**Third culture young women:**

**Understanding their life experiences and leadership perspectives**

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## Abstract

Globalisation influences how leadership is understood and practiced and impacts on culturally diverse interactions in New Zealand communities. Examining leadership and intersecting diversity with regards to culture, gender and age could provide a richer understanding of how identity impacts on leadership. Youth are increasingly growing up in multicultural communities, giving rise to a phenomenon widely referred to as Third Culture Kids (TCKs) – adolescents who grow up in cultures outside of their home culture. To date there is no research on the leadership perspectives and development needs of TCKs, and although there are programmes and studies focusing on leadership development for young women, very few of these initiatives focus on culturally diverse young women. This research focused on examining the diverse lifeworlds of third culture young women to appreciate how their intersecting experiences and perspectives influenced their leadership understanding.

Using an interpretive phenomenological approach, four third culture young women, selected from a leadership programme for Year 13 (16 year old) young women, were interviewed and asked questions that explored their experiences and perspectives regarding being third culture individuals, young women, and leaders. The responses were analysed using a modified version of Ashworth's (2003) phenomenological framework to reveal that diverse young women have an awareness of the gendered expectations that society constructs, have an ability to navigate cultural differences, and are able to strategize how to interact with various social groups as a result of their diverse life experiences and intersecting identities. Ultimately, their core values, life experiences, and diverse perspectives as culturally distinct adolescent women shape their leadership understanding and practice.

This study concludes that third culture young women are embodying values, perspectives, skills and strategies that suggest their potential as emerging leaders in their communities and future aspirations aligned with their leadership purpose of achieving personal success and helping others. In conclusion there is a need for greater application from academics and practitioners of intersectionality into leadership studies and practice. Recommendations were made with regards to leadership research and development programmes in the future and how these can explore the leadership potential of young, culturally diverse women like young TCK women.



***Keywords: third culture, leadership, youth, women, intersectionality***

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# 1. Introduction

With globalisation the world is becoming more "interwoven and interdependent" (Moore & Barker, 2012, p. 553), borders are being eliminated and cultural diversity is fast becoming the norm in many communities (Jackson & Parry, 2011; McDonald, 2010; Moore & Barker, 2012; Pollock & van Reken, 2001; Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009). There are approximately 230 million international migrants present in the world today (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2013). Globalisation and the subsequent diversity it creates, is also present in New Zealand society where a quarter of people living in New Zealand in 2013 were born overseas (Statistics NZ, 2013). Auckland, New Zealand's biggest city is one of the world's most culturally diverse cities with 23.1% Asian, 14.6% Pacific peoples, 10.7% Māori and 59.3% Europeans (Statistics NZ, 2013). It is evident that cultural diversity is becoming a reality in Auckland and is trickling down through the country with 11.8% Asian, 14.9% Māori, 7.4% Pacific peoples, and 74% European nationwide (Statistics NZ, 2013).

With an increased acceptance and awareness of diversity in society, diversity is becoming a priority in many organisations and leadership that embraces cultural intelligence, awareness of others' values and motives, and cross-cultural communication is necessary to lead diverse groups in diverse environments (Graen, 2006; Jackson & Parry, 2011). As Jackson and Parry (2011) suggest, "Leadership is essentially a cultural activity – it is suffused with values, beliefs, language, rituals and artefacts" (p. 71). However, leading a diverse group of followers and managing the cultural exchanges within diverse contexts requires effective leadership development and education. Many organisations provide leadership development once individuals (often adults) are inducted into their context. This thesis, however, argues that leadership development needs to start with youth because they are often at the forefront of social justice movements and emerge as frontline leaders in their communities to influence positive changes (Denner, Meyer, & Bean, 2005; Libby, Sedonaen, & Bliss, 2006; Taylor, 2012). Furthermore, youth need leadership development during their adolescent years because they are in the process of forming their identity and to become an effective leader involves internalising leadership as part of one's identity (Ely, Ibarra, & Kolb, 2011; Libby *et al.*, 2006; Rorem & Bajaj, 2012).

Youth growing up in a globalised world are often living in diverse communities, where they are exposed to a variety of different cultures in person or on-line (Jones, 1999). Some of these young people spend their formative years living in a culture that is not their home culture. Literature refers to these youth as Third Culture Kids (TCKs) (Moore & Barker, 2012; Pollock & van Reken, 2001; Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009). Pollock and van Reken (2001) define TCKs to be "a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside of the parents' culture" (p. 19). This youth group is an important group to research because they have been exposed to a wide range of cultures, and thus have experienced culture shock, navigated cultural differences, managed expectations in different environments and interacted with a range of different groups of people while simultaneously developing their own identity and sense of belonging. TCKs are four times more likely to achieve a bachelor's degree compared to non-TCKs (Cottrell & Useem, 1993) and approximately 44% complete an undergraduate degree after 22 years old (Cottrell & Useem, 1994). As such, third culture youth are a group that deserve further research on issues pertinent to leadership development because their varied cultural experiences suggest that they may have the attributes of an effective leader in culturally diverse settings due to the wider perspectives, and ability to manage and embrace change their diverse life experiences provide.

Young third culture women are the main focus of this research because there is a need for research on young women and leadership (Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008; McNae, 2010), and even more need for research on culturally diverse young women and leadership (Jones, 1999; McNae, 2010). Furthermore, research on third culture individuals has only been done in the spheres of identity development (McDonald, 2010; Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009), intercultural relations (Hoesting & Jenkins, 2011; Lyttle, Barker, & Cornwell, 2011; Moore & Barker, 2012; Tarique & Weisbord, 2013), and international education (Bates, 2013; Cottrell & Useem, 1993; Cottrell & Useem, 1994). Adolescent young women are normally at a crossroads of discovering their potential that influences and shapes their leadership identity (Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008). As such, the research aims to develop a view of how a sample of young women interpret their potential and define their leadership identity from their life experiences thus far. Research on third culture individuals and their contributions to

leadership were non-existent in the academic sphere when a search in article databases was conducted. However, the conversation around TCKs and their leadership potential is prominent in popular culture through websites like 'Denizen for Third Culture Kids' (an online blog where TCKs can share their life experiences), and 'TCKidNow' (a non-profit organisation that helps educate communities about TCKs and connect TCKs around the world).

The motivation for this research was also based on my personal experience as a third culture young woman. Growing up in the Philippines, a culture outside my Malaysian Chinese-Indian home culture, I learnt of the term TCK from the international schools that I attended. I did experience culture shock when I first moved to Manila with my family but over time, I understood that in our international environment, being a TCK was the norm. So I easily embraced the culture of the TCK, which essentially was to build relationships with peers from a diverse group of cultures and assimilate into any environment that I was thrown in. Throughout my adolescent years, I held a range of leadership positions like Assistant Secretary of Student Council and President of the Spanish Cultural Club. I also engaged in experiential leadership by participating in leadership development programmes hosted by Envision like the Global Young Leaders Conference. My third culture experiences continued when I moved to New Zealand to complete my tertiary education. At Massey University, I also held leadership roles in our local AIESEC chapter as Vice-President of Incoming Exchange, Director of Corporate Development and Vice-President of Communications. Aside from leadership roles, I was able to develop my leadership skills through internships with working in diverse groups, group projects in class assignments and being involved in leadership development programmes like the University Presidential Inaugural Conference, Achieving Career Excellence (ACE) programme and the Young Women in Leadership programme. During my undergraduate studies, I noticed that my peers found my TCK experiences rare and unique. I never really understood their fascination and admiration because I thought that my background was the norm. I began to understand that my third culture experiences showed signs of leadership with being able to embrace change, navigating cultural differences, having intercultural relations, and being aware of my values and those of my peers, and how that influences how interactions. As such, I realised that I

potentially had the skills, abilities and qualities to be a leader that could integrate my gender orientation, my cultural filters and my age to my advantage and lead by example for other youth to follow and be empowered. Towards the end of my degree, I realised that I was truly passionate about youth leadership development, especially that of females. From my personal experiences and journey of identity development, I recognised that cultural orientation did influence my leadership perspective, style and attributes. This increased my curiosity to find out how a combination of age (adolescence), gender (young women), and culture (TCKs) could influence leadership perspectives. This was emphasised when I had the opportunity to facilitate and research the Young Women in Leadership programme at Massey in 2014 and 2015. I had the opportunity to be a facilitator in 2014 and 2015 and a mentor in 2015. The programme provides an opportunity for young women to develop their leadership skills and experience through the delivery of a project to positively impact their sphere of influence. In 2015, of the 80 participants, 16 identified as Māori, 54 identified as NZ European and ten identified as other. The small group who identified as other were of interest to me because in my mind, they were deemed to be TCKs because they were not of New Zealand origins and were growing up in a culture that was outside the ethnic origins. As such, I chose to select my research participants from this group of ten programme participants.

Globalisation is not a passing phase; it is being established as the norm. As a result, third culture youth will increase their presence in our communities. This research aims to develop an understanding of how the diverse life experiences of third culture young women influence their leadership perspectives. The thesis will provide a background of literature on youth, gender, culture and leadership. The methodology will be outlined to describe how the whole research process was conducted. The findings and the discussion are separated to bring the third culture young women's voices upfront and centred; to avoid their anecdotes being submerged in literature. Finally, the conclusions will acknowledge the limitations of the research and provide recommendations for future research. This research and its findings aim to help other third culture young women to be aware of their potential by embracing their intersecting identities and what this means for their leadership development and understanding. This study will also assist in the planning and delivery of

leadership development programmes that acknowledge diverse life experiences and perspectives, and may provide knowledge for those wishing to understand what impacts on the identity formation and leadership experiences of young third culture women.

# 2. Literature Review

## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter will critically review literature on leadership related to women, culture and youth. The review shows that there is some research on youth and leadership, young women and leadership development and third culture kids, but insufficient literature that provides an understanding of third culture young women's life experiences and how they may influence their leadership understanding and development.

It is important to note the precedence that intersectionality has in this research space. McCall (2005) proposes that intersectionality aims to understand and explore the complexity of multiple, intersecting categorical interactions in social life. Intersectionality purports the premise that people have "layered identities" (Richardson & Loubier, 2008, p. 143) that are heavily influenced by their origins, social interactions and societal hierarchy. Intersectionality is valuable when studying leadership because it unveils the multiple layers of a person's identities and how their understanding of leadership is influenced by intersecting categories, which helps to facilitate understanding of distinct and diverse experiences that intricately intersect and influence a person's identity and perspectives on leadership (McCall, 2005; Richardson & Loubier, 2008). Intersectionality is employed in this research because it is looking at the influences of three different personal orientations; age – youth; gender – female, and; cultural orientation – third culture, and how these contribute to the development of a third culture young woman's leadership identity. However, it is difficult to present intersectionality in a linear report because of its intricate nature in continuously influencing the young women's leadership development and that in turn, influences their orientations. As such, the chapter will begin with a focus on youth and leadership, then youth, gender and leadership and lastly, youth, gender, culture and leadership. This is outlined in Figure 1.

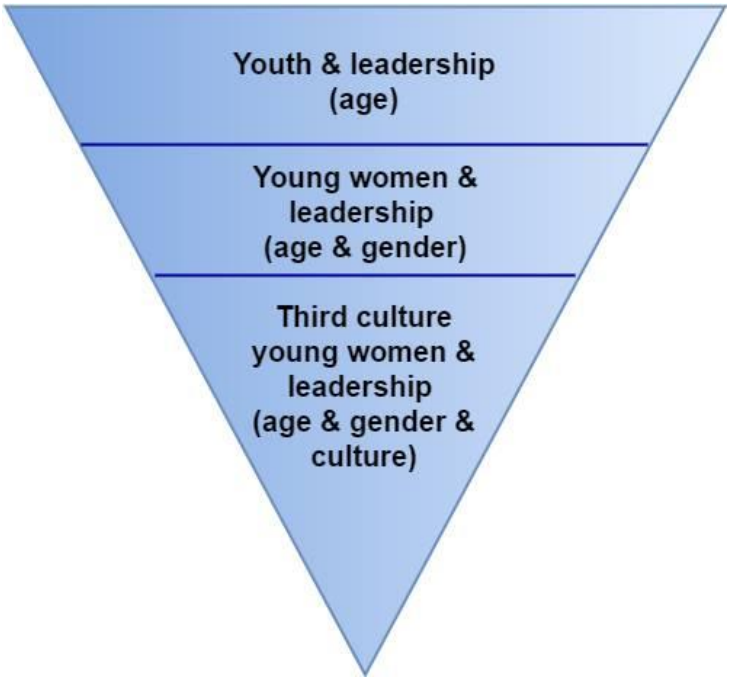


FIGURE 1. UNDERSTANDING THE EXISTING LITERATURE

## 2.2 Youth and leadership

Youth are often at the forefront of social justice movements and emerge as frontline leaders in their communities to influence positive changes (Denner *et al.*, 2005; Libby *et al.*, 2006; Taylor, 2012). As such, youth leadership is an important factor in youth development to help young people become socially, morally, emotionally, physically and cognitively competent (Libby *et al.*, 2006; Taylor, 2012). By researching and understanding the value in youth leadership, opportunities can be created for young adolescents to develop their identity (Taylor, 2012) to collectively support and motivate leaders at all levels (McNae, 2010). Adolescent youth are often at a crossroads of discovering their identity and leadership potential (Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008). Research shows that youth leadership development improved adolescent self-esteem and confidence (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008). Research also suggests that youth who are able to use their filters and voice to influence their leadership capabilities are even better positioned in this globalised world to be examples and lead change to provide positive contributions in their communities (Denner *et al.*, 2005). Youth leadership development however is a space of research that needs further insight because "youth whose needs have not been met" (Libby

*et al.*, 2006, pp. 22-23) (for example, marginalised youth) have the capability of transforming their sphere of influence (Denner *et al.*, 2005; Taylor, 2012).

Many youth leadership development programmes are adult-driven despite the youth focus (Denner *et al.*, 2005; Libby *et al.*, 2006; McNae, 2010; Rorem & Bajaj, 2012). More co-operative partnerships and initiatives between youth and adults have been highlighted to co-construct content and structures for youth leadership development programmes by sharing knowledge and expectations with one another to create relevant and valuable leadership learning (Libby *et al.*, 2006; McNae, 2010). Based on this, McNae (2010) used the co-construction process at a high school in New Zealand to design a young women's leadership development; the action research found that this was an effective way to develop "a relevant and authentic leadership programme that met the needs of the young women" through a balanced and shared ownership (p. 677). Furthermore, education facilities have policies and visions that aim to influence and support youth development but these are not put into practice (Denner *et al.*, 2005; Eva & Sendjaya, 2012; Libby *et al.*, 2006). Many leadership programmes teach youth the skills that they need to develop into leaders but these are often from an adult's perspective and do not consider the 'world' into which these youths are going to try and influence and lead (Denner *et al.*, 2005; Libby *et al.*, 2006; McNae, 2010). Thus, to reconcile this discrepancy between youth's needs and adult-driven youth leadership development programmes, a long-term approach to leadership development is encouraged by starting at an early age (Murphy & Johnson, 2011). This is encouraged because Murphy and Johnson suggest that early developmental factors including gender, parenting styles and learning experiences are influential in identity development. This then ripples into future development experiences and leadership effectiveness (Murphy & Johnson, 2011).

## 2.3 Youth leadership development

For many years, preparing "young people for future roles have been practiced and valued" (Libby *et al.*, 2006, p. 16) but research on youth leadership development began in the late 90's and is still considered to be a relatively new area of study. The research space

in young women and leadership development has expanded slowly in the last five years. However, youth leadership focusing on young women, especially in high school contexts is limited, thus creating impetus for this research (McNae, 2010; Mullen & Tuten, 2004; Taylor, 2012).

The process of leadership development has often been considered a development of character, preparation for the future and building relationships in the community (Denner *et al.*, 2005; Libby *et al.*, 2006; Rorem & Bajaj, 2012). Through development of leadership skills and encouragement to practice leadership, youth are encouraged to develop competencies that aid in progressing through the challenges of adolescence and adulthood. However, this is not to say that through leadership development, youth will easily navigate the challenges they face as they grow up but rather, these programmes do not prepare the young adults, if not young women, for the gendered world that they will enter (McNae, 2010; McNae & Mackay, 2013). Many youth leadership development programmes do not fully prepare "young people to take on leadership roles within the schools and beyond the school gates" (McNae, 2010, p. 686).

Empirical studies have been conducted to develop theories and strategies to encourage female youth to ignite their interests in leadership (Denner *et al.*, 2005; Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008; Kirshner, 2008; Rorem & Bajaj, 2012; Taylor, 2012). Through studies of established programmes, such as the Sadie Nash Leadership Project, the Girls on the Move Leadership Programme and the Young Women's Leadership Alliance, a range of concepts have been recommended to foster relationships with female youth to motivate them to take on leadership roles (Denner *et al*., 2005; Rorem & Bajaj, 2012; Taylor, 2012). A summary of the programme evaluations and recommendations suggest mentoring, power sharing and creating a safe environment for youth to share their experiences are important (Denner et al., 2005; Kagan, 1992; Libby *et al.*, 2006; McNae, 2010; Rorem & Bajaj, 2012; Taylor, 2012).

Mentorship is necessary to cultivate successful youth leaders and adults play a key role in providing the necessary knowledge and guidance to youth leaders (Rorem & Bajaj, 2012). Denner *et al*. (2005) also support this partnership of youth and adult sharing the

power in planning, problem solving and learning to drive leadership opportunities for young people to be empowered and inspired. Mentorship helps youth to find their identity as a leader and condition their understanding of their current situation (Kirshner, 2008). This encourages feminist outlooks for them to share their knowledge with each other while being guided by female adult mentors to provide real-life examples from their own experiences (Brown, 1998).

Closely aligned to mentoring is the concept of power sharing. According to Libby *et al*. (2006), building a partnership between youth and adults is a positive strategy in building leadership skills and sharing power. This equal partnership and mentoring experience is an educational experience for both parties through the creation of shared power, and having their voices "heard on an equal level" (Libby *et al.*, 2006, p. 22) and responsibility (Denner *et al.*, 2005; Libby *et al*., 2006; McNae, 2010; McNae & Mackay, 2013).

Creating a safe learning environment for leadership development encourages participatory discussions and collaboration (Kagan, 1992). This provides safe spaces for young people, especially young women, to discuss any queries about leadership free of judgment and prejudice (Ibarra, Ely, & Kolb, 2013; Kagan, 1992). The importance of female adult mentors for young women is that such mentors have a deeper connection to the latter's knowledge and share a similar understanding because of their gender (Brown, 1998; Denner *et al.*, 2005; Sullivan, 1996). This aligns with Ibarra *et al.*'s (2013) suggestion for creating safe spaces for women to share their inhibitions with one another (and similar mentors) to develop a shared understanding of leadership.

However, there are limitations to this research on leadership development for young women. The recommendations for best practice are generalisations of youth and leadership programmes from a range of case studies. There has been no meta-analysis of these programmes and further exploration is needed with regards to the diverse cultural contexts within which these programmes take place and the diverse backgrounds of youth to explore how these impact on their leadership understanding and development. Additionally, many youth leadership programmes that are offered are for young people aged 11 to 13 years old (Denner *et al.*, 2005; Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008; Rorem & Bajaj, 2012; Taylor, 2012) or for

tertiary students (Edralin, Tibon, & Tugas, 2015; McNae, 2010). The age range of 16 to 18 years old is a focal point for this research because studies suggests that adolescents, especially adolescent women are often on the verge of deciding and acknowledging their identity (Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008; Josselson, 1987). This is an important time to be engaging with these young women and researching their leadership development needs. Moreover, the ethnicities and cultural backgrounds of the young women in the case studies are unknown. Cultural orientation and the intersecting identities and experiences of culturally diverse young women could influence the perspectives and strategies of these young women, thus the need for more research into this niche to explore their leadership development needs.

## 2.4 Identity development

According to Josselson (1987), "identity is the stable, consistent and reliable sense of who one is and what one stands for in the world" (p. 10). From this perspective, identity is the framework that is comprised of values, beliefs and influences that define how individuals interact with one another. Similarly, authentic leadership encourages one to lead and act in a manner that aligns with "one's own values and beliefs" (Ladkin & Spiller, 2013, p. 12). Authentic leadership relates to self-awareness and such leaders build lasting relationships and lead with purpose that is driven by their values (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Bass, 1985). Identity development however is a life-long journey and it is not measurable or easy but it is a process by which every individual partakes in. It takes time to gain self-awareness, and to demonstrate leadership that is 'authentic' to one's own values and beliefs.

Adolescent young women are normally at a crossroads of discovering their values and beliefs that influences and shapes their leadership identity because they are starting to lay the foundations that define them as adults (Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008; Josselson, 1987). Hoyt and Kennedy (2008) explain that "Simultaneously, they are facing the challenge of negotiating what it means to be a woman within many domains, including personal, interpersonal, and societal" (p. 203). Aligning these various domains of identity can be even

more difficult for adolescent third culture young women whose personal identities do not fit the interpersonal and societal expectations associated with "white middle class femininity" (Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008, p. 203), who have to define their identity amidst the barriers they face due to race, class and gender discrimination, and who have largely been silenced in the academic space.

It is during an individual's formative years that their sense of belonging and identity (and the meanings and emotions these concepts evoke) are developed (Andres, 2011; Jones & McEwen, 2000; Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009). This is relevant to the concept of developing an internalised/core leadership identity by developing the various domains of an individual's personal (core identity that develops their core values), interpersonal (their ability to relate with others and how they develop their relationships) and societal (how society perceives them through their obvious attributes like race and gender) identities (Ely *et al.*, 2011; Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008; Kirshner, 2008). A person "accumulates experiences" (Ely *et al.*, 2011, p. 476) that inform their sense of self as a leader and recursively construct their identity (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). Through relational and societal processes, "one comes to see oneself, and is seen by others, as a leader" (Ely *et al.*, 2011, p. 476). This process can lead to a boost in self-confidence through validation of one's actions; conversely, a lack of validation can diminish self-confidence and thus, reduce one's leadership identity (DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Ely *et al.*, 2011; Kirshner, 2008). It is assumed that these issues will be experienced by most youth during their formative years. This is especially significant for young women because they start to develop an awareness of their gendered identity and begin to negotiate these challenges to develop their leadership identity.

## 2.5 Second generation bias

The main challenge for many women, including young women, is to integrate leadership into their core identity by establishing credibility in an environment that is "deeply conflicted" about females exercising authority (Ibarra *et al.*, 2013, p. 63). According to Ibarra *et al.*, 2013, "most women are unaware of having personally been victims of gender discrimination and deny it even when it is objectively true and they see that women

in general experience it" (p. 63). Many women tend to separate themselves from their gender to be recognised for their skills and talents. This unawareness and subconscious separation from their gender is due to the subtle rise of "second-generation bias," which is one of the understated factors that is causing the underrepresentation of women in governance positions (Ibarra *et al.*, 2013, p. 64).

Second-generation bias "does not require intent to exclude" and "does not produce direct, immediate harm to any individual" (Ibarra *et al.*, 2013, p. 64). It is literally an understanding that the second-generation has of how society is structured based on their upbringing by the first-generation, where the first-generation unconsciously passes down the stereotypes and practices that they have learnt to be the norm (Ely *et al.*, 2011; Ibarra *et al.*, 2013). This creates a context that "women fail to thrive or reach their full potential" (Ibarra *et al.*, 2013, p. 64) because of societal and organisational prejudices and practices that disadvantage women. This form of bias needs to be understood to provide context of the disadvantages that young women experience because women are stereotyped to be a group that failed to achieve parity with men. Without the knowledge of second-generation bias, society is being informed by generalised messages that portray successful women as the exceptions and women who have setbacks are faulted to be failures (Stead, 2014). Recognising the subtle effects of second-generation bias in a social and organisational context will encourage empowerment and eradicate the idea of victimisation.

## 2.6 Leadership development in adolescent young women

The way in which one views themselves as leaders is typically based on their sense of identity and this will influence how they develop a sense of purpose (Ely *et al.*, 2011; Ibarra *et al.*, 2013; Rorem & Bajaj, 2012). Young women need to be empowered and educated of the challenges that women face with regards to sharing their voice and building relationships (Denner *et al.*, 2005). As mentioned previously mentoring, power sharing and creating a safe environment for leadership development enables adolescents, including adolescent women, to have an increased awareness of their diverse capabilities as leaders, despite not fitting their previous ideas of the typical leader.

Many young women do not view themselves as leaders because they feel that they are not assertive and outspoken individuals which are traits/skills often associated with leadership (Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008; Libby *et al.*, 2006). According to Brown and Gilligan (1992), young adolescent women often suffer from issues of low self-esteem, confidence and independence. Furthermore, young women from lower income backgrounds and/or of colour often find their voices silenced and are unable to speak their mind (Arminio, Carter, Jones, Kruger, Lucas, Washington, Young & Scott, 2000; Brown, 1998; Edralin, *et al*., 2015). Hoyt & Kennedy (2008) further expand on this notion to share that adolescent young women silence and censor their voices because of societal pressures and sanctions that lead to depression and psychological distress.

Furthermore, it is important to note that there is a wide range of research that expounds upon multicultural perspectives of feminism (Ackerly & Attanasi, 2009; Herr, 2003; Okin, 1998) but they do not fully address the argument presented in the study of third culture young women. Further insight into how third culture young women address feminism is necessary to evaluate how their life experiences impact their understanding of feminism.

Upon reviewing what influences young women and their leadership development, and acknowledging the lack of research on culturally diverse young women's experiences of leadership development, the next section will explain the phenomenon of third culture kids (TCKs) which will be the main focus of this research.

## 2.7 Third Culture Kids (TCKs)

According to Pollock and van Reken (2001), the term TCK is a way of describing "a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside of the parents' culture" (p. 19). In other words, these individuals have grown up in a foreign culture to their home culture and have adopted this new set of cultural values to develop their individual identity (i.e. the 'third' culture). This third culture is neither their home culture nor the host culture but rather a new personal culture that is a combination of their home and host cultures that is only identified by the individual TCK. Third culture individuals

are a demographic that are quickly gaining presence in academic research (Cottrell & Useem, 1993; Cottrell & Useem, 1994; Moore & Barker, 2012; Pollock & van Reken, 2001; Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009).

The concept of a TCK has always been around but they have been recognised as a phenomenon because of present day globalisation, their numbers are increasing and their significance in communities are more prominent (Pollock & van Reken, 2001; Moore & Barker, 2012). The majority of the literature focuses on their identity development and finding their sense of belonging in a new environment (Cottrell & Useem, 1993; Cottrell & Useem, 1994; Moore & Barker, 2012; Pollock & van Reken, 2001; Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009)

### 2.7.1 Challenges of TCKs

TCKs are raised in a highly cross-cultural and mobile reality. They navigate between a range of cultures during their formative years and this influences the development of their personal, interpersonal and societal identity (Pollock & van Reken, 2001; Useem, Donoghue & Useem, 1963). Forming a sense of identity and finding a sense of belonging therefore, are two of the major challenges faced by TCKs (Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009).

The difference between adults who travel to a new country and face culture shock and a TCK is that TCKs move through different cultures before they have developed a secure sense of personal, interpersonal and societal identity (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001). Just like everyone else, TCKs develop their sense of identity by picking up on social and cultural cues and structures placed in the environment around them, like following how their new peers dress and act (Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009). However, because they are constantly moving, they collect more cues, cultural doctrines and values than an individual who tends to stay in one culture (Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009). This poses the challenge of finding a sense of identity and research suggests that TCKs have a variety of ways of dealing with this challenge.

Moving so many times in their formative years and attending different schools, these TCKs either feel at home everywhere or nowhere at all. As a result, TCKs either have a multiple sense of belonging or have no sense of belonging at all (Fail, Thompson, & Walker, 2004). Without belonging to a particular social group, they can sometimes feel a sense of isolation (Fail *et al*., 2004; Pollock & van Reken, 2001; Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009). Because they have no sense of belonging to a particular place or space (Spatiality), they develop their sense of belonging through the relationships they build (Sociality) rather than through the geographical location itself (Fail *et al.*, 2004).

As a result of constantly transitioning through life and having to "navigate unfamiliar cultural terrain" (Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009, p. 756) TCKs adapt and accept change (Moore & Barker, 2012; Pollock & van Reken, 2001). For this reason, TCKs are considered to be independent at an early age because they face the challenge of being socially marginalised in their home country because their peers cannot grasp their unique lifestyle and similarly, in their host country because their new peers cannot understand their difference in perspectives.

Alternatively, Moore and Baker (2011) suggest that third culture individuals may not have identity crises but rather have the ability "to possess multiple cultural identities…rather than a confused cultural identity" (p. 559). This blended identity of an amalgamation of cultures occurs because they "are unable to compartmentalize their different cultural identities" (Moore & Barker, 2012, p. 559). Moore and Baker's (2011) study goes on to suggest that third culture individuals do not necessarily have confusion in their identity and participants interviewed were able to clearly articulate their different cultural identities. Many TCKs develop their identity based on their experiences and interactions with their surroundings but their identity is not necessarily a conformation to the society that they are in but rather a result of their experiences (Andres, 2011; Moore & Barker, 2012). Participants in these studies however, were adults who may have already worked their way through the maze of identities and social/cultural cues to arrive at a secure identity that works for them (Andres, 2011; Moore & Barker, 2012). This research focuses on adolescent third culture women who are potentially at a crossroads with their identity development as suggested earlier by Erikson (1959) and Josselson (1987).

This identity discussion leads into the hermeneutic concept of 'thrownness' which was coined by Heidegger in 1962 (as cited in Ladkin, 2010) to explain how individuals have no choice about certain circumstances of their lives such as the family they are born into and the place that they live in. The key aspect of thrownness is that individuals are 'thrown' into a "particular place and historical time" (Ladkin, 2010, p. 106), which can impact on their identity and pathways in life (such as leadership opportunities). Similarly, TCKs are thrown into particular cultural contexts, who their parents are, where they are born and generally, across which borders they move because these are often the choices made by their parents or wider family unit. To be able to develop an understanding of one's locale, time and corresponding customs and norms is also seen as a 'thrown' project (Ladkin, 2010). Similarly, TCKs are always engaging in a 'thrown' project to understand their new location and the society that they interact with (Moore & Barker, 2012; Pollock & van Reken, 2001; Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009). Ladkin (2010) suggests that leadership requires "meaning between individuals," (p. 106), which begins with developing and understanding their "different orientations" (p. 106) or 'thrownness'.

Likewise, TCKs who want to be effective in leadership need to learn and understand the differences between them and their potential followers for them to develop a meaningful relationship (Moore & Barker, 2012). Additionally, Andres (2011) suggests that a person's collective connections or networks are an influential factor of their personal identity because it provides a framework for their identity development to branch from. Essentially, understanding one's own thrownness in relation to the thrownness of others implies that leaders can emerge from various 'thrown' situations but that it is important to understand that some individuals may have more barriers to leadership that they have to overcome based on their thrownness. In this case, being a TCK could be considered as either an enabler or barrier to leadership depending on how aware the young women are of their thrownness in relation to the thrownness others, and how they ultimately adjust to their changing social, cultural, interpersonal and personal circumstances.

### 2.7.2 Conclusions about TCK research

Although there has been research on the identity development of TCKs which suggests they are a unique and interesting cohort to examine, there remains little to no research on third culture individuals and leadership development. This is despite research suggesting TCKs practice cross-cultural leadership, cultural intelligence, diverse views, and the ability to embrace and manage change (Moore & Barker, 2012; Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009).

There is still a gap in the research of TCKs and their interactions with their host culture. With rapid changes in technology, ways of communicating and increased awareness of second-generation bias, TCKs of a younger generation may provide a different outlook to that of the older generation.

## 2.8 Third Culture Bonding (TCB) model

As social, cultural and economic exchanges take place more often on a global scale, there has been a need to find common ground between cultures rather than just segregating each nation's values into a range of generalised categories, as previously classified in studies like Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory and the GLOBE project. This gave rise to the Third Culture Bonding (TCB) model (Graen, 2006). The TCB model was a result of a research team that was looking for "the best way to lead multinational teams" (Graen, 2006, p. 99). The model aims to minimise offense to the cultures involved in an operation but rather, encourages the different sets of values to find common ground by accepting and committing to their "preferred way of dealing with the foreign culture" (Graen, 2006, p. 99). This is established through careful cross-cultural and cross-functional team efforts. TCB provides a bridge between the two contrasting cultures rather than determining a dominant one over the other. This builds a sense of "mutual trust, respect and commitment for the cultural parties involved" (Graen, 2006, p. 100). This method encourages a peaceful cultural compatibility among different ethnic leaders by reconciling the differences present. It prioritises the individual's leadership style to be aligned with the values of all members in an organisational context or all followers in a social context. This

fosters innovation in providing "creative solutions to different cross-cultural practices" (Graen, 2006, p. 100). The TCB model is a more relevant approach than the GLOBE study because it does not seek to make generalisations about cultures and their impact on leadership but rather find a harmonious approach to develop inter-cultural relations (Graen, 2006). This model is deemed to be the most applicable with the TCK phenomenon because the concept of bridging cultural differences relates to TCK experiences.

## 2.9 Summary

The growing discourse around youth as our future leaders (Libby *et al.*, 2006) and the call to include the voices of youth in leadership development suggests this is a key area of research to be explored. Furthermore, the intersection between identity development and leadership development is important to examine during adolescents, especially for young women, who are shaping their identity and leadership purpose whilst navigating their personal, interpersonal and societal interactions. Additionally, many young women are aware of their gendered thrownness and second-generation bias but are also more susceptible to silencing their voices and having low self-esteem. Moreover, third culture young women are an even more complex group to research because they have remained relatively absent from the research on leadership development so far despite facing unique identity challenges due to negotiating the complexities of harmonising their home, host and third culture expectations with regards to age, gender and culture.

# 3. Methodology

## 3.1 Introduction

Qualitative methodology is often used to develop an understanding of the phenomenon of interest (Moore & Barker, 2012; Moran, 2000; Tuohy, Cooney, Dowling, Murphy, & Sixmith; 2013). Qualitative studies aim to "build rich descriptions of complex circumstances that are unexplored in the literature" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 33). Similarly, this research aims to build an understanding of the complex circumstances young women with third culture experiences navigate, and how these intersecting identities/experiences contribute to the participants' leadership understanding. A qualitative interpretive phenomenological approach was chosen to develop an understanding of third culture young women and how their life experiences influence their leadership understanding.

Phenomenology provides a way of looking at the interaction between the participants' realities and how they live through their experiences (Tuohy *et al.*, 2013; Moran, 2000). Research suggests third culture kids are a growing phenomenon (Cottrell & Useem, 1993; Moore & Barker, 2012; Pollock & van Reken, 2001; Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009). From the research on TCKs and their cross-cultural competencies, and the research on young women and leadership with their need for leadership development, it is conjectured that third culture young women may have the potential to be effective leaders. Thus, motivating the focus on this specific group could potentially add value to research on leadership development initiatives for young women of culturally diverse backgrounds.

Interpretive phenomenology aims "to describe, understand and interpret participants' experiences" (Tuohy *et al.*, 2013, p. 18). This approach to analysing the research was chosen because it supports developing an understanding of young women's third culture experiences and interpreting how their experiences may influence their leadership understanding. This research stance emphasises that human action is meaningful and that human subjectivity does not degrade the objectivity of knowledge, which in part calls for more studies of the experiences of youth suggesting that their subjective perspectives and actions are of value (Tuohy *et al.*, 2013; Moran, 2000; Libby *et al.*, 2006).

However, interpretive phenomenology does have its limitations. Interpretive phenomenological analysis tends to utilise smaller sample sizes compared to empirical studies, and this deeper analysis could distract from the more obvious generalisations of the findings (Pringle, Drummond, McLafferty, & Hendry, 2011). It is not the purpose of this research to generalise the experiences of participants to all third culture young women. Each participant's experiences and leadership understanding are unique to themselves, and cannot be generalised (Pringle, et al, 2011)).

Leadership research that considers age, gender and culture simultaneously (as is the case for third culture young women) appears to be an under-researched area that requires an exploratory approach for future research to build on through a database search where results were predominantly linked to only one or two of those factors and leadership (examples include women and leadership, culture and leadership, women and culture and leadership). This exploratory research aims to build an understanding of third culture young women as a specific leadership phenomenon. The research collates anecdotes and subjective interpretations of their life experiences to determine how these lived experiences may influence their leadership understanding which could assist in the planning and facilitation of leadership development programmes for culturally diverse young women in the future.

## 3.2 Participants

For the purpose of this research, the definition of a third culture young woman was loosely defined to be young women who identified with ethnicities that were not only New Zealand European and/or Māori in their programme application forms. The participants, who fit the definition above, were selected from the 2015 Palmerston North cohort of the Young Women in Leadership programme that Massey University has hosted annually since 2014. As a facilitator of the Palmerston North cohort for the 2015 programme, the young women were familiar with me and we had a comfortable rapport. Thus, it was decided that the potential participants would be selected from this cohort. From the the 80 participants that attended, ten participants were determined to fit the specified TCK description. At the

programme, the young women were informed that the research was being conducted and that I would be contacting them with further information on being a participant.

Before post-programme contact was made, an ethics application was approved by the university to progress with the research. The application outlined the age of the participants and 16-year-old women were selected because they were a low-risk age group as outlined by the university. Upon approval of the application (Appendix A), all ten participants were contacted via email but only four young women responded. Before the interviews were conducted, they were provided with an Information Sheet outlining the research (Appendix B) and a Consent Form to sign (Appendix C).

## 3.3 Data Collection

The qualitative data was collected via semi-structured one-on-one interviews because the research is of a small-scale and allows for flexibility in changing the questions depending on the young women's responses in that instance to explore themes that may not have been pre-determined by the prepared questions (Drever, E., 1995; Fylan, 2005). The interviews were designed with 26 open-ended questions (Appendix D) that encouraged the participants to reflect on their experiences based on their gender and social interactions with regards to their multicultural exposure. I was able to ask all the questions and often, generally, in the order presented but because the interviews were semi-structured, I had the flexibility to delve deeper into some of their anecdotes by asking supporting and more inquiring questions that encouraged to elaborate their thoughts. The interviews began with asking the young women to share their cultural background and how they ended up living in New Zealand. This was to encourage them to share basic knowledge about themselves to build rapport with me and help them to relax and feel comfortable when opening up (Fylan, 2005). They were then asked to reflect on their interpretation of the term 'Third Culture Kid' and how they navigate the cultural differences that surround them in their local environment. Next, the young women shared the extent of the impact their gender had on their life experiences and the expectations they faced from their family and friends because of their gender. Finally, the interviews took a more forward-thinking approach and the

young women shared their personal definitions of leadership, how their core values influenced their leadership identity and their hopes for the future as young leaders.

The interviews were generally an hour-long. Two of them were conducted over the phone because the young women preferred to speak on the phone than conduct the interview in-person, and the other two interviews were conducted in-person. For all the interviews, their families were not present and they were alone. The young women chose their homes to be the venue for the face-to-face interviews. Each interview was audio recorded and later transcribed verbatim by the researcher for analysis and discussion. The participants were asked if they wanted to check their transcripts post-interview but they all chose not to.

To ensure the research was robust and valuable qualitative research, the transcriptions were reviewed by two research supervisors who are subject matter experts in the area of young women and leadership, and diversity and leadership. With their input, they created some triangulation of ideas and thoughts as to how the data could be analysed (Thurmond, 2001). The researcher analysed the interviews multiple times by listening to the audio recordings several times, writing notes, reflecting on the literature and ensuring that the authentic voice of the participants was demonstrated throughout the study.

The analysis was conducted by following Ashworth's (2003) Lifeworld Existential Themes framework, which is outlined in further detail in the Results. A framework was employed to help guide the findings established in the study, which is often done in qualitative research to provide value to the resulting knowledge within a larger body of theories (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Ashworth's (2003) framework was also utilised in developing the interview questions. The anecdotes were then thematically analysed by further developing Ashworth's suggested framework to unravel the pertinent themes that were prominent in the interviews. This helped to foster an understanding of how the young women's life experiences influenced their leadership understanding, as outlined in the Discussion.

# 4. Results

## 4.1 Overview of each participant

For the purpose of this research, the definition of a third culture young woman was loosely defined to be young women who identified with ethnicities that were not only New Zealand European and/or Māori.

### Lila

Lila's father is from New Zealand and her mother is Vietnamese. She began her third culture journey in Cambodia at an international school from the start of her schooling years. She moved to a small rural town in New Zealand at the age of 16 years old because the international school in Cambodia was facing complications. For the betterment of her education, her parents decided that it would be best for her to move to a school in New Zealand without them and after completing her last few years of secondary schooling, continue her tertiary education at a New Zealand university. She is currently living with her half-brother and his family. Her parents are still living in Cambodia and she Skypes them regularly.

### Naomi

Naomi was born in America to a French-Canadian and Native American father and an Irish and New Zealander mother. She moved to a provincial town in New Zealand with her family (both parents and her elder brother) when she was a few months old. Her family's reason for moving to New Zealand was to pursue job opportunities for her mother who was a scientist. Despite Naomi's mother being part New Zealand European, Naomi still went through a multicultural acclimatisation and assimilation process. She still maintains a strong connection with her grandparents and familial ties in Canada.

### Ava

Ava's family (both parents and her elder brother) moved to New Zealand from South Africa because of social unrest and safety concerns in South Africa when she was 18 months old. Her parents chose New Zealand over Canada as their new home in a provincial city. At the time, her parents found it difficult to make the move and the family was lonely when they arrived because all their relatives were either in South Africa or Zimbabwe. She does not visit her relatives often because they normally come to New Zealand to visit her family. However, supporting one another through this hardship has brought Ava and her family closer.

### Madeline

Madeline's parents moved to New Zealand from China when they were young adults, before she and her siblings were born. Their reasons for moving to New Zealand were "for a better life" from the one they had experienced in China. Chinese cultural influences are practiced at home while Madeline attends a predominantly European co-ed secondary school. She has been brought up in New Zealand but her family still maintains strong Chinese cultural customs at home. Madeline's strategy for coping with this cultural difference between her peers and family is to keep them separate. She may not traditionally be defined as a third culture young woman but her methods of dealing with two cultures are still worth exploring because there may be other young women out there who have similar experiences.

## 4.2 Framework

The framework provided by Ashworth (2003), has been adapted to reflect the realities of the TCK participants that recounted their experiences during their interviews. Ashworth introduced this adapted framework as an overview of how one's lifeworld is interpreted through seven different fractions (Selfhood, Sociality, Embodiment, Temporality, Spatiality, Project, and Discourse). A lifeworld can be explained to be "the universal framework for all of human endeavour" (Ladkin, 2010, p. 19). The experiences

encapsulated in one's lifeworld provide an understanding of how the individual best operates within other "socially constructed human communities" (Ladkin, 2010, p. 19). Ashworth's (2003) framework is a useful analytical tool because it provides meaning and structure to a third-party individual's reality and perception of their universe. It is relevant in this research because it helps to make sense of the intricate nature of the third culture young women's lifeworld when understanding their diverse life-experiences. Ashworth (2003) suggests that the seven fractions that form a lifeworld are:

i. Selfhood – how an individual defines their identity through their own presence and voice.
ii. Sociality – how an individual's situation affects their relationships with those around them.
iii. Embodiment – how an individual's situation affects their understanding of who they are.
iv. Temporality – how time affects their biography.
v. Spatiality – how a physical space or location affects an individual's situation.
vi. Project – how an individual's situation affects their priorities.
vii. Discourse – the words an individual use to describe their situation and way of life.

Ashworth emphasises that the seven fractions intertwine and intersect to give value to one another while conjointly forming an individual's lifeworld. This holds true for a TCKs reality with their multiple adjustments spatially and socially, which influence their Selfhood and in turn also influences the way in which they interact with their Sociality. The navigation of differences will affect their Embodiment when understanding who they are to continuously develop their identity and this will progress and further develop as Temporality advances. Their priorities (Project) will either change of influence their interactions and will also be developed or changed depending on time. Lastly, their Discourse evidences how they feel about their experiences and development of their lifeworld, and again, the way they express themselves will change with time, with the physical and social environments that they are living in and the priorities that they feel are

pertinent in that moment. However, based on the anecdotes of the participants interviewed, Ashworth's framework can be further adapted to reflect their lifeworlds of the young women interviewed. This is outlined in Figure 2.

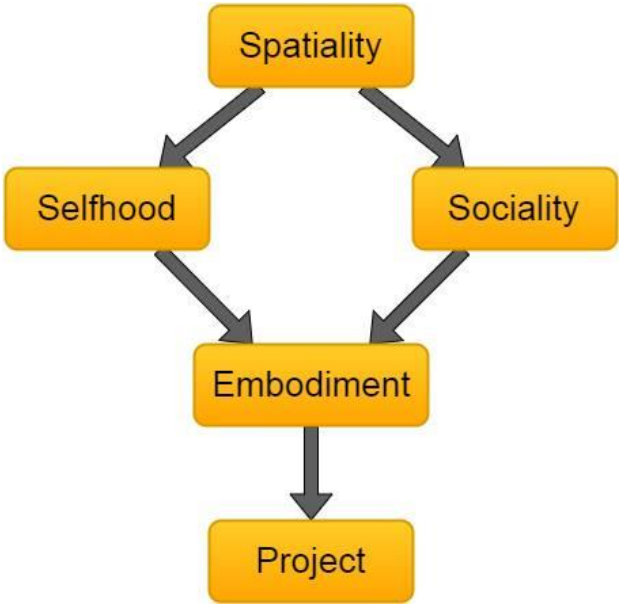


**FIGURE 2. THE LIFEWORLD OF THE THIRD CULTURE YOUNG WOMEN**

A TCKs lifeworld is normally dependent on their location because they move to a new cultural location and begin their third culture experiences by negotiating the differences they encounter in the new place (Fail *et al.*, 2004; Moore & Baker, 2011; Pollock & van Reken, 2001). From there, five of the seven elements branch into an understanding that is depicted in Figure 1. As the main influential factor in a TCKs environment is their location (Fail *et al.*, 2004), Spatiality is set to be the main influencing fraction that ripples through to the other four elements (Selfhood, Sociality, Embodiment and Project). Discourse and Temporality have not been included because they are two fractions that were considered to be present throughout the interviews. Discourse is presented in the quotes from their interviews that align with each of the fractions outlined in the diagram. As the participants were only interviewed once, Temporality will not be discussed in much depth because their interviews only capture a moment in time of their development. Moreover, it is important to recognise that despite the re-adaptation, Ashworth's emphasis on the fractions intertwining and intersecting still holds true. As leadership development is an

ongoing process, like identity development, as the young women's Selfhood matures, this will influence the way they interact with their surroundings and their prioritisation of values. Similarly, as their Spatiality changes, the way they navigate the new environment will be dependent on their Selfhood and Project. Their Discourse and Temporality were not included in the diagram but as they get older and progress through their leadership and identity developments, the young women's Discourse will change paralleling changes in Temporality.

In the context of third culture young women's experiences, each of the fractions outlined in the diagram can be applied in the following manner:

i. Spatiality – how the past and current physical locations that the third culture young women are living in influences their experiences.
ii. Selfhood – how the third culture young women define their identity and their voice.
iii. Sociality – how the third culture young women form relationships with their surrounding society.
iv. Embodiment – how the third culture young women develop their sense of belonging as they navigate their Spatiality, Selfhood and Sociality.
v. Project – how the third culture young women prioritise their values and the choices they make in their daily lives.

As the young women's experiences through all these fractions are examined, an understanding of their leadership understandings and development needs will be discussed. This will guide the research in seeing how being a third culture young woman influences their leadership understandings.

## 4.3 Spatiality

The location that a TCK is living in is a main influencing factor because they have to acclimatise to the physical changes in their surroundings, cultural customs that they need to accept and embrace, and new encounters that challenge their underlying beliefs, values and identity. Spatially, these young women are currently living in New Zealand but they and/or

some family members were not born or socialised in New Zealand. They are living in New Zealand due to parental choices (sometimes with their children's future opportunities in mind) and now have to adapt to the changes between their home environments and their current host (New Zealand) environment. Being a TCK is not about how many times they move across borders or whether they have 'moved' physically. Rather, a TCKs experience of Spatiality is about how they navigate differences they experience in various environments. As a result, how they define themselves (their Selfhood) is influenced by their environment (Spatiality), and this in turn can influence who they interact with (Sociality), as well as how their leadership is embodied (Embodiment) and enacted (Project).

The four young women in this study had a strong sense of 'being different' due to their experiences, feelings and locations. Lila had an acute awareness of the 'small things' and 'everyday rituals' in New Zealand culture, perhaps because her acclimatising experience was most recent. For instance, she talked about having to acclimatise to the extreme weather differences between hot and humid Cambodia and a New Zealand winter:

> *I felt my fingers were falling off, my toes were falling off and I thought I could never feel my fingers and toes again…it was this perpetual state of being cold.*

Lila moved to rural New Zealand from "a busy city" in Cambodia. Although her transition was not difficult language-wise because she could speak English, the size of her new location brought some discomfort. As she described:

> *The change wasn't too bad because I had grown up in such a diverse community and because my dad is Kiwi, he incorporated a lot of Western stuff, so it wasn't too bad. But in such a small town, coming from a busy city with cars and motorbikes everywhere, people honking at you and never stopping at zebra crossings, and no markets [in New Zealand], that was what I found was hard to deal with, there wasn't a lot of people.*

Although Ava had lived in New Zealand from a young age, she revealed her innate struggle with being TCK and feeling 'different' and unsure about what was right and wrong:

> *Because I was brought up here from a very young age, it was easier to transition…even though I'm what they call 'Kiwi' because I was brought up here, having a family that raises you completely different to everyone else, you're as good as being in a different country. It's*

*weird because you don't know what's right, what's wrong. You feel like an alien because only your family is like that, so you feel like 'Are we even doing the right thing?'*

Naomi who also moved to New Zealand as a baby explained how she and her family acclimatised by getting involved in the community through school, church and sport:

*I think just going to school is really good because you meet lots of New Zealand people and because we go to church, we also meet everyone through that. We get really involved in the community. I find that getting involved in sports teams is really good as well.*

Madeline, unlike the other three young women, was living in two distinct spaces:

*A bit of both. At home, it's more Chinese but at school, it's more European. Mostly, I do what my friends do. If I was to go to their house or dinner, I just do what they do.*

Isolation and alienation were commonly felt by the third culture young women. With Lila, this was due to the difference between her previous and current location. Her new peers live in a small rural town and are often unaware of the world beyond it. From Lila's point-of-view, her peers struggle to perceive anything beyond New Zealand. This is due to the differences in their Spatiality where she used to be in a big city surrounded by changes and access to information but some of her peers may have never even left the town where they live and cannot even begin to place where Cambodia is in the world:

*Here, a lot of people don't know even where Cambodia is. A lot of people asked me if it was in America because of my accent and I think it just threw them off.*

This is evident in Lila's conversations in her school classes. In Cambodia, she studied in an international school (a complete TCK-environment) where she and her TCK peers had conversations that were beyond their daily academic topics and location:

*We'd have the most intense conversations in our classes about different cultures and how it ties back to something like math or something. Our topics here aren't as wide. I'm the only one talking about anything outside of New Zealand and I'd have to bring out a map.*

Lila's peers in New Zealand have not been interviewed on their perceptions of her. However, Lila used this 'difference in perspectives of the world' to exercise leadership by sharing her knowledge with her peers:

*For example, in my Geography class, we had a topic on development and my teacher decided that I could do Cambodia. Because of that, I was able to talk to everyone else who was doing the topic with me and give a deeper insight to it, not just what they saw on the Internet or facts but a real first-hand experience.*

Naomi provided a similar viewpoint when she explained how the cultural differences she faces influence her cultural identity:

*I think it gives me a wider understanding of the world and how people function. I find that some of my friends who have never been outside of New Zealand or Australia, they are not as worldly and aware. They're not as culturally sensitive either.*

The common trend from the TCKs anecdotes is that being a TCK can positively influence situations where seeing beyond their current surroundings is beneficial. As Lila shared:

*Being a TCK influences my having a wider perspective on the world because there is more to life and more to the world than just the little town that you've lived in. You have not really lived until you know how the rest of the world lives, and you have to embrace it.*

Spatiality outlines how the physical location, environment and perceptions of space and place influence a TCKs experiences and perspectives. The physical location plays a significant role in setting the tone of their TCK journey to result in leadership themes that resonate most with them such as gendered expectations, navigating cultural differences, and social interactions. These themes will be outlined and discussed further on in the research.

Spatiality also influences their Selfhood (how they define their identity) and Sociality (how society perceives them and the differences that they notice between their home culture and their host culture). Selfhood will now be outlined in relation to the participants' responses.

## 4.2 Selfhood

Selfhood looks at how these third culture young women define their meaning of identity, how they make sense of their place in their Spatiality and Sociality, and how they find their personal voice. The four young women shared and reflected on how their home culture sets the foundations for their identity and provides guidelines for them to shape their perspectives on the world.

The young women shared the ethnicity they identify with and justified their reasons with personal anecdotes. Lila embraces her mixed roots and shared her ethnic mix:

> *I actually call myself mix. I don't like going with one or the other. I'm Vietnamese-New Zealand. That is what I identify myself as.*

Naomi also acknowledged her mixed heritage but identifies more with her father's roots than her mother's. She rationalised her reasoning with a historical anecdote:

> *[I identify] More the French Canadian side. I just find the whole French Canadian-Native American thing is more interesting. When I was back in Canada, my poppa was telling me that our last name means to have hope and be safe. That came around with all these French guys who came to Canada after a war and they all changed their last name [that], which meant to have hope during the war…I really do find the Native American thing very interesting and cultural.*

Ava also affirmed her cultural origins in her identity:

> *South African, definitely. My morals and my values are definitely South African.*

Madeline on the other hand explained her separation of identities when she explained her ethnicity:

> *A bit of both – at home, it's more Chinese but at school, its more European.*

The young women all shared their interpretation of their identity in terms of their cultural understanding of their roots or genealogy and then explained how this related to rituals, expectations, and values associated with their cultural roots. Lila described how her

mixed heritage was demonstrated through food and explained how this made her more accepting and open to other cultures:

> *It's very unconventional to other people. So I think that describes my culture and how I do things…Like at dinner, we would have steak because of my dad and then we would have rice with the steak because of my mum. So my friends would come over and be like 'What?!' because they would never think to put rice and steak together…I'm quite open to different cultures. I'm open-minded…because that's how I grew up.*

Naomi also explained how she was more connected to her Native American and French-Canadian cultures because of the importance these cultures place on respect and politeness:

> *I just find the whole French Canadian-Native American thing is more interesting…Like looking at the chief [Native American], who is really respected, it helps me to respect people who are wiser and it helps me to take advice and not be offended, so that I can build and grow on it.*

Ava also shared that she prioritises her South African morals and values because of the importance the culture places on respect:

> *My morals and my values are definitely South African. They're very common there with respect being high up.*

Madeline accepts that she is Chinese but is not set on embracing her cultural heritage as wholeheartedly as the other young women did. She keeps the practice of her Chinese traditions confined to her home:

> *I haven't really grown up trying to keep to the Chinese ways. It's more when we're at home, we speak Chinese but I don't really know much about my parents and their background; a bit vague.*

As she does not elaborate much about her parents' background, it is still unknown if it is because they have not shared their history with her or because she was not interested.

Whilst navigating the new culture that they are being exposed to, the third culture young women try to maintain some connection to their home culture to avoid losing the foundations of their identity. Lila emphasised the importance of staying in contact with her

family and the cuisine from home for her to stay connected to her heritage and culture. This is because her parents are not in New Zealand with her and having moved at an older age than the other young women, she has a shrewder awareness of the differences in her environment. So staying in touch with her immediate family and friends that she grew up with, brings her a sense of comfort:

> *I find Skyping my parents and keeping in contact with people over there is quite helpful, and I have a friend in Auckland and he sends me little packages of Cambodian food, and it is just those little things that remind me of home…It's got to do with a lot of little things – like our own food, Skyping people from home and talking to people who have the same interests.*

Naomi finds that her home culture is very different to her social culture. She stays connected to her home culture because they place an importance on respect, which she values and emphasised this in the following quote:

> *I definitely think that my home culture is very different to my social culture. I would say that my home culture is a lot more respecting, whereas with my social culture, we all just hangout and have fun. My home culture is a lot more culturally sensitive.*

Ava maintains her connection to home culture because it defines her standards and provides comfort to her development:

> *It's what I identify with and am comfortable with because it keeps me sane. It actually lifts my standards in general and also with the people that I accept into my home. You have these guidelines and if people show signs of not meeting them, it says a lot about the person. The culture definitely helps my social life.*

Madeline described her personal culture to be a combination of her environments. She acknowledges that she is Chinese and partakes in the customs but she does not prioritise the culture in her identity:

> *I think it's kind of a mix of both. I have incorporated what I've grown up with. Growing up in a complete Chinese household, I suppose I try to bring it into my everyday life but it's not really that pronounced or important. At home, I'm fairly Chinese. I eat with chopsticks and talk Chinese. At school, it doesn't really come through. It doesn't really matter quite a bit that I'm Chinese.*

Seeing how gender influences their identity and leadership development is also a key aspect in this research. The young women shared their perceptions and experiences of how young women in general embrace their home culture. Naomi's perceptions related to Ava's reflection that culture provides guidelines and standards for a woman's identity:

> *Young women find it [their home culture] more interesting and are more willing to acknowledge their heritage. It gives them a sense of guidelines and identity.*

Ava also built on this reasoning that the home culture provides women with boundaries and foundations for their identity:

> *They [young women] are more in-tune and naturally, more sensitive. I think it's what keeps them safe because there are a lot more boundaries for women, especially third culture women. It's hard to know where the balance is because it all depends on you as a person. If you don't know where you stand as a person, then you're completely screwed.*

Madeline, on the other hand, showed a different view of young women and their identity development:

> *I feel for young women, it's more important for them to fit in. They won't really care about identity; like at home they could be a completely different person to how they are at school or like when they're out with friends. It's more like trying to hide it and fit in and be more like someone else.*

The young women then shared their thoughts on being a young woman in today's world. Lila associated her wider view of the world with having an open-minded outlook:

> *I feel being TCK and mixed, I am more diverse and have a bigger view on the world, and I know what's out there and I'm open to new things, and I'm very diverse in my way of thinking. I feel like I have a Western mind-set with Asian aspects. That is so helpful because it helps you to relate to so many different things. It makes you an easier person to communicate with and work with because you have a wider mind-set.*

Naomi shared her heightened awareness of feminism and how this has influenced her career aspirations:

*I'm just starting to notice a lot more of the feminism thing coming out, not that I have any trouble with being a girl. I think it's good because I want to go into fashion when I'm older. All of the big brands are all males. So it's like why can't females design? Why can't girls design for girls?*

Ava also shared her understanding of feminism aligning it with more freedom and independence for women while also acknowledging that women's choices are still influenced by the expectations of others:

*I probably would have caused a lot of trouble in the '50s. I'm basically very straight up and I would do something that I wanted to do. Just the working situation and how it was not acceptable for women to come into jobs. Now, I think it's cool but there's still a lot more work to be done on acceptance. Like old men, in particular. I wanted to do welding and my dad really encouraged me. However, as soon as an old guy asked [what I wanted to do], they'd go 'Oh no, you can't do that.' It really pissed me off.*

Madeline's view of feminism in today's world perceived this movement as stifling and 'overdone':

*I feel like it is really feminist now and it's really important to make your own stand as a woman, and make your mark and stuff. I feel like it's a little suffocating. It's not like you're trying to make yourself seem like you're this amazing young woman, independent and all that. I feel like it's a little overdone.*

Selfhood is a fraction that plays a part in a young third culture women's development of their identities and related expectations and aspirations. The young women shared how gender also influenced their development and identity. They emphasised the importance of staying connected to their home culture to maintain the cultural foundations while continuing to develop as individuals and members of their host culture/community. They expressed that staying in-touch with their home culture (through family, values, stories) and keeping to the values and morals aligned with their home culture allowed them to possess a sense of uniqueness, self-respect and self-acceptance. They asserted that respecting themselves and where they have come from are key values to have and the first step is to have mutual respect between them and their peers. Interpersonal experiences

and relationships are a key part of identity development, and influences leadership development.

## 4.3 Sociality

Sociality explores how the third culture young women interact with their surrounding society and manage the societal expectations in socio-cultural contexts. This fraction provides an overview of how environmental changes for these young women affect their relationships with those around them through the social pressures that they face, the gendered expectations put on them by their families, peers and friends, and how these young women use their experiences to navigate their surroundings and relationships.

The young women summarised the cultural differences that they noticed between their home/family culture and their New Zealand culture. Lila talked about the difference in levels of politeness between her Asian customs and those that she noticed in New Zealand:

> *You guys are polite here but a lot of us have to bow to any elderly back home. I know some houses wear their shoes inside but we always take our shoes off because it was like a no-no type thing.*

Lila went on to explain how transitioning into New Zealand culture was not too much of a shock because she had grown up with most of the latter culture's customs with having a Kiwi father:

> *It is not drastic as if someone was thrown into Asian culture because I had grown up with it, so it wasn't such a massive shock for me. There's no language barrier but I do kind of miss having Asian influences into my life.*

Naomi shared the same sentiment with regards to politeness and respect. She compared her Canadian experiences to her New Zealand ones:

> *I find that everyone is very warm and friendly in Canada, and I don't know if it's because I've mixed with different people in Canada compared to New Zealand. In New Zealand, everyone is friendly but people in Canada are a lot more generous.*

Naomi also highlighted the cultural insensitivity she faces among her peers. Her peers have not been interviewed to get their views, so this is just her outlook of the situation:

> *I find with the Native American dress and things like that, a lot of people wear headdresses quite a lot and they don't understand the cultural significance of it, especially when women wear it. Women are not allowed to wear them at all. So if I'm like 'Oh can you not wear that because that's quite offensive,' they get annoyed at me for being rude. However, I'm just mentioning to them what it actually means.*

Ava accompanied the same thought process in sharing about different levels of respect when describing the cultural differences between South African culture and her views on New Zealand culture:

> *Like if my friend comes over, my parents would expect them to greet them but it doesn't happen here. People here don't make eye contact, which is a big thing of disrespect. My grandma and I were saying that there's no respect for elders here. In South Africa, they even have names for elders. If someone is older than you, you'd call them 'Aunt' or 'Uncle.' Here, it is completely non-existent.*

Madeline, on the other hand, spoke about her familial responsibilities and how she commits to pleasing her family because she is thankful, not because they force her to:

> *I feel like in school, they [her family], want me to succeed more. They expect that of me whereas some people have to push their kids to do it, and I do it because it's expected of me. Sometimes, I work in my parents' shop and they work really hard for me, so it's more of an all-round sort of thing. Most people my age, get jobs for themselves whereas I do it more to help my parents out. It's not quite a 'me' sort of thing.*

The young women also discussed their thoughts on how youth (young people) today embrace their home culture. Lila provided a recommendation rather than discussing the extent to which young people embrace their home culture. She encouraged TCK young people who embrace their home culture to communicate with like-minded peers to eliminate the feeling of isolation and loneliness:

*Talking to people who have the same interests and meeting other people like that, you feel like you're not by yourself and you know that there are other people who do these things as well and you're not completely alienated.*

Naomi provided a blunter outlook with regards to young people in New Zealand and their level of connection to their family heritage:

*I don't think they do very much. I think a lot of people acknowledge it but aren't very interested in it. They are more focused on themselves rather than their heritage.*

Madeline has a similar view to Naomi of young people and their attempts at staying connected to their heritage. She took it a step further to explain why she believes that young people do not make deeper connections with their home culture:

*No, I don't think it's that important, especially not at my school. Well, you might see it come through but it's more trying to fit in to be more like them. They don't really try and embrace their culture because I know I don't.*

Ava provided a narrower outlook by focusing on TCK youth rather than young people in general. She reflected on how TCKs face an internal conflict and are trying to navigate the discomfort and unknown:

*There is a big problem with existential crises in immigrated kids because they've been thrown into this thing and are questioning all their beliefs, then getting confused because there's such a big difference and a big variety. There's a certain level of discomfort because when you're young, you don't know what you're doing is right because everything else says it's wrong.*

Madeline emphasised her attempts to deal with this discomfort and fit in by compartmentalising her identity:

*I'm a completely different person with my friends compared to how I am at home. At school, I am a lot more reserved and really quiet. Whereas at home, being in a big family, it's always hectic and really loud.*

The young women also shared anecdotes about the roles of young women in their families and their family's expectations of them as women. Lila reminisced about how as the

oldest child, her parents experimented with her in raising a child between two cultures. She also expressed how her mother is very protective and how her parents had to come to a compromise in raising her:

> *Because I'm the oldest, my parents had never raised a kid in two different cultures before and trying to find international schools that fit. I think that helped my parents to know what to do with my siblings. Most Asian mothers are quite paranoid, my mum is really paranoid. Like in Asian cultures, you don't have sleepovers but because my dad was Western, he would let me have sleepovers. So that's where the two cultures come together. So my mum would let me sleepover but we had to know the family and that was the happy medium.*

Her family's expectations for her as a young woman are to achieve her aspirations and get a career which Lila felt went against the cultural norm. They encouraged her to pursue education and did not prioritise producing 'grandkids' as an expectation for Lila:

> *A lot of girls at a certain age are expected to be in a relationship, and be married and have kids. That is the general expectation of a girl – breed grandkids. My grandma and my parents put my education first in that sense. I feel that is really supportive on my parents' behalf because I know a lot of Asian cultures ask girls to get married and have grandkids. Getting my education is a very big thing, that's the whole reason why I came here – to get an education.*

Naomi talked about the gendered differences in communication and expectations from her parents between her and her brothers which motivates her to do more and achieve success. However, unlike Lila, Naomi does face the pressures to be more 'well-rounded' because she is a young woman which includes having a career and a family. Naomi is aware of these gendered expectations, but remains driven to succeed in her career:

> *I definitely get to make bigger decisions than they [her brothers] do. Like with my older brother, my parents are like 'You should go to university' but with me, they're like 'We'll support you in whatever you do.' I think that, personally for me, I don't want to just sit around and not do anything but my brother does. I want to continuously achieve success…To have a family with all the important family values, whereas there's not so much pressure on my brothers to do that. Their pressure is more to have a good career but mine is to be a well-*

*rounded person. I think it's kind of dumb but you just learn to work with it. I just go with the flow and do what's good for me.*

Ava also referred to the term 'well-rounded' when explaining how having a daughter changed members of her family's demonstrations of affections while expectations between Ava and her brother were the same:

*I think it gives my family something to look after. It makes them a bit softer. With my dad, he used to be non-affectionate but as soon as I came around, it made him affectionate. So I think being a young woman gives a different side to my person, makes them well-rounded. I think they just want me to be a good person in general. They treat my brother and I the exact same. They don't expect me to go off and get married. There are no different expectations between the two of us.*

Madeline finds that being a young woman in her home is competitive because she tries to be at the same level of achievement as her brothers:

*I feel like I'm always trying to be on par with my brothers. So it's like yes, I'm a girl trying to compete with guys.*

The young women also discussed their roles and expectations from those outside of their home environment. Lila notices more equality for women in New Zealand than in Cambodia:

*Here, everyone has jobs and everyone works. You see a lot of women in politics and there are many opportunities for girls as there are for guys. A lot of local Cambodians, especially in the provinces, more males have a higher percentage of education than most girls do because that's the way things are. I feel the opportunities aren't as equal. The girls are more domesticated.*

With regards to her female peers at school, Lila perceived that they were more focused on the present and getting into intimate relationships. She explained that getting a boyfriend was not her current priority and shares this sentiment and stance to her peers as well:

*I know a lot of people assume that girls in high school only think about getting a boyfriend and that is the main goal. Everyone believes it is my priority or that it should be, and they think I'm weird that it's not. I want to study and get my path straight. I feel like you need to*

*accept yourself first before you go out with anyone else. Self-acceptance is the main key. If you can't accept yourself, how can you expect anyone else to?*

Naomi talked about the similarities between Māori culture and Native American culture but highlighted that her New Zealand school does not share the same level of respect for others as her Canadian culture appears to:

*I find that the Māori culture and the Native American culture are quite similar, in terms of respect for others. However, in school here, they don't have that respect factor but in Canada, you would.*

Naomi felt the expectations from her peers were to achieve the best and to be a role model to those younger than her:

*To always strive for the best. Also, just to be a good role model for younger students.*

Ava shared that her peers have the same expectation for her as she does, which is to be successful:

*They just expect me to not accept below anything that I deserve.*

Madeline perceived the gendered expectations of New Zealand society compared to her 'home' society as feminist and therefore suffocating:

*At home, the guys do quite a bit of the guy work, like mowing the lawns and driving around everywhere, whereas girls will start with the cleaning. Outside of home, it's the feminist sort of thing where girls shouldn't have to do the cleaning and girls shouldn't have to look after the kids. I feel like it's suffocating, the feminist side.*

She also shared that her school had different expectations of what each gender was capable of or expected to do:

*In school, they expect girls to do better but to do it quietly. With the guys, they don't have high expectations, just maybe of a select few.*

Sociality explored many different strands of identity for the young women as a result of the perceived expectations from others of them as a result of their culture, gender and youth. Generally, the third culture young women perceived a sense of casualness in the

New Zealand culture that contrasted with the formality of their home cultures, especially with regards to respect and politeness – values that resonated with three of the four young women. The transition into the New Zealand culture was not too much of a shock because they were moving to a place that was an English-speaking community and all of them were fluent English speakers. However, these young TCK women perceived that many of their local peers had narrower views of the world. Three of the young women asserted that their home cultures provided a foundation for their identity and moral/ethical guide for their decision-making and behaviour. All of the participants were aware of pressure from their peers and family with regards to what they could and should do as third culture young women. Sometimes these expectations aligned with their own aspirations – to be successful, to achieve, to help others, to be respectful, to expect gender equality, to be well-rounded. For some participants, expectations of others varied from their own aspirations with regards to having a family, career goals, pursuing intimate relationships, and the ideal division of labour between men and women. In most cases the third culture young women had a strong appreciation for their cultural heritage to acknowledge the existence of peer pressure but not give into it. Madeline, however, perceived that fitting in with her peers was a priority, although she did express what she perceived to be excessive feminism as suffocating and a bit 'overdone'. Sociality is an element in their lifeworld that highlights how their interactions with peers and family demonstrates their reliance on their cultural origins to influence their expectations of themselves and others.

## 4.4 Embodiment

Embodiment explores the development of the young women's leadership identity through the intersecting fractions of Selfhood (personal identity), and Spatiality and Sociality (their interactions with their surrounding environments). The main influences and foundations of their identity examined in this research are their culture, gender and age. Their interactions with society involve the relationships that they develop with the people around them (family, friends and peers) and how they manage the expectations placed on them. This section outlines how the third culture young women develop their sense of belonging as they navigate the changes in their Spatiality, Selfhood and Sociality.

The third culture identity they embody results from harmonising or compartmentalising the differences between their home culture and the host (New Zealand) cultureBeing able to embody this third culture that is unique to each of them also influences how they embody their leadership identity. Lila explained that embracing her cultural differences (third culture) were vital because they are her distinctive qualities:

> *You may find them [different cultural aspects] normal but everyone else will find them really interesting and it's different to them because they didn't grow up with it. It adds more to your character and it makes me unique. I don't hide that I am mixed. I don't hide that I am TCK. I fully embrace it. It is my quirk and I feel that it makes me unique, and it makes me, me.*

Naomi shared that her differences help her to view the world with a more varied outlook and be respectful to other cultures:

> *I think it helps me respect people more. It helps me to respect people who are wiser and it helps me to take advice and not be offended, so that I can build and grow on it. Acknowledging cultural differences is really important.*

Ava expressed that her differences give her multi-dimensional perspectives:

> *Coming from a different culture, you've got more things to learn from. If you're not brought up with that, how are you meant to know any different? So I think with the more variety of different things, you can learn differently from everything. Put it together, then be who you want to be. Whereas if you have one [viewpoint], then it probably wouldn't even cross your mind because you wouldn't know any different.*

She does not consciously refer to her culture as influencing her leadership understanding but identifies the importance of respect (which is culturally learned from her family) as influencing her understanding of leadership:

> *It might not be cultural but my dad owns his own business. His biggest thing is looking after his employees and that in turn, makes better results. So I believe with leadership, if you respect people and do treat them like people, they'll look after you. So in leadership, just respect and realising that there are so many perspectives, and it is valuable to see those perspectives.*

Madeline embodies cultural stereotypes in different settings but does not believe it impacts her leadership understanding. She views herself as a high achiever due to her culture (i.e., Chinese culture) but interestingly does not believe her Chinese culture is an influential factor in how she embodies leadership. In fact she expressed that her ability to distance herself from her cultural heritage is a reason for others to see her as a role model:

> *I think because I'm Chinese, I do well in school. It's more in my motivation to do better because of the stereotypes. I feel like I should do it. We don't really talk about it because it's not really that important in my household…I've been quite a good leader because younger people look up to me because I do try to succeed. I don't think my culture and being Chinese have contributed to my leadership, so I feel like it's been a part of why people look up to me and why I strive hard.*

The third culture young women acknowledge their gender and how it contributes to their leadership Embodiment. However, they view their unique leadership qualities to be a result of their TCK identity rather than their gender identity. Lila illustrated that being a TCK and being female allows her to connect with a wider range of people:

> *Being a young woman and being a TCK, I can represent more people. I can represent and reach out to more people. I genuinely embrace that I'm both.*

Naomi viewed her gender as a motivation because of the sibling rivalry she has with her brothers. She also follows Lila's view of being able to reach out to different groups of people because she is female and TCK:

> *I think it makes me motivated. I don't have any sisters, so I find that I'm competitive with my brothers. I'm always more motivated to beat them and to always persevere...I think it [being TCK and female] makes me stand out. I can relate to people more about worldly things. I think that it [being TCK and female] makes me appear more reliable and to be someone who can get the job done.*

Ava shared that her gender provides her with skills that she believes females innately possess (such as intuitiveness and maternal instincts) but acknowledges that males could also possess these skills. As a result of this logic, she concludes that being a good leader is based on the individual more than their gender:

*I honestly just see everyone as people. I believe that being a good leader is what makes you a good leader, and being a woman doesn't make you a good leader but it [being female] has its advantages. You are more intuitive, so that's definitely an advantage…Also that maternal instinct with someone younger and you want to help them. Guys could do that too!*

Madeline outlined her competition with other young women in her school with regards to leadership positions. So to be recognised, she has to set herself apart from them which creates a dilemma for her; she knows that embodying her Chinese identity makes her different, and yet she doesn'twant to heavily rely on her culture to be selected:

*At my school, for leadership, there are more girls going for it than guys. So I feel like I have to compete with tons of girls. I feel like I have to be more different than these sorts of girls. I don't really want to use the fact that I'm Chinese, so I'm good at school. So you want to be different but not have to rely on your culture to be different. I am Chinese but that doesn't influence my choices and differences.*

The fraction of Embodiment illustrated the extent of influence their cultural and gendered identities had on their leadership understanding. Each of the young women interviewed integrated their personal, interpersonal and social identities in relation to their age, their third culture experiences, and their perceptions of gender expectations to embody what they perceive to be a pragmatic, authentic and unique understanding of leadership.

## 4.5 Project

Project outlines how the third culture young women prioritise their values in the choices they make in their daily lives. The intersectionality between their culture, personal experiences, identity, and core values all impact one another and on their leadership development. The young women all shared similar core values that relate to respect and politeness, approachable, confidence, having wider perspectives and being open-minded, self-awareness of themselves and others, empathy and compassion to help others, and being well-rounded. Lila's core values are also her definition of being a good leader:

*You need to respect other people and keep an open mind. As a leader, people will bring in new fresh ideas and you have to be open to it. Most of the time, those ideas are better than yours and it'll make things so much better. So being open-minded is very critical in being a leader.*

Like Lila, Madeline's core values were a description of a good leader:

*They get things done. They listen to others. They work well in a team. They understand their limits and know when to ask for help. Approachable. Someone can understand the different sides of a story. Not just thinking from only their perspective…I would like to think that I try to be more of a leader and try to have these qualities but sometimes, it's difficult to always be the one that people ask what to do. Sometimes I'll show these qualities. I would like to think that I am approachable and I have a wider perspective.*

Naomi shared similar core values but emphasised confidence and perseverance:

*Definitely, respect. I think confidence is a good quality to have. Perseverance is a good one to have. I definitely try to embody them.*

Ava's core values align with her explanation of leadership:

*Respect, compassion and empathy. It helps you look after the people that you are guiding. It basically comes down to that if you look after them, they're going to look after you.*

Their core values align with their descriptions of effective leadership. The young women have a clear sense of what constitutes an effective leader and try to embody many of these values and attributes. Some of these values and attributes are aligned with expectations of women and female leadership such as compassion, empathy, caring for others, and being approachable while others are aligned with cultural expectations such as politeness and being open-minded and accepting of difference. Ultimately, these core values guide their leadership understanding at this point in their lives.

With a clear outline of the four third culture young women's perspectives with regards to their life experiences and leadership, the findings will now be discussed to address the research objective which was to understand how the life experiences of third culture young women influence their leadership perspectives. How this understanding of

third culture young women could be applied to the development of third culture young women, leadership development initiatives, and research in the future will then be discussed.

# 5. Discussion

## 5.1 Overview

The purpose of this research was to develop an understanding of third culture young women and how their life experiences influence their leadership perspectives. The adapted framework presented as Figure 2 in the results chapter helped to structure the responses of the participants in a way that acknowledged their subjective experiences from a phenomenological perspective. Figure 3 reflects the progression of analysis necessary to explain how the diverse life experiences of third culture young women influenced their leadership understanding:

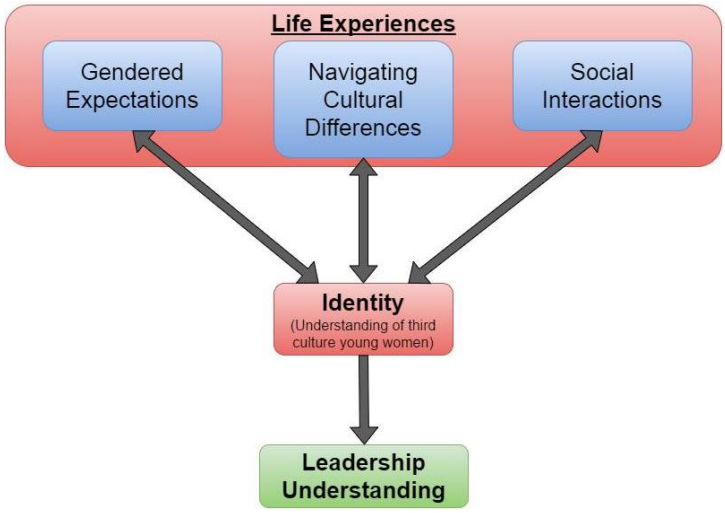


FIGURE 3. AN UNDERSTANDING OF THIRD CULTURE YOUTH WOMEN AND HOW THEIR LIFE EXPERIENCES INFLUENCE THEIR LEADERSHIP UNDERSTANDING

For this research, their life experiences were defined by; the gendered expectations they faced from their family and the host culture; the cultural differences they navigated to develop their third culture, and; their social interactions with their peers and family. The interactions of these three intersecting themes provided an overview of what influenced the third culture young women at this time in their lives and provided insight into what informed their identity. Their personal, interpersonal and social identity were constituted of the extent to which they embraced their cultural origins, the core values that were important to them, and how they navigated gendered and cultural expectations of young

women with regards to future aspirations and success. It is important to note that the connection between their life experiences and their identity development is not one-way. As their identity evolves with time, this will influence their views and interpretations of their life experiences and vice versa (Andres, 2011; Josselson, 1987; Kirshner, 2008). As this research focused on leadership understanding, the discussion aims to develop a comprehensive view of how the young women interpret leadership and define their leadership identity/potential from their life experiences thus far. With this overview, their leadership developmental needs will be discussed so that leadership development programmes in the future can be designed to enhance the support for young women from diverse cultural backgrounds because this is currently an issue with regards to leadership development programmes.

## 5.2 Gendered expectations

### 5.2.1 Familial

Gendered expectations were expressed through different parental expectations of sons and daughters with regards to higher education, career choices, starting a family and how females should conduct themselves. Participants also perceived their peers and New Zealand society to have gendered expectations of young women in relation to intimate relationships, helping younger students and what they perceived to be the goals of feminism and feminists. Sometimes the culturally gendered expectations between the home and host cultures differed, and the third culture young women had to create strategies to navigate not only the gendered expectations they were aware of but also the variances between cultures. Thus they experienced subtle forms of second generation gender bias, and were also aware of cultural norms that have been passed down through the generations (Dickson, Den Hartog, & Mitchelson, 2003; Ibarra *et al.*, 2013).

The third culture young women navigated their way through the myriad of expectations by either; challenging those that do not align with their own aspirations (Naomi voiced her resistance); accepting they exist but doing what they want to do anyway (Ava embodied her resistance); indicating a preference for the status quo with regards to

gendered roles and expectations (Madeline voiced her support for the status quo); and resisting what they believe feminism represents (Madeline embodied her resistance to change). Lila and Ava felt they had the full support of their family to achieve success and pursue their career aspirations and perceived no gender differences in parental expectations for themselves and their siblings. Unlike Naomi and Madeline, Lila and Ava accepted the expectations that their families had for them because these seemed to challenge the general status quo where they were encouraged to have careers. Lila and Ava were aware of gender roles in society but appreciated that their parents had equal expectation for them and their siblings. Literature suggests adults play a key role in providing knowledge and guidance for youth leaders (Denner *et al.*, 2005; Libby *et al.*, 2006; McNae, 2010; Rorem & Bajaj, 2012) and at this point in their lives, their parents still play a key role in supporting and mentoring these young women.

### 5.2.2 Feminism

Naomi and Ava perceived feminism as challenging the status quo with regards to gendered roles and expectations especially with regards to career choices. Naomi for instance, questioned why fashion design was an industry dominated by males while Ava challenged why 'old men' (excluding her father) felt welding was not an appropriate career for a woman. Madeline on the other hand seemed conflicted by feminism which she perceived as women making their own stand and mark. She felt feminism was suffocating and overdone, perhaps because it created what she perceived to be pressure on young women to be 'amazing, independent and all that'. Madeline also expressed resistance to challenging gendered roles associated with domestic and child rearing roles. This may reflect a conflict between feminist aspirations she perceives to be reinforced in New Zealand culture and gendered divisions of labour she perceives as effective in her 'home' environment.

### 5.2.3 Leadership

The young women mentioned several qualities they valued and admired in leaders that were non-gendered (confidence, perseverance, respect), and gendered (being intuitive, maternal, well-rounded and understated). There were also values and attributes mentioned that they didn't explicitly associate with gender such as empathy, compassion, approachability and politeness that they aligned with cultural values but that are also associated with female or feminine leadership.

Their anecdotes suggest that second-generation gender bias (Ibarra *et al.*, 2013) is a reality for these young women, sometimes within their family, at other times from others (old men) and sometimes within social movements (feminism). Second-generation bias is often unspoken and inequality is explained as an individual issue rather than a gender issue. Second-generation bias is a way of interpreting the prejudices that younger generations face from previous generations, as the latter group up with these social constructs. This form of bias and discrimination tends to be studied within organisations where the older generation tend to hold the power and resources that determine who is promoted through the ranks (Ely *et al.*, 2011; Ibarra *et al.*, 2013). At this stage in their lives, the young TCK women did not mention formal gender discrimination and bias in work settings, and none of the participants mentioned feeling discriminated against at school or in other institutions (school, church, sport, etc), but some of the third culture young women did perceive subtle forms of second generation gender bias within their families such as lower expectations, pressure to prioritise having a family, being quiet and well-rounded which suggests that their family unit may be influenced by the socio-cultural context and prejudices that they were raised in (Ibarra et al., 2013). It is difficult however, to know what has influenced the expectations of their parents unless the parents themselves are interviewed to determine whether their cultural backgrounds and gender socialisation create gender bias regarding their expectations of their daughters.

Ibarra *et al.* (2013) suggest that gender discrimination could disadvantage women and that more education is needed on this form of bias because it will help women to feel less victimised and more empowered, such that the discrimination they face is not perceived as their fault nor is it because they lack the skillset. Rather, it is the mind-set of

the previous generation being subconsciously passed on to the younger generation. This type of bias tends to be researched in organisational settings and with adult women pursuing formal leadership roles. It is important to note that oftentimes subtle biases are developed because it often involves men who are in positions of influence and power, who have the resources to choose who they mentor and sponsor. They often choose to sponsor similar men and do not purposely disadvantage women but is observed to be the case due to the lack of gender diversity in governance (Ely *et al.*, 2011; Silingiene & Stukaite, 2010) The findings of this research suggest that second generation gender bias is subtle yet perceived by this small group of young women. Furthermore, research on second generation gender bias should also consider the impact that cultural upbringing has on gendered expectations and how the intersections of culture, gender and age can create a myriad of biases that young women from diverse cultural experiences must navigate. This should signal to leadership development programmes that it is important for their facilitators to consider the biases third culture young women may experience as a result of their youth, gender and culture.

## 5.3 Navigating cultural differences

All of the third culture young women noticed the cultural differences between their home cultures and their host culture. Three of the participants (Lila, Naomi and Ava) navigated these differences by referring to their home culture as their point of reference while merging cultural practices and perspectives that aligned with their core values. Madeline, on the other hand, navigated the cultural differences by compartmentalising them and embodying her sense of 'self' in two worlds that she tried to maintain as distinct. Chinese culture was practiced at home and guided her attitude and behaviour amongst her family, while values and expectations embodied by her New Zealand peers guided her actions and attitudes in the 'host' culture or public space.

### 5.3.1 An awareness of difference

This research found that despite their diverse experiences of being 'third culture young women, the participants all had an acute awareness of their physical and social surroundings and of their peers' values, attitudes and behavioural characteristics because the cultural differences were more noticeable to them (Moore & Barker, 2012; Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009). As a result of this heightened awareness of the differences they are able to adjust tothe changes that surround them (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001; Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009). Frequently adjusting to cultural differences requires a range of skills such as problem-solving, ethical decision-making, cross-cultural communication, and possible negotiation and conflict resolution skills (Jackson & Parry, 2011; Graen, 2006).

### 5.3.2 Third culture bonding model, blended identity and bridging the gap

With regards to three of the young women (Ava, Naomi and Lila), their way of addressing cultural differences could be related to the Third Culture Bonding (TCB) model (Graen, 2006). This model mimics the development of a third culture, which is essentially the common ground between the two different cultures that they are navigating (Graen, 2006; Pollock & Van Reken, 2001). According to Graen's (2006) study, the TCB model provides a bridge between the two contrasting cultures, rather than determining a dominant one over the other. The model fosters innovation in cross-cultural practices (Graen, 2006). In the same way, the young women understand that their peers may not always see eye-to-eye with them but if they share their knowledge, then they have made an attempt at bridging the gap between them and their surroundings. An example of this was when Naomi shared the cultural significance of Native American headdresses with her peers and Lila shared her experiences of Cambodia with her peers to give them a first-hand perspective. The identities of Lila, Ava and Naomi amalgamate the differences to be one blended identity (Moore & Barker, 2012) that continues to evolve as time progresses and their lifeworlds change. For example, Lila was raised in two cultures; Asian (Vietnamese and Cambodian) and New Zealand (Pākehā/European) and she integrates different elements from each culture (Moore & Barker, 2012) into her everyday life (i.e., steak and rice) to form

one multicultural identity that is consistent regardless of the environment and context that she is in.

### 5.3.3 Compartmentalising, shifting identity and maintaining the gap

Moore and Baker (2011) suggest that third culture individuals "with blended identities are different from those with shifting identities" (p. 559) because they do not compartmentalise their different cultural identities. Madeline embodied a shifting identity because she appears not to bridge the gap between the two cultures that she lives in – Chinese at home and New Zealand European at school and in fact compartmentalises her cultural identities depending on the context (Spatiality) and people (Sociality) she interacts with. If she is at home with her family, she abides by Chinese customs, embodies the cultural and gendered expectations and speaks the language. When she is with her friends, she admits that she tries to be more like them, downplays her cultural difference even though it may help her to stand out from her 'competitors' for leadership roles, does not take the opportunity to share her Chinese culture with her peers and silences her Chinese voice when she does not express resistance to jokes about her being Chinese that many would consider an act of racism. Madeline, unlike the other third culture young women interviewed, has not blended her cultural identities. Instead she is 'loud' and perhaps proud to be Chinse and home yet silences her Chinese identity when she is with her school peers, which is a common trend among third culture female adolescents (Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008; Pipher, 2001; Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009).

### 5.3.4 Embodying cultural identity can vary

Moore and Baker (2011) however, suggest that third cultural individuals have the ability to "possess multiple cultural identities or a multicultural identity" (p. 559) and support that an individual is able to participate in two different cultures, just as Madeline is doing. They explicitly state that "The individual never loses his or her native cultural identity, but adopts a new one and is able to successfully alternate between the two" (Moore &

Barker, 2012, p. 559). This strategy of compartmentalising her identities seems to be effective for Madeline in her current situation. She has not lost her native Chinese culture because she engages in it when she is at home but embodies her New Zealand identity when she is socialising with her peers. This may be because Madeline was born in New Zealand, unlike the other three young women who moved to New Zealand at a young age. Furthermore, both Madeline and Lila have Asian heritage, but Lila's exposure to Asian culture occurred in and out of the home while she was in Cambodia whereas Madeline's experience of Asian culture appears to be limited to her family and home life. Both Madeline and Lila may not be able to 'blend in' with their European/Pākehā peers as much as Ava and Naomi who could 'pass' for New Zealand Europeans. Lila's way of dealing with this embodied cultural difference is to embrace what makes her unique from her peers. Madeline's strategy for dealing with embodied cultural difference is to minimise it by being reserved and silencing her Chinese identity.

### 5.3.5 Blended, shifting and multicultural identities and leadership

Moore and Baker's (2011) study of multicultural identities suggests that individuals who are able to foster multiple cultural identities, like Madeline, have an ability to integrate cultural differences to support intercultural communication competency. Cross-cultural competency is necessary in leadership with regards to international organisations because of globalisation and an increase in expatriate workforce (Jackson & Parry, 2011). At this stage, there is no evidence that shows Madeline's intercultural communication competency capabilities but it is a possibility that this would be a beneficial competency for her as a leader. Alternatively, Madeline could be perceived as suppressing her culture and silencing her 'Chinese' voice to fit into social doctrines (Pipher, 2001). She continuously emphasises the importance of fitting in with her friends and that most women should just fit in with society rather than stand out and be different. According to Pipher (2001), to be socially accepted is highly apparent in young women and they abandon their true identities to fit into social doctrines. As such, more research is needed to understand whether compartmentalising cultures and silencing aspects of their cultural voice is effective with

regards to intercultural communication and ultimately, leadership (Moore & Barker, 2012; Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009).

### 5.3.6 A strong sense of belonging

Despite having different ways of managing their multiple cultural expectations and developing their third culture identity, all four of these young women reject Fail et al.'s (2004) notion that TCKs have a multiple sense of belonging or no sense of belonging at all. The four young women acknowledge their cultural origins and establish their sense of belonging in ways that work best for them. Lila, Naomi and Ava use their cultural origins as their focal point for their embodied third culture and blended identity. They have found their sense of belonging by embodying their blended identity and embracing their differences in their host environments. Although Madeline separates her cultural origins from her social identity, she has found her sense of belonging in each environment – home and host – by transitioning between two filters that influence how she embodies her identity in different spatial and social contexts. As such, the responses of the four young women interviewed did not suggest they had no sense of belonging but rather different methods of finding their place of belonging in their home and host environments.

## 5.4 Social interactions

The young women perceived a difference between the worldview of their peers (local, narrow, lacking diversity) and their own (global, broad, diverse) to bridge the gap between their worldviews and that they perceived of their peers' three of the third culture young women took opportunities to share their diverse and first-hand knowledge and experiences with their peers. This was seen when Naomi and Lila shared their knowledge of their native cultures and third culture experiences. Ava does this by her actions of keeping to the customs of her home culture in other contexts such as acknowledging her friends' parents when she visits their home. This demonstrates to her friends that these practices are her norm and are important to her, even if they may not be the norm or important to

her peers. These three young women are demonstrating leadership in terms of taking opportunities to shift mind-sets, educate and inform others, create change, and lead by example (Hylen, 2014; Libby *et al.*, 2006; McNae, 2010; Taylor, 2012). Madeline does not seek opportunities to educate/inform her peers about her home culture but by moving between identities, she has managed to develop relationships with her peers by showing them that she understands and embraces their culture.

In most cases, the participants expressed the awareness of a 'gap' between them and their peers due to the perception that their peers had never connected with a third culture individual before or been exposed first-hand to cultures outside of New Zealand's dominant cultural groups – European/Pākehā and Māori. This contextual difference for both groups could be seen as an eye-opening experience because by reconciling these differences, they will be able to heighten their self-awareness and awareness of others (Edralin *et al.*, 2015; Trompenaars & Woolliams, 2010; Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009). As outlined above, three of the four young women have developed blended identities to manage the differences between their home and host culture but Madeline has developed shifting or compartmentalised identities, avoiding bringing the differences into one sphere.

### 5.4.1 Leadership and relationship building

Literature suggests that leadership development encourages development of character and building relationships (Denner *et al.*, 2005; Libby *et al.*, 2006; Rorem & Bajaj, 2012). The young women exemplify character development and fostering relationships by sharing their diverse life experiences with their peers to expand the latter's knowledge beyond their hometown.

## 5.5 Acknowledging intersectionality

Although each of these themes has been discussed individually, in reality, they are all interacting with one another and combine to influence the young women's identity development (McCall, 2005). The layered identities of the young women in reality cannot

be separated and these themes intersect and influence one another (McCall, 2005; Richardson & Loubier, 2008). Their identity is also ever-evolving with a range of other factors, and the way each of these themes influence their identity will also change accordingly. The themes will interact differently with one another as each of the young women mature and time progresses. This is important to consider with regards to leadership experiences and development needs. This research acknowledges that all these elements are operating at the same time, and that there are multiple negotiations that women of intersecting identities must manage in their leadership development (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010; Watson & Scraton, 2013)

### 5.5.1 Embracing diversity and having wider perspectives

The young women share that their ability to embrace diversity and change, and having wider perspectives were a result of their third culture experiences (Moore & Barker, 2012; Pollock & van Reken, 2001; Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009). Correspondingly, these were key factors that they believed leaders should possess because they saw a connection between being able to embrace wider perspectives beyond theirs and flexibility to be signals of leadership (Jackson & Parry, 2011; Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009).

## 5.6 Leadership understanding

As literature suggests that youth are generally an emergent group influencing positive change in their communities, this can be seen with the young women (Denner *et al.*, 2005; Libby *et al.*, 2006; Taylor, 2012). The young women are showing signs of becoming socially, morally, emotionally, physically and cognitively competent by managing the gendered expectations that they face, navigating the cultural differences that are part of their daily lives, educating their peers, recognising their core values, and internalising a leadership purpose founded on their identity and experiences.

All the young women are driven and motivated to achieve success, and this is further emphasised from having participated in the Young Women in Leadership programme

through which they were selected to be participants in the study and thus, supporting their strong desire to develop their leadership potential and succeed. Each of them defined success to be more than financial security and have a direction for their future based on their passions or family roots. Because of where they are in their lives, success in school and career aspirations are a priority. Their leadership purpose seems to be focused on helping or influencing others and/or creating change within an industry. This aligns with Libby *et al.*'s (2006) explanation that young people are passionate about social injustices and emerge as frontline leaders to champion the causes. Additionally, the young women demonstrate qualities of servant leaders as outlined by Greenleaf (1977) where such leaders emerge from having individual characteristics and aspirations cause them to serve and in turn, to lead (as cited in Dennis, Kinzler-Norheim, & Bocarnea, 2010). Lila wants to be an actress to bring ethnic diversity to the film industry, Ava wants to pursue a career in human resources to help others achieve their potential, Naomi wants to be a fashion designer to bring gender diversity to the fashion industry, and Madeline wants to pursue a career in family law to help others who may have family troubles. These young women are using their diverse experiences as third culture young women to influence their leadership capabilities to provide positive contributions through their future careers (Denner *et al.*, 2005; Rorem & Bajaj, 2012).

As these third culture young women were interviewed when they were 16 years old, the findings only portray a small snapshot of their perspectives, values and identity at that particular stage of their life. Many of their responses to the leadership questions were future-focused which is understandable as they enter into a transitional period of their lives with regards to decisions about when and where to pursue tertiary study, an overseas experience, a career or all of the above. They are optimistic about what they are capable of as third culture young women and as leaders. Time is needed to see how they develop as leaders. Ibarra *et al.* (2013), however states that "Focusing on purpose can lead women to take up activities that are critical for success" (p. 66). These activities could include being mentored by adult women who are able to share their experiences, power-sharing discussions to encourage youth-adult partnerships, and participating in leadership development programmes (Libby *et al.*, 2006; McNae, 2010; Rorem & Bajaj, 2012).

Mentoring helps the young women to create connections and develop relations with adult women who also have diverse life experiences (Libby *et al.*, 2006; McNae, 2010; Rorem & Bajaj, 2012; Taylor, 2012) and with equal power-sharing, the adult women can help the young women to internalise a leadership identity and find their leadership purpose to advance their visions (Denner *et al.*, 2005; Ibarra *et al.*, 2013; Libby *et al.*, 2006; McNae, 2010; Rorem & Bajaj, 2012). The young women expressed that their parents were leadership role models for them. Lila respected her mother's entrepreneurial skills and independence with setting up a business on her own in Cambodia. Madeline admired her mother's quiet leadership role in the household of making sure there was harmony present without being at the forefront of the family. Ava respected her father's leadership approach of caring for his followers and loosening his patriarchal control because of having a daughter. Naomi does not explicitly discuss her parents as leadership role models but appreciates that her family moved to New Zealand for her mother to pursue her career.

Leadership development programmes can provide a safe setting for young women to share their life experiences thus far in a judgment-free setting and learn from one another and mentors to develop a shared understanding of leadership (Brown, 1998; Libby *et al.*, 2006; Kagan, 1992). At the time of the interviews, the participants had recently participated in the Young Women in Leadership programme at Massey University and had the opportunity to put in practice experiential leadership through delivering a project that benefitted their local community. The programme supported literature's suggestions of mentoring and providing a safe environment for the young women to share their ideas for a project (Chatiya Nantham, 2015). However, before the programme, only Ava had previous leadership experience and the other young women had no form of leadership experience. Nonetheless, these third culture young women perceive of themselves as leaders and verbally expressed a clear direction of how they would like their future to pan out by going to university and pursuing a career that is rooted in their passions. This suggests that they are choosing their career goals based on influencing others to challenge the status quo with regards to ethnic and gendered makeup of these industries. Although they are individual aspirations, they are aimed towards a higher purpose and one of the ways in which a leader arises is by internalising a purpose and serving towards that purpose (Dennis *et al*., 2010; Ely

*et al*., 2011). This indicates that the young women are planning to gain qualifications as well as social and cultural capital that give them the potential to be positive leaders within their sphere of influence because women leaders who are self-aware, clear about their leadership direction and are able to recognise the resources they need to achieve their goals (Brown, 1998; Ibarra et al., 2013; Libby *et al.*, 2006; Kagan, 1992). As such, there is a need to prepare third culture young women for the harsh reality of the environments in the careers that they want to enter to influence and change.

# 6. Conclusions

The findings show that leadership development for young third culture women embodies intersectionality with regards to age, gender and culture. With increasing globalisation and diversity in society generally and workplace settings specifically, third culture women may have the mindset and skillset to potentially lead in diverse cultural and social contexts. Their first-hand experience of navigating cultural differences combined with their awareness of gendered expectations and youthful optimism suggests they could be ideal leaders in an ever-changing environment. It is important to note the role that intersectionality plays in the leadership development of these young third culture women. Intersectionality emphasises that their diverse and overlapping life experiences influence their intersecting identity strands and thus create a diverse, broad and blended understanding of leadership. The conclusions are presented to align with the themes presented as a result of the findings and discussions.

## 6.1 Gendered expectations

### 6.1.1 Familial

The young women faced expectations set by their family – either with regards to difference in treatment between them and their siblings or with encouraging them to be feel free of gender prejudices in how they are treated and achieving their goals. The young women in turn either challenged or accepted the expectations of their family.

### 6.1.2 Feminism

The young women acknowledged that feminism was present and perceived it as a social construct that set expectations for how they should act as young women in New Zealand society. They either embraced it or felt that it was restricting and overdone. As such, it raises the question of how young women understand feminism, whether they can relate to that perception, and what their personal thoughts and conversations with others around the topic are.

### 6.1.3 Leadership

The young women's perspectives of leaders were both non-gendered and gendered with regards to values, attributes and roles associated with leadership. They did not mention any forms of gender discrimination and bias in formal or work settings and neither did they feel discriminated against in their curricular and co-curricular environments. However, they sensed some subtle bias in their homes and among their peers. As a result, they demonstrate leadership by their future aspirations and choices that are aimed at resolving social injustices or challenging the gendered/monocultural bias in particular industries, which are common dynamic that motivates young leaders (Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008; Libby *et al*., 2006; Rorem & Bajaj, 2012).

## 6.2 Navigating cultural differences

### 6.2.1 An awareness of difference

The young women all had an acute awareness of their physical and social environments. They had a heightened awareness of their peers' values and behavioural characteristics because the cultural differences were more obvious to them. This helped them to negotiate the changes that surrounded them to adjust to their new environments and social groups.

### 6.2.2 Blended and shifting identities

The young women appear to either have a blended multicultural identity or shift between multiple cultural identities. Those with blended identities form one multicultural identity that at this point in their lives is consistent in a variety of environments and contexts. This is their way of bridging the gap between them and their surroundings. Compartmentalising and shifting identities may not be acknowledged as bridging the cultural gap between home and host cultures but it is still a way of dealing with cultural differences. However, the research suggested that the latter method of navigating cultural

differences was a way of suppressing one identity over the other, which is common among adolescent young women (Denner *et al*., 2005; Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008; Josselson, 1987).

### 6.2.3 Embracing and accepting change

Through their identity development shared during interviews, the young women have demonstrated their ability to embrace the diversity and accept the cultural changes around them. They also highlighted these qualities to be the attributes that they perceived leaders should have and signalled their leadership potential because their diverse experiences have played a significant role in how they navigate difference, relate to others and see the world. By negotiating and reconciling differences, the young women have established their sense of belonging in ways that suit them – by embracing their cultural origins or separating them to suit the context. Their ability to adjust to the cultural differences they encounter also indicates that they are developing a range of useful skills for effective leadership such as problem-solving, ethical decision-making, and intercultural competencies.

## 6.3 Social interactions

### 6.3.1 Interpersonal relationships with peers and family

The bonds third culture young women have with their family appear to be stronger than those with their peers. Their interpersonal relationships with their peers are essentially a process of negotiating difference because their peers do not tend to relate to their diverse life experiences. The third culture young women respond by either educating their peers about their culture or silencing their cultural diversity to fit in with their social group. None of the young women discussed any urges of wanting to separate from their family although one young woman did seem to express a stronger desire to attach to her peers than the other participants. Despite having a blended or shifting identity, they all returned to their family for guidance and felt most comfortable in their home environment. This suggests that their home is their foundation and the group that they have spent the most time with, and

therefore, still have a stronger sense of belonging to their family, which is typical of youth of this age (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987; Kim, Hetherington, & Reiss, 1999).

### 6.3.2 Leadership relationship management

Relationship management is an important skill to have in leadership (DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Ely *et al*., 2011; Jackson & Parry, 2011). The young women either demonstrated leadership through offering to share their learnings with their peers based on their cultural origins and/or were able to connect with their peers in a way that minimised any discomfort between them. In doing so, it suggests that for three of the four young women, they are confident in articulating thoughts and purpose with those around them.

## 6.4 Identity and Intersectionality

The third culture young women's identities have been influenced by their diverse life experiences but intersectionality helps to showcase how their core values (foundations) also influence their attitudes, decision-making and behaviour. The core values that the young women have outlined are also adjectives used in defining leaders – approachability, confidence and perseverance, having wider perspectives and an open-mind, having heightened awareness of themselves and others, empathy and compassion to help others, respect and politeness, and being well-rounded. This emphasises the importance of intersectionality to showcase the value in the interactions of the young women's life experiences that help shape their leadership perspectives and vice versa (Watson & Scraton, 2012; McCall, 2005).

## 6.5 Limitations

To provide a robust and rigorous study, it is important to note the limitations of the research for further improvements and open up avenues for further research.

In hindsight, it may have been beneficial to have asked the young women how they had experienced leadership in the past and present, and what examples of leadership they had been influenced by or practiced themselves. This would have developed a cohesive timeline of their leadership understanding. Additionally, as they were not officially in leadership positions before attending the Young Women in Leadership programme, this inquiry into their past leadership experiences would have further identified how they interpret leadership beyond just a role.

The leadership phenomenon or moment, according to Ladkin (2010) involves leaders, followers, and the relationship between them in relation to the purpose and context of leadership. The interviews only focused on the perspective of young third culture women who could be considered leaders or followers depending on how I, the researcher, interpreted their anecdotes and perspectives. A more robust understanding of their leadership experiences and development needs may have been achieved if the perspective of others and a deeper exploration of context and purpose were undertaken. Interviews or surveys with members of their family, peers and significant others (eg., teachers, coaches) may have provided a richer picture of the identity and leadership development of these young women.

The sample size of the study was small, and thus did not provide a broad view of third culture young women's experiences and leadership development. Despite this, the four young women interviewed shared a range of 'third culture' lifeworlds, 'gendered' perspectives, and 'youth-related' issues. The life experiences of each participant may be unique to them and may not apply to third culture young women generally. The aim of interpretive research however, is not to generalise but to explore a phenomenon and the similarities and differences in experiences and perspectives among the four young third culture women helped to inform our understanding of their life experiences and how this influenced their leadership understanding and development.

The research suggests that third culture young women possess skills that may be more pronounced in them than in their host culture peers. This can only be speculated however, because the peers themselves were not interviewed or surveyed to get their

perspective. The skills identified in this study that may be beneficial to leading in the future are having heightened awareness of self and others, wanting to help/influence others and challenge the status quo, and being able to embrace and manage change. However, more inquiry is needed into their past leadership experiences and roles to inform their present leadership understanding.

## 6.6 Recommendations

### 6.6.1 Research recommendations

Future research should take a longitudinal approach to follow the progress and growth of particular cohorts such as third culture young women. This approach will help to determine if the young women fail, succeed or adjust the goals they mentioned. Longitudinal research would also reveal the process of how their leadership potential develops and the varied ways they demonstrate leadership at different stages of their identity development and lives because as Ladkin (2010) suggested, an individual's leadership moment is always changing and evolving.

The study opens a door for future research into how third culture young women today understand feminism. The research hints that these young women at least appear to view feminism as an external entity that has grand or unrealistic expectations for women. An understanding needs to be developed about how third culture experiences impact third culture young women's understanding of feminism – how do they interpret feminism based on their gender, their age and their cultural experiences? Do they embrace, reject or revise feminism to fit with their own intersecting identities and experiences? Currently, a vast amount of research exists on multicultural perspectives of feminism (Ackerly & Attanasi, 2009; Herr, 2003; Okin, 1998) but greater research is need specifically on feminism perspectives of third culture young women to address the questions raised.

Much of the research showcases views from the young women's perspectives. Further study is needed in understanding how their peers perceive these third culture young women and how they choose to interact (or not) with the young women and why.

This could be conducted via separate focus groups – a group of host culture students and a group of third culture youth. This will provide a safe environment to allow each group to share their perceptions of the other group among each other. Similarly, an understanding needs to be developed of how the third culture young women's families view their daughters' development and world views. Research is needed on how significant others (peers and family) influence the perspectives and experiences of third culture young women, especially in regards to leadership and identity development.

Similar research needs to be conducted for third culture young men to develop an understanding of how their gender, cultural experiences and age influence their leadership perspectives and experiences – are they similar to those of the young women or different again? Understanding how culture and gender interact would create a richer understanding of leadership development and diversity. Moreover, more research on how the intersectionality of identity and leadership development is important for third culture young women is necessary for youth leadership programmes to better support this group's leadership development.

### 6.6.2 Leadership development recommendations

Youth leadership development programmes should consider the importance of intercultural competencies by incorporating learning opportunities on cross-cultural communication and cultural intelligence. Facilitators in these programmes could use these moments to help bridge the gap between culturally diverse youth such as third culture youth and youth from the host or majority culture. Aspects of these programmes also need to embrace a range of cultural customs and perspectives to educate their participants on how diverse leadership approaches work in different environments.

Leadership programmes need to provide opportunities for the families of third culture young women to develop and explore diverse leadership perspectives as well. Simultaneously, they need to try to change the societal and cultural environments in which these young women must re-enter because the young women do not create real change (Holt, 2008). This could be done through building youth-adult partnerships (Denner *et al*.,

2005; Libby *et al*., 2006) and by introducing the concept of power-sharing (Libby *et al*., 2006) to establish a growing and learning relationship between the young women and their families.

Research on the benefits of mentoring for leadership development is extensive (Libby *et al*., 2006; Rorem & Bajaj, 2012; Taylor, 2012). Leadership programmes however, could encourage more culturally diverse mentors to form learning and power-sharing relationships with culturally diverse young women so that they can see their own intersecting identities reflected in the mentors (Ely *et al*., 2011; Ibarra *et al*., 2013)

Youth leadership development programmes that are focused on developing young women should also prepare them for the environments that many adult women face where prejudice, discrimination, and subtle forms of second generation gender bias and racism exist (Ely *et al*., 2011; Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008; Ibarra *et al*., 2013). Leadership development programmes are doing these culturally diverse young women a disservice if they don't and need to equip their participants with the necessary skills to negotiate these challenging situations by incorporating problem-based scenarios and ethical dilemmas to encourage action learning, management strategies, as well as negotiation and conflict resolution skills.

The research highlights the leadership potential of third culture young women as leaders who could positively influence their families, their peers, and their communities. Further research into their leadership development is needed to continue to enhance their leadership journeys. the third culture young women involved in this research demonstrated the ability to navigate new environments and social groups, influence others and create change. There are still many research gaps to fill with regards to young women and leadership, culturally diverse young women and leadership, and third culture individuals and leadership. This study is only one small attempt to fill that gap. More studies from a phenomenological intersecting perspective are needed to gain a richer understanding of third culture young women's leadership development from adolescence to adulthood.

The study aimed to showcase the voices of third culture young women and allow them to share their diverse life experiences and how these influence their leadership perspectives. This was to encourage us to embrace and acknowledge their potential

contributions to leadership practices and for leadership development programmes to recognise the need to support this youth group. To conclude the study, Ava succinctly emphasises why greater and deeper research is needed with third culture young women and their leadership development:

> *There is a big problem with existential crises in immigrated kids because they've been thrown into this thing and are questioning all their beliefs, then getting confused because there's such a big difference and a big variety. So they get lost because their family is such a small population compared to the rest of the country. Are we weird? There's just so many things that contradict everything you believe. So kids struggle with where they think they fit because they question everything. Then the people that they trust and rely on the most, they seem different now compared to everyone around you. There's a certain level of discomfort because when you're young, you don't know what you're doing is right because everything else says it's wrong.*

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# 8. Appendices

## Appendix A

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA

4 November 2015

Rhema Nantham
[redacted]
**PALMERSTON NORTH 4414**

Dear Rhema

**Re: HEC: Southern B Application – 15/62**
**An in-depth understanding of the leadership development of young women who are Third Culture Kids (TCK's)**

Thank you for your letter dated 2 November 2015.

On behalf of the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B I am pleased to advise you that the ethics of your application are now approved. Approval is for three years. If this project has not been completed within three years from the date of this letter, reapproval must be requested.

If the nature, content, location, procedures or personnel of your approved application change, please advise the Secretary of the Committee.

Yours sincerely

Mr David Robinson, Acting Chair
**Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B**

cc Dr Farah Palmer
School of Management
**PN214**

Prof Sarah Leberman
School of Management
**PN214**

**Massey University Human Ethics Committee**
**Accredited by the Health Research Council**

**Research Ethics, Research and Enterprise**

Massey University, Private Bag 11222, Palmerston North 4442, New Zealand T 06 951 6841; 06 951 6840
E humanethics@massey.ac.nz; animalethics@massey.ac.nz; gtc@massey.ac.nz **www.massey.ac.nz**

# Appendix B

**SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT**
**Private Bag 11 222**
**Palmerston North**
**New Zealand**

**Telephone: 64 6 356 9099**
**http://management.massey.ac.nz**

**Developing an understanding of the leadership development of third culture young women**

**INFORMATION SHEET**

My name is Rhema Chatiya Nantham and I am conducting research on young women, culture and leadership for my Master of Business thesis at Massey University. The research aims to develop an understanding of young women who are Third Culture Kids (TCKs). A TCK is someone who grew up in a culture outside of his/her parents' culture and you have been selected because you fit the TCK description. I want to investigate how being a young woman who is a TCK contributes to your leadership understanding and experiences. As a TCK myself, I am very passionate and interested in developing an understanding of how other young women who are TCKs use their experiences to develop their leadership identity and potential.

This is an invitation for you to participate in this research. You have been approached as a potential participant because of your previous participation in the 2015 Young Women in Leadership programme at Massey. If you consent to being involved in this study, I will interview you and ask a range of questions regarding your culture, your leadership experiences and how all of these influence the development of your leadership identity and experiences. All your answers will be audio recorded and later, transcribed. The transcription will then be emailed to you for further editing and clarification. Your identity will be protected because you will remain anonymous in the audio-recordings transcript and thematic analyses of collated information from all interviews.

Upon agreeing to participate in the research, a time and location (Massey University or another of your choice) that is convenient and best suits you will be discussed and arranged. The time of the interview will be scheduled during daylight hours.

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- Decline to answer any particular question;
- Withdraw from the study at any time;
- Ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- Provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to me (the researcher);
- Be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded;
- Ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.

For further information and any further queries, please feel free to contact me or my supervisors at any time. Our contact details are below.

Sincerely yours,

**Rhema Chatiya Nantham**
[redacted]
[redacted]
**B.L.Tootell@massey.ac.nz**

**Dr. Farah Palmer**
**(06) 356 9099 ext. 84912**
**F.R.Palmer@massey.ac.nz**

**Prof. Sarah Leberman**
**(06) 356 9099 ext. 84935**
**S.I.Leberman@massey.ac.nz**

**Beth Tootell**
**(06) 356 9099 ext. 84907**

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 15/62. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact:

Dr. Rochelle Stewart-Withers
Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B
(06) 356 9099 ext. 83657
humanethicssouthb@massey.ac.nz

# Appendix C

**SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT**
**Private Bag 11 222**
**Palmerston North**
**New Zealand**

**Telephone: 64 6 356 9099**
**http://management.massey.ac.nz**

**Developing an understanding of the leadership development of third culture young women**

**PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

*Please circle*:

I agree/do not agree to the interview being sound recorded.

I wish/do not wish to have my recordings returned to me.

Are there any further cultural sensitivities/considerations that the researcher needs to be aware of? If yes, please elaborate further (e.g. wearing a certain cultural attire, having a family member present, etc.)

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I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

**Signature:** **Date:**

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**Full name – printed:**

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# Appendix D

**Developing an understanding of the leadership development of third culture young women**

**INTERVIEW PLAN**

**TCK**

1. Get them to tell me their story of how they got to NZ and how they are familiar with the TCK term (if they already knew it)
    a. Their origins
    b. Why their family moved to NZ
    c. The ethnicity that they identify with
    d. How long they have lived in NZ
2. How have you acclimatised to living in NZ?

**CULTURE**

3. How would you describe your cultural identity?/Describe the ethnicity that you identify with.
4. What cultural differences are you aware of in NZ compared to your family culture?
5. How do these differences influence your cultural identity?
6. How does your cultural identity influence your leadership identity?
7. How do you balance your home culture with your social culture?
8. To what extent do you think that young people today embrace their home culture?
9. To what extent do you think that young women, specifically, embrace their home culture?

**YOUNG WOMAN**

10. What are your thoughts on being a young woman in today's world/age? Just share anything that comes to mind.
11. How do you embrace being a young woman who is also a TCK?
12. How does being a young woman influence your leadership identity?
13. How does being a young woman play a role in your family?
14. How does being a young woman play a role outside of your home environment?
15. Have you noticed a difference in gender roles from your home culture and your current environment?/How do you embrace being a young woman in your home culture and current environment?
16. As a young woman, what are the expectations that you face in each of your different surroundings? *(Family, friends, school, extra-curricular, etc.)*
17. As a young woman in the community, what opportunities do you find available for leadership development?
18. How does being a TCK influence these situations?

19. As a young woman, have you experienced any challenges? If any at all, just share anything that comes to mind.

**LEADERSHIP**

20. How would you define leadership?
21. What core values are important to you? How do they influence and shape your leadership identity?
22. How would you like to lead and influence others?
23. If you had the opportunity, how would you help to resolve situations for other young TCKs who have struggled to transition into their new environment?
24. What are your aspirations?
25. What does success mean to you?
26. How do you see yourself in 5 years? *[Open up from there]*