the family business. Collectivism is also what prompts Martha to realize about her influential place in “the lives of countless families” (lines 23-24). Eventually, collectivism became an integral part of Martha’s belief about accomplishment. She wrote at the end of the narrative, “From the authentic connection among employees, I understood that united people are a necessity for achieving and sustaining success” (lines 43-44). This influence of collectivism is also evident in another interview segment where I invited Martha to share a particularly memorable experience with one of her CoPs. She chose to tell a story about celebrating her first Mid-Autumn Festival in the U.S. with a group of school mates with a similar background of Chinese cultural heritage, including another Taiwanese student at the same school. When prompted to elaborate on the connection between the story and her identity, Martha cited two words from her language identity portrait: empathy and outgoing, and she explained: Outgoing because… At that time, I was not yet very acquainted with that [other] Taiwanese friend, and there were only two Taiwanese students in our school, so I had wanted to meet him
and become friends with him. For one thing, I won’t be alone after returning to Taiwan. For another, people usually want to meet those from the same place of origin.

This quote illustrates a longing for connections among transnational youths, especially connections with those who share not only the same linguistic background, cultural heritage, and national origin but also a similar transnational education journey. These connections help forge a collective identity for the youths, a transnational adolescent identity.

**James: Negotiating the Dilemmatic Selves across Communities of Practice**

“...I thought there would really be a lot of difference if I didn’t play, so uh, I just wrap it up, and then I ate some ibuprofen, and I just play the second game” (lines 66-68, James: Positioning Profile Data Set). This quote from the interview with James, another participant from Taiwan, reveals a new self-positioning that is not apparent in his personal narrative (lines 4-30) but greatly adds to the interpretation of his self-positionings in that written narrative. The quote is part of James’ response to my request for stories that represent memorable experiences of CoP interactions or participation. Even though James briefly elaborated on the personal narrative when we were going through the identity items in his language identity portrait (Figure 4.5), he was not explicitly prompted to think of this memorable experience in the context of the personal narrative. Despite so, the particular story, from which the quote above is extracted, reveals significant information about how James positions himself, especially in the CoP context of the basketball games as well as the school team where he served as the captain.

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13 James’ positioning profile data set is available as Appendix E and also accessible digitally at [https://bit.ly/3ALXDtE](https://bit.ly/3ALXDtE)
In his personal narrative (lines 4-30), James describes how he has been transformed in terms of the confidence to do something he was afraid of doing and had trouble accomplishing: “making shots from mid-range or further in basketball games” (line 4). He presents himself as having undergone changes that eventually resulted in a new persona. In particular, verb phrases, such as “suddenly realized” (line 9), “actually made threes” (lines 10-11), “decided to change my shooting form” (lines 12-13), “build new muscle memory” (line 16), “got more stable and consistent” (line 22), and “shoot way better than before” (lines 22-23) are one example of linguistic devices James uses to represent himself as striving for a goal within an area of his passion and discovering new self-worth. James also predicts his continual changes as he states toward the end of the personal narrative, “While I reached that goal I had set for myself, I still have a long way to go because there is no such thing as a perfect shooter in basketball” (lines 23-24). The two CoP photos (Figure 4.6) he submitted to represent how he sees
himself are both pictures taken of him during basketball games. In the photos, he is depicted as a strong and competent athlete, which reflects the result of his transformation.

Figure 4.6. James’ CoP Photos

Compared to the aspect of constancy vs. change, which is featured with linguistic means throughout the personal narrative, the aspect where James marks himself as different, similar or the same with respect to the other individuals in his narrative is much less prominent. The other characters in James’ personal narrative include his basketball teammates, a friend whose question prompted his realization and reflection, and a player who shoots balls well, therefore, perhaps someone whom James emulated. In the very beginning of the narrative, James describes a concern about the discrepancy between his capability of making shots from the three-point line and that of his teammates. He was
worried that he wasn’t as good as his teammates. Even when his skills developed and as he became a transformed player, the theme of being different from the others is still evident in the coda, or the conclusion of the story, where he contrasts himself from most “people” (line 27), who tend to become lazy and satisfied with what they are comfortable doing rather than striving to change and improve themselves, which is what he accomplished, as demonstrated in his narrative.

Furthermore, James seems to position himself as both the agent and the recipient in the story world of his personal narrative. First of all, the other characters in his narrative are portrayed as the change agents. For example, his teammates encourage him to make those shots (line 6). A friend’s question causes him to reflect on the reason behind his incapability of making the shots (lines 8-9), and a skillful player provides support that partially contributes to his transformation (line 15). However, James also describes in detail how he takes the matter into his own hands by taking the initiative to seek support from the more competent others (lines 14-15) and to engage in continuous practice to build muscle memory (lines 15-16). This illustrates the fact that representations of self can at times be dilemmatic.

The above first-level positioning analysis reveals that in the story world of James’ personal narrative, he is both the narrator and the protagonist working toward a goal, i.e., overcoming the obstacle that is his lack of confidence. The other characters, including his teammates, his friend, and the accomplished player from whom he seeks help, are portrayed as aids toward his goal. Relevant to this notion is the fact that James portrays himself not only as an agent that is mostly responsible for his final transformation but also as a recipient of support from others. However, as can be found throughout the narrative, many sentences start with the first-person pronoun, I, as the subject, and the active voice in the sentence construction highlights proactivity in his interactions with others, even within the beneficiary interactions.
The second level of positioning is structured within the interactive engagement where I had invited James to select multimodal items that best represent how he sees himself to share with me via the questionnaire; therefore, that prompt had framed me as the intended audience for these items. In the context of the interview, he was narrating about his experiences and elaborating on the items, with me as his audience. There are some significant differences in terms of his positioning on the second level in different narrative spaces. In his personal narrative, James depicts himself as lacking confidence, but at the same time, there is also evidence of his self-representation as being reflective, strategic and always up for challenges for the sake of personal growth. The focus of this self-representation during the interview shifts to how he perceives the roles he plays in his communities. For instance, during the interview, James shared that he was actually the captain of the basketball team, a piece of information that is not revealed in his personal narrative. His sharing of this information became especially significant when he went on to share an experience where he couldn’t play due to an injured ankle and how the team camaraderie suffered because of this, and the team lost the game eventually. Lines 61-75 of James’ Positioning Profile Data Set is illustrative of an image of how he wants to be understood by his audience in this interactive engagement: not only as an individual that plays an important role and shoulders important responsibilities in his community but also someone who has earned respect and trust from other community members.

The analysis of the third-level positioning examines the relationship between James’ self-positioning and the positioning the world imposes on him through the dominant discourses and master narratives about who he is. According to Bamberg (1997), in level 3 positioning, the narrator usually bespeaks “a discourse type that searches across past events (of personal experience) for evidence to make claims of a more decontextual sort” (p. 341). The excerpt above is an example where James references a past experience to make an identity-related claim. There is an underlying assumption, a dominant discourse, in this excerpt that structures the roles and relationship expectations between the
captain of a sports team and the other team members. James’ account of this past event is a potential counter-narrative that illustrates a counter-reality (Bamberg & Andrews, 2004; Stefánsdóttir & Traustadóttir, 2015) that is in dialogue with the dominant discourse. By highlighting the role reversal at the end of the narrative where his teammates try to cheer him up as compared with him doing the cheering as the captain, James positions himself as someone that is well-integrated into the community and cared for by the other members of the community.

Another theme that emerges at the intersection of the personal narrative and the dominant discourse is one that appears frequently in the narratives of study abroad, i.e., personal transformation through the study abroad experience. In addition to the improvement in athletic performance featured in his personal narrative, the video James shared as an artistic creation representative of his self-concept depicts a timeline that runs through his daily routines in the U.S. as compared to his daily routines in Taiwan. The juxtaposition of two different routines makes salient two different selves, one portrayed as static, with him doing nothing but studying and attending classes throughout the day, while the other one portrayed as dynamic, with him participating actively in multiple communities and extracurricular activities. Figure 4.7 is the video presented in its ten frames.
Figure 4.7. James’ Video Presented in Ten Frames
Rose: Understanding Communicative Competence through Chronotopic Selves

When Rose, an informant from China, was invited to elaborate on the most essential aspects of her identity that she represented on her language identity portrait (Figure 4.8), she said, “I only have a problem. It’s that I don’t... I don’t really have... I don't have confidence for myself” (lines 178-179, Rose: Positioning Profile Data Set14). In the portrait, along with her lack of confidence, Rose also includes characteristics, such as “sentimental” and “self-abused”, within the contour of the body silhouette, as the core self-representations of her chronotopic being at a time and space where she was frequently prompted for self-evaluation and the projection for future selves, i.e., time and space for university/college applications. The negative self-image is a relatively consistent thread through the personal narratives Rose has chosen to share for the purpose of this research. I selected two of them, along with the corresponding and relevant interview segments, for analysis. The selected narratives are two respective representations of Rose’s chronotopic being that mark the time-space intersection at the two ends of her academic journey as a transnational secondary student in Maine. Furthermore, they also provide a framing for the other chronotopic configurations in between. I have borrowed the concept of chronotope as a lens to analyze and interpret Rose’s experiences in this profile. The concept was originally devised by Bakhtin to examine the time-space frames within literary texts (Bakhtin et al., 1986; Bakhtin & Holquist, 1981a) and is a useful conceptual device for the analysis of identity development and the scope for agency of the protagonists within a narrative (Ritella et al., 2021). The concept also corresponds to the orientation component of Labovian analysis, and according to De Fina (2003), analyzing how orientation is constructed and articulated makes possible an understanding of storytelling as a social and interactional practice, which is what I aim to achieve through the discussion of positioning below.

14 Rose’s positioning profile data set is available as Appendix F and also accessible digitally at https://bit.ly/3Iwy6q7
Rose’s first personal narrative is about the experience of meeting her host family for the first time, and the orientation component of Labovian analysis shows that the reported events in the narrative took place in new cultural and geographical environments at the end of her first year in the U.S. Lines 8-12 shows how Rose was under-prepared for the “freezing weather” during her “first year of staying in Bangor” without the proper socks to keep herself warm. It was not just the physical environment that was new to Rose. In fact, Rose dedicated a substantial and significant portion of the narrative (lines 22-44) to explaining the idea and practice of sharing one’s daily go-abouts at the dinner table and why it constituted a source of her anxiety. In comparison, the second narrative is mostly a piece of recollection, with her recalling and evaluating her decision and experiences of studying overseas, and since the second personal narrative was constructed in response to a prompt for applying
to study in a college, the narrative ends with how her decision and experiences of studying in the U.S. have helped her to choose international relations as a major in college.

In terms of the first-level positioning analysis, most of the characters in the story worlds of both narratives are positioned as the “language socializers”, who are speakers of English as their dominant language. In contrast, Rose positions herself as an English learner, and at times an ineffective English learner, when comparing herself to the other Chinese and international students who have “really good English”, those that belong to a “social hub” that she doesn’t believe she is qualified to enter (lines 112-113). In terms of socialization into the target language, English, Rose described the significance of her home-stay experience in both the first personal narrative and the interview. The evaluation component of the first personal narrative sheds important light on the positioning in the narrative’s story world. Specifically, when considering the evaluation component of this personal narrative, it is important to also consider the evaluation of objects, items, or experiences that were used as analogies by Rose. For example, the socks can be said to represent Rose, and the descriptor Rose uses, "unappealing", can also be understood to refer to her own mediocrity. On the other hand, the spacious house of the host family may represent Rose's initial evaluation of the host family being larger not only in the number of members but perhaps also in strength and power.

When Rose described the other members of the host family, she discussed their interests and hobbies, but for the host mother, Rose chose to focus on her stature and physique being substantial and awe-inspiring. Additionally, Rose seemed to position the host mother as the enforcer of language management in the family and the antagonist in the story. She is someone that Rose, the protagonist, fears. Besides the evaluation mentioned at the end of the previous paragraph, the following are two salient positionings of the whole family. The first is when Rose realized about the reality of the “friendly American family” (line 26), with all the rules and limitations. Therefore, the family is positioned as the reality, in contrast to her imagination. Another positioning of the family is the language socializer or
manager, with the family language policy of sharing something that happened during the day at dinner time as a way to help Rose improve English.

In the second personal narrative, Rose first positioned herself as an imagined victim of discriminatory treatment as an international student. However, this self-positioning was altered when she came into interactions with the students she was studying with in her American high school. At that time, these students’ positioning also changed from the imagined inflictors of discrimination to individuals who extended a warm welcome to Rose and expressed interests in her culture and identity. This process of coming into contact with those from another culture and its associated outcome of intercultural learning are connected to Bakhtin’s idea of dialogicality (Jackson, 2008). According to Bakhtin (Bakhtin et al., 1986; Bakhtin & Holquist, 1981a), a person’s self-expression as well as sense of self are constantly shaped and reshaped when they engage with Others, or those outside of their own culture. This is the case for Rose as well, as illustrated at the end of the first personal narrative, where she claimed, “Living with the Maccinis [= pseudonym] has made an enormous difference in my life and changed my personality for the better. I am now much more outgoing…” She also expressed this same opinion in the interview (lines 115-117), referring to moving in with the homestay family as one of the adjustments she made to her overall attitudes about herself and her learning after an apparently decisive conversation with the headmaster of her school, who encouraged her to look beyond her academic communicative competence as measured only by the TOEFL\(^{15}\) score.

Standardized testing of English proficiency can greatly impact a transnational learner’s reflexive identity as an English learner and user. According to Benson and colleagues (2013), a person’s reflexive identity corresponds to their view of self and incorporates both their self-concept and the actual capacities and attributes on which their self-concept is based. They also concluded from a review of previous research that the study abroad experience has a generally positive effect on a student’s

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\(^{15}\) Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is a standardized test that measures the English proficiency of non-native speakers of English wishing to study in academic institutions where English is used as the main medium of instruction.
linguistic self-concept. Rose, for example, has mentioned that although her TOEFL score is not as high as those of her school mates and is often a reason behind her low confidence, she can also referenced several scenarios where she has felt confident, and those scenarios are often grounded in the context of her CoP participation, such as being a leader and facilitating a cultural presentation to the community and being able to play challenging music pieces that no one else can (lines 213-220).

Finally, an analysis of the third-level positioning of Rose’s two personal narratives reveals some commonly referenced master narratives in the discursive construction of international student and immigrant identities. These majoritarian stories are based on a number of correlated dominant societal ideologies of monolingualism, linguistic imperialism, and assimilation as well as popular mindsets pertaining to linguistic authority and ownership, most of which Rose seems to have internalized. Specifically, she constituted herself as compliant in response to the implicit as well as explicit family and educational language policy and management both in her home-stay family (as demonstrated in her first personal narrative) and in school (as revealed in the interview).

Helen: Defying the Socially Expected Self; Desiring the Socially Connected Self

Helen, like another informant, Kim, also came to the U.S. after having spent more than two years already in a high school in their home country, Vietnam. The point of entry into their transnational education journey makes the idea of transnational social ties and affiliations much more salient in their narratives. In Helen’s two personal narratives, her transnational social ties and affiliations also bring to the surface the experiences of transnational loss and discontinuity, which, in turn, became part of the funds of knowledge that she drew upon when constructing the two personal narratives. The first piece is an autobiographical account of her evolving relationship with her family, mainly her father, and the lessons she learned through the years from gaining a deeper understanding about her father. The second piece is a valediction letter, written to address her friends and school mates from her high school in Vietnam. The vividly illustrated shared experiences depicted in both narratives are the pivotal
foundation for understanding why Helen defies the social expectations imposed on her and why she holds on tightly to the relationships at home and earnestly longs for connections in the U.S.

The first-level positioning analysis shows that the characters in the story worlds of the two narratives occupied the space and time of home in the past. The orientation component of Labovian analysis further details the various points of transitions through Helen’s life at the ages of five, ten, fifteen, and seventeen. These points are depicted as the major hallmarks in her relationship with her father, and with these transitions emerged an evolving understanding of as well as a closer connection with her father. Although Helen’s mother seems to have a more distinct positioning in the first personal narrative, i.e., as a mentor that taught and guided Helen while revealing the "truths" about the father to her, the positioning of Helen’s father is harder to define. He could have been positioned as a hero for the family or an ally along with Helen and her mother because they had the common goal of sustaining the well-being of the family. The two positionings, though, would also constitute different positionings for Helen. Whereas the former, where the father is considered to be the hero, positions Helen as a recipient of the love, devotion and wisdom of her parents, the latter, where the father is considered to be an ally, positions Helen as being equally agentive as her parents, if not more. An alternative interpretation may be that Helen is positioned as transformed over the years, from a recipient of devoted affection and care from her parents to a contributor, taking care of her father and household chores.

In an interview engagement about this narrative, Helen revealed an additional layer of positioning. She described her younger self as “naughty” (line 55, Helen: Positioning Profile Data Set\(^\text{16}\)) and a “trouble girl” (line 58). This positioning serves two purposes. First, in the storytelling world, Helen tapped into this positioning as a way to explain to her audience the rationale behind her interactions with her father that were described in the personal narrative, as a way to legitimize her words and

\(^{16}\) Helen’s positioning profile data set is available as Appendix G and also accessible digitally at https://bit.ly/3c0VnV7
actions that may have appeared hurtful and insensitive in the narrative. She explained, “I think I was very troubling... I was a trouble girl for like difference. I think I did it because I wanted attention because, you know like, um...” (lines 57-59). In other words, her behaviors were a result of a desire to gain attention from her parents, whom Helen positioned as not showing concerns for her because she had always been independent and strong on her own. Another function the positioning of a naughty, troubled girl serves is to be in dialogue with the master narrative of gender norms and family structures. In the society of her home country, “male offspring” (line 62) are valued, and because in her family, there are only her younger sister and her, they often received negative treatments from their relatives. In response to the socially constructed positioning of female offspring, Helen chose to prove that “a girl can do what a boy can” (lines 63-64) by defying the gender stereotypes and became strong and independent from a young age. As she grew older, although at times she would rebel against her parents’ wishes for her to gain their attention, she said deep inside, she really loved and cared for them. These positionings, which are also represented in her language identity portrait (Figure 4.9), are essential for understanding how Helen has come to position those in her social and academic circles in the U.S.
Relevant to the first personal narrative are two salient self-positionings represented in the language identity portrait, namely the role as a daughter as well as the characteristic of being protective. Helen saw the role of a daughter in the family as a responsibility (lines 198-201), hence represented on the shoulder of the body silhouette. This positioning is very much related to what was discussed earlier about her relationships with her parents and how she wanted to defend her parents from the relatives. Helen also constituted herself as someone protective, and she attributed this characteristic to an instinct associated with growing up as an older sister (lines 178-181). When prompted to give an example, she shared an experience of looking after a fellow student in the dorm who was ill. When describing the experience, Helen positioned herself as a "mom" and would “do everything, like a mom would do, to their children” (lines 188-189). This positioning, however, also illustrates that Helen has internalized some of the dominant ideology about gender roles that she grew up deflecting.
Intertextually, this self-positioning as a “mom” is also significant in the context of another interview segment. This segment shows Helen’s differential positioning of a Chinese teacher from the American teachers in her school. The Chinese teacher was positioned as "chilled", "kind", and giving Helen an impression of a “mother” (line 151). She was positioned as someone whom Helen could relate to because of their shared racial identity as well as transnational lived experience. The teacher provided “a sense of belonging” in the school, the community, and the U.S. (line 155). Specifically, Helen explained:

Being international students and like international residents in the U.S., we have a lot of problems that only international people understand, like the papers of staying here and all the rules that you have to apply to as an international individual, so there are a lot of problems that only us understand. So, it's like if ever, if I ever have any problems with those kinds of stuff, I would just come to her and talk about it, so much easier for me.

Within this same interview engagement, Helen shared that she even processed her depression with only this teacher (lines 169-170). This information is significant on two levels. First of all, it highlights the criticality of culturally responsive mental health service for international students, who often experience loss, trauma, and depression in compounded way due to their migratory life and the potentially distinctive attitudes and practices related to mental health services from their home culture, a conclusion supported by some studies (e.g., Ichikawa, 2021; Nesteruk, 2018). The other layer of significance related to this information is the importance of representation. Helen assigned the positioning of a “mom” to the Chinese teacher, a positioning she had taken up herself at one point. In the broader sociocultural sense, these parallel positionings can be seen as a projection of her aspirational identity, where she sees her future self as an individual who provides care of some sort to others, corresponding to her characteristic positioning of being protective. This was also supported by a statement she provided when asked why she chose to major bioengineering in college:
One of the reasons I choose to pursue this career is because I lost my grandma because of kidney failure, and it was because she could not afford accessible treatment back at the time because we were poor. And so, she passed away, and it just made me think that... made me look at the health industry in Vietnam, and I just realized that it’s not good. It's just... It’s not right... It’s not designed to help people with illnesses. There are a lot of faults and other stuff back home, so I wanted to make changes or be a part of the change to my country’s health industry.

This quote is representative of Helen’s core self-positionings. She aspires to contribute herself to the change she wants to see in the health system of Vietnam because she believes health care should be readily accessible to people with illnesses. This aspirational positioning, on top of the need to see representation, further highlights the importance of increasing diversity among staff and teachers in school, so that international students of raciolinguistically minoritized backgrounds can also see themselves as individuals who make a difference in education, health care, and other systems in the society.

Finally, Helen’s two personal narratives, one written for the purpose of college application and the other as an assignment for her English class, demonstrate how the transnational lived experiences and relationships can become these adolescent students’ communicative and literacy resources. In particular, Helen drew upon her memories of close friends from her Vietnamese high school in her engagement with the genres of valediction and letter writing for her second personal narrative. Because of the solid relationships from her transnational social network as well as her own transnational aspirational identity, she was able to effectively position herself both as part of a collective among her friends from home and as a unique individual leaving for a “better place” (line 100) without these friends. These friends were positioned as “strong and brave” but still “dreamers” (line 102), where as Helen was already embarking on a journey ahead of them. They became merely “a part of [her] youth” (line 105), her past. Besides the second personal narrative, the memories of these friends were also
recruited when Helen was prompted to select photos that best represented her CoP participation. Despite having taken part in some CoPs in her American high school, Helen chose these photos (Figure 4.10) from home as a communicative resource in the interactive engagement within this research.

Figure 4.10. Helen’s CoP Photos

**Portrait & Visual/Multimodal Analyses**

In the following, I introduce the core findings from the portrait as well as visual and multimodal analyses as a connection between the positioning profiles above and the thematic connections in the following chapter since these findings play an illustrative role in both ways (i.e., profiles and connections) of making sense of transnational identities and lived experiences.
Core Findings from the Analysis of Language Identity Portraits

In the previous part about the data analytic process, I explained that I applied a set of questions targeting language and identity, the two aspects of each portrait, to a process of inventory taking and created a table (Table 4.2) to record the result from the five informants. Then, I engaged in memo writing to first make sense of what I saw in the table and then to focus my attention on the findings that were consistent across the five informants. Table 4.4 displays the portraits from all five informants, and following the table is what I have found from the analysis of these portraits.

Table 4.4. All Language Identity Portraits
Communicative resources are represented as multimodal, and in some cases, the representations are nuanced. All of the five participants represent both the languages they use and other means of communication and self-expression in their portrait. The languages included across the five portraits are Vietnamese, Mandarin Chinese, Taiwanese, Japanese, Spanish and English. Even though the visual representation of these languages does not reveal participants’ self-perceived levels of competence in the languages, the participants have made some nuanced representations with regard to the languages they use and other means of communication and self-expression. For instance, James and Martha both come from Taiwan, but they represent the two main languages spoken in Taiwan quite differently. James, for example, only represents Mandarin Chinese, and it is represented with the color orange and as the heart of the body silhouette. Martha, on the other hand, represents both Mandarin Chinese and Taiwanese in her portrait, and both are represented on the upper part of the body with equal spaces but different colors. These differences symbolize the different linguistic realities and identifications even within the same nation state.

Compared to the languages, there is a wider range of non-linguistic communicative resources represented across the portraits. This representation of diverse communicative resources is actually the pattern across the informants, illustrating their diverse understandings of what can constitute as a tool or resource to draw upon when communicating with others or expressing oneself. Another pattern is that most informants include the non-linguistic communicative resources that are connected to their membership and participation in their CoPs, e.g., music and piano for Kim, basketball for James, etc. In contrast to the two patterns, Kim’s distinct representations of music and piano as well as Rose’s representations of various genres of art, such as cartoon, visual art, and even video games and writing all indicate an understanding of communication and self-expression as multimodal.

Identity is represented as multifaceted, and in some cases, positionings are incongruent. Identity in this study is defined as how one sees oneself and how one thinks others see them, in other words, their self-
positionings and the positionings from others. Predominantly, participants represent identities as characteristic positionings, using different types of descriptors and mostly adjectives. However, there is also an inclusion of role positionings, often connected to CoP membership and participation, hence potentially providing some insight into the significance of each CoP to them.

Although not consistent across all participants, there is incongruence between self-positionings and positionings imposed by others. Rose’s portrait is a good example of this. Not only does she include far more positionings from others in her portrait, but most of these positionings from others are also more positive than her self-positionings. The incongruence in positioning can also be found simply within one’s self-positionings. For instance, Kim represents both “talent” and “hardworking” on the hands of the body silhouette, overlapping with the representation of “piano” as a communicative resource. However, “talent” is on the raised hand, while “hard-working” is on the lowered hand. The symbolic differences are further explored during the interview, where she distinguishes the two positionings with visibility. Even though both positionings are associated with her identity as a pianist. Most see her as talented, while she thinks her achievement comes from her hard-working characteristic.

Various semiotic resources are adopted to give meanings to representations. In addition to the languages, colors, and symbolic meanings of the body silhouette parts, all participants make use of semiotic resources to give meanings to specific representations. For example, a symbol representing the heart is used by every participant, other than Martha, to represent a language (Kim, James, Rose) or an aspect of identity (Helen) that is significant to them. Rose includes the symbols of a pencil and a brush to represent her writing and artistic communicative resources, while Helen includes the symbol of a pair of glasses to highlight eye contact as a means of communication and self-expression.

As will be demonstrated below, many of these findings echo those from other processes of analysis, but there are also disparities in representations and positionings that may shed more light than can the congruences.
Core Findings from the Visual & Multimodal Analyses

Select visual and multimodal data were analyzed because of their relevance to the personal narratives and/or the corresponding interview segments. These data are presented in Table 4.5. Following the table is a presentation of the core findings from the analyses. I used the elements of visual grammar proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) to analyze the visual and multimodal data from Table 4.5. The findings are presented in accordance with the three structures in their model.

Table 4.5. Visual & Multimodal Data
**Representational Structures.** The CoP photos from Kim, James, and Helen, on their own, construct narratives. They may represent a fragment or fragments of a story related to their CoP membership and/or participation. Taken together with their personal narratives and interview segments, these images serve important illustrative functions. Specifically, they provide a visual representation of the experiences and relationships they have within their CoPs. According to Serafini (2014), representational structures are used to “convey meanings, construct narratives, and suggest conceptual relationships” (p.62). James’ CoP photos are an example where a meaning of personal achievement in the CoP is communicated. Helen’s CoP photos, on the other hand, construct the visual narrative of transnational affiliations and social ties that are further explored in her personal narrative and the interview. James’ multimodal artwork, a video that depicts his two contrasted daily routines in the U.S. versus in Taiwan, representationally conveys the meaning of personal transformation and suggests the concept of cultural differences between two educational systems.

**Interpersonal Structures.** Interpersonal structures emphasize the relationship between an image and the viewer (Serafini, 2014). Similar to the second-level positioning in the narrative positioning analysis portion, these visual and multimodal data serve significant representational functions as demonstrated in the previous section, but at the same time, they are also selected to create certain relationships with the viewer, in this context, the researcher. Kim’s CoP photo, for example, creates a different relationship than James’. In the former, the human subject is dis-identified, with no face revealing, and the object, the piano, seems to become the subject. There is also a stuffed animal in the image. It may have been used to represent the human subject through a process of visual personification. Both interpretations show a lack of relationship projection in the photo. James’ photos, on the other hand, are not dis-identified (in the original version). He is placed front and center in the image, visibly depicted as the subject in the image. However, the relationship it creates through the subject’s gaze is not drastically different from that created by Kim’s photo. James selected these photos, where the subject does not
have a direct eye contact with the viewer(s) to potentially position the viewer(s) as outsiders, onlookers, and voyeurs looking in on the actions being depicted, which could be a reflection of his idea of the projection of relationships between the researched (him) and the researcher (I).

The graphic artworks from Rose and Helen are also noteworthy in this category. As explained in the corresponding interviews, both Rose and Helen convey a significant self-positioning as an artist through the sharing of their artworks. In Rose’s case, it is a digital drawing that represents a quote from a fictional text, created as an assignment. In Helen’s case, it is a collection of photographs of natural scenery and landscapes, created to process and reflect her emotions. In other words, the interview engagement allows these images to take on additional relationships due to the interactive meaning-making about them between the image creator and the viewer.

**Compositional Structures.** Compositional structures focus on “how visual elements relate to one another, how they are organized spatially, and how they are positioned relatively” (Serafini, 2014, p. 65). For this category, James’ CoP photos and those of Helen provide a meaningful contrastive illustration of salience as well as individuality and collectivity. In James’ photos, he is depicted as the subject, placed in the foreground and the center in relation to the other two characters in the photos. By selecting these photos to illustrate his membership and participation in a CoP, James communicates the salient role he plays in the CoP. Helen’s photos, on the other hand, depict the characters as a collective subject. No one in particular is singled out in terms of composition to indicate their different level of salience or individuality, other than in photo H1, where Helen herself is standing on the podium delivering a presentation about an event the CoP was about to put on. But even in the image of its original size, it is difficult to distinguish the person on the podium from the rest of the crowd in terms of their identity, and there is no way to tell if Helen is the presenter in the image unless a prior acquaintance has been made with Helen in the real world. Therefore, the two compositions in these two sets of images convey different meanings of CoP participation and establish different relationships with the viewer.
Conclusion

I began this chapter with a brief review of the research purpose and design as a way to transition into the introduction of the data analytic process, where I elaborated on each of the four stages, along with all the steps and procedures, involved in the analysis. I also explained the rationale for structuring the findings as positioning profiles, which constitute the majority of this chapter, and as thematic connections, which will begin the following chapter along with their discussion and implications for educational practitioners. I ended this chapter with a presentation of the findings from portrait and visual/multimodal analyses because the findings play a connecting and illustrative role in the profiles displayed in this chapter and the connections to be presented in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 5

THEMATIC CONNECTIONS, DISCUSSION, AND CONCLUSION

In Chapter 4, I first described the process and procedures I had adopted to analyze the found and produced visual and verbal narrative artifacts collected from each informant through a questionnaire, a language identity portrait, and an interview. Specifically, with narrative positioning analysis and Labovian analysis of the informants’ submitted personal narratives and the corresponding interview segments, I created a series of positioning profiles, each depicting one informant (but simultaneously representing the others in various positioning aspects) and how she or he positions themselves in relation to themselves in different configurations of time and space, in relation to others in their social and academic communities of practice, and in relation to the dominant discourses and master narratives the society imposes on them.

In general, the positionings in these profiles illustrate that the collective identity of Asian transnational adolescent students is multifaceted, dynamic, and subject to change, reflecting the conceptual framework guiding this study, i.e., the post-structuralist view of second language learning and use (Pavlenko, 2001, 2002b, 2004). The five students position themselves as strategically cultivating their future selves; as developing agency within a collective of transnational affiliations; as negotiating aspects of identity dilemmatically within and across communities of practice; as developing a situated understanding about communicative competence; and as negotiating between resistance against social expectations and desire for social connections.

In addition to the positioning analysis of personal narratives of the five informants, I also conducted analyses of the language identity portraits and the visual/multimodal artifacts from them. The portrait analysis revealed the following: communicative resources are represented as multimodal and involving nuanced connections to identities and sociocultural realities; identities are represented as multifaceted, and positionings as incongruent across interactions; semiotic affordances are evident in
their representations of communicative resources and identities. Furthermore, the analysis of the representational, interpersonal, and compositional structures of the visual and multimodal artifacts the informants shared showed that these youths construct and convey meanings and stories of themselves and their multifaceted lives via different modalities of communication.

In the remaining parts of this chapter, I will first present the thematic connections as a synthesis of the findings from the thematic analysis and the findings from the other analyses reported in Chapter 4 and summarized above. After synthesizing these findings, I will interpret their meanings and explain their relevance in the context of this study’s research questions as well as in connection to previous research in similar lines of inquiry. Concurrently, based on the discussion, I will make recommendations in terms of the research and practices surrounding the education of transnational multilingual learners in U.S. secondary schools. Finally, as a conclusion to this dissertation, I will discuss the limitations of the current study and highlight its significance in the overall research areas of language, literacy, and education in transnational contexts.

**Findings: Thematic Connections**

Through a general inductive analytic approach (Thomas, 2006), I conducted a thematic analysis by coding and analyzing the data sets from the five informants. By the end of the thematic analytic process, I had arrived at seven main themes of findings, including: (1) social networks and CoP membership; (2) CoP participation and personal transformations; (3) positioning self as multifaceted; (4) positioning others and dominant discourses (merged from two original themes); (5) language learning as language socialization; (6) language as the site of identity construction and negotiation; (7) positioning language and communication. Figure 5.1 is a thematic map that visually represents the seven themes as well as their relationships with the sub-topics. Below, I present these themes and connect the findings with those from the other analyses described in Chapter 4.
Social Networks & CoP Membership

A major theme of findings is centered around the membership, participation, and interactions in CoPs. For example, one of these findings is about how the five participants in this study gained membership into their various CoPs. A commonality regarding this is that their CoP membership was mostly initiated by and/or for social networks, but networking was usually not the sole factor. For example, Kim joined the Japanese club in her school at her friend’s suggestion, but she further elaborated on the main reason behind her decision to join:

Um, so I kind of like my friend asked me do you want to join the [Japanese] club with us like that and I’m the person who kind of interested in Japan, too, because I love Japan. I love like the food...
there and the culture. I think that's so like... That's like... Their country is kind of like beautiful and like excellent. I love it.

This quote shows that social networking may be the initiator for CoP membership, but it is still grounded in personal interests in the practices within the CoP. Also noteworthy is that Kim had another reason that supported her decision to join the Japanese club. She explained that her options for CoP were limited because sports were out of the question. She elaborated, “... my parents and myself kind of concerned about the sports because, like my hands, like if I broke my hands, or I have injured my hands, or it's just a small scratch, like, I cannot play the piano.” She took into account factors associated with her aspirational self when making decisions about CoP membership. This is aligned with how she positioned herself in the personal narrative and the various interview segments as intentionally and strategically preparing herself for the future.

Whereas Kim’s CoP membership was initiated by social networking, i.e., recruited by her friend, the main driving force for CoP membership in Rose’s and Martha’s cases was a need for social networking. Martha was a transfer student, and she arrived in the middle of the year. She explained that most people were busy with preparing for the graduation or for their finals at that time, and most new students had already established their social circles; therefore, it was challenging for her to meet new friends. At a friend’s suggestion, she signed up to become part of the Key Club, a community service student organization where her only friend at that time was a member. She made the decision, not only because of her friend’s recommendation but also due to a need to expand her own social circle and a wish to strategically satisfying the community service requirement for graduation. Martha also signed up for another CoP, the IB program, under the suggestion from some friends because she was “unfamiliar with the IB and AP systems in the U.S.”, but the outcome was a different kind of CoP experience when she realized that her English proficiency was not sufficient for her to succeed in the program.
English proficiency also played a part in Rose’s CoP membership and participation. For Rose, the motivating factors were more complex. When asked to explain how she became part of the concert band in her school, she recalled her freshman self, whom she positioned as someone with low English proficiency but also someone with enthusiasm and competence for playing the piano. She wanted a group where she could “fit in” and had a chance to make friends and practice English, and she chose the concert band. Her participation in the concert band led to an unexpected development and transformation in her self-positioning, which I will present below along with examples of other personal transformations.

**CoP Participation & Personal Transformations**

Rose chose to enter the concert band because she believed her identity and skills as a pianist would allow her to fit in and contribute to the practice of the group. However, when she entered the concert band, she found out there were already five or six students playing the piano. Therefore, she decided to learn to play a new instrument and chose the flute, an instrument that was completely new to her. She encountered some challenges while learning to play the flute. At this time, a CoP connection, another Chinese international student, who was a senior and had been an excellent flute musician in the school, came to her aid and facilitated the process of Rose’s personal transformation. This is how she described the outcome of her evolution from being completely new to the instrument to being selected to play in an important school event:

At the end of my first year, I learned a lot from being in the concert band and how to like practice my flute skill. And the most important thing for me is we do have like spring musical for students who can like perform, and I think only the most talented and skillful students can join the pit band who can like play for those students who perform on the stage, so I’ve been chosen. I’m being the one who can play in that band. At that time, I only practiced my flute skills for only about two years, I was really surprised, surprised at this opportunity for me.
Rose’s accomplishment as a flute player and this newly developed identity largely resulted from the interactions she established through the concert band CoP.

This personal transformation also occurred for James as a result of CoP participation and interactions. He explained, “I think I become more proactive and talkative and more sociable with people, doing those things. And I think I would never become that if I just joined the school and do all the academic part.” By “those things”, James was referring to the various CoPs he was involved in. Through the interactions, he gained new self-positionings as more “proactive”, “talkative”, and “sociable”. These new self-positionings are aptly illustrated by his personal narrative and video artwork. As described in his personal narrative, similar to Rose’s experience, James’ encounter and interactions with a more skillful other in his CoP also contributed partially to his transformed self, an athlete who had overcome the challenges and became more confident and competent practitioner in his CoP. His video artwork, on the other hand, demonstrated the kind of personal transformations that was more connected to the experience of studying abroad rather than the specific experiences in a CoP. The video features a comparison of his daily routines between the U.S. and his home country, Taiwan. He positioned his Taiwanese self as being subject to the social expectation of a student’s life with every day filled with academic work and almost non-existent CoP participation. The interview excerpt above expressed his opinion about the potential consequence of “all work (study) and no play (CoP participation)”: not gaining those new positionings.

**Positioning Self as Multifaceted & Dynamic**

James’ evolving self-positionings fit into another theme of findings, which focuses on how the informants positioned themselves in relation to themselves, to others in their CoPs, and to space and time. James’ video artwork is an example where he imaginatively positioned himself in relation to himself in two different spaces synchronically. In addition to positioning themselves as evolving or transformed, there are also several examples of findings where participants’ self-positionings are
multifaceted, dynamic, and sometimes, even dilemmatic. James’ positioning profile illustrates this concept of dilemmatic selves within and across CoPs quite effectively, but thematic connections across data sources showed that Kim’s own representations of her dynamic identities as both a musician and a music teacher were at times dilemmatic. When asked to clarify whether she saw herself as hardworking, she responded:

For me, in daily life, I'm not a hardworking person, but in piano I think I'm kind of a hardworking person because in daily life, I am kind of lazy. Like you say, like you have to clean your room, like every single day, no, I am not going to do that, or you have to do it every single day, no I’m not so... I don’t see myself as a hardworking person because I’m not but with my interest and what I like, I will be hardworking for that, like piano.

Kim distinguished between her piano-playing self and her regular self as dynamically different. This self-positioning as a hard-working pianist became even more complex when she was prompted to further choose between hardworking and talented as the more appropriate descriptor for her pianist identity as represented in her language identity portrait. There appeared to be a conflict in positionings, where Kim saw herself as more hardworking, while others thought of her as talented in piano playing.

These positioning conflicts are not uncommon among these transnational youths both within their self-positionings and between those and others’ positionings of them. Martha’s personal narrative about how she tried to quit the IB program after enrolling herself is an example of the incongruence of positioning. She explained in her personal narrative, “And at that time, it’s a stress for me because when I joined the IB program, I haven't got to U.S. for a year, so my English ability is not good enough, but the teacher thinks I'm enough.” And a little further on in the same narrative, she added, “The administration kept me in the program since many other international students were dropping from the IB program and as I was the most academic achieving international student, they wanted me to stay unless I started failing my subjects.” Not only do these statements show a disparity in positionings on the surface, but
according to the second-level positioning analysis, Martha also managed to position herself as a victim of the system represented by the teacher and the administration.

**Positionings of Others**

In addition to self-positionings, another theme of findings surrounds the informants’ positionings of other members in their CoPs and those in their transnational social networks as well as their positionings of the dominant discourses and master narratives imposed on them by the society. These transnational youths’ positionings of others are found across different data sources and are usually carried out in contrast to their self-positionings. For example, in Martha’s first personal narrative, she wrote, “I found myself passively following the daily schedule that my mother planned for me.” In positioning herself as the passive recipient of her mother’s planning, Martha positions her mother, just like she does for the teacher and administration in her second personal narrative, as the one with authority and agency in their relationship.

Similarly, when Kim was asked to explain how others thought of her in the music club, with a shy and almost embarrassing laugh, she answered, “I think as a good piano player because I think… Like I am one of the good piano players.” She didn’t stop with that self-positioning. She went on to contrast the self-positioning with a positioning of others in her CoP:

I think, because, like actually the students here, like they’re good at some instruments, like they’re good at many instruments, but not the best. You know, they know a little bit, a little bit, a little bit, but not everything like about one instrument and really like outstanding like that, just a little bit a little bit, so I think I’m like a great piano player, maybe yeah...

Just as Martha positions her mother, teacher, and the school administration as the authoritative and powerful to highlight her lack of agency in the particular CoP interactions, Kim positions the other students in the music club as “jacks of all trades but masters of none” to emphasize her uniqueness and her excellent piano skills.
From the perspective of language socialization, those whom these transnational youths interact with in their CoPs comprise not only multilingual individuals like the other international students similar to themselves but also monolingual English speakers, with whom the youths interact in order to acquire English as linguistic capital. These monolingual speakers also received a variety of positionings from the international adolescent students in this study, one of which is that of a language socializer. For instance, her positioning profile in the previous chapter detailed how Rose positioned her host family, especially the host mother, as the enforcer of language management and policy at home. Similarly, James explained that he chose a high school in Maine not simply because it offered a basketball scholarship that allowed him to study in the U.S., but more specific to his choice of a rural region of Maine, he further elaborated:

I was having this program in Taiwan, and then there are a few options that we can come to America to join the basketball team for scholarship’s purpose. And then I just choose [anonymized school] because it was in Maine, and in other schools, there are more Asians, so I think this environment is going to make me fit with the whole English environment better. James considered not only Maine but also his particular school to be an ideal environment for English socialization due to a character of his imagined community before he even set foot on the U.S.: a small Asian population.

Kim also shared her positioning of the local community surrounding her school but from a retrospective perspective as a senior about to graduate. As a response to a thread of questions about experiences of raciolinguistic discrimination, Kim shared this positioning of the local community by comparing it with her home country’s society:

Like people here... They are nice... They are so so so friendly, I swear, like they are... They will be there if you need them. Like you say, oh, can you help me with this? Of course, they will help you, but in Vietnam, they are more like... they are more suspicious, and they are more like afraid
of dangers... But in here they are like open with everyone... Like everyone is nice and everyone
are good people... The community here, they are more friendly, they are more like talkative... In
Vietnam, they’re all almost like timid.

The local community is positioned as “nice”, “friendly”, “talkative” and helpful people that are “open to
strangers”, compared to people in her home country whom she positioned as “suspicious” and “timid”.

All of these differential positionings in the interview setting are also connected to her positioning profile
about her aspirational self, which she sees to be located in the U.S. in the future. However, the
positioning of the local community in Kim’s comment below conveys another layer of meaning beyond
the positive descriptors she provided above:

I think that people here if you’re not good at something, they are still nice. They still say nice
things for you, like, ‘It’s fine. Your English will develop.’ Like that, or ‘It’s nice like your English is
good,’ like that, so I did not get through any like bad situation... I don’t know... They always say
the nice things, so sometimes I am really confused about myself am I really good or not like
that...

This quote from Kim simultaneously communicated two sides of the same positioning of the host
community about language socialization: unhelpfully encouraging.

Responses to Incidents of Raciolinguistic Discrimination

Also common in the theme of experiences grounded in identity are findings about the
informants’ responses to raciolinguistic discrimination they have either personally experienced or
observed. Even though none of the five participants explicitly shared any personal experiences of
marginalization based on their raciolinguistic identities in their personal narratives as well as language
identity portraits and visual/multimodal artifacts, Rose’s personal narrative about her interactions with
the host family is an example of experiences subjected to the monolingual ideology. In the interview,
when asked about personal experiences of discrimination, only one of them was able to specifically cite an example of microaggression. Helen shared a personal experience:

I remember I went to Hannaford one time, and it was like I think it was the beginning of COVID. We went there... I went there with my friend, and when we walked into Hannaford. Like back at that time, American people hadn't like worn face masks and stuff, and just go out like normal days, but like we were wearing our face masks. And when we walked into Hannaford, people there like, they started to just stay away from us, and they pulled their T-shirts and coats to cover their mouth and nose because we were there, like they did that in front of us, and, like me and my friends all saw that. It was kind of weird.

Helen came to the U.S. in her junior year. Like Kim, she was relatively new to the U.S., compared to the others, and only she was able to recall this specific incident. The others either cited vague memories of experiences or observations or did not believe discrimination would exist in their respective schools.

Kim, whose positionings of the local community discussed above, continued to hold the same positive beliefs about members of her school. She shared:

There’s so many Korean students, and there’s so many international like Asian students in general, so I don’t think my school have the discrimination case or discrimination like action from the other students or the other teachers or something, because they are kind of like...

They’re generous and friendly, so I don't think they have any like hate for any student like that...

In addition to the teachers’ and local students’ kind and friendly nature, Kim also cited the racial composition of her school to legitimize here argument. Similarly, when asked about whether he had experienced discrimination, he explained, “I never experienced that [discrimination]. I think if you don't see yourself as a special or different person, I don't think usually people think of you like that.”
**Positionings of Language & Communication**

**Communicative Burden.** Communicative burden is generally understood to be the responsibility shared by the interlocutors to ensure successful communication between them. It plays a role in a process that Lippi-Green (2012) calls “the language subordination process” (p.69). One of the examples she uses to illustrate this process is the decision native speakers of U.S. English make when being confronted with an accent that is foreign to them. In other words, they can decide whether or not they should participate. According to Lippi-Green, it is commonly observed that speakers of the dominant language feel completely empowered to reject sharing the responsibility, and to demand that the interlocutor with a foreign accent to carry most of the burden in a communicative act.

James’ attribution of discrimination to the victims themselves corresponds to his beliefs about communicative burden. The quote below is an example of how he positioned communicative burden between Asian international students and their American peers and teachers. When asked about the most common challenge faced by Asian international students, James replied, “Obviously, communication is the most challenging part that first came to American people.” He further elaborated on this:

> People don't tend to talk to you or make friends with you if they don't know what kind of person you are, the way you talk. And I think those activities or sports or even teams.... I mean you can just make people understand you more. And having more communication is a good way to face this kind of challenge.

This quote illustrates several layers of James’ ideas about language and communication, which reflect those of the other informants. First, James believed that Americans tended to associate Asian students with communicative barriers; therefore, they would be reluctant to make friends with Asian students since they could not understand them. Then, he believed it was up to the international students to make themselves understandable and that participation in CoPs was one way to improve upon this situation.
In other words, even though he believed that communicative burden should be shouldered by the Asian students, he also believed that communication is multimodal, as also illustrated in his language identity portrait, and that CoP participation would provide more opportunities for communication of different modalities to take place and therefore had the potential to bridge the gap between international students and their local student counterparts.

Similarly, Helen also attributed Asian international students’ most significant challenge to their language, accents to be specific, but she also believed that Asian students would be discriminated because of their race and ethnicity. However, different from James, Helen believed that communicative burden should be shared between the interlocutors:

I think it has to come from two ends, like from both of them [Americans and immigrants] because if you have the decision to come and live in the US, you have to make... to improve your English to the extent that other people can understand you. Also, at the same time, American people should only... They should not be too harsh on Asian people when they use English to communicate because it’s also a way of encouraging Asian people to get more involved in American people’s lives, so like to increase the diversity, so I think it has to come from two ends. Helen believed that adjustments needed to happen from both sides. While those new to a society need to do their best to learn the dominant language, those from the host society also need to be encouraging and welcoming to the newcomers, as way to increase the diversity in the society.

**Communicative Competence as Situated.** Another theme that is related to language and communication has to do with informants’ positionings and experiences of communicative competence which is defined by Milroy and Milroy (2012) as a person’s capacity to select and recognize the language variety appropriate to the communicative occasion. A major finding in this theme is that communicative competence is understood and experienced by the informants to be situated and dynamic. In one of her personal narratives and the interview, there were several cases where Martha positioned herself as an
international student with low English proficiency. However, this positioning of English proficiency was not always consistent. When asked to elaborate on the portion on her language identity portrait that dealt with academic English, she shared the following:

In our school, there’s English classes like literature, and we have to study for a novel. And I’m not good at reading lots of words in English. Yeah, and so I usually if I... If we read a novel, we will have to write a summary, or our opinions about that or an essay and I cannot do a good job expressing my thoughts because I usually cannot really understand what the novel is talking about. But for math, even though it can be hard, I can understand it. And other people, from a lot of countries, different countries will come to ask me because everyone knows that my math is good, and they will ask me, and I’ll teach them. And sometimes while teaching them, I have to speak English, right? But like, I don't really know how to say the correct math vocab, but during the process of teaching... while teaching others, I learn the math vocab... Like parabola is 拋物線 [parabola], right? At first, I don't know what is 拋物線的英文 [the English equivalent of parabola], and I just said, oh, the curvy line, or something like that, and like some Americans say, oh, you’re saying parabola, like that.

This quote from Martha shows that communicative competence in terms of academic English is understood and experienced differently across subject matters. Martha shared a few other examples during the interview to explain why mathematics is more comprehensible to her compared to English and History because math is more universal, i.e., less context dependent. Therefore, it allows her to tap into the semiotic resources already in her communicative repertoire. The example of this in the quote above is the terminology of parabola, which can be expressed through either the drawing or verbal description of a curve line. In other words, Martha’s communicative competence may be perceived differently across these academic CoPs because of the different levels of access to semiotic resources.
Another example where communicative competence is understood and experienced to be situated is from James. When asked whether he had ever been judged for the way he used English, James responded by referring to the multilingual environment of the dormitory he had lived in as an international student, “I don't think so because um... I live in the dorm, and there’s some people that have good English that can communicate with somebody, and there’s some people that are not. I think I’m in the middle.” Even though the quote points to the situatedness of the physical space where English is used, rather than perceiving the varieties of English he heard as different, James still assigned assessment to not only his own communicative competence but also that of others in the dorm.

**Communication as Multimodal.** Perhaps the most dominant theme across different data sources in this study is the participants’ shared understanding of communication as multimodal. The thematic connections are mostly grounded in the language portraits produced by the informant. In these portraits, the youths not only represented their linguistic and communicative resources as multimodal, but they also tapped into various semiotic resources to represent their languages and means of communication and self-expression. In the interview setting, in addition to Martha’s example about the different levels of access to semiotic resources across school subjects, each of the other four participants also provided examples where non-linguistic means of communication had played a role for them, particularly in terms of their CoP practices. The following interview segment is an example from James:

I: So, let's take a look at this language portrait here. So maybe just talk to me. Talk to me about the languages that you put in this portrait, and what they mean to you, and why you chose those colors.

J: Um I put red as basketball because I think the passion of the game and everything, teammates. It's one of the most important things.

I: And you think of it as a language?
J: Yeah, it can be a language sometimes.

I: Can you say a bit more about that?

J: Just how you play shows about your, again, just like confidence and stuff. It can show more about you. It's not really the way you can communicate a lot. But I think you can show yourself to others what kind of person or what kind of skills you have.

I: So, like self-expression, like how you express yourself?

J: Yeah

The except shows that not only did James make use of semiotic resources, such as colors, in the context of the engagement, i.e., creating the portrait, but he also constructed the symbolic meaning of the color red and associated it with the concept of passion and further the practice of playing basketball, which he also considered to be a way of projecting self-expressions to other. Similarly, both Kim and Rose participated in musical CoPs, and both expressed the significance of music in communicating emotions. In Helen’s case, as discussed in the visual analysis of her artworks, a series of landscape photographs, the subject of her photography usually played a symbolic role. Helen explained it this way when I asked her why she liked to take pictures of the nature, “I think nature is um... Like the weather at that time is kind of a way to also reflect my feelings at that time yeah.”

Language as Site of Identity Construction & Negotiation

In terms of the role of language in identity construction and negotiation, the five informants together have displayed various subject positions in the various narrative and visual discourses in this study, including adolescent male, adolescent female, daughter, sister, girlfriend, basketball team captain, concert band flute player, outgoing dorm mate, future family business owner, future health care reformer, future music educator, and many more. Each of the five informants wore several hats in their life at the time of this study. For some of them, the use of any language, English for instance, was connected to the construction, negotiation, or even transformation of their identity or identities.
Martha’s examples illustrate this effectively. The above section about communicative competence as situated is also an example of how identity is constructed. Martha’s subject position as a student excelling in mathematics provided her with a very different communicative experience and self-concept than as a student struggling to understand a novel and complete a writing assignment based on that novel. Therefore, it can be said that Martha constructed a separate communicative identity related to mathematics, one where she felt confident in her communicative competence.

Kim also explained how English learned in different contexts, e.g., English as a foreign language in her home country and English as a second language here in the U.S. contributed to her development of a new persona. Living and studying in the U.S. allowed her to experience English not just as she learns it but also as she uses it. Because of that, in the U.S., she had a chance to experience English more colloquially, following fewer or less rigid rules. Consequently, she became more open and friendly.

In both Marth’s and Kim’s cases, a new identity or subject position was developed while they were engaged in acts of languaging.

**Language Learning as Language Socialization**

**Language Socialization through Interactions.** The last thematic connections of findings are around the idea of learning through socialization, i.e., social interactions with other CoP members. In fact, several findings in the previous sections in this part of the chapter already illustrated this theme, e.g., Martha’s learning of mathematics terminology through teaching her peer. In the section about the motivation for gaining membership into a particular CoP, Rose was said to join the concert band because she wanted a group where she could fit in and also learn and practice English. In the interview, she explained how she went about practicing English through interactional processes that were similar to Martha’s described above:

After that student who teach me how to play flute, she graduated, after she graduated, so I’m the only international student in flute group, and because my skill is greater than other local
students, and sometimes I need to communicate with them and teach them how to play
although I’m not the group leader, there are some students in the flute group, they are nice to
me because I am great. And they want to be friends with me and talk to me, and I think it makes
me not be afraid to talk with local students.

This quote shows that CoP interactions provide opportunities for practicing English, but at the same
time, the shared CoP goals and experiences along with previously established relationships make it
psychologically more comfortable for transnational youths to engage with their CoP peers and to
practice English while interacting with each other.

In the section about communicative burden, James’ comment not only revealed his attitudes
toward communicative burden, but it also positioned CoP interactions as providing an opportunity for
international students to practice English and to get to know their American peers. According to James,
these are mutually beneficial. In other words, people interact to learn about each other, and the more
they know about each other, the easier it is to communicate with each other and to understand each
other.

In terms of social interactions for language socialization, Rose’s experiences were especially
noteworthy because of their diversity. She had experienced language socialization across various CoPs,
including the concert band, the Chinese club, her dorm community, etc., but the most memorable
experience of language socialization she had been subjected to was that of her host family. The
language socialization experience was documented in her personal narrative and also analyzed and
presented as part of her positioning profile in Chapter 4. This intentional and strict implementation of
language socialization imposed on her not only the language but also the sociocultural aspect of
communication, i.e., the practice of sharing about one’s day at the dinner table.

**Outcomes of Language Socialization.** The final set of findings that belong to the theme of language
learning as language socialization are about the outcomes of language socialization. The informants
explicitly and implicitly shared their perspective about the importance of the English language, not only for their current being as transnational adolescent students in American high schools and universities, but also as an investment for their future transnational selves. In other words, whether proactively seeking opportunities of social interactions in order to increase and solidify their English proficiency or passively accepting the language management of the language socializers, these youths mostly positioned English as a language with significant symbolic capital and therefore the accumulation of the symbolic capital of English as an important mission during their American secondary school education. These positionings could be found in representations across different data sources.

Linguistic Capital. For instance, when explaining why he had chosen Maine as the destination of his study during the interview, James attributed the state’s ideal environment for English learning to its lower level of raciolinguistic diversity. When prompted to elaborate on why English was important to him, James answered, “It’s important because, as you know, English, it’s a common language in the whole world. And I believe learning this language could help me in the future of my work or just on any way to my future.” This belief of English as a universal language was also held by Helen. And her positioning of English as a language commonly used by all peoples of the world further illustrated the transnational root of this language ideology. Helen explained:

I put English here [in the portrait]. It’s because I think it’s one of the most... like most commonly used languages in the world. And like, I, myself, when I was still living in Vietnam, I used English, I think I used English more than Vietnamese. I only used Vietnamese to like... to talk to people, and I used English for most of my study, and like for searching for information online.

This quote shows Helen’s differential positionings of the two languages: English and Vietnamese. The sentence constructions of “… English more than Vietnamese” and “only used Vietnamese to..., and I used English for most of…” both illustrate the different amounts of symbolic capital Helen attributed to the two languages.
English’s symbolic capital was depicted as something more idiosyncratic and ideological in James’ discourse, i.e., English as helpful for his future career, but he did not specify how exactly the language would be helpful in that context. On the contrary, Martha, who saw returning to her own country to inherit the family business as the main goal, did not associate English with her distant future as much as her immediate future as a college and graduate student in the U.S., where English would be a means of learning. Helen’s positioning of English’s symbolic capital was a little more tangible. She pinpointed how English would be essential for her study by allowing her to access a wider array of information on the Internet.

Among the five informants, only Rose emphasized a positioning of English for her current study in a secondary school in the U.S. Especially salient was her positioning of English as the symbolic capital for institutional access and the standardized tests of English, such as the TOEFL test she repeated referenced in the interview, as a gate-keeping mechanism for institutions, such as her high school and the universities she was applying to, which she could only pass through with the symbolic capital gained from the accumulated English proficiency.

**Discussion**

The thematic connections above served as a synthesis of the findings derived from the various analyses of the data sets. In drawing connections among the themes, I made references to specific interview segments or other types of data, such as the language identity portraits, the visual and multimodal artifacts, and the informants’ personal narratives. In the following part of Chapter 5, I will first review the research problem, purpose, and questions of this study. Following that, in reference to the research questions, I will explore and interpret the meanings emerging from both within and across the positioning profiles and thematic connections. Furthermore, I will consider these meanings in the context of current and previous scholarship of relevance. Concurrent to that, I will make recommendations for educational research and practices. The recommendations provided below are
formulated based on the discussion and interpretation of the findings from this study and are by no means meant to be one-size-fits-all. These recommendations highlight the unique nuances of the intersectional raciolinguistic identities of the participants in this study, thereby creating space for awareness of alternative lived experiences of adolescent students in American high schools. Finally, as the conclusion to this chapter as well as the dissertation, I will state the limitations and highlight significance of this current study.

**Review of Research Problem, Purpose, & Questions**

There are several problems associated with the educational research and practices targeting international students in the U.S. First, relatively little scholarly attention has been paid to the younger and often unaccompanied international students. Furthermore, there still exists many problematic representations about Asian international students in educational settings, including educational research. Recognizing the gap constituted by these problems, I set out to conduct this research study which features a group of five Asian international secondary students in Maine’s high schools. The study specifically explored their identities and experiences of language learning and use across their various communities of practices, i.e., the social, academic, and extracurricular groups of which they were members. By posing a set of research questions and answering them through this study based on narrative inquiry, I recruited these five students’ personal accounts of their beliefs and experiences, the purpose of which was to counter and inform the majoritarian narratives underlying the problematic representations mentioned above. These research questions will be answered below with reference to the thematic connections from the first part of this chapter: In what ways do a group of Asian transnational adolescent students perceive and experience identities and language socialization as they navigate their participation across different communities of practice (CoPs) in their American high schools? How do these students perceive and experience interactions with the other members from their CoPs? How do these students perceive and experience language socialization across different
CoPs? How do their identities form and transform across different CoPs and through the language socialization processes?

**Perceptions & Experiences of Interactions across CoPs**

In this study, through the lens of narrative positioning analysis, I explored the five informants’ perceptions and experiences of interactions with the other members from their communities of practice. This allowed for a multidimensional understanding of the multifaceted CoP interactions of these transnational youths. Specifically, the youths experienced CoP membership as grounded in and/or expanding (inter)personal social networks. They perceived the CoP interactions as transformative in terms of the developments in identities, CoP-related skills, and English proficiency. Overall, these findings are aligned with previous research about how learning occurs within CoPs. Specifically, according to Iddings (2005), within a CoP, learning is situated within an activity, context, and culture; it is viewed as a process where members of the CoP become socialized into the jargon, behavior, norms and belief systems of the social group; through engaging in the practices of the community, not only do the members develop new concepts and skills, but they also experience the formation and transformation of identities. These are the basic tenets of situated learning through legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Although at one point, this view of learning as a social and participatory process within communities of practice was revolutionary under the backdrop of the belief that learning was merely the reception and accumulation of knowledge, when it comes to understanding the identities and experiences of the transnational youths represented in this study, all of whom occupy more than one subject position in their lives and navigate across social networks that span across borders, this view of learning as situated and participatory is essential but insufficient. I argue that when considering these international teenagers’ learning through the perspective of CoP participation and interactions, it is imperative to take into account the following factors, in order to gain a fuller understanding of their experiences of learning and socialization in particular communities. Below, I discuss these factors.
**Differential Access to Participation, Inequitable Access to Learning.** When it comes to learning by participating in communities of practice, access to participation and in turn to learning is often influenced by the social positions which a learner or CoP participant occupies. Therefore, not everyone enjoys the same level of access to every community of practice or opportunity of learning. Study-abroad itself is a telling example. Just like the South Korean sojourner participants in Song's (2012) study about the language and literacy practices in South Korean transnational families, most Asian transnational adolescent students who are able to spend a year or two, or even the whole high school career in the U.S., come from middle-class families who can afford to invest in an oversea education for their children to help them gain the symbolic capital for upward mobility in the society, especially if the youths end up returning to their home countries, where the English language and educational credentials from Western countries are highly valued for their symbolic capital that can be transformed into tangible economic capital in the global market. Therefore, not every family has the capacity to usher their children into this community of transnational education. Even among the five informants in this study, there existed a resource gap. Some had to rely on scholarships; some could only afford to attend their American high schools for a year or two before applying to colleges and universities; some had siblings on the same transnational educational journeys. These socioeconomic disparities among the participants may have also contributed to the differential sense-making and responses of the participants during this study.

Transnational families have different levels of monetary resources to deploy when supporting their youngsters’ transnational education. Similarly, in an educational system where English plays a hegemonic role, multilingual learners, equipped with different amounts of linguistic capital, may have different yet limited levels of access to various language and literacy forms and practices that are essential to language development as well as meaningful and successful membership in academic communities (Gutierrez & Larson, 1994). This finding from Guiterrez and Larson’s study echoes the
experiences of some focal informants in this study. Most prominently, Rose’s personal narratives, her self-representations in her portrait, and the interview segments all contain concrete examples where her level of English proficiency, perceived by herself and by others, interfered with not only her participation in her social and academic communities but also her self-positionings. This interference with self-positionings could have, in return, led to a lower level of investment and participation, hence creating a vicious circle. Similarly, this was the case for Martha, when she chose to enroll in the IB program but did not have sufficient English proficiency to benefit fully and meaningfully from the participation in the program community and thus even suffered substantially in her grades.

**CoP Practice as/for Communicative Affordance.** In an English-dominant environment, the transnational youths often do not enjoy equitable access to full and meaningful participation in their social and academic communities because their raciolinguistic and many other statuses are not aligned with the environmental constraints. However, as put forth by many proponents of culturally responsive pedagogy (e.g., Gay, 2000; Hammond, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Snyder & Staehr Fenner, 2021), it is essential that education for the multilingual learners be operated from an asset-based approach. Based on this belief and on the findings from this study, I argue that despite the dominance of the English language, the five adolescent students’ individual achievement in the practice of a particular CoP as well as the associated skills and knowledge has become a communicative affordance for them when they interact with the other CoP members. For instance, Rose shared an experience of her becoming the most skillful flute player in the concert band after the flute player who trained her had graduated, and because of that, many band members, especially those interested in improving their flute skills would consult Rose how to do so. Accord to Rose, this gave her opportunities to practice and use English while communicating with local students. Martha’s example is very similar, although it was an academic practice that became her communicative affordance, specifically the language of mathematics. For James, it was his devotion to refining his basketball skills and his leadership as a team captain. Even
though Helen and Kim had spent relatively shorter time in their CoPs, their outstanding accomplishment, respectively in mathematics for Helen in her school’s math team and in music and piano performance for Kim in her school’s music program, should not be deemed as any less significant for their communication and interactions with others in their CoPs.

Despite their significant contribution to these youths’ social and communicative connectedness and well-being, these practice-based communicative affordances have not seemed to be fully recognized by educators as accounting for the communicative competence of multilingual learners. This, along with the tendency for a monolingual educational system to focus on the acquisition and proficiency of the dominant language as well as to rely on the standardized testing of the language as a gatekeeping mechanism, makes it difficult for educators to see and appreciate the whole reservoir of communicative resources multilingual students bring with them to school, let alone know how to build on these resources to help the students succeed. I will continue exploring the importance of expanding the conception of communicative competence in the next section in relation to the informants’ perceptions and experiences with language socialization.

**Recommendations for Educational Research & Practice.** The discussion above reinforces the need for educators to understand adolescent students’ desire to be in community with others and the significance of social interactions for the students’ learning. This is especially true for the students with any configuration of minoritized statuses. Because the mainstream education is not designed with them in mind, the students often must jump through many hoops in order to find any sense of belonging and become academically successful at all. With this in mind, not only should educators strive to create opportunities to involve all learners in learning by doing in the classroom, but they also must work either individually or collectively to remove or reduce the barriers that stand in the way of their multilingual students. One way to work toward this goal requires the educators to intentionally connect the students’ lives in multiple parallel universes, or their chronotopic beings, with learning. Educators also
need to develop a more diverse and situated understanding of academic and communicative competence and actively seek or create opportunities to recognize and encourage further development of the students’ multiple communicative affordances, especially those integral to the students’ core identities.

**Perceptions & Experiences of Language Socialization across CoPs**

The relationship between CoP participation and language socialization cannot be overemphasized. As in the previous section, I will point out how the participants’ perceptions and experiences regarding language learning and use intersect with their CoP involvement and interactions. Specifically, I will explore some emerging ideas associated with the following concepts: language ecology and symbolic competence (Kramsch & Whiteside, 2008), transnational funds of knowledge for literacy practices (Skerrett, 2012, 2018; Skerrett & Bomer, 2013), as well as some dominant ideologies associated with English and English learning in the context of this study.

**Language Socialization in a Landscape of Practice**. But before I delve into the above-mentioned, I believe an equally urgent task is to examine the concept of communities and its appropriateness for examining the identities and experiences of language learning and use, especially in multilingual settings like those in this study. On the surface, the findings from this study may not deviate substantially from previous studies about the same subject matters if the focus remains logocentric. However, if the focus is shifted to the youths’ multiple semiotic resources, both linguistic and nonverbal, the findings from this study then echo the calls from some scholars of applied linguistics and educational studies to problematize logocentrism, which is the tendency in much of current and previous educational research (cf. Kramsch & Whiteside, 2008; Martínez Hinestroza et al., 2022).

Transnational and multilingual students experience “border crossing” every day, crossing the boundaries to move from one community of practice to another, and sometimes from one nation state to another via telecommunication technologies, and while doing so, they are constantly engaged in
“language crossing”, a practice defined by Rampton (1995) to be “deviation from the linguistic norms of the speaker’s habitual speech” (p. 492). Consequently, the border crossing brings these students into contact with not only a diverse representation of peers and teachers but also a diverse representation of symbolic resources adopted and negotiated during the interactions. Most of these symbolic resources are grounded in the practice of a CoP, e.g., music for Kim and Rose, basketball for James, mathematics for Helen and Martha, etc. And as the youths cross boundaries and navigate through their various CoPs, these resources also adapt and are re-configurated to accommodate the communicative needs at hand.

I introduced the ideas of border and language crossing as a context for an argument I would like to make based on a set of findings of this study that are centered on the concept of language socialization. Socialization is defined as “a process by which a person becomes a competent member of society or their social group” (Rampton, 1995, p. 488). However, this conception of socialization has two assumptions. First, the groups are “socio-cultural totalities”; and second, there is a final “endpoint” for people to arrive at in terms of gaining expertise (p.488). These two assumptions make the socialization process especially problematic when it is applied to the acquisition of language through interactions in multilingual settings. I argue that in the context of this study, it is necessary to move beyond the periphery of a community to consider learning, or more specifically, language learning and socialization, as navigation through a landscape of practice (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2015) or as negotiating and interacting with others in a language ecology characterized by its multilinguals and their communicative practices (Kramsch & Whiteside, 2008). Both notions of landscape and ecology allow the complexity of memberships and interactions in transnational lives to come to the foreground and can accommodate the type of socialization that is multidirectional and contains processes that are less linear than the one traditionally defined (e.g., Rampton, 1995). More importantly, transnational youths usually have investments and see themselves in imagined communities in multiple global locations (Darvin & Norton, 2015; Pavlenko & Norton, 2007). Therefore, viewing language socialization as operating within a
complex system allows educators to understand what may impact these youths’ decision making about their present and future lives.

**Transnational Funds of Knowledge for Literacy Practice.** The personal narratives submitted by the five participants are important pieces for positioning analysis because of the context in which they were produced and disseminated with specific audiences in mind. In other words, these narratives were analyzed for the positionings of the story world within the narratives, but at the same time, they were also analyzed in the context of the interactive engagement within this study, for which they had been consciously selected by the informants to represent themselves and their experiences as transnational students.

In addition to projecting the significant positionings of these youths, these narratives also serve an important function. They are the vessels that carry their transnational memories and lived experiences, which in turn become significant funds of knowledge that the youths incorporated into their literacy practices, and in the context of this study, these literacy practices are situated within the production of evaluative texts, i.e., the college admission essays and high school writing assignments. In these narratives, the youths recruited memories of experiences from their multiple lifeworlds as tools for engaging with high-stake evaluative literacy practices of admission essays and assignments. They wrote about memories of accomplishment (e.g., Kim and the recognition she received from the audience at the end of her performance; James and the challenge he successfully overcame); memories of family and friends (e.g., Martha and her family’s business; Helen and her parents as well as friends and classmates from her home country); and memories of interactions and relationships within their American high school and community (e.g., Rose and her interactions with the host family and her school mates; James and his basketball team mates). These are common scripts based on the experiences, understandings, and frames of reference across two or more nations (Sánchez, 2009).
Many of these narratives are autobiographic in nature, and echoing the idea put forth by Pavlenko (2001), the personal narratives in this study are treated as a genre, the genre of cross-cultural autobiography, rather than a collection of unproblematic factual statements. According to Pavlenko (2001), cross-cultural autobiographic narratives are usually “shaped by historic, social, and cultural conventions of the time and place in which they are produced” (p. 320). Since these personal narratives are cross-cultural, in order to enter a dialogue successfully with readers from another culture, the authors have to construct their autobiographic selves in terms of the discourses recognizable by particular discursive communities and to adhere to particular constrains of the genre, which in turn builds on the youths’ capacity to engage with the academic literacy practices associated with the evaluative texts.

**Toward a View of Symbolic Competence.** In the previous section, I suggested that achievement in CoP-related practices should be viewed as constituting part of a student’s communicative competence, but this requires an effort to decentralize language in the mainstream dominant ideology about what it means and entails to be a competent communicator. According to Milroy and Milroy (2012), communicative competence refers to “the capacity of persons to select and recognize the language variety appropriate to the occasion” (p. 100). As shown in this definition, language, or specifically the selection of the appropriate language variety, is still considered the yardstick for a person’s communicative competence.

However, as illustrated by some of the findings from the positioning profiles and thematic connections, in communicative settings where multiple languages are used, the social actors often activate more than one communicative competence to help them engage in accurate, effective, and appropriate communication. These multilingual social actors are particularly capable of playing “with different linguistic codes and with the various spatial and temporal resonances of these codes” (Kramsch & Whiteside, 2008, p. 664). In other words, symbolic competence could be thought of as the ability to
shape the multilingual game in which one invests – the ability to manipulate the conventional categories and societal norms of truthfulness, legitimacy, seriousness, originality – and to reframe human thought and action.

**Dominant Ideologies of Language Learning & Use.** As revealed in the positioning profiles and thematic connections, dominant ideologies about the learning and use of the English language are prevalent in the informants’ narratives. The third-level narrative positioning analysis asks what dominant discourses or master narratives exist in the personal narratives and how the narrator of the narrative positions themselves in relation to these discourses or narratives. In addition to the written narratives, when responding to the interview questions, the informants also draw on similar discourses and narratives on occasions. Although not all dominant discourses they draw on are based on the dominant ideologies about the learning and use of the English language, some of them are interconnected and worth highlighting in the context of the recommendations that follow.

**Monolingualism.** According to Harmon and Wilson (2006), not only do these language-learning-related ideologies crucially influence the general attitudes toward immigrants as well as non-native speakers of English, but some also become myths that end up (mis)informing educational policies and practices. Therefore, it is of great significance that educators gain a deeper understanding of these ideologies and how they operate in the American society and its educational system. One example where language ideologies leave an impact on policies is the English Only movement. It is an endeavor to make English the mandated official language in the U.S. It “fuels the fire of resistance to immigrants, their languages and cultures, and complicates the educational decision-making about programs for English language learners” (Harmon & Wilson, 2006, p. 194). Monolingual ideologies underlying movements such as English Only often circulate in public discourses where the acquisition of the English language is framed as imperative for personal well-being and success, whereas other languages are constructed as problematic and detrimental to both individuals and the nation (Leeman, 2018). And this
is no exception for the transnational youths, almost all of whom show some signs of internalizing these dominant ideologies.

The most telling example of the monolingual mindset can be found in one of Rose’s personal narratives, where her host family operates from a perspective that regards the acquisition and mastery of English as the most essential and urgent task for Rose. As a result of that, a family activity that is originally social in nature, i.e., sharing about one’s own day at the dinner table, becomes a language management activity. However, since Rose is probably the only non-native speaker of English (or probably the only multilingual person) in the family, she does not have access to comparable communicative resources when English is mandated as the only language to be used at the table. The host family may have made the decision to implement that particular language policy because they have internalized the monolingual ideology. They may have done so for another reason, and that is due to the limited (and limiting) conception of communicative resources that is solely language-based.

**From Communicative to Semiotic or Symbolic Resources.** If other non-linguistic resources have been recognized as legitimate or even celebrated as effective and creative, the conception of communicative resources then becomes more expanded, and I argue this will, in turn, lead to a more expanded conception of a transnational multilingual student. In Rose’s first personal narrative, she depicts herself as mostly (if not solely) defined by her “communicative competence” by those around her even though she possesses a rich repertoire of “symbolic resources” such as her piano and flute skills (as demonstrated in the interview and language identity portrait) and her digital drawing skills (as demonstrated in her graphic artwork). Interestingly, when she describes the members of the host family, she depicts them as possessing and empowered by their non-linguistic symbolic resources, for example, the homestay sister for swimming, her homestay brother for video games, and her homestay father for guitar. The only exception is the antagonist of the story, the homestay mother, whom Rose
depicts as the representation of power and authority, but even so, Rose highlights her facial expressions, physical features, and posture as effective means of communicating the language policy.

**Other Language Ideologies.** Other than the prevalent ideology of monolingualism, there are also some ideologies related to the English language that are more implicit but still detectable in the informants’ personal narratives and discourses. The first of these more subtle ideologies is a raciolinguistic ideology found in James’ discourses about an ideal spatiality for the acquisition of English. Specifically, he attributes an ideal environment for English learning to a locality with minimal racial diversity, especially destinations “with few Asians”. There are several underlying assumptions embedded in James’ comment. The first has to do with the racialized identity of Asians and its associated positioning as the “perpetual foreigner”. This is the language ideology of nativeness, an ideology that divides the world into two mutually exclusive linguistic groups: the native versus the non-native speakers, an us-versus-them type of division (Lippi-Green, 2012).

In fact, the rationale conveyed by James for selecting Maine as the destination for oversea study is rooted in what Flores and Rosa (2015) conceptualizes as the raciolinguistic ideologies. These ideologies are concerned with the systemic stigmatization of racialized populations’ linguistic practices disregarding the extent to which these practices may conform to the standardized norms (Rosa & Flores, 2017). Some commonly referenced examples of interactions informed by a raciolinguistic ideology are the comment, “Your English is so good,” and the question, “Where are you REALLY from?” that are frequently experienced by Asian American individuals, most of whom are born in the U.S. and grow up speaking American English as a first language.

James’ raciolinguistically-informed decision shows that the raciolinguistic ideology of English learning and use has become an issue of a global scale. Numerous studies have explored the perceptions about the “ideal English speaker/teacher” as well as the experiences of racialized education expatriates, such as the non-white teachers who teach English as a second or foreign language in Asia (e.g., Grant &
Lee, 2009; Ramjattan, 2019; Rivers & Ross, 2013). Findings from these studies indicate that the global spread of English has led to the exploitation of “local realities regarding race/ethnicity, class, and power, thereby reinforcing the mythic norm of the White English speaker” (Grant & Lee, 2009, p. 44).

**Recommendations for Educational Research & Practice.** Based on the above discussion about the various ways the transnational students perceive and experience language socialization and communication across their CoPs, I contend that not only must educators recognize transnational students’ multiple chronotopic beings and the implications of each being for their learning, but they can also empower these students greatly by intentionally designing educational experiences that allow these students to draw upon their funds of knowledge, which are often characterized and enriched by their transnational affiliations and lived experiences. In this context, the concepts of chronotope (Bakhtin & Holquist, 1981b) and chronotopic lamination (Prior & Shipka, 2003) may be helpful as educators make the shift from recognizing students’ multiple beings to designing learning experiences that are responsive to the students’ cultures and identities. Chronotopic lamination, as defined by Prior and Shipka (2003), is a process of composing texts that entails the “simultaneous layering of multiple activity frames and stances” (p. 187). Along with the dispersed, fluid chains of places, times, people, and artifacts commonly found in the semiotic productions of transnational individuals, chronotopic lamination allows the transnational students to explore the connections between their transnational identity and writing identity, between their transnational habitats and their writing habitats, and between their multiple other transnational processes and their writing process.

Specifically, educators can explore different genres of composing, such as the photovoice essays, that allow for a more flexible and creative adoption of multimodal artifacts in literacy practices. This way, transnational adolescent students can incorporate their multiple symbolic resources into their literacy practices, which is aligned with the vision laid out by a group of international scholars known as the New London Group in their manifesto, *A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies* (The New London Group, 1996).
The vision is for all students to benefit from a pedagogy designed to facilitate fuller participation in their working, civic, and private lives (García & Kleifgen, 2018). An example of such genres is arts-based literacy practices. Sharp and colleagues (2016), for instance, review and compile a series of studies that feature arts-integrated literacy instruction for all levels of learners across the curriculum as a response to a redefinition of literacy by the International Literacy Association. Literacy in this new definition entails “the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, compute, and communicate using visual, audible, and digital materials across disciplines and in any context” (International Literacy Association, 2016, para. 1, as cited in Sharp et al., 2016). And arts-integrated literacy instruction will provide students with the opportunities to tap into the modalities they are comfortable with or adept at using; in other words, it encourages them to draw from a more diverse range of symbolic resources and therefore creates a more equitable access to the literacy playing field for the students whose literacy practices and funds of knowledge have not been traditionally recognized in school, such as the transnational adolescent students in this study.

Another genre, not mutually exclusive of multimodal arts-integrated literacy, is a liminal genre that Canagarajah (2019) labels as the literacy autobiographies (LA henceforth). This is a genre of writing that educators of transnational adolescent students can introduce into their curriculum to create a bridge that connects the literacy selves from different global localities within the writing classroom. Canagarajah defines LA this way:

Broadly, the LA genre is a narrative about how we become literate in community, academic, and professional discourses. The genre could be personal and ye academic, narrative as well as an argument, literary and analytical. It could be written for a specific community but voice the experiences of diverse, especially marginalized, communities. It could be descriptive of one’s learning experiences but also performative of projected repertoires and voices. One could develop the LA variably depending on one’s purposes and contexts. We started treating it as a
liminal genre for these reasons. This was a genre between genres. In fact, it was congenial for representing in-between identities and discourses, i.e., those straddling community, disciplinary, and knowledge boundaries. (p. 4)

The last notion in this definition of LA is key in the context of this study. LA are written about the lives within and across transnational liminal “spaces”, which Canagarajah defines as extending beyond the nation states and often “virtual, social, constructed, and emergent” (p. 5). Some of these characteristics are evident in the personal narratives of the informants in this study. Therefore, a potential research area in this regard in the future can be exploring the LA genre and its features and significance when intersecting with the genre of evaluative texts, such as the college admission essays.

Finally, in the classroom, when educators make space for writing between communities, the writing usually ends up developing textual and linguistic properties that are diversified (Canagarajah, 2019). One example of such a diversified linguistic practice is translingual practice, which is common in the lives of transnationally mobile people. They often adopt translingual practice for communication in their transnational social fields by taking advantage of their multiple languages or language varieties as well as other semiotic resources. For these reasons, I believe LA have an important role to play in the education of transnational and multilingual students.

Perceptions & Experiences of Identity Construction & Transformation

The last component of this research study is concerned with how the five transnational youths in this study perceive and experience identity construction and transformation as they navigate language socialization across CoPs. In this study, I have chosen to approach the construct of identity from a narrative positioning perspective. In particular, I have relied on Bamberg’s (2011, 2012) work on how narration contributes to self and identity, especially the three practical challenges often encountered in the processes of self and identity formation. Bamberg explains these three challenges as the three dilemmatic dimensions or spaces where identity activities are navigated. The first dimension
along which identity is navigated, according to Bamberg (2012), is constancy and change across time, or the diachronic identity navigation. The second is a dimension where identity is navigated as sameness or difference. The third dimension of identity navigation is agency, between a construction of an agentive self and a recipient or victim. The analysis of identity through these dimensions, however, yields some findings that go beyond positionings and warrant further future research. Below, I focus on two of these: one providing an alternative interpretation about the dimension active agency versus passive reciprocity, and the other about investment in the self in an imagined community for the future.

**Culture, Negotiation, Autonomy, & Decision-Making.** The idea of navigating identity along a dimension or within a space not only corresponds to the poststructuralist view of identity as subject to change and constantly evolving, but it also echoes the characteristic of transnational adolescents often exhibiting uncertainty regarding their current decisions and/or future plans. This is largely due to their transnational affiliations and the cultural orientations in interpersonal and familial relationships. Several informants, for example, have expressed uncertainty when it comes to choosing a university major.

James seems to be interested in studying business because of his strength in mathematics and an emerging interest in studies that involve exchanges of innovative ideas, especially in cross-cultural settings, but he is also inclined to go for the undeclared major to gain himself additional time to make the decision. Rose is similarly uncertain, but her decision seems to depend on the outcome of the negotiation between her own wish and her parents’ desire. She wants to choose from institutions near the university where her boyfriend, a Chinese international student graduating from her school the year before, is a student. However, her parents urge her to focus her energy on applying to institutions where she can major in subjects that have good career prospects. Martha’s uncertainty about her future becomes the deciding factor for her accepting to go on an academic path that will prepare her for inheriting the family business. Even Kim and Helen, the two Vietnamese students, who are relatively
certain about their major, piano/music and bio-engineering respectively, both cite their family as playing a part in the decision-making process.

In addition to the Chinese indigenous concept of qin (literally: being close to) previously cited in Kim’s positioning profile as a potential explanation for the negotiating pattern between parents and child, I argue that cultural dimensions, such as individualism versus collectivism, may also play a role in the five informants’ decision-making and autonomy, both of which are critical not only in the context of university applications but more importantly also for adolescent identity development. Autonomy is often understood to be a key factor for a person’s well-being. It has traditionally been more emphasized in relatively more individualistic societies because pursuing autonomy is often not aligned with the two salient values in collectivistic societies: interdependence and relatedness (Chen et al., 2013). This, however, does not adequately take into account the distinction between the two conceptualizations of autonomy: autonomy as independence and autonomy as self-endorsed functioning as proposed by Chen and associates (2013) in their study of a group of Chinese adolescents’ autonomous decision making. Other studies of Asian adolescents’ conceptions of autonomy find that instead of regarding and/or experiencing autonomy as acting independently from parents, some of them experience and even benefit from relating or inclusive autonomy, which means they would feel autonomous even when they interact interdependently with their parents (Rudy et al., 2007; Russell et al., 2010).

An intercultural perspective of autonomy and decision making can potentially serve as an alternative narrative with regard to Asian parents’ involvement in their adolescent children’s lives. Therefore, future research should continue to explore how family influences transnational adolescent students’ learning and identity development through their transnational affiliations.

**Investment & Imagined Community.** Finally, in terms of identity and language learning, I argue that the transnational youths have different levels of investment (Norton Pierce, 1995) in the English language because of their different socially constructed relationships with that target language. For instance, in
Helen’s personal narratives, along with language, gender is a salient social identity that co-mediates her perceptions and experiences of relationships with family and friends. Specifically, she talks about how she defies the social expectations imposed on her family and herself by working harder to prove not just that she can be as outstanding as anyone else but that girls can be as accomplished as boys. She also talks about her role as an older sibling and the responsibility she has in being a role model for her younger sister as a motivator for studying abroad. In other words, she has an investment in gender equality, and English, the language she uses for learning, even when she was a student in Vietnam, is a means to the end of gender equality. Therefore, she invests in the learning of the language, even before her study abroad. In the interview, she reveals that she played a significant role in the English club in her Vietnamese high school, devoting a great amount of time and energy to participating in the CoP’s activities and practices. This background provides important information about what motivates language learning that extends beyond the personal and to the social.

Additionally, according to Wenger (1998), direct involvement is not the only way with which people can become members of a community; imagination is another way to community membership. The informants in this study experience not only the membership of the CoPs in their immediate surroundings, like those in their American schools, but in fact, they also cultivate themselves in preparation for participating in their imagined communities. They cultivate themselves in gaining different forms of community cultural wealth, which Yosso (2005) defines as “an array of knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression” (p. 77). Community cultural wealth, according to Yosso, is different from the traditional view of cultural capital, which is narrowly defined by white, middle-class values. Instead, it represents the assets and resources accumulated from the histories and lives of Communities of Color.

Based on the findings from this study, I contend that there are parallel assets and resources also existing in the transnational Communities of Color, and they are applicable to the informants of this
study. Specifically, community cultural wealth consists of the following categories: aspirational capital, linguistic capital, familial capital, social capital, navigational capital, and resistant capital. Table 5.1 lists the definition of each capital category from Yosso (2005).

Table 5.1. Categories of Community Cultural Wealth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Aspiration capital</td>
<td>Refers to the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linguistic capital</td>
<td>Includes the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familial capital</td>
<td>Refers to those cultural knowledges nurtured among familia (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory and cultural intuition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social capital</td>
<td>Can be understood as networks of people and community resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navigational capital</td>
<td>Refers to skills of maneuvering through social institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistant capital</td>
<td>Refers to those knowledges and skills foster through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality</td>
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The informants have expressed how they have benefitted from these forms of community cultural wealth. Rose and James have directly benefitted from the wisdom from their senior transnational school mates, for instance. Helen explicitly mentions having the Chinese teacher in her school as especially significant to her because of their similar experiences as a transnational person of color. Martha has a brother that went through a very similar transnational education journey and attended the same school that Martha attends. He is now back in their home country, and he has been able to pass on some experiential knowledge as suggestions and advice for Martha. Kim has benefitted from the connections from her parents, and one of these connections is a transnational contact, with whose suggestions Kim chooses the music program at her current school.

**Recommendations for Educational Research & Practice.** The two discussion items above will be helpful to educators working with international secondary students, especially the students who are planning on continuing to receive post-secondary education in the U.S. It is essential for educators, such as school psychologists, counselors, and university admission personnel to understand that decision making for transnational youths is not always linear and straightforward and may involve both personal and cultural
factors because of their transnational ties and affiliations. Recognizing their differences and how those differences constitute unique systemic challenges for them is a first, but not the only, step toward effectively supporting them in their journey into the American higher education. Institutionally, at both the high school and the university, all educators can greatly benefit from receiving intercultural training and familiarizing themselves with culturally and linguistically responsive teaching or other educational practices, such as counseling, advising, and mentoring, so they can make sure to support all students, acting as a threat, rather than a contributor, to the structural injustice and institutional inequity that prevents transnational raciolinguistically-minoritized students from being successful in their educational journey.

**Conclusion**

In this final section of the dissertation, I will first provide a brief review of the purpose of this study as well as the research questions and design to precede a summary of the research findings. Following that, in a statement of researcher positionality, I will discuss some of my identities and social positions as well as some of my own lived experiences in social, cultural, political, and transnational contexts. I will emphasize how these identities, positions, and experiences have played a role in this study, especially in terms of how they may have shaped my understandings and interpretations of the findings from this study. Finally, I end this dissertation with a re-statement of the significance of this study.

**Review of Research Purpose, Questions, & Design**

After reviewing previous research about international students in the United States as well as reflecting my own identities and experiences of language learning and use, I noticed there was a gap to fill and that more research needed to be devoted to a particular segment of international students in the U.S. Asian international students have accounted for a significant percentage of all international students in the U.S. over the years, but among them, the unaccompanied minors who have chosen to
attend American high schools before transitioning into U.S. post-secondary education have received little scholarly attention, and worse still, the representations of and public dominant discourses about these Asian students remain stereotypical and problematic. Recognizing this gap, I set out to conduct a critical narrative study with a view to providing a platform for the stories of these Asian transnational adolescent students. Specifically, I recruited their stories of identities, broadly defined as how they position themselves in relation to how others position them. I also invited them to share stories about their interactions with members of the communities of practice (CoPs) as well as stories about their experiences of language learning and use.

In total, ten Asian international students signed up to participate in my study, but in the end, only five of them were selected as the focal informants due to the overall amount of data collected and the relatively complete data set from them. To allow these youths, most of whom embody multiple identities, to speak in multiplicity, I adopted a multimodal approach for data collection. The participants filled out a questionnaire that collected basic information about their background and participation in CoPs. They were also invited to upload personal narratives, photos of CoP participation or interactions, and artworks that they thought best represented themselves. Then, I met with each of the five focal informants for an interview, during which they also created a language identity portrait to represent their linguistic and other communicative resources as well as their self-positionings and positionings from others.

**Summary of Research Findings**

Following the overall methodological pluralism, I analyzed the multimodal data collected from the participants, adopting the following approaches: positioning analysis, Labovian analysis, visual and multimodal analysis, portrait analysis, as well as thematic analysis. With these analytic processes, I created a series of positioning profiles, each representing one focal informant, to explore how they positioned themselves in relation to others in their narratives as well as the dominant discourses about
them. Overall, these profiles depict Asian transnational adolescent students as strategically cultivating their future selves; as developing agency within a collective of transnational affiliations; as negotiating aspects of identity dilemmatically within and across communities of practice; as developing a situated understanding about communicative competence; and as negotiating between resistance against social expectations and desire for social connections.

Overall, the thematic connections of all findings indicate that there is a connection between a transnational adolescent’s social networks and their CoP membership. A connection also exists between their participation in CoPs and their experiences of personal transformation. In addition, the youths’ positionings of self are multifaceted, dynamic, but also dilemmatic at times. In addition to their self-positionings, the youths also represent themselves through their positionings of others in their CoPs as well as transnational social networks. In terms of their perceptions and experiences of language socialization, the transnational students in this study discussed their views about communicative burden and communicative competence. They also shared a common understanding of communication as multimodal. In addition, these young adults also expressed that they were able to learn and practice English while participating in the activities of their CoPs, and the outcome of this language learning as language socialization is increased symbolic capital both in terms of culture and language as well as epistemic diversity, i.e., the capacity to understand knowledge and learning in different cultural contexts.

**Statement of Researcher Positionality**

Practices of representation always implicate the position from which we speak or write—the positions of *enunciation*... We all write and speak from a particular place and time, from a history and a culture which is specific. What we say is always ‘in context’, *positioned*. (Hall, 1990, p. 222)
The findings from the positioning profiles and thematic connections presented in Chapter 4 and 5 and then summarized in the previous sub-section should be read, understood, and interpreted with caution. They should be considered in light of my researcher positionality as well as some limitations in this study. In this sub-section, I would like to acknowledge my positionality, i.e., the place and time as well as the history and culture that Hall (1990) was referring to. A part of this positionality was already communicated in Chapter 2, where I made the paradigmatic choice: poststructuralist and critical perspectives to guide the design of this study.

In this sub-section, I will discuss how my positionality has been informed by my social identities and lived experiences as well as how it has played a role in every stage of the research process. Specifically, I will explore how my positionality influenced my choice of topic, my opinions and assumptions about the topic, my choice of methods for investigation, the findings I have chosen to highlight, and the formats I have chosen to present the findings.

**Similar or Different?** There exist both similarities and differences between the five core informants of this study and me, the researcher, but like what I am illustrating in this sub-section, oftentimes, these similarities and differences are fluid, situated, and sometimes even entangled, with no clear boundaries in between. For example, like the five adolescent students, I also identify as Asian, and at the time of this study, my legal presence in the United States is made possible with a F-1 international student visa. Like them, I am also a multilingual learner in the context of U.S. educational system. I share a first language with three out of the five core informants: Mandarin Chinese, and two of them have the same place of origin as mine: Taiwan. These seeming similarities, in fact, conceal many significant differences. For instance, these similarities do not reveal the fact that the varieties of Mandarin Chinese spoken in mainland China and in Taiwan are different and that speaking different varieties of Mandarin positions us differently in social, cultural, and political contexts. In other words, the Mandarin varieties become an identity indicator. More specifically, during the production of language identity portraits, I would share
my own portrait with each participating student. I have observed that when describing Mandarin, I almost always resorted to the same term James used when talking about Mandarin, and that is 國語 (literally national language), a term most Taiwanese people would use when referring to Mandarin spoken in Taiwan. I have also observed that during interviews with the two Taiwanese participants, I used the first-person plural pronoun “we” much more frequently than I did with the Chinese participant, in whose interview, I seemed to distinguish between “you” (as those of you in mainland China) and “we/us” (as those of us in Taiwan), especially when I talked about the variety of Mandarin I use.

In addition to how our first language sets us apart, there are other significant differences in terms of our positions in the society and the educational system. By way of illustration, I identify as a cisgender male but also a member of the LGBTQIA+ community. Although my cisgender male social position has granted me several advantages along my education journey, including greater mobility freedom as well as educational and occupational autonomy in my home society, I have also once imagined a possible self in an imagined community (Darvin & Norton, 2015; Norton, 2013; Norton Pierce, 1995; Pavlenko & Norton, 2007), where my queer identity would become a source of strength rather than a target of oppression, and I would speak a language of power, a language that would grant my words the authority they had not been recognized for, a language I would come to acquire by embarking on a transnational education journey, leading to a terminal degree. Therefore, despite the differences in how we identify in terms of gender and sexuality and how the differences may have placed us on unequal playing fields along our respective education journeys, we have all cultivated in ourselves the aspirational and navigational capital essential for achieving the ideal self in the imagined community, even if the investment in the target language, English, may look different due to the different stages of life we each occupy.

Influence of Positionality. In Chapter 1, I described how I became interested in the topic of this dissertation as well as the target student population. However, my own experienced as an international
graduate student studying in Maine has also played an important role in my decision to investigate identity construction and transformation as well as language socialization across communities of practice in the context of a rural locality. Since the beginning of my doctoral program, I have actively involved myself in various CoPs. In addition to the doctoral cohort, I have associated myself with groups of two main areas: teaching and learning as well as equity, diversity, and inclusion. My membership in some of these groups is based on my institutional affiliation with the University of Maine; however, especially in the last couple of years, my CoP involvement has extended beyond the University with a fellowship with the College of the Atlantic and with committee work for the American Association for Applied Linguistics. I have gained a great deal from participating in these CoPs. I have experienced a number of personal transformations, including my capacity for self-advocacy and providing mentorship to undergraduate students of color. I have also developed new and critical orientations to the English language and the capacity to explore and analyze dominant language ideologies. Most importantly, through interacting with some members from some of my CoPs, I have gained an appreciation for equal representation and justice for all. All of these formed a framework within which I chose the topic, formed opinions about the topic, chose the methods, and interpreted the findings.

Specifically, drawing partially from poststructuralism and partially through critical perspectives, I made the assumption that my participants, just like other transnational individuals, had identities that were multiple, fluid, and situated, and this assumption led me to the belief that current master narratives about Asian international students, often based on unidimensional stereotypical imaginations, were problematic and therefore needed to be counterbalanced with storytelling from the margins. At the same time, with this counterbalance between the majoritarian and the marginalized, I also assumed this power balance existed as binary, which is again complicated by my belief of identities as multiple, fluid, and situated.
**Research Relationships.** This study had a participatory element, not in the traditional sense, where participants act as co-researchers, but instead, I recognized my participants’ legitimacy in creating and interpreting research data, and I also offered my reciprocity as a researcher.

First, inspired by Ní Laoire (2016), I involved the students in my study as “active sociocultural producers” and “competent research participants” by inviting them to tap into different found and produced narrative artifacts, and then, by inviting them to be the first discussants of these narratives during individual interviews.

In addition, I also followed Annamma’s (2016) example of reciprocity. Specifically, I created my own language identity portrait to share with my participants, who had the choice to ask questions of me. This showed my participants that I also had narratives to share, and these narratives were not to be interpreted by others but to be discussed. Additionally, I tried my best to remain open and honest with my participants as I expected them to be with me, and this openness and honesty encouraged them to be vulnerable with me, which facilitated the process of sharing their experiences. Finally, in the spirit of the critical paradigm that guided this study, I disrupted the hierarchical relationship between the researcher and the researched, letting my participants know that I was not the only one who had the privilege of knowledge; they did, too.

**Limitations & Suggestions for Further Research**

Most of the limitations in this study are either a direct or indirect result of the disruption of the original data collection plan and consequently the modification of the research design. The disruption was caused by the COVID-19 pandemic’s impact on institutional research protocols. Below, I will discuss the limitations of this study in the context of criteria used to establish the trustworthiness of the findings from the study (Hamilton, 2020; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Stahl & King, 2020b).

**Credibility & Trustworthiness.** Triangulation is a method often adopted to enhance the credibility of research findings. As explained in Chapter 3 and subsequently when I discussed the findings, this study is
guided by methodological pluralism (Frost, 2009, 2013; Frost et al., 2010, 2011; Katsiaficas et al., 2011), both in terms of the research design and analytic approaches. I collected data of different modalities, including verbal, such as written personal narratives and spoken narratives via the interviews, as well as the visual and other multimodal artifacts, such as photos, language identity portraits, and artworks from the participants. Furthermore, I tapped into narrative positioning and Labovian analyses and thematic analysis as well as visual and portrait analyses to derive the findings which I presented as positioning profiles and thematic connections. Overall, the findings across these analytic approaches are coherent and congruent.

I had hoped to further enhance the credibility of the findings through member checking, i.e., involving the five informants in verifying the findings and my interpretations. However, due to constraints with time and organizing logistics during the pandemic, I chose to forgo this step and focused on triangulation through pluralism.

Future research can continue to explore additional configurations of methodological pluralism and supple it with member checking either individually or in the form of a group discussion. If this is done after some have entered higher education, the informants may be able to share perspectives about the stories they tell from a different reflective standpoint, hence adding to the dynamism of the stories. Additionally, due to COVID-related constraints, I had to give up the original plan of entering the sites, namely the schools which the five informants were attending as seniors, to implement workshops. Instead, all communication with them took place online, including the interview, which was conducted via the video-conferencing platform, Zoom. This change removed the observation component and the possibility for prolonged engagement with the participants in the surroundings where many of what they described during the interview and/or in their personal narratives happened. Future research can consider exploring how to creatively incorporate observation of some format into the research design to add another layer of rigor.
**Dependability & Researcher Bias.** I had hoped to engage some doctoral colleagues and faculty mentors in the process of peer debriefing to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings in terms of dependability. However, due to a change in dissertation completion timeline, I was only able to do so with one doctoral colleague, who read an earlier draft and provided feedback. However, Stahl and King (2020) described another aspect of dependability that has to do with the researcher’s anticipation of peer review, which, presumably causes the researcher to be cautious in separating what is recorded as fact and what is bracketed as the researcher’s interpretive comments about the data.

Furthermore, portions of this study have been submitted, peer-reviewed, and presented in the annual conferences of American Association of Applied Linguistics and Literacy Research Association (M. Chien, 2020, 2021; M.-T. Chien, 2022). The reviewers’ feedback has been helpful in terms of clarifying some muddy arguments. I have also stayed close to the research purpose and the guidelines outlined in the application submitted to the institutional review board (IRB). I took these measures as an effort to minimize the effect of potential research bias.

**Sampling Adequacy & Appropriateness.** I adopted purposeful sampling to select individual students for my study because of their capacity to inform an understanding of the research problem and topics of inquiry in this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Specifically, I started out with a combination of the criterion and maximum variation purposeful sampling strategies in order to collect diverse variations of stories from the participants with the goal of arriving at a collective story (Richardson, 1988; van den Hoonoord, 2013) about Asian transnational adolescent students in Maine, but a limited access to the pool of sample due to COVID-related constraints meant that the sample I ended up with was not as diverse in terms of their demographic, educational, and CoP background information.

At the end of the data collection period, a total of ten students had signed up for my study, but not everyone of them completed the whole process. In the end, I chose to focus on five informants because of their diverse background characteristics and the comprehensibility of their data set. Future
research should strive for a more diverse representation of social categories, such as place of origin, ethnicity, language, gender, sexuality, socioeconomic background, ability status, and so forth. This will allow for a more explicit and comprehensive exploration of the ideas of investment and imagined communities that have begun to emerge in this current study. These ideas are closely connected with the social positions of the transnational youths, hence a more diverse sample may lead to a more complete collective story about these adolescent students.

**Other Future Research Directions.** The purpose of this study was to explore and center the perspectives from the Asian transnational adolescent students. Even though their representations of their own perceptions and experiences were partial, just like others’ representations of their perceptions and experiences, centering their self-representations plays an especially important role when it comes to creating space for voices less heard in educational research. With this said, future research can incorporate and juxtapose perspectives from students alongside those from educators to paint a different picture that may be more directly beneficial when it comes to informing educational practice.

**Research Significance & Conclusion**

The findings from this study are significant in terms of how they contribute to the scholarship about international students, especially by helping to fill the gap of research dedicated to a segment of this student population who live at the intersection of multiple social positions, some of which make them more vulnerable than their counterparts in higher education. Additionally, the transnational focus as a lens has allowed this study to hone in on the identities and lived experiences of international secondary students and make a case for their unique affordances and challenges that are distinctive from their immigrant peers. Also significant is the epistemic coherence of pluralism that guides the design of this study and then is reflected in the theme of findings that point to the multimodal nature of communication. Analytically, the narrative positioning analysis and the ensuing positioning profiles paint a holistic yet nuanced, perspective yet unfragmented portrait of the adolescents. Finally, sociologically,
this study is part of the greater effort in narrative inquiry that contributes to counter-storytelling in
dialogue with the majoritarian sociocultural storylines (cf. Bamberg & Andrews, 2004; Hasford, 2016;
Hochman & Spector-Mersel, 2020; Stefánsdóttir & Traustadóttir, 2015). I conclude this dissertation with
hope and aspiration dedicated to social justice, educational equity, as well as communicative and
epistemic diversity, hope and aspiration that grew out of the work in this study.
References


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A: Questionnaire

Part 1: Basic Information
For this part, you will answer a few questions about yourself, your educational background and future study plans.
1. Please provide a nickname not associated with your real name that I can use throughout this study.
2. What is the best email to reach you?
3. What year are you in currently?
4. What is your date of birth?
5. What is your gender?
6. Where are you currently located?
7. If you are currently attending school in person, where are you staying?
8. What is your plan after graduating from high school?
9. What universities and majors are you considering? You can list a few if applicable.
10. Before coming to the United States, did you study in another country other than China? If yes, specify the country (countries).
11. Did you attend an international program/school in your home country?

Part 2: Interactions across Communities
Over the years, you are likely to have participated in several groups in your school, where you interact with other members in these groups regularly for social, academic or other purposes. These can be extracurricular activity groups, such as the basketball team or other sports, the musical or theatre groups, the debate team, the chess team, the model UN, etc. These can also be student organizations such as the key club, the amnesty international student group, the student senate, the yearbook team, etc. These can be different language classes and clubs or different AP classes and science project teams. These can even be the dorm community, the host family, or even just a group of friends from the same country that you interact with on a regular basis.

1. In the space below, please make a list of all the groups you have belonged to since you entered your school. Please list the groups in the order of their level of significance/importance to you (e.g., 1. the key club; 2. the basketball team; 3. the yearbook team...)
2. Now, please list these groups one more time, this time in the order of how often you interact or interacted with them. Start with the group with whom you interact or interacted most frequently (e.g., 1. the yearbook team; 2. the key club; 3. the basketball team...)
3. Please list the groups in which you believe you play or played an important role. In other words, to which groups do you believe you have or had special contribution?
4. If available, you can upload up to five photos that represent your experiences in these groups. These photos will only be used during the interview and will not be published in any way that will disclose your identity.
Part 3: Languages and Communication
For this part, please think about all the languages and ways of communication that are important in your life. These can include languages in the traditional sense (Chinese, English, Japanese...), different varieties (academic English, English slang, standard Chinese, Chinese dialects...), language use that is associated with particular groups of people (grandparents, siblings, close friends, classmates, people from the groups you listed in Part 2...), particular situations (class presentations, leisure activities, study...), and particular practices (writing, singing, praying, language games...). These can also be forms of non-verbal communication, such as body language, gestures, silence, or different expressions of moods and feelings, such as fear, anger, frustration, love, etc.

1. In the space below, please list all the languages, ways of communication, including forms of non-verbal communication and expressions of moods and feelings, that are important to you in your life. You can list them in any order.

Part 4: Samples of Written and Art Works
For this part, I am inviting you to provide some samples of your written work, specifically your college essays or other writing assignments, as well as some visual representations of artwork that you have created as assignments for different classes. Please select those samples of written or art works that you believe best represent who you are and/or how you have experienced life in your school.

1. Please upload up to three writing samples such as your college essays or other writing assignments that best represent who you are and/or how you have experienced your life as a student in your school.
2. You may have created different varieties of artwork as assignments for different classes. Please select up to three items of artwork that best represent who you are and/or how you have experienced your life as a student in your school. Take a picture of each item and upload the pictures here.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. If you have successfully answered every question and uploaded at least one photo in Part 2, at least one essay and at least one photo of an artwork in Part 4, you will receive an Amazon eGift card via email. Next, please use the link below to select a time that matches your availability for an interview that could take place this month.
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (90 minutes)

Introduction:
Thank you for meeting with me today. We will begin today’s interview by creating a language identity portrait to represent the different languages and ways of communication that you indicated in the questionnaire as important in your life. I have also brought with me the various items you uploaded while completing the questionnaire, such as your college essays as well as some photos. In today’s interview, I will be asking you a few questions based on these items, but I want to encourage you to go into as many details as you can and tell me stories about your interactions with people in your communities of practice and about your identities and language learning experiences.

My main role is a listener to your stories. Aside from a few follow-up questions from me, please feel free to express yourself with whichever combination of languages in whichever way you feel you can best tell stories about yourself and your experiences. Please also feel free to ask questions if you need clarifications or if you need me to repeat or explain anything to help you better understand my questions.

I expect the interview to last 90 minutes. Your participation is voluntary. You can decline to respond to any question, and you may choose to end the interview at any time if you wish. I will record and transcribe this interview but only for the purpose of my dissertation and some follow-up research. The recording will be deleted after the interview is transcribed, and any identifying information about you or your school will not be included in any presentations or publications of this study.

Do you have any questions before we begin? Are you willing to participate?

Language Identity Portrait Instructions:
Now, I am going to walk you through how to create your language identity portrait. This portrait consists of two interconnected components. The first component focuses on the collection of languages and different ways of communication you currently possess. For this component you will represent your experiences of using different languages or ways of communication while interacting with different groups of people in different situations. The second component focuses on your identities, and these include how you see yourself and how you think other people see you. Please follow my instructions to complete this portrait now.

1. On a piece of paper, please draw a silhouette, or the shape of a human body (show an example).
2. Now, let’s start with the language component. Here are the languages and ways of communication you listed in the questionnaire. Please write them down on a corner of the paper. Feel free to add more that come into your mind now.
3. Next, use markers of different colors to represent these languages and ways of communication and map them on the silhouette.
4. While you do so, please think about the meaning of each color you choose to represent each language or mode of communication. Does it relate to a particular experience of using the language or mode of communication with a certain group of people in a certain situation?
5. Similarly, you can also tap into the metaphor of each body part when you are mapping these languages and modes of communications.
6. You can also think about the space from within the body and the space outside the body as well as the line that makes up the contour of the body as the boundary. Use these spaces to represent the extent these languages or ways of communication have been internalized and are integral to your daily communication.

As you finish mapping these colors that represent different languages or ways of communication over different body parts, let’s continue to map two aspects of your identities onto this piece of paper.

7. These two aspects of your identities are how you see yourself and how you think those around you see you. I am going to invite you to use words, icons/emoticons, drawing, illustration or any type of image, such as the photos you uploaded to the questionnaire that you thought were representative of you and your experiences in different groups.
8. Within the outline or contour of the silhouette, please enter words, phrases, sentences and/or images that represent your views of yourself and what you believe to be the more important aspects of your identities.
9. Then, make use of the spaces outside the silhouette to map out the words, phrases, sentences or images that represent how you think people see you. Please focus on the people from those groups you have listed in the questionnaire, people you interact or have interact quite regularly.

When you are finished with these two components, please let me know, and we can move on to the interview.

**Interview Questions:**

Why don’t we start with your communities of practice? These are the groups of people you interact regularly for a common purpose or shared experiences. You have listed the following groups in the questionnaire...

1. Can you tell me how you came to become part of these groups? Is there a story you can tell me about how you entered one or more of these groups?
2. Can you tell me what being part of these groups means to you? Are some groups more important to you than others? (Explore: significance vs. investment)
3. Tell me a memorable experience of interacting with people from these groups.
4. Have you changed/transformed as a result of participating in these groups? How?

Thank you. Now, let’s move on to your language identity portrait. For the identity component of this portrait, I’ve invited you to explore how you see yourself and how you think other people see you, in terms of your relationships with them and your roles in the society.

5. What would you say are the most important parts of your identities now? (Explore: a particular incident/occasion for realization about this)
6. Have these parts of identity always been this important to you? (If not, explore what happened that changed its significance.)

7. Are the ways people see you different from or similar with how you see yourself? (Explore: a particular incident/occasion for realization of this different/similarity; examples of expectation conflicts)

   Earlier, you told me about a memorable experience of interacting with others from the groups.

8. Do you think that experience had anything to do with any of your identity at that time? (Connect: reasons in Q3.)

9. Looking back, do you think that experience has had an impact on how you see yourself now? How about your relationships with people? Have any relationships changed because of that experience?

In this study, I am interested in the identities and experiences of Chinese international students.

10. Do you consider yourself to be a Chinese international student? What does being a Chinese international student mean to you? Does the meaning (to you) change when you move between your groups? (Explore: a time when that identity stood out more than the others.)

11. Based on your own observations and experiences, what is people’s general opinions about Chinese international students? Are these opinions similar to those of other Asian students? How about European students? (Explore: own thoughts about these opinions and the emotions upon hearing these opinions for the first time & specific challenges for Chinese international students compared to other international students.)

   Next, let’s talk about the language and communication component of the portrait.

12. First, tell me about the languages and other ways of communication you have including in this portrait. What do they mean to you?

13. Next, think about your interactions with other people in the social or academic groups you belong to. Can you recall any memorable experiences using your languages or other ways of communication with these groups?

14. Do you think experiences like the one you just describe has an influence on your attitudes toward and your learning of these languages? How?

   Earlier we also talked about how you see yourself across the groups and how you think people see you.

15. Do you think the way people see you changes as your ability to communicate with different languages fluently increases? (Explore: cultural familiarity; perceptions from here vs. from home)

   Finally, let’s talk about your ideas about the future.

16. What are some short-term plans? How about long-term plans?

17. What does being an international high school student from China mean to you in the future? (Explore: short vs. long term benefits and plans)
Appendix C: Kim’s Positioning Profile Data Set

Personal Narrative
"Of all noises, music is the least disagreeable" - Samuel Johnson, that is what I always think. Black, white. Left hand plays quickly but clearly, right hand strong but melodical. But both smoothly. Diminuendo, a little staccato, then sudden forte, crescendo, and end with a strong, powerful but no uncouth note. Lift my foot slowly off the pedal, punctuate the echo of the final chord. I stand up, in front of the audience, I bow my head in the applause. The sound of cheers, of hand clapping, it makes me feel like on cloud nine. My hand is still shaking, cause of worry. My heart is still pumping so fast, not only because of pressure from the audience but also joy and happiness.

I reminisce about the past when I was still a student of Ho Chi Minh's Conservatory of Music, sitting for an hour at the piano. Bach, Haydn, Cerzny... all of the composer's pieces just going around my mind. Just like "round-the-clock service" but this is "round-the-clock practice", scales, arpeggios, then practice the strength for hands.....everything makes me sick to death! Sometimes I want to quit.

Then after that, my parents ask me to teach two kids whose parents are my mom's friend. I'm not really sure to deal with children, but then I still give it a shot. At first, they were so nice and dutiful, after a week, they were starting to be naughty and playful, giving me a hard feeling. But I cannot give up because they are my first students anyway. I took a week to find out the most effective and intelligible way to teach. Those days, I was searching "how to comprehend children's mentality" or "how to educate kids easily",... I buy candies, make many quizzes with small recompenses if they got the correct answer, I also find more comparisons, images to make music theory more interesting and easier to understand,. ... and all of my attempts were finally reciprocated. The kids are all ears, waiting for me to teach them new things in each of my classes. From knowing nothing about piano, now they can read and understand the pieces, they can also play "Minuet in G" by Bach, "the Swan", "Surprise Symphony"-Haydn rewrite for piano,. ... I had mixed feelings when I listened to their performance. It is so touching, but after all I think it is called happiness.

I've also experienced performance on the stage, in front of a thousand audiences. I have a chance to join the Asian Pacific Arts Festival in Singapore and get the Gold award, many performance days take place in Ho Chi Minh's conservatory, and even the performance for the Ho Chi Minh's Conservatory entrance exam,...Despite the bushed practice days, I still trying to give it my best shot. Despite being in deep water, I am still trying to be calm and use all of personal experience to overcome the obstacle at all cost. And after all the performances, standing in front of the audiences, under the light stage. Hearing the applause and praise, I have many different feelings, but one more time, there is happiness for sure.

After all, hours staying in the piano room are worthy. Performing, and teaching for me is not a job or not just an action, it is a great experience, great feeling to spread music, to impact
and to put everybody on-line. For many, it is vain, it is boring, but it is the world for me. It brings me life and it is considerably meaningful. "Music is what feelings sound like"

Corresponding Interview Segments (I= Interviewer; K= Kim)

I: Now you've shared with me an essay that I found fascinating. It's very, very interesting, about your experience working with…. [Interviewer searches for the essay on his computer to show via shared screen.] Do you remember this piece of writing about...

K: Yes, it's actually my college essay.

I: This is actually exactly what I want, and I was hoping that students will share more with me if you have more that you write about yourself I would be very happy to…

K: Because, like most of my college essays are about music and most of it it's all about music like that.

I: That's fine, but in this piece you write about teaching right? Can you tell me like about teaching?

K: About teaching?

I: Well, actually, you know what let me, let me go back a little bit, what are you trying to tell people by, by this piece, what are you trying to project to people?

K: I just actually want… I really want to share that piano is fun, because actually I want to study piano in the futures, but I actually want to like teach piano in the future. So I will go into like education of piano like that, and I want, I just want to show that you know it's fun it's relaxed and it fits to everyone like it's suitable for everyone, like everyone can learn classical music because, like many people think that classical music is complicated it's hard to listen and understand, but no it's actually more fun and relaxed than you know you just not you just haven't found a right piece for you actually, like that, and I also want to say about my experience when I study piano and when I like perform the piano like that. It's quite a good experiment for you to like perform the piano because, like, how can I say my teachers have taught me that if you go into perform the piano and you feel like nervous just think as you're excited because the excited, excited feeling, and nervous feeling, it's kind of like the same with each other so when you go to the stage, just feel that you're excited like that, so I think that's why I loved the teachers, my teachers so much.

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I: Do you remember any memorable experience of performing piano like unforgettable experience of performance?

K: Uh huh, I have performed like so much time, like multiple times in my old school, on our stage and in other countries, but I think like one of my best feeling is like when I go to Singapore and perform. And I go to Singapore and perform and I was so nervous like there's like thousands of people there and I shaking I really shaking and like you know it's cold there but like my hand is all wet. And actually it's, it's great, because I usually play… I am really nervous at the beginning of the piece, and then, when I go to the middle of the piece, I feel like more relaxed and kind of enjoy the music, you know, so it's not like in the beginning of the piece I suck and then in the middle, I play so well like I'm surprised of myself because it's so good, and I can feel
the music like in me I don't know how to tell the fueling, but I think like prepare your, your mind is the most important thing.

I: My question is… because the last time we talked you, you used a different word to describe yourself with your piano skills. You used hardworking.
K: Oh yeah, that's right.
I: So do you see yourself as a hardworking person or talented person because there seems to be a difference there? K: For me, in daily life, I'm not a hardworking person, but in piano I think I'm kind of a hardworking person because in daily life, I am kind of lazy. Like you say like you have to clean your room, like every single day, no, I am not going to do that, or you have to do it every single day, no I'm not so… I don't see myself as a hardworking person because I'm not but with my interest and what I like I will be hardworking for that, like piano.
I: So do you mind if I add the word hardworking, but only in terms of playing the piano?
K: Yeah, of course.
I: And do you think I should represent it here on your hands or anywhere else?
K: Yeah, I think you can put it on my hands. It's more clearly.
I: And I will remember that this is only for piano playing, okay.

Other Relevant Interview Segments (I= Interviewer; K= Kim)

Language Identity Portrait
I: Alright, so you sort of talk about the music and the piano here in the portrait you can see the portrait, right?
K: Um hmm, of course.
I: Good, alright, um, so let's talk about these two things here, I have two questions for you. The first is you separate music and piano as two languages, as two ways of communication. Can you tell me a little bit about how they are different for you?
K: Music is more like general. It's more like… you can say, like everything is music, like when you hear like the noise of a cat or something it can be music actually. So, the music is like general. I love all kinds of music actually, and like it's can affect me in many ways, like different ways, like… So I put it in my head, I think, because, like, for me, everything it's music and everything I can link… I can like think about music so like music is more bigger and more general for me. And the piano, I put it in the hands, because, like that's my that's my daily activity that's my daily life and my futures and everything I use my hand. And even though I use the piano to like it's my career, so I can earn money, and I can like enjoy it by my hands, and I can like, how can I say like I can hold it and I can like use it for myself or interest for my future jobs. And it's like yeah… And I use it to play like piano so it's a really important things, because my piano like for me and for my parents, my hands is like the most important part of my body yeah to play piano so I put it separate because the music is more general it's more bigger and not just the music in the panel, but the music in the other instruments in the others like activities in
the life and the music, even in the TV and on the Internet, so it's more bigger because, like I love
all genres of music and all kinds of music.
I: So it's very interesting that you should mention this because the way you think about music is
all as almost like the way I think about languages, not languages that you use to talk to people
from different cultures, but also like different ways of communication. So for you music is all
kinds of sounds really, right?
K: Um hmm, yeah, that’s right.
I: Like you said, sounds like cats make. sounds that birds…
K: And it's like no like not much people like there is, but like there's some kind of like some sort
of people that didn't like to listen to like classical piano or something like piano in general, but
with so we can talk to them like by my, by my knowledge or something like talk to them about
the particular like music piece or music songs from like K Celebrity or something, but for piano
like not that like not all of the people like listen to piano that much so I think I color my hands,
because, like, if you want to know the piano I think you should listen to it actually so you listen
to what I'm playing so I think what I am playing shows them I love piano more.
I: So if I'm hearing you correctly, for music, there is something that's universal. You can always
find something to show people, and then so they can understand, but with piano, it's more
specific it's more unique. They really have to get into this experience.
K: Yeah.
I: Okay, wonderful. Uh, my next question is a little bit more abstract. The question is about
um… Has there, has there been any situation where you use music or piano to communicate a
feeling to other people? Or to communicate with other people in general, like not through
language?
K: Of course, yeah, of course, like, like when you are sad, when you're feeling, you cannot play a
happy song, you can, but, like you, you more like to play sad songs, so when you perform a
piano piece, and you play a sad song like everyone cannot just laugh, right? [K laughs] Like it's,
it's kind of like clear to me, and like when you are with your friends, you should play the songs
that are more like well-known and more popular, or jazz songs, like jazz pieces, like they will
make your mind and your feelings more like more like enjoyable more like happy, so I think that
is a way of communication because, like, for me, communication it's showing of feelings like
communicate by feelings and by your enjoyable, so I think that's the way, like music
communicates, too.
I: Do you remember a specific example, for example, um like this, students, that I was talking
about she's a flute player right? She shared with me this experience of her breaking up with her
boyfriend by sharing a piece of music that she played just to, you know, as a way, as a message
to him right? I was wondering whether you have something similar, where you use music to
communicate to someone about a message. It doesn't have to be about love or relationship, but
any other kinds of things.
K: Like, for example, the easiest and the simplest example is like when everyone like my
relatives or my friends or all the people like for their birthday, I can play them a piece, and they
really enjoy it. Yeah, like you can play it, I can play it, and, like many other people sing it. I think that is a message and a gift for them, like a small special gift for them, or like when I, I like someone, like some boy in school, I will like more I like to study or have a new piece that I never played before and I tried to like study that and maybe like send him as a gift or as a message, something that's like especial just for you like that. So I think that's a good way for music to communicate and a gift for the other people.

**CoP Photo**

I: Can you tell me a little bit about how people see you in the concert band or in the music club? Like what do people think of you, how do you... How do they position you in the group?

K: I think as a good piano player [K laughs embarrassedly.] Because I think like I am one of the good piano players, I think, because, like actually the students here, like they're good at some instruments, like they're good at many instruments, but not the best. You know, they know a little bit, a little bit, a little bit, but not everything like about one instrument and really like outstanding like that, just a little bit a little bit, so I think I'm like a great piano player, maybe yeah [K laughs embarrassedly].

I: That is because of your, your background in Vietnam, you specialized in piano and piano only and then that's why it makes you, you know, such an excellent piano player.

K: Yes, I think so.

**Future Plans**

I: Alright, now let's talk about your future plans. After you graduate from MCI, your plan is to enter a college in the US?

K: That's right. I think I will move to California, with my, my relatives and like have a university there.

I: Wonderful. Let's start by talking about this a little bit. Ah, do you have like a, an ideal school, like a dream school that you want to go to.

K: Um, yes, because I study piano so actually, I want to go to some of the conservatories of music, like that, but like I think I have to study like two years of my college and then I will transfer to university to like... to like ah... so like I don't have to like spend more money on like four-year universities, so I can save a lot by two years of college and two years of university.

I: Okay, so you are planning on going to a two-year college and then the university.

K: Yeah, that's right.

I: So, for the two-year college, it doesn't really matter what you study. It's really just to get the basics out of the way.

K: Yes, and I also have like, more time to like, practice piano, and to prepare for all what I need to like submit to the university.

I: I see. Okay, now, is this [I pointing to the name of the school K had put in the questionnaire as an answer via shared screen] the college that you will go to?

K: Yeah, that's right.
I: Is that for sure already?

K: Yes, like I applied and, and like accepted to many universities, but I think like I will go to this one, because it's like a community college, and it's in California.

I: Can you tell me more about this decision? Is it a decision that you made together with your family or is it more your own decision?

K: Um, I think like... both. I think, because, like, at first, I want to stay in U.S., I really wanted to stay in U.S., but my mom was like... you have to choose the university that is like... the tuition like as low as possible, like that, so I was thinking like if I choose a university with a low tuition, maybe it has a bad condition and like security and all stuff, so I think about like the college community and I found out the Orange Coast College, it is like one of the big college and it's cheap and it's like, it has a good quality and all the stuff, so I think Orange Coast College may be a good opportunity for me.

I: So if I'm hearing you correctly, this is almost like a negotiation between you and your parents. Your parents want you... Sorry... You want to stay in the U.S.

K: Um hmm

I: And you're hoping that... you know... you don't spend too much during the first year, first few years of the college so...

K: That's right.

I: So a way to meet them in between is to go to a community college.

K: Uh huh, that's right, so I choose the community college. That's the reason, the main reason.

Why MCI?

I: So, why MCI?

K: At first, like you know, the, the woman that I just told you, right? And actually, like I met her, like my parents met her, and I also met her, and like we have many conversations, and she said that MCI is a good school that has a good ballet program, as you know, like a really great like ballet program and also music. And I think this is my good opportunity for me to go to like the school that has good music because as you know that I think high schools in U.S. don't have that much music conservatory or stuff. It's just like when you go to college, you can go to the music school, but not high school, so I think like from here, I can learn, and I can have more experiment, and then I can go to the music school. And actually, the school have a great music program, like the teachers are so great.

I: Okay, wonderful. I was hoping that you can tell me more about this program. But before that, can we go back to this concept of... Do you think this is almost like a steppingstone? Like, you know, it prepares you for a music program in college.

K: I think so. Like actually for me... I'm kind of confused myself about that, because you know, like in Vietnam, like I'm in the music conservatory, and my study and my program of music in the country is so large so hard and so heavy. You know the music conservatory, right? Like they are all competitions, and all the stuff like that, but when I came to MCI, it's more like relaxing, and I can do like whatever I want and play the piece that I love like that, because in the
conservatory actually the teachers just give you the piece and say like you have to do that, you have to study it. But in MCI like I have more chance to like try the harder piece or the piece that I really like and the teachers are nice too. They are so nice like that, so I think like maybe a small story, but for myself, I love it.

Memorable Experience in CoP

I: So you have already talked about this a little bit, about being able to learn about different music cultures or music from different cultures. Can you remember any special experiences interacting with people in a concert band? Any memorable story you can tell me?

K: Do you mean like the international students or like students in general?

I: Students, teachers, you know, anyone.

K: In the concert band I realized that like there's many students that study many different like instruments more than I know because, like in my country, we didn't play like you know trumpet trombone much the piano and violin is the most two instruments that, like many people, and everyone like choose to study when they are kids and when they grow up. But in here like one people… like one student can play like multiple instruments, and you know, like when I first came to the concert band class, like the teacher say like, if you don't know that instrument, he can teach you right away, and you can like just go and play. And I was like I was like shocked and you know, in the concert band, I'm not just playing the piano. I played drum and I think the other… like xylophone like all the stuff. And he actually like teach me some basic things about that instrument that I can definitely play it. Because, like, I have the basic knowledge and basic like theory and knowledge, so I can like easily understand and just play it so like you can play like more instruments than you know there.

I: So can I say that your understanding about music or your understanding about playing music has changed because of this experien
Appendix D: Martha’s Positioning Profile Data Set

Personal Narrative 1
“A cowardly person can only standstill, a reckless person can only be burned, and only the truly
daring ones can be invincible.” This is a motto that my father had engraved in me since I was
little.

Growing up in an affluent family, my life had always been smooth-sailing and well-
arranged. I found myself passively following the daily schedule that my mom planned for me. I
used to think that it would be a non-negotiable responsibility to inherit my family’s scalable
eyewear business until I overheard my parent’s conversation regarding the company’s future
trajectory where they discussed closing the factory if none of the children undergo the rigorous
optometric training needed to run the company. It was a hard realization because my brother had
already chosen another career path, and it was not until then, I finally started to consider my
future seriously.

My parents were superhumans. At the age of fifty, my mother completed a four-year
optometry course in a single year. My father built an eyewear empire from scratch: he toiled
two jobs daily to save money and, over ten years, established and expanded his brand. I
respected their spirit. At the same time, I had a constant fear of not being able to reach their
success.

In the next few days, my father’s words looped in my head: “If neither my brother nor I
hold an optometry license, the company will be sold.” For someone as passive as me and
uncertain about my own passion, managing a company seemed an even more rigorous task. Do I
have what it takes? The thought of being such a crucial component influencing the lives of
countless families terrified me. To clear out my mind, I visited the factory.

When I was a kid, I enjoyed watching employees rushing to produce, pack, and ship out
the merchandise. I sat down and observed the business workflow. Aunt Hu, a senior employee
who worked in the company even before I was born, spotted and greeted me with a pleasant
smile. She commented on my growth over the years and gave me a tour of the factory. As we
patrolled around, she elaborated on techniques in producing the products. It was the first time I
noticed the intricacy of each role. Aunt Hu first took me to the production department. Before
entering, I changed into dust-free clothes, gloves, and mask. The discomfort of the equipment
quickly crept in. As I unpleasantly sweated in my outfit, employees around breezed through their
routines with kind smiles and exchanged greetings. During lunchtime, all the employees,
regardless of department, gathered and shared their personal matters. The conversations went
from walking dogs to reviewing an anticipated movie to celebrating son’s first-grade graduation.
That day showed me a community that surpassed work: the atmosphere resembled a harmonious,
lively union and sparked a motivation to preserve this status. The success that my family worked
hard had a significance in me from that point onward.

After resolving my inner conflicts, I expressed my interest in the management role of my
father. The conversation, surprisingly, brought me closer to him. He analyzed problems that I

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would encounter on this path. As he spoke, I could not help but be reminded of his maxim. I
never used to think much about the plural in ‘the truly daring ones,’ but my visit to the factory
shed light on this enigma. From the authentic connection among employees, I understood that
united people are a necessity for achieving and sustaining success. I know that I can't become the
brave one without those employees, face the difficulties ahead, learn my parents’ spirit of
perseverance, and continue my father’s legacy. I walked into the factory that day as an ungrateful
child but left with an appreciation for this closely-knitted community and a drive to become a
reliable, worthy co-worker of theirs.

Corresponding Interview Segment (I= Interviewer; M= Martha)

I: Ok. Now you wrote about this in your essay. You talk about family business. This seems to be
a very important part of your identity. It also seems to be a very important part of your plans for
yourself because you mentioned that you study mathematics and optometry only because you
want to return to Taiwan to work in the family business, so I’m very curious about this. Can you
tell me a bit more about this? Why is it so important to you for you to return to your family
business?

M: Actually, I don’t have specific interests in my life. I mean, like some people love to do some
activities, but I’m not. And I like math, but I never thought about I will choose math as my life
career. I don’t really know what major should I apply to, and I asked my parents, they said I can
apply for optometry. But in U.S. there's no optometry in university only for grad school, so I will
study some optometry related major. But I’m not really have a big interest about studying
optometry. I only know that oh if I don't do this our family will disappear, maybe disappear. That
is a kind of empathy, yeah, my personality empathy. I will be sad about because of me…

Because my brother, he cannot go back to the U.S. to study optometry, and even in Taiwan
because he is very busy now to manage other business things, so I want to take some stress from
my brother and my father. Yeah, so I guess, ok I can do it. But I don't really care, I don't really
want it or don’t want it.

I: No strong feeling about either way.

M: Yeah. But my parents said before if I during this time, if I found something that I really,
really want to do, then I can go to do the thing that I want to do.

I: Ok, so they are open minded about changes.

M: Yeah

Personal Narrative 2

The first time I ever visited the States was when I moved here in 10th grade for boarding school.
It was a rough transition since I only experienced Taiwanese education with Mandarin
instructions previously. The first school year was challenging as I endured linguistic and cultural
barriers, and consequently, my grades suffered. Fortunately, I adjusted quickly, saw my
academic performances picking up, and began making new friends at the beginning of the junior
year.
As I was unfamiliar with the IB and AP systems in the US, I selected the IB program at the beginning of the junior year under some of my friends' suggestions. However, I quickly recognized the linguistic gap required to perform well at my IB higher levels, namely, Biology A, English A, and History A. I faced some administrative barriers and could not switch out of the IB program until senior year.

Right at the beginning of my junior year, I recognized that the IB program was too difficult within the first few weeks of the quarter. At that time, my teachers from those subjects dissuaded me from switching from IB into AP, saying that if I earn any grade above an F, they will not allow for the switch. I studied hard after this discussion but eventually realized that I could not learn effectively with the pace of IB. I attempted to negotiate with my teachers to allow for the switch at the end of my first quarter in junior with no success: the administration kept me in the program since many other international students were dropping from the IB program and as I was the most academic achieving international student, they wanted me to stay unless I started failing my subjects. When the second quarter kicked in, the level of difficulty in my higher levels increased, and I found myself unable to catch up with the course load. My teachers finally gave in and allowed me to switch to AP at the beginning of my senior year.

**Corresponding Interview Segment** (I= Interviewer; M=Martha)

M: Yeah, and I have joined IB courses in my junior but I dropped it because I think it's too hard for me but I also made friends from the IB, yeah…

I: IB classes, can you tell me about that? How is it different from AP classes?

M: Ok, at first, when I’m getting to the junior. It is the first year that our school is holding IB program, and counseling told me that IB has very challenging classes as AP. And they said, if you join IB program you have to study all of the… all lists of the courses that they ask for… You cannot choose what you… Like AP you can choose, I want calculus and chemistry, but I don't want something, but IB is this, this, and this, and you have to join it even if you don't like it or you're not interested in it. And IB courses is for two years, and AP is just for one. And same, both the same, you’ll have to take an IB exam or AP exam at the end of year. But IB is at the second year, at the end of second year… And the… for IB, you have to write the internal assessment, which is called, IE. And at that time, it’s a stress for me because when I joined the IB program, I haven't got to U.S. for a year, so my English ability is not good enough, but the teacher thinks I'm enough. But for like IB biology, I can get by with the knowledge I have learned before in Taiwan. But just saying that chemistry, the pronoun [terminology] is too hard for me so my score is getting… my grade is getting lower and lower, and also in history because in Taiwan, we don't have to study for any history, any American history. We only study for Taiwan or maybe China or world with very important world things. And so at that time I didn't study for any US history before, and I just directly jumped into IB history so I don't have any basic knowledge for my challenging knowledge, so I think I’m not good enough yeah. Only we take seven courses or eight courses for IB, but the only course I got good grades is IB math yeah… and IB environmental science yeah… These two is the only ones I take good grades. So
overall, I don't want to make my transcript like a D or even F so I asked the counseling could I change my courses and they say, I cannot drop the IB courses but I asked it during… ugh so complicated… My school is like quarters yeah… our grade is quarters, but we can… we end our class by semesters.

I: Okay
M: Yeah, so I asked for dropping my IBs during first… in quarter one. Yeah, so first quarter and our teacher said no, you cannot because I think you are, you have the ability to complete it and blah blah blah… But my reason in my mind is… The IB program only including me just three people and the other two are American and I’m the only international student so they want international students in our IB program but the people will be less yeah… But anyway, I dropped it because my grade is really too bad. And the history teacher told the counseling that I’m not good. I don't have the ability to do IB program, so I should switch to the CP. It’s US History.

I: What’s CP?
M: CP, um, conceptual one? Yeah, the easiest one.
I: So…
M: I just suggest that, but on my transcript, it still showed my IB courses that I failed from several ones but all of them I didn't get credits.
I: So I know that people take AP classes because you can get college credits, right?
M: Yeah
I: That's why people get… why people do AP classes… Now, is that true for IB courses, too?
M: Yeah, and IB is better. For more credits, because IB is two years, right? So I joined IB, the reason is because it is better than AP, so I thought if I pass and earn the IB diploma I’ll earn another points on my resume or transcript yeah…
I: So throughout this process, did you make all the decisions on your own? Or did you talk to your parents or did you talk to the teachers? Was it mostly your own decision to be enrolled first and then to also to drop out of it?
M: Oh, so my friends from Vietnam, one of them is also in IB program at first, and she dropped it yeah before me, so… and I asked her why she wanted to drop because I never thought about dropping IB because my personality is like when I promise, I set a goal and I have to accomplish it, so I didn't think that maybe I don't have ability to do it at first. But she described it to me like… She is from a Vietnam’s international school, and their school is a lot easier from [anonymized school] so… And she just got to U.S. for first year, which is less than me. And she thinks it’s too hard for the internal assessment, and the classwork and blah blah blah… And I think alright… because when we study in IB program, we have to spend all our time on that even though, if we, after school we get back to the dorm. And usually for me I stay in my room and do the classwork or other internal assessment I don't have time to go out to hang with my friends or other extracurricular like Key Club, so I feel like… it makes my life boring yeah…
I: So did your life become different after you dropped IB?
M: Yeah, I have more time to do other things.
I: Were you happy with your decision?
M: I'm happy for my decision to drop but I should… When I dropped it, it was because of my grades from biology and history. It is both bad, very harmful for my transcript, so I should maybe don't make it to F or I’ll regret for this.

Other Relevant Interview Segments (I= Interview; M= Martha) (English translation in paratheses, following the Chinese version in the original interview)
I: Let's talk about how you have interacted with people around you in your school in Maine, ok? So let’s take some time, ok? You can take a few minutes if you want to. Think about a memorable experience, ok? An unforgettable experience of interacting with other people ok in your school maybe in your dorm or in the groups that you mentioned to me or with your teachers or with other American people outside of the school? 懂我的意思嗎? 我想要你大概想一下，你住在緬因的這幾年來 有沒有一個讓你印象深刻的经验? 到現在都還很難忘的經驗? 有沒有? (Do you understand what I mean? I would like you to think about this. During the past few years when you have lived in Maine, has there ever been a memorable experience? Unforgettable, even till now?)
M: 有 (Yes)
I: Great, ok. Usually when I asked students about that question, they are like… um… not really… So yeah, it's great. Ok, so can you tell me about that experience?
M: 在我剛去美國快一年的時候的中秋節，然後我跟我的台灣朋友，和一群中國人。然後我們一起過中秋節。然後我本來想說，因為在 Maine 沒辦法烤肉， 但是我從小到大就是中秋節會烤肉，可是沒有辦法烤，那就算了。然後他們就提倡，就是有些中國人在 Amazon，還是哪裡，買了月餅。然後我就想說 everyone 一起吃月餅，然後吃完後，就有另外一個中國人，拿著… 去那個 dollar tree 買那個燈籠，然後我就去我們學校附近的 一座橋，就是一個蠻漂亮的地方。然後那時候是晚上，大家就去那裡，提燈籠，拍照，然後什麼的。對，然後走過去大概離學校十分鐘吧，好像是。反正我那時候就覺得，就是那是我第一次在美國過中秋節。然後我覺得，有一種雖然沒有烤肉，但還是有溫馨感。因為中秋節，不通常是家人團圓嗎? 然後雖然那個時候沒有家人，但是有很多朋友，也是一種溫暖。(When it was almost a year after I arrived in the U.S., during the Mid-Autumn Festival, along with the other Taiwanese student and some other Chinese students, we spend the night celebrating the festival together. At home, it was a family tradition to have a BBQ in the evening of the Mid-Autumn Festival. But this was not possible in Maine that year, so some of my friends proposed that… Someone ordered some moon cakes on Amazon, so they proposed that we got together to taste the moon cakes. Another Chinese student managed to buy some paper lanterns from Dollar Tree, so we all headed to a bridge near our school. There, we hung out and took pictures of each other carrying the lanterns. Yeah, about ten minutes from school. Anyways, that was my first Mid-Autumn Festival in the U.S. Even though I didn’t get to have any BBQ, I still felt a sense of warmth in my heart. Aren’t there usually family reunions during Mid-Autumn
Festivals? Although I wasn’t with my family, I was surrounded by a group of friends. For me, that is a kind of warmth, too.)

I: Interesting. Okay, so the most memorable experience that you had was with other international students, well, I should say, Chinese-background international students?

M: Right

I: Okay, now, let’s think about this experience for a little bit. Do you think that experience is somehow related to your identities? Like do you think that experience has an impact on how you see yourself or how you think other people see you? Are there any connections?

M: Mmm… empathy… and outgoing…

I: Can you say a bit more?

M: 因為，outgoing 是因為，我那時候，跟我那個台灣朋友還不熟。然後我們學校只有我們兩個台灣人，所以我一直想要跟他當朋友。(Outgoing because… At that time, I was not yet very acquainted with that Taiwanese friend, and there were only two Taiwanese students in our school, so I had wanted to meet him and become friends with him.)

I: Mmm

M: 一個原因是，這樣回台灣後，就不會是自己一個人。另外一個原因是，自己同鄉，都會想要認識一下。(For one thing, I won’t be alone after returning to Taiwan. For another, people usually want to meet those from the same place of origin.)
Appendix E: James’ Positioning Profile Data Set

Personal Narrative 1

Last year, I was having trouble making shots from mid-range or further in basketball games. During the games, I would be wide open to shoot threes, but I was afraid, so I just passed to my teammates instead. They had been telling me to shoot, and I was disappointed that others could make shots from the three-point line, but I could not. I was too afraid to even look at the rim.

One day in the off-season, my friend asked me, “Why do you not have confidence shooting threes?” I suddenly realized that a lack of confidence was the main reason I could not make any shots, so I set myself a goal. I would build my confidence in shooting and actually make threes in games. I thought about why I did not have the confidence, and the answer was that I did not even feel comfortable when I was shooting threes. I decided to change my shooting form. I spent some time finding a more comfortable shooting form for myself, shooting foul shots again and again, trying to get the right feeling. I searched for shooting videos and even asked for help from a player I knew who could shoot well. Once I found my comfortable form, the next most essential thing was to build new muscle memory. It took about two or three months to get used to my new shooting form, which helped me think I would make those shots. That is where confidence comes from. In those few months, I would sometimes make consecutive shots and feel really confident, but the next day, I might miss a lot. Things did not always go as I expected, and it made me feel like all the changes I was making were not only useless but also a waste of time. However, one thing I learned from this was to stick with taking on the problem I am facing. As time passed, my form got more stable and consistent. Now, I can shoot way better than before, and I have even made some shots in actual games. While I reached that goal I had set for myself, I still have a long way to go because there is no such thing as a perfect shooter in basketball.

There are a couple of things I learned from this. Firstly, do not be afraid of changing from what you are comfortable in. People tend to get lazy and satisfied to just keep doing what they are used to do. Secondly, find the key point of the obstacle you face and seek out a corresponding solution. Sometimes, you have to persist in your changes for them to stick, and you have to trust the process and believe in yourself.

Corresponding Interview Segment (I= Interviewer; J= James)

I: That’s very interesting that you mentioned that because I had a question about the writing that you shared with me, and from that piece of writing, the concept of hardworking was also very, you know, very much talked about, right? Do you remember that writing that you shared with me?

J: Yeah, I think so.

I: It’s about you not being able to make shots from mid-range or further, but then you kept practicing.
J: Yeah
I: And then basically, can you tell me what that story means? What are you trying to convey?
J: It just mean that... Um... I think, just like what I said, like hard work always pays off, and you just trying to solve problems that you never see. And in the story, I think I told about how I see problems and how I realized what's conference what's not and what can I do better? How can I get out of the comfort zone to get better? And just the way to deal with things and the mentality to solve things.
I: Okay, so in that writing, you also talk about lack of confidence.
J: Yeah
I: You talked about you being afraid or being concerned or worried to make those shots. Uh, can I ask what made you worried? What made you afraid of trying it at that time?
J: Uh... I think it's just people looking at me and the way I think people look at me made me feel uncomfortable, not confident.
I: I see, so like expectations from other people?
J: Yeah

Other Relevant Interview Segments (I= Interview; J= James)
I: Um how about like basketball team or cross-country team? Like do you have special experiences interacting with people in these two groups?
J: Yeah, actually, I’m gonna share one of the stories of the basketball team?
I: Um hmm
J: So this year, we're having a really short season because there's COVID, and we were already excited that we're going to even have a season because most of the inside sports couldn't happen in the fall. It happened in the winter, but it was late and then during the regular season. We did pretty fine. Uh and then, in the playoff, we thought we were going to win all the way to the champion. But the thing is I broke my ankle, and I couldn't play during the last two games of the regular season, and I couldn't join the first game of the playoff, but I thought there would really be a lot of difference if I didn’t play, so uh, I just wrap it up, and then I ate some ibuprofen, and I just play the second game. But I think it's because we, me, myself I, as a point guard, we, I didn't play that much game and practiced for like two weeks or three weeks. So the whole team chemistry didn't work really well. And I, and we could have won the game if I made the ball free throw during the final seconds of the game. But instead, I missed it. But after we lost, we just got on the bus. And obviously, people were upset. And I was... I was the one who was like couldn't believe and was more upset. But the most memorable part I remember about that part was all the teammates, like, they were all trying to cheer me up even though we just lost, and the season was over.
I: How does that make you feel, or how did it make you feel?
J: As a part of basketball team and as a captain, that really means a lot to me that people just ignore the fact that we just lost and just trying to make me feel better and just talk me through.
I: So you were, or still are, the captain of the basketball team?
J: Yeah, I was the captain.
I: Okay. Alright, um… When you were telling me this story just now, there's a sentence that, you know, just got stuck with me, and I want you to say a little bit more. You say that there would be a lot of difference if you didn't play.
J: Yeah
I: Can you say more?
J: Uh… Yeah, because I’m the star of the team, and this year, we have a really strong starting five, and if I didn't play, and you can obviously see that on the court. Uh… there's a lot of difference, and teammates are complaining about the subs instead of me playing. And the scores and the result of the game obviously show that it will be a lot of difference that if I didn't play
I: I see.

**CoP Photos**
I: Great, so in the questionnaire, you also included two pictures that I think are very relevant to the story that you just told me. This is one of them. [Interviewer shows the picture via the shared screen on Zoom.]
J: Yeah
I: Uh, is that [anonymized school] you were playing against?
J: Yes
I: Okay, so [anonymized school] is another school that I’ve been recruiting students for interviews, too.
J: That’s really cool.
I: Yeah, and this is another one. [Interviewer shows another picture on shared screen on Zoom] So what school is this?
J: I think it was [anonymized school].
I: Okay, so in both pictures, I mean, I’m sure there have been a lot of pictures taken of you and of your teams, but yet, you’ve selected two pictures. Why these two pictures? And what are you trying to tell me by, you know, sharing with me these two particular pictures?
J: I just feel like wearing masks on the basketball court… It's like the thing that I will never, like, dream of. I don't know. I just feel like those two pictures are really cool, so there's not really a big reason of me showing those two basically.
I: Okay. Um thank you for answering that question.
J: No problem.

**Language Identity Portrait**
I: So my first question is: What would you say are the most important parts of your identities now at this moment?
J: Um, is it like I see myself?
I: Yeah, yeah, or you can also talk about how you think other people see you. So basically what about you right now right at this time is the most important to you? What part of the identity is
the most important to you? Is that your friendship with your American friends? Or is it your
relationship with your family? Or is it the fact that you are hardworking?
J: Um I think one of the reasons I put down hardworking is because I’m responsible, and I think
that's the most that I see myself.
I: Um hmm. Okay, do you think that's how people see you, too?
J: Uh... I think sometimes, yes.
I: Yeah, okay. So have you always been a hardworking person?
J: Um no, I was in... When I was in elementary school, I realized that hard work always pays off,
and whatever you're working on, it’s going to get... You're going to have your own result. Your
own success depends on how much time you put in, how much work you put in.

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I: So let's take a look at this language portrait here. So maybe just talk to me. Talk to me about
the languages that you put in this portrait, and what they mean to you, and why you chose those
colors.
J: Um I put red as basketball because I think the passion of the game and everything, teammates.
It's one of the most important things.
I: And you think of it as a language?
J: Yeah, it can be a language sometimes.
I: Can you say a bit more about that?
J: Just how you play shows about your, again, just like confidence and stuff. It can show more
about you. It's not really the way you can communicate a lot. But I think you can show yourself
to others what kind of person or what kind of skills you have.
I: So like self-expression, like how you express yourself?
J: Yeah
I: Okay. That makes sense. Thank you. Continue, please.
J: And the orange part is Chinese. It’s just that I put it as orange because when I think of home, I
just I feel like it's warm. It's like my family. It's like the tool I use to communicate with the
people that live in my country.
I: Can you maybe say a bit more about that? Because I know that [anonymized school] also has a
lot of students from mainland China, right? And you also have two other friends from Taiwan.
So does Chinese play a role in your communication here, too?
J: Yeah, it does, I talk... Actually, one of them is my roommate, and basically, we talk using
Chinese and... But there is not, Chinese, people from China this year so...
I: Okay J: It doesn't really... I don't really use a lot of this language. But it does make me feel like
I’m home.

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I: Can you say a bit more about English?
J: Oh yeah, English is just like... I think English is um... I see it as a way that I can not just
communicate with people here but also I can, I don't know, I just feel comfortable to um use it,
and when I use it, it just makes me laugh a lot because sometimes there's uh miscommunication,
and sometimes different jokes can make by using English or because English is the common
language that everybody use, so if there's like some type of other languages, if they are translated
to English, it might be different. And I put it at eyes but eyes, mouth and where abs are at
because I think it just makes me laugh a lot and those are the um body parts that I remember
when I really laugh a lot like happy, yeah.
Appendix F: Rose’s Positioning Profile Data Set

Personal Narrative 1
When Ms. [anonymized person] knocked on my door, I knew it was time to go. I grabbed my thick, heavy, jacket and tried to find a nice pair of socks among my clothes. Unfortunately, I only saw a pair of socks with holes, and the other socks seemed to play hide-and-seek with me.
Regardless, it was 5:50 p.m., so wearing those unappealing socks, I immediately stepped into my boots and those unappealing socks and went out with [anonymized person]. That was my first year staying in Bangor. I had never seen such impressive snow before, like a pile of sugar knocked over on a table. The freezing weather quickened my already restless heart. Snow and wind drilled into my boots and blew on my bare toes. My nerves suddenly tightened.

Their house was spacious, and everything seemed tiny, including me. I was sitting on their couch quietly, thinking about my socks and this marvelous family. [anonymized person], my homestay sister, showed enthusiasm for swimming. [anonymized person], my homestay father, liked to strum on his fabulous guitar. [anonymized person], my younger brother, liked to be lost in his bean bag chair while playing video games. However, the person I was most afraid of was my homestay mother, [anonymized person] Maccini [= pseudonym].

Her powerful stature and muscular shoulders made me look and feel frail in front of her. Behind her hefty, black, square glasses, those brooding eyes were always looking straight at me, without any caution. I felt uncomfortable and inferior before those keen eyes, bashfully crossing my feet together as I was conscious of my ragged socks.

At last, I made it to the final moment of dinner. The family welcomed me to live with them, and luckily, no one seemed to notice my tattered socks.

After the formalities, I finally joined this amazing family. However, things were quite different from what I expected. No breakfast, no after school pick-ups, and not even extra bath time. All the rules and limitations shattered my impression of the “friendly American family.” The most terrifying requirement was to share something during dinner which I was afraid to do. At that time, my English level was not proficient enough to support me in forming a complete sentence. I would spend an hour thinking about an interesting topic to share with my host family.

After one week, my brain cells were exhausted, and my nerves were shot. I started to speak less or only answer simple questions. Beyond that, I never had an in depth conversation with my family because I did not want this cool family to realize my inferior English skills. These tattered, holey socks would never fit in with the fashionable, colorful, and comfortable socks which the Maccinis [= pseudonym] family was wearing.

Eventually, the situation began to change. One night after finishing my dinner, I was ready to quietly creep up the stairs when [anonymized person: homestay mother] sat me back in the chair and stared at me with those chilling eyes. “Rose, you haven’t talked at the dinner table for a couple of days. I’m wondering if you still remember our promise?” She paused and sighed. “I know it is hard to start a conversation with other people, but we all want to hear your story and your thoughts.”
“I’m sorry. You know how bad my English is, Mom.” That was the first time I called her Mom.

“That’s why you need to practice.” She smiled, and her eyes no longer caused fear within me. “We all would like to help you, just like families do.”

Living with the Maccinis [= pseudonym] has made an enormous difference in my life and changed my personality for the better. I am now much more outgoing and cheer for my sister at her swimming competition, I play music with my brother and father, and I take part in deeper conversations at the dinner table. These experiences remind me of a mother’s hand which uses a needle and thread to slowly sew up a child’s worn socks, then washes them clean, adding vivid color and a refreshing fragrance. Gradually, the gray, broken socks have transformed into glowing socks with the “Made in Maccini [= pseudonym]” label which accompany me further along the road of life.

**Corresponding Interview Segment** (I= Interviewer; R= Rose)

I: Okay, perfect. So, earlier you told me about a… Well actually I read about the experience of you interacting with your host family. I remember very well about this part where you describe your host mom, and the very last part of the essay where you told her that you, you cannot really share your thoughts or feelings at dinner table because you feel like your English wasn’t good enough and what she told you really changed you, right? She told you that they were here to help you and that interaction kind of changed you, transformed you, right? Do you think how you felt at that time has something to do with your identity as well?

R: I think so, the part that I’m not really good at English, and I can’t communicate with them fluently.

I: So that has something to do with your lack of confidence as well?

R: Yes

I: Can you tell me a little bit about your English before you came to the US? How did people… For example, in your middle school or in your family, how did they see you and your English?

R: Um, in middle school, I… Because my English teacher knows I’m going to study abroad. But like at that time, I’m not really a good student. I can spend all my weekend to play games with my friends, so I’m not really paying some efforts in it so… But I think my English was my best subject between math and Chinese. Before I came to [anonymized school], my TOEFL score was only 32. The minimum to get into [anonymized school] is 85.

I: This is the TOEFL exam you are talking about?

R: Yes, like before I came here, my TOEFL score was 32.

I: Um hmm

R: And I… One time I cried and asked my headmaster. Why are you letting me join this school because I… My English is poor and I’m not really a good student, and I feel really pressured, like I’m not um… like the students around me are really talented, really great, and the one thing that my headmaster told me that we can see leadership on you and like… you can be more confident about my… about yourself, so I continued to study and like that.
**Personal Narrative 2**
I was always questioning my purpose of studying abroad. Was it for a better quality of life and more abundant opportunities in the future job market, or was it because my parents gave me no choice but to study in the U.S.? With these questions in mind, I came to study abroad. I encountered strange Western faces speaking languages I did not understand, yet they gave me their most cordial greetings. As a Chinese student, I have felt the recognition of my own cultural identity within other diverse cultures.

Before I studied abroad, I was concerned that I would be discriminated against. However, I found the students to be very warm toward me. They welcomed me and have shown interest in learning about my culture and identity. Although I struggled with the language barrier, this inclusion made me feel accepted. Throughout my time, I have gained much knowledge about Western cultures from classmates and teachers.

Due to my experiences communicating and living with people from other countries, I have developed an interest in international relations. I believe that [anonymized university] will provide me with the best opportunity to explore this interest through rigorous studies, hands-on experience, and a diverse college environment.

**Corresponding Interview Segment (I= Interviewer; R= Rose)**
I: And I remember your sharing about the TOEFL score that you had.
R: Yeah
I: I remember you said something about 30 something, and the lowest score for entering [anonymized school] is 85. Can you… Can you talk more about this part because you… You mentioned that you were very upset at one point.
R: Yes
I: Because you… You didn't feel very prepared to be a student at [anonymized school], and I was just wondering why you felt that way by just, you know, looking at this test score. How about your experiences interacting and communicating with other people? Does that not make you feel more prepared or better? Why’s the test score so important?
R: Like for most of students… Like when they talk about test scores, they have really high scores and… You know sometimes people like to compare with others, and… I feel like I'm not good enough to enter this social hub. And when I was a freshman, there's a lot of Chinese students or international students that came here that had really good English. But after that… like after the talk with my school’s headmaster… After that, I tried to not make myself more upset and tried to do anything I can for my English ability. And actually, I moved to my homestay family for my second semester when I was a freshman and… I think it helps me a lot to… like a lot of parts for my growing and my English ability and also helps me be become more confident about myself because I know although my English ability is not that good, I can get really high GPA. Um like I can do other things that other people cannot do.
I: Okay, interesting. Um, just by listening to you, there are a few things that I wanted to follow up with you. The first is this concept of testing being very important to students coming from the Chinese background. Do you think that's true?
R: I think it is.
I: And do you think that's still true today? Like when you talk to the freshmen?
R: Yes
I: So now that you have been a student here for a number of years, do you think those peers of yours who came into [anonymized school] with a higher TOEFL score, based on your observation, do you think that they are able to communicate better than you or the other students who perhaps don't have as high TOEFL scores? Or the score is really just a number. It doesn't really mean very much in terms of communication?
R: Um, I do think the score shows the English ability for a person because they can understand other people and like the meaning from the texts, so the students who have higher TOEFL scores that came to [anonymized school] do have greater ability than me. But in my opinion, I don't think the score is really important, but sometimes you really need those scores to help you get opportunities for yourself.
I: Such as college entrance, right?
R: Yes
I: Now, the second thing that I wanted to follow up with you is about this talk between you and the headmaster. Um… it seems to me that this talk had a very significant influence on you because before you talked to him, you felt very upset, and you were not very sure about your future in [anonymized school]. But simply by having this talk with the headmaster, you were able to change the way you thought of yourself. Um what… What did this talk mean to you?
R: Why was it so helpful? And have you ever had other interactions like that with teachers or with other students that also changed you like that? It seems to me it's very magical you know...
[Interviewer laughs.]
R: Oh yeah, I really think this talk is funny that I can just directly go to the headmaster to just directly to talk to him. And I think it's really funny and crying in front of him… But he… Um at that time he gave me like… support and told me what type of person am I that I never thought of before. So I think… after the talk, I find what kind of like… I'm trying to think about what kind of person am I, and what I want to be in the future if I can. I'm trying… After that talk, I was trying to consider about myself that I never really did before.
I: So, am I right by saying that this talk made you realize that there is more to you than just your English?
R: Yeah
I: Okay. So yeah, that was very interesting to me. Did anyone suggest that you go to the headmaster or was it your choice?
R: It’s my choice.
I: Oh, interesting. So you did not choose to go to like a teacher, or a friend, or a local student or a librarian. You went directly to the headmaster.
R: Yes, because he gave the decision for me to go to the school so...
I: That’s interesting. Okay, hmm… In your mind, at that time, did you think that he was the one that you could talk to or because he was at a place where he made a lot of decisions so you wanted to talk to a person like him?
R: Um… I think both because I met the headmaster before I came to [anonymized school]. They had a meeting for all the students in China. Um so… but I think the reason why I talked to him is because he's the headmaster and he had… like he did the decision and to let me go into the school.

**Other Relevant Interview Segments** (I= Interview; R= Rose)

*Most Salient Aspects of Self-Perceived Identity*
I: Okay, um, so let's move on to the language identity portrait that you just created. Okay, and let's take a look at the identity component first. I've invited you to explore how you see yourself, and how you think other people see in terms of your relationships with these people and your role in the school and also in in the society. So, what would you say are the most important parts of your identities now?

R: For my opinion or?

I: Yeah, based on… Well, maybe you can talk about how you see yourself first.

R: Um… I… Um… I only have a problem. It’s that I don’t… I don’t really have… I don’t have confidence for myself. And I think low of… And other people for like… I have really low self-value, like, for my opinion. And sometimes, I get really sentimental, like emotionally. I mean I get really emotional and self-abused. But other people think I'm great and talented and like that.

I: So there is a difference between how you see yourself and how other people see you?

R: Yes

I: Okay. If you don't mind, can you tell me more about this? I'm curious about why there is such a difference. If people think that you are a great flute player, and you seem to be doing very well in terms of leading the Chinese club, so people see you as accomplished. People see you as very competent, right? But that's not how you see yourself. Can you tell me why there is such a difference?

R: Um because sometimes that I want to reach some of my goals, and I can’t do that. I can’t reach my goals because of my low abilities. And the international students like Chinese students around me, they are so talented and so smart that those peer pressures make me feel I’m not great. And I need to… Um… I need to be better than that especially, especially during the college application. This special time… It makes me feel like I'm… Just four years, I did nothing to improve my English and other like academic stuff. And so, I feel myself did nothing. And I’m also unclear about my future and the major, like what I'm going to be, and what I'm going to do.

Scenarios Illustrating Confidence

I: Okay, and if you don't mind, can we come back to this piece where you don't feel very confident and you think this is the most important part of your identity now? Has this always been the most important part of your identity? Or has this only been important since you came to the U.S.?

R: Yes, like before I came, too. Before I studied abroad, this is also the same thing that confused me a lot that I don't have confidence for myself.

I: So do you think that coming to [anonymized school] or coming to the U.S. and becoming part of [anonymized school] has made this aspect of your identity more significant or less significant?

R: It makes it less significant, but it still exists. Like I realized some parts of it... like when I do something that I can have confidence for myself, like playing music, or um being a leader, that sometimes I do have confidence for myself. But I don't know why. But I... like I can see myself that I'm improving... like I have improved, yeah.

I: Can you share with me one moment where you felt very confident? Can you share with me an experience where you feel like you're very accomplished, you are, you know, you have achieved what you wanted to achieve and you think highly of yourself?
R: Um like… I… I can play the [musical] parts that nobody can play that… I feel like… I'm really… I'm really proud of myself. And like… um… also the time I organized and communicated with everybody or do presentation in front of local [= American] students I feel like I'm… I'm a leader or like that.

I: When was the last time you felt that way?

R: Um… [long pause] I think the last time is… I did a presentation for a Chinese Club activity, and we introduced 清明节[qīngmíngjié = Tomb Sweeping Day] for local students, and we like… introduced using PowerPoint…

I: So how… What was people's reaction to your presentation?

R: Um… I don't know… I don't really… I didn't ask them a lot, and because we had a little trouble with technology, and time was really… time was rushed, so… But I think we did a pretty good job.

I: Good. So overall, you feel good about yourself during that experience, right?

R: Yeah
Appendix G: Helen’s Positioning Profile Data Set

Personal Narrative 1

I grew up hating my dad.

At 5, I hated his smell. I could tell my dad’s presence before actually seeing him by his strong reek of petroleum, dust, and sweat that got built up from his job as a car engineer. Never was there a single time I let dad hug me or pat my head before questioning him: “Are you clean?” I was a five-year-old girl who did not want my floral dress and my candy scented hair to be made “dirty.”

At 5, I asked mom to let dad use her perfume to get rid of that horrible smell. Without a word, she took me to dad’s workplace, secretly. It was in scorching weather, dad's shabby T-shirt was all wet, stained with black sticky oil. Yet, for the very first time, I saw him with a shiny wrench, competently loosened the nuts, parted out a big dirty frame covered in dust. He replaced it with a brand new one, then skillfully connected wires, and stood out looking satisfied. For the very first time, I realized how diligent my dad was. For the very first time, I ran right into my dad’s big embrace.

At 5, I learned that doing what you loved was what mattered.

At 10, I began to notice and hate dad’s reticence towards me. In my eyes, dad was a stiff man spared of words for his children, yet had no difficulty socializing with people from all walks of life. It was normal for me to talk endlessly about a 10 I got on Math, only to receive either a nod or a grimace. I was a ten-year-old girl who doubted if dad loved me or not.

At 10, being transferred to a new school, I usually skipped meals and locked myself in my bedroom, crying silently until falling asleep. The time was difficult, but since then, I began to receive different little presents every morning. It would be my favorite candy, a bottle of milk, or some crackers, with a small piece of note: “You can do it!”

It was dad who woke up at five to prepare that for me. For 6 straight years, there was hardly a day he forgot his little surprise. When moving to the US, his morning treat was what I found the hardest to say goodbye to.

At 10, I learned that love doesn’t always have to be in words.

At 15, I hated dad for the gap between him and me. He would avoid talking, seeing me, and always showed his indifferent look. “Mind your own business.” - he once said with a deep fierce tone. I was a fifteen-year-old girl who wondered if I belonged in his world.

At 15, I woke up in the middle of the night overhearing mom's crying in despair. Dad's body curled up and twisted. He was shaking and grunting in pain. Only until then did I know dad was suffering from meningitis, which produced a side-effect on his back spine. I stood there, impotently, while mom gave him a handful of pills.

"Don’t blame him. He just wants us to be stronger." - Mom whispered. Warm tears began streaming down my cheeks, washing away my selfishness and ignorance. While mom became the breadwinner, I took care of dad and handled all the household chores. There were times I was
exhausted, but looking at my dad’s frowny face because of the pain, I knew my problem was nothing near what he was going through.

At 15, I learned not to take anything for granted and not to give up on your love-ones.

Throughout all these years, dad has given me a world full of love where I, little by little, grow up with independence and courage. He was, is, and will always be my motivation in every chapter of my life.

Now 17, I am using all the lessons I learned to achieve my dream.

Now 17, I am thankful I grew up hating my dad.

**Corresponding Interview Segment** (I= Interviewer; H= Helen)

I: And this other piece that you share with me. I was also deeply touched by what you wrote in the essay. You mainly talk about your relationship with your parents, especially your dad. And I, you know, I mean I was able to learn a little bit about this relationship by reading this essay, but I’m hoping, I was hoping to hear it from you. Can you maybe describe a little bit about your relationship with your family?

H: Well, um, to be honest, I was a very, very naughty girl, when I was still in Vietnam. Like I barely listened to what my parents say cuz I was, you know, like at some certain age, you will like, you want to like be free. You don’t want to listen to your parents and stuff, and I think I was very troubling... I was a trouble girl for like difference. I think I did it because I wanted attention because, you know like, um... This, a part of me, that has been with me since I was young that I always like make myself responsible for a lot of things so um... when I, so I was born in a family with very loving parents, but like the relatives on my father’s side, they are very like... They look down on my family because my father cannot like have male offspring, so people look down on my family, and ever since I was young, I just want to like to make other people know that even a girl can do what a boy can, so I start to like be strong and all those stuff in order to show that even though my parents don’t have a boy, they still have two girls that can be as good at what boys can you know so...

I: Is it an older sister or younger sister you have?

H: I have a younger sister.

I: Okay.

H: I feel like it is a responsibility for me to be strong, to pretend I’m strong, so that people don’t look down us. And because of that, when I was young, so my parents just thought that... okay you are so independent, so we don’t have to take care of you that much, so they didn’t really like care about me when I grew older so... but I wanted attention so yeah I just did all the things that they don’t want me to do, but like deep inside I really love them and, like I always care for them.

I: Thank you again for sharing that. I appreciate it. Um, so I think I can get a sense of what you’re trying to express from writing this personal essay, but can you tell me what... I mean what message are you trying to convey?

H: Actually, this personal essay is not only about um the relationship between me and my dad but it’s also a way for me to express my, like, myself, my emotion, my thoughts like... Although I
have some very bad actions towards the ones I love, it doesn't mean that I don't love them. It just
means that I’m, um, what to say, how to say it, like I’m shy to show my emotions out, so I guess
yeah...
I: That's very, very interesting.

**Personal Narrative 2**

**MY VALEDICTION LETTER**

To my dear friend group,

Honestly, I have been trying to find the right words to put down for quite a while, for I
have so many things to say, yet so little time. So please bear with me.

Looking back on those good old days, we carefree kids did not think much about life. We
let our mind wander freely, and we enjoyed our life to its fullest. Until now, it is still clear and
vivid to me, those afternoons we hopped on our motorbikes and rode to our secret spot up in the
mountain. We would talk about all sorts of things while enjoying our favorite snacks under the
big pine trees in that light breeze which rustled the leaves. Do you still remember how we used
to call the earthy and refreshing smell of the grass after a pouring rain the smell of youth? How
nostalgic. Through many ups and downs, the silly us laughed, cried, and made promises that we
would never part. Yet here I am, trying to hold my tears as I think of how unfortunate I am to be
leaving so soon.

Guys, when I’m gone, don’t cry, because the very last thing I want to see is your sobbing
faces. Knowing that I am going to a better place where I will be waiting for you until our paths
cross again, you must not be sad. I truly believe that you can pull this through, together,
considering how strong and brave you dreamers are. I will be there in the pouring rain, in the
light breeze, in every rustling leaf, in every tiny corner of this world waiting for you. You are
having a wonderful journey ahead, so please give every day your best shot, and be happy. From
the bottom of my heart, thank you for being a part of my youth. I love you.

Smile whenever you miss me, will you?

Yours truly,

Helen

**Corresponding Interview Segment** (I= Interviewer; H= Helen)

I: But I do want to talk about these two pieces of writing that you share with me. And I, I truly
appreciate them. The first one, the personal essay, can you, can you tell me... I mean for what
purpose did you write this essay?
H: Um for applying to college.
I: Okay, so it’s a college entrance essay?
H: Um hmm
I: And then, this other one, was it before you left Vietnam?
H: No, for one of the assignments in my English class.
I: Here?
H: Yeah
I: Okay, so the audience of this letter... You are addressing this letter to your friends and classmates in WA?
H: No, actually, I wrote it for my friends in Vietnam.
I: Oh okay. Can you tell me about this assignment? It sounds very interesting.
H: So we were learning like poems about a man saying goodbye to his wife and stuff, and the teacher just found it’s really interesting for the students to also write something about that same concept, too, so she asked us to write it.
I : Um, interesting.

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I: I appreciate that you shared this with me. So, this letter ends with a sentence that resonated with me a lot. It says: smile whenever you miss me, will you? So, from this sentence, it made me feel like you had a very intimate, very close relationship with whomever you're addressing this letter to, but it also gave me an impression that you feel a bit sad for, you know, ending this part of your life. Can you say a bit more about this?
H: Yeah. Um so well, you asked me before how is my relationship with my friends in Vietnam, and I told you, it was not as good as it was before, so this letter is like my thoughts and emotion when I thought of that.
I: Um. am I right in saying that this is a reflection of what you hope? That the relationship would be or what would remain to be?
H: Yeah

Other Relevant Interview Segments (I= Interview; H= Helen)

Relationship with Faculty & The Importance of Representation for Connection
I: So how is your relationship or how are your relationships with the teachers?
H: Um, I think that our relationships are good yeah. Like I’m close to one of the Chinese teachers here, and like she's also one of the dorm parents, too.

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I: So why Chinese teacher?
H: Well, part of it, because she's Asian so she kind of understands Asians, you know? And like, she is very chilled. She is very kind, too. And she just gives me an impression of a mother.
I: Um hmm
H: That I don't have many chances to... have much chance to interact with because I’m in the USA, and my mom is in Vietnam, but like that teacher is like... She just makes me feel like... She just gives me a sense of belonging here.
I: Um hmm
H: Yeah, and there are a lot of American teachers who are very kind, too. And I think I’m pretty close with them, but like if I have to choose my top one, it will be the Chinese teacher.
I: I don't mean to assume, but is she also international?
H: Yeah
I: Okay, do you think that plays a role?
H: Yeah because, as I told you um... Being international students and like international residents in the US, we have a lot of problems that only international people understand, like the papers of staying here and all the rules that you have to apply to as an international individual, so there are
a lot of problems that only us understand. So, it's like if ever, if I ever have any problems with
those kinds of stuff, I would just come to her and talk about it, so much easier for me.
I: Do you remember the last thing that you and her talked about or something that was very
important to you that you shared with her?
H: Um well yeah actually I am um... I am dealing with depression, so I... She's the only one
teacher I talk to about it yeah...

Being Protective as Second Nature
I: What would you say are the most important parts of your identities right now?
H: Um
I: Out of all these things you have listed
H: I think the protective one is what really identifies me.
I: Um hmm
H: Yeah because, I don't know, maybe it's just an instinct of being a sister to my younger sister,
so I don't know, I just have a feeling that I want to protect other people even my friends here, and
like, it's a part of me, like being nice and like protective towards other people. It’s just been a
part of me for a long time.
I: Let's just talk about that a little bit more. So, when you say you want to be protective, what are
some sort of like specific things that you do to protect people? Because everyone probably has a
different definition of what it means to be protective, right? So, in your case, how are you
protective?
H: Um, well, to think about it is actually hard. To like think of a specific example of that thing...
But like I feel like sometimes I feel like I’m a mom no even though I’m not like... Sometimes, it
just makes me feel like I’m sort of a mom. because like I just do everything, like a mom would
do, to their children, you know like um... So, okay, so when my, the Vietnamese friend that I’m
very close with here like in my school/ One time, she was sick, and she couldn't go to school for
two weeks, and I was kind of affected too because, like, I was worried about her all the time.
And when I came back to the dorm, I would just come and check up on her and help her with all
the things she needed. And I cooked for her and make sure she take her medicines and stuff. It's
like that and yeah...

Family as a Responsibility
I: What role do you think is the most important to you now?
H: Um, well, I think that being a daughter is the most important now. Yeah, so I put the word
daughter, like in the shoulder part because I see myself like being a daughter to my family. It
also means being responsible to like, you know, like to deal with all the problems that my family
are facing. And part of it is also because I’m far away
I: Um hmm
H: So actually, I have... I miss my family a lot. And we don't really have that much time to spend
on to each other like all day long so sometimes, I just feel like um... It's just like a lost feeling,
you know? Like the feelings that you're lost, and you don't have the same kind of feeling as you
had when you were with your family. Yeah, I think. Yeah, I think that's the most important to me
now.
I: So that's also the main reason why this role is being represented on your shoulder because you feel like... It's like a sort of like an invisible sort of a burden that you carry, not a burden, but like a responsibility, maybe?

H: Yeah
BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR

Ming-Tso Chien was born in Tainan, Taiwan on May 24, 1982. He grew up in Nantou, a county in central Taiwan, and has lived and studied in Maine since 2015. Ming-Tso attended National Chiaotung University in Hsinchu, Taiwan and graduated in 2004 with a Bachelor’s degree in Foreign Languages and Literatures. He also obtained his teacher certificate from the same institution. After teaching for a few years, Ming-Tso went back to school and received a Master’s degree in International Communication Studies from National Chengchi University in Taipei, Taiwan in 2010.

Ming-Tso was one of the 2015-2016 recipients of the Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistantship, with which he taught Chinese at the University of Maine for a year before returning to attend the PhD program in Education in the College of Education and Human Development at the University of Maine, where he specialized in language and literacy education and where he accumulated teaching and research experiences as a graduate assistant in multiple capacities.

In 2020, Ming-Tso was awarded a Predoctoral Teaching Fellowship of Educational Studies from the College of the Atlantic, where he designed and taught the following courses: Advocacy and Education for English Learners, Equity and Social Justice in Education, Language and Education in Transnational Contexts, and Intercultural Communication.

After receiving his degree, Ming-Tso hopes to work in the fields of international education and higher education where he can make use of his skills in and knowledge of subject matters such as language, culture, communication, education, and social justice. He is a candidate for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education in December 2022.