Transnational Citizens and Identities: International Students' Self-Perceived Identities, their Social Networks and their Consumption of Entertainment Media in Australia

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Abstract
International students are part of a global circulation of people who face challenges maintaining their national, cultural and ethnic identities. They encounter such challenges while developing new (transnational) identities as they physically cross national boundaries for the purpose of education and seeking migration. In travelling abroad international students become transnational citizens who grow to be adept at maintaining links with their home countries while exploring new cultures similar to or other than their own. By conducting 30 in-depth interviews with international students in Melbourne on their self-perceived identities in Australia, their social networks and their consumption entertainment media, this study suggests that the consumption of entertainment media (film, television and music) and the creation and maintenance of social networks in Australia play pivotal roles in identity maintenance and/or formation which may be permanent (e.g. national and cultural identities through their sense of belonging to home country) or temporary (e.g. identity through status as international students). Entertainment media and social networks are elements that contribute to the links international students have with the homeland while developing of their sense of belonging in Australia. This study also observes that international students have transnational identities before embarking on their educational sojourn due to their exposure to global entertainment media outside of their home country, home culture and home language (e.g. Mainland Chinese consumption of American entertainment media).

Key Words
transnational citizens, transnational identities, entertainment media, social networks, international student

INTRODUCTION

There have been an increasing number of studies that look at how international students adapt to life as transient migrants in their adopted country with research looking at either their social networks or their use of media communication technologies as the lens used to unpack the international student experience. More often than not these studies locate international students as a static group with singular national home-based identities or social networks exclusively connected to the home nation. Moreover studies that examine the ways in which international students maintain links to their home countries turn to advances in communication media use as a significant means by which these students keep in contact

with families and friends in the homeland but also maintain their cultural and national identities. Work in the area of international students and the media (e.g. Chang et al., 2012) has shown that digital technology allows migrants to remain connected to their home cultures and societies by creating virtual networks and by providing direct communication with friends and family both residing in the homeland and elsewhere.

While acknowledging the role played by communication media particularly digital technologies in the international student experience, this study looks at other forms of media — primarily entertainment media —to understand if and how it affects international students' negotiate of everyday life in their adopted country of Australia. This study thus turns to entertainment media in the form of film, television and music to find out if is a helpful platform that positively aids the international student experience by connecting them to the homeland and by arming them with subliminal ways in which to adapt to everyday life during their stay in Australia.

The connection between international students and communication media is clearly important, and yet a more sophisticated understanding is required of their emerging and hybrid identities. Assumptions of identities and social networks being solely tied to the place of birth can oversimplify. Recognising the tremendous impact the media has on global societies, this study thus looks at the ways in which entertainment media has both affected and empowered international students as transient migrants. By doing so, this research presents a new way of uncovering the complexities of the migration experience by looking at international student transient identities in a creatively investigative manner.

Entertainment media has become a focus within the academy with branches examining different forms (film, television, music) and platforms that can be corporeal (e.g. films screened in cinemas, television programs, DVDs, memory sticks) and virtual. The unprecedented rise of direct user engagement with media such as comments on YouTube channels and entertainment fan sites, have provided people with the power to express themselves like never before. Doing so provides people with a platform to communicate individual and communal identities while at the same time connecting with others who are similar in order to create a sense of belonging.

This study thus considers international students to be transnational citizens who often face challenges attempting to both maintain established identities that are linked to the homeland while at the same time creating new ones reflective of their local experience during their time overseas. The research thus adopts a methodology that investigates both local social networks and media consumption as tools to uncover the intricate and developing (transnational) identities that assist with international students' transient existence in Australia. International students' established and evolving (transnational) identities may well help them negotiate everyday life in Australia through the links they maintain to the homeland while at the same time feel a sense of belonging in their adopted nation.

In order to understand the roles entertainment media and local social networks play in international students' negotiation of everyday life in Australia, this study asks the following research questions:

1. How do entertainment media and social networks in Australia assist international students with their sense of belonging to both the home nation and the host nation?

2. What are international students' (self-perceived) identities?

3. How do these identities help international students connect to both homeland and adopted country?

BACKGROUND
Transnational Citizens and Identities

Theoretical work on globalisation (e.g. Giddens, 1991, Appadurai, 1996) acknowledges that the global circulation of people, cultures and ideas together with advancements in communication technologies creates schisms in individuals and groups as they become linked to multiple nations while uprooted from their place of birth or cultural origin. They become what some theorists refer to as transnational citizens. Transnational citizenry, as Fox (2005) explains, is a curious and complex term. It is interpreted in different ways, depending on the discipline (political sociology, geography and anthropology) and the author (e.g. Ong and Nonini's work on the diasporic Chinese as transnational citizens).

In his discussion of the different approaches to unpacking transnational citizenry, Fox observes that the term broadly refers to both physical and non-physical cross-national and multi-national crossings. Transnational movements thus can involve the circulation of ideas and cultures through other means (e.g. through media and communication technologies) (Ang, 1985, Castells, 2000a, 2000b & 2004) besides physical movements of people. While interpretations of transnational citizenry are fluid, a key aspect of the condition, Fox infers, is the ability for individuals to identify with a particular nation and its values even though membership is not apparent due to geographical displacement. Transnational citizens thus develop transnational identities as they connect with people, cultures, ideas, products and events other than their own. Furthermore, geographical displacement does not prevent these individuals from forming communities overseas, unified precisely by their common connection to the distant nation.

Importance of Identity in Social Networks

Transient migrant identities have become increasingly difficult and challenging to define, specify and even recognise because of globalisation through the circulation of people, ideas and cultures. This is often facilitated by the spread of communication and media technologies. Appadurai (1996) notes that the global cultural flows and circulation of people, finance, technologies, media and ideas have created new collectives and thus identities. However, these new collectives are unique as they become what Anderson (1983) calls *imagined communities* that exist outside their geographical and national boundaries. Anderson famously theorised that individuals create a sense of belonging with their home nation and culture even though they may be diasporic. He notes that this can be done by forming communities with other diaspora from their home nation. Doing so allows individuals to maintain their national and cultural identities through communal networks. However, while Anderson specifically looked at how communities maintained their national and cultural identities outside their homelands, his template allows us to build upon his theory of the imagined community in order to unpack the complex identities that are evolving as part of the globalisation process. The notion of the imagined community can be seen in the social networks international students and other migrants create while overseas.

Literature has shown that international students' social networks are strongly made up of other international students (e.g. Kashima and Loh, 2006, Kashima and Pillai, 2011). The literature also notes that international students form friendships with individuals from their own country, from other countries, and from the host country with research showing that international students often have more friends from their home country. Portes and DeWind (2004) for example, found that international students in the U.S. formed friendships primarily with other foreigners citing differences between American and foreign experiences as the reason for their lack of assimilation. Research has also demonstrated a relationship between having more host country friends with satisfaction, contentment, decreased homesickness, and social connectedness. Hendrickson et al. (2011), for instance, analysed the relationships between friendship networks, social connectedness, homesickness, and satisfaction levels of international students and explored these relationships through a social network lens by examining friendship network ratios, strength, and variability of the three friendship groups of 86 international students in the University of Hawai'i. A friendship network grid was developed to assess where international students' friends are from and how strong those friendships are. Contrary to prior research, international students did not report having a higher ratio of individuals from their home country in their friendship networks. However, international students with a higher ratio of individuals from the host country in their network claimed to be more satisfied, content, and less homesick. Furthermore, participants who reported more friendship variability with host country individuals described themselves as more satisfied, content, and more socially connected. This correlates with Sawir et al.'s (2008) earlier Australian study that argued for more social interactions between international students with people from outside the home nation as a more successful way of curbing loneliness. Here Sawir and colleagues suggested that international students who formed friendships with nationals from the home nation were more lonely than those who broadened their friendship networks to include people from outside the homeland.

Communication Media, Entertainment Media and Identity
Often, the identities and related social networks of international students in Australia are understood and theorised as being connected to the homeland. Such assumptions are unsurprising since transient migrants are guests and thus understood to have very little investment in their host country. The increasing use and connectivity provided by improvements in communication media and digital technologies have enabled transient migrants such as international students, more so than ever before, to remain connected to their national homelands (Hjorth 2011; Hjorth & Arnold 2012). Hopkins (2011) for instance examined the ways that Turkish Australians (in Melbourne) are using traditional and new forms of media and information technology to negotiate a place in a multicultural society which is increasingly perceiving Muslims as 'the other' All the respondents in these focus groups reported that the Internet was their first resource both for gathering news and current affairs information and for communicating with friends and family. Online chatting are their preferred means of keeping in touch with peers both locally and internationally. The communication is with cousins, through 'chatting and phones and texting', illustrating that generational change in media use is occurring in Turkey as well as in Australia.

Meanwhile Cemalcilar et al. (2005) examined the role of computer-mediated communication (CMC) technologies in the early stages of cross-cultural transition for international students in the United States. He developed a model to test the impact of CMC on international students' identification with home, perceived support and adaptation. Data from 280 first year international students who responded to a web survey were used to test the model. The

findings suggest that the model is plausible in explaining how these factors combine to affect the students' adaptation to the new culture.

In his discussion of television, Hall (1973) explains that there is a symbiotic communication flow between broadcasters and audiences, where broadcasters encode their productions with messages within a framework of knowledge familiar to audiences. Moreover, these messages are constructed within the cultural framework of the audiences. Audiences thus find enjoyment in these productions because they recognize the messages in them.

These messages, according to Staiger (1993), when referring to film, are not simply embedded in a text, waiting to be discovered by audiences. Rather, the meanings of these messages are products of their own particular or general historical events. In other words audiences identify with what they see in the media since they are based on and reflective of their collective national, cultural and historical collective circumstance. However as others (e.g. Martin, 2005) notice, the distribution and spread of entertainment media productions allow for transnational audiences to become familiar with and thereafter identify with their national, cultural and historical content. An obvious example here is the global cultural power of the American film, television and music industries. These American productions are meant primarily for North American audiences but because of the power of the US's global distribution machinery, global audiences become familiar with and identify with American culture as seen in the replication of American culture in the everyday life of its global audience (e.g. the adoption of hip hop culture by Malay youth in Singapore, Kamaludeen, 2013). Globalisation and the spread of technology in other words allow audiences from one culture to be exposed to media texts from another culture, such as films and television shows.

METHODOLOGY

Thirty international students studying at Melbourne higher education institutions were interviewed as part of a larger qualitative study involving the identities of transient migrants (international students, exchange students, working holiday visa holders, 437 visa holders and bringing visa holders) in Australia. Ethics approval for the study was granted by the RMIT College Human Research Advisory Network committee (CHEAN A-2000827-01-13). Table 1 provides demographic details of the participants reported in this paper. Participants were recruited through advertisements in the Australian online classified website Gumtree, through colleagues from various Victorian universities (e.g. RMIT University, LaTrobe University and Melbourne University), through international student society groups, through the City of Melbourne and through the snowball effect where participants brought along their friends for scheduled interviews with the researchers. The advertisements requested for participants over the age of 18 and who have lived in Australia for a minimum of 3 months. Participants were remunerated with a $30 shopping gift voucher each for their time.

The participants were interviewed in focus groups, small groups and as individuals in addition to a short survey which captured their background information such as age, gender, country of birth/citizenship, ethnicity(s), number of years in Australia to date, course of study/work, media use and hobbies. Two focus groups with 3 and 7 international students respectively, took part in the pilot study of this project. There were 13 individual interviews while the rest were interviewed in small groups of no more than 2 participants each. In each interview, the researchers asked open-ended questions pertaining to participants' self-perceived identity(s), social networks, entertainment media consumption and changes in

media consumption from home country to Australia. Participants were also asked to provide percentages to some questions in order to get a clearer picture of their social networks and media use (e.g. "*Do you have groups of friends in Australia who you hang out with? Can you provide percentages of whether these groups of friends are mostly from your home country, host country, elsewhere or a combination of all three?*"; "*Can you list the countries and languages the films you watch come from if any? Can you give percentages? Do you watch films at the cinema, online, on DVD or on TV? Can you give percentages if any*?") The duration of the interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 60 minutes, depending on the willingness of the respondents to go into more depth. We amended our research strategy from focus groups to individual and small groups because we found that both focus group sessions ran for between 90 minutes to 150 minutes which was longer than the expected one hour. Moreover, individual and small groups allowed participants to contribute in depth information more freely.

As indicated in Table 1, the sample included students from a range of countries and across different educational levels (from vocational education and training (VET) to postgraduate studies (coursework and research higher degree). Notably there were more women who responded to the project than men and more students from Asia than elsewhere.

The interviews were recorded and then transcribed in full. Transcripts were then analysed manually and through SPSS software using thematic analysis. Using dual methods of thematic analysis allows for double checking of the categorisation of the data and the themes. The process of manually analysing the transcripts involved reading and re-reading, preliminary categorising of the data, and further categorising to illuminate recurring themes in the data. The process of using SPSS software involved coding and categorising data. The accuracy of the data was verified by working backwards and forwards between the manual categorising of the data and the coded categories in SPSS.

Table 1.

Gender	M (12)
	F (18)
Age Range	18 to 20 (5)
	21 to 25 (15)
	26 to 30 (9)
	31-35 (1)
Education Pursuit	Diploma (5)
	Undergraduate (9)
	Postgraduate (16)
Discipline Areas	Arts (1)
	Biomedicine (1)
	Business (3)
	Commerce (5)
	Engineering (2)
	Event Management (1)
	MBA (1)
	Medicine (1)
	International Relations (2)
	Science(3)
	Not Specified (10)

Country	Bangladesh (2) China (6) France (2) Germany (1) India (5) Indonesia (1) Iran (1) Korea (3) Malaysia (3) Pakistan (1) Singapore (2) Vietnam (3)
Length of stay in Australia at time of interview	>1 year (7) 1 year to > 2 years (9) 2 years to > 3 years (5) 3 years to > 4 years (2) 4 years to > 8 years (7)
Lived in countries other than their homelands for work or study before coming to Australia	Finland (1) India (1) Italy (2) New Zealand (1) Poland (1)

FINDINGS
Perceived Self-Identity
The participants overwhelmingly said that they identified as international students. This is not surprising since their recognisable status in Australia is that of being an international student (e.g. "for me being a student is the most important thing here [pgrad/M/India] and "I guess one thing that's important to me being here is being an international student. Once again it's just because who they are – I mean it's what I do every day – I go to uni and I'm classified as an international student" [ugrad/F/France]). Moreover, international students continue identifying themselves according to their status as international students through their social circles. International students here are friends with fellow international students because of similar situations (e.g. courses) and familiarity (e.g. same region).

Only half of the respondents (16) identified themselves according to their home countries and only 3 students (India, Malaysia and China) placed significance on their ethnicity in their self-perceived identity. This could be because some participants (3/ France, Vietnam, India) felt that their national identities are more pronounced in their home countries than in Australia and others (4/ Vietnam, India, Malaysia and China) openly identified themselves as global citizens. A participant who felt that his national identity was stronger in their home country explained that this is due to changes in his everyday life where cultural identity such as language and food are reinforced. As one student explains: "when I living here and just like communicate with local people and then international people, it's actually I forgot my culture, could it be my food, oh my God, I like Asian food but when I come here I like sausage rolls, pie, pizza and could it be 24 hours to I just speak with my friends. So maybe when I'm speaking with my Mum sometime I forgot the meaning of the word, the meaning of the Vietnamese – … means work yeah, could be a grammar and then like my – … like quite

different when I live in Vietnam, this could be quite a mix things from … to Vietnamese" [ugrad/M/Viet]. Meanwhile a participant who expressed herself as a global citizen felt that this was due to her growing up in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious environment in her home country and that she makes the effort to get to know more international students since "multiculturalism that's what defines me " [ugrad/F/Bangladesh].

Social Networks
Less than half (15) admitted that they still kept in regular contact with friends in their home countries. All countries with the exception of Iran are represented here. When it comes to friends in Australia, 15 participants revealed that their friends come from their home nations. All countries with the exception of Germany are represented here. Twelve participants said that their friends came from the same region (e.g. Pakistani student whose friends are Asian). Most countries except for Iran and Germany are represented here. Ten participants mentioned that their friends come from beyond their home countries or from the region their home nations are located. All countries are represented here. In summary more participants stated that their social networks consist of people from their home country.

Only 6 mentioned that they have Australian friends. Countries represented here are India, Germany, France and Korea. When asked, almost all participants said that Australians are Caucasian. They also expressed difficulty in making friends with Australians. Some participants provided explanations for this such as Australians already having their own established social circles, the difficulty Australians have in understanding non-Australian accents, Australians' perception that they have nothing in common with international students and their cultures and lack of interest in foreign cultures on the part of Australians.

All participants have friends who are fellow international students. The bond of education does feature in friendship networks with 5 participants saying that they met their friends at earlier English courses which they completed and 6 others at bridging courses or from high school in Australia. A third (13) made friends through other friends. Only 3 participants say they make friends with people they randomly meet (e.g. at pubs) while 2 made friends with people online (i.e. Couchsurfing).

More than half (18) noted that they made friends in order to know people from different cultures for practical reasons such as loneliness (7), sense of community and family (4), to improve English language (3), people to turn to (2) and networking (2).

Participants reveal that they made friends with people who they meet regularly and share common interests. More than half (21) note that they made friends with people in their university or college courses, 12 made friends with their workmates, 14 through their hobbies (e.g. photography club) and sports, 12 with those of similar cultural or language background (e.g. Indians making friends with fellow South Asians and diasporic Chinese from Singapore and Malaysia making friends with Mainland Chinese), 12 made friends with people in volunteer associations often made up of other international students , 6 from country-specific student groups, 7 with those from their religious organisations while 10 say they made friends with people who live in the same house or building as they do.

Entertainment Media — Film
When it comes to their choice of films, not many participants seemed interested in watching films from their home countries or languages. Instead, participants revealed their preference

is for American films (18) over and above films from their native languages although not necessarily home countries (3)[1]. Participants who watched American films come from all countries represented in this paper while those who watched films from their home countries are from Malaysia, Germany and Vietnam. Some participants reported that they watched American films because these are the kinds of films they watched back in their home countries and to improve their English language skills (e.g. "So I watch English movies to improve my language" [pgrad/M/Iran]).

A few participants watched either Australian films (3) or non-American films from countries other than their own (8). Participants who watched Australian films also watched Australian television shows while participants who watched films from countries other than their own came from France, Korea, China, India, Malaysia, Pakistan, Germany and Vietnam.

Entertainment — Television
Participants revealed that they prefer watching American television shows (17) to watching shows from their home countries (13). Those who watched American television shows come from all the countries represented in the paper while those who watched shows from their home countries come from most of the countries represented in this paper except for Germany. More than half (20) reported that they watch television through online downloads. Some participants who watch American shows note that they do so to improve their English language skills.

Less than a third of the participants (10) watched Australian-made television shows. Participants provided mixed responses to the reason for this which include difficulties understanding the Australian accent and the assumption that Australian and American television and culture are similar if not the same (e.g. "A lot of these are America – I, even I haven't ever watched a TV show from Australia. Yeah, I don't know why, yeah – but a lot of things that, I always try to ask to my Australian friends, because I want to learn their culture and then follow their trend, what they watching, so they suggest some movie, or a TV show, they're, all of them from America" [diploma/F/Korea]).

Meanwhile 4 participants watched television shows from non-English-speaking countries. These participants came from France, China, Malaysia and Singapore, and they noted that they had already been watching these shows before coming to Australia.

Entertainment — Music
More than half of the participants (21) interviewed state that they listen to music in their home language and they come from all countries represented in this paper. After music from their homelands, participants (19) listen to music from American and British acts and they come from all countries represented in this paper. However, only 1 participant (India) listened to Australian music. Only 2 participants (France and Korea) own radios.

Participants stated that they access music from their homelands through online download applications and YouTube. Some participants stated that they listen to music from their homelands because it is easier to listen to their native tongue since listening to English-language lyrics can prove stressful (e.g. "to listen about the lyrics and then because it's read

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[1] For instance the diasporic ethnic Chinese who reside in home nations outside China and Taiwan such as those in Malaysia and Singapore consider Chinese (Mandarin and Chinese dialects) as their native language(s).

and not spoken it makes it harder to" [ugrad/F/France] and "Chinese music because of the language and understands them deeply" [pgrad/F/China]. Others provided another explanation: that listening to music from the homeland provides familiarity ("Korean music because I need to understand the words" [pgrad/F/Korea]) and thus provides an anchor for them during their transience in Australia as international students.

YouTube Use
Almost all participants (29) stated that they either subscribe to or regularly watch videos on YouTube channels. A third (11) which are representative of most countries mentioned in this paper except for Germany, Pakistan, Iran and Bangladesh state that they subscribed to or watched videos from their home countries while a small number (5) from France, Singapore, Korea, China and Vietnam admit that they do these in relation to cultures and languages related to their own (e.g. Malaysians interested in Singaporean YouTube productions).

However, of note is that almost half of the participants (15) subscribed to or watched YouTube videos from cultures, countries and languages other than their own. They came from Korea, Malaysia, India, Iran, France, Vietnam and Singapore. Also of note is that some participants subscribed to YouTube channels and watched YouTube videos that are reflective of their religious identity (4) and interests (6) such as hobbies which include reading, travelling and hanging out with friends. Half of those who watched religious material on YouTube also stated that religion is part of their identity.

Media Use
Participants reported they spent an average of 4.5 hours a day online for various activities such as entertainment, communication, general information seeking and general knowledge, news, research and study and shopping. Meanwhile less than half (12) of the participants own a television while only 2 own radios.

Fourteen participants who are reflective of all countries represented in this paper, revealed that they felt that entertainment media helped them express themselves. (e.g. "Like I get excited when I see an Asian face on TV because it's like 'Yeah'" [ugrad/F/Female]). Meanwhile 18 participants felt that using the media gave them confidence and comfort (e.g. "So when I see that ad the Yoplait that does remind me of home simply because we've got similar ads back home and it's the brand really. It's because it's French or ads like Baby Belle – the cheese …. I don't know if that is French or from somewhere else but because I used to eat it a lot when I was a kid it reminds me of home automatically. So when I see that ad too that reminds of France a little bit" [ugrad/F/France] and "Yeah, it helps me to reconcile that, the place I was born in, yeah, and it makes me feel also at home in Australia, where I can, I'm always, I always know what's going on in my home country, in Asia, even though I'm in Australia" [ugrad/F/Korea]).

Only 4 participants revealed that their use of entertainment media has changed. They came from France, India and Singapore. By this they mean that they have been accessing the same types of entertainment (films, television shows and music) as they did back in their home nations. They revealed that they are able to do this through downloads in particular.

While participants are immersed in Australia and are heavy media users, they are not particularly interested in Australian entertainment (films, television shows or music). However those who do state that they do so in order to learn more about cultures other than

their own. Those who watch Australian films, for instance, felt that this is a way to embed themselves in Australia and to understand Australian culture and society. (e.g. "Yeah so I try to watch like Australian cinema – an Australian movie. So the thing is with Australian cinema it's really like – especially the comedies - they are really specific and targeted for Australia I think, apart from a few crocodiles … but a movie like Priscilla Queen of the Desert and stuff wouldn't do so well back home I don't think, and I'm not sure about overseas, so I had a period of time where I was only watching Australian movies especially Australian comedies because I really like the Australian humour. Australian humour it goes straight to the point – it's straight forward – it's just plain English – it makes you laugh" [ugrad/F/France]).

DISCUSSION:
By investigating their social networks together with their consumption of entertainment media, this study presents an indirect yet creative way of understanding international student identities and how these students negotiate everyday life as transient migrants in Australia. Doing so, this study highlights the ways in which international students make use of social networks and entertainment media to create links between the home country and the host country while at the same time exploring and developing their individual and collective transnational identities.

The findings show that there is a relationship between media consumption, social networks and identity in the international student experience. On the surface, international students tap into entertainment media and social networks as sources for various and sometimes interrelated reasons such as relaxation, community and wellbeing (e.g. to de-stress). On a deeper level however, entertainment media and social networks also help to maintain existing national and cultural identities in addition to aiding in the formation and reinforcement of new yet temporary ones such as being an international student. This research, while preliminary since it is part of a wider international study looking at both international students and temporary worker migrants aids in understanding the complex negotiations of everyday life sojourners undertake in order to feel connected to both their homeland and host nation.

Exploring Transnational Identities through International Student Social Networks
Our research shows that regardless of the country they come from, international students' self-identity is based on their current status as foreigners on temporary student visas more so than linked to their home country or ethnicity. Our participants rationalised that they are able to connect and identify more with non-locals because of similar and shared experiences of being foreigners and international students. This correlates with Pedro and DeWind's (2004) study of international students in the U.S. who felt that Americans did not understand their experiences as foreigners while they could not relate to American culture such as interests in sports.   International students as Hendrickson et al. (2011) have noted are not only comfortable with fellow international students from their home but also with international students from their region and elsewhere. A reason for this which the participants in this study reveal is to get to know cultures and people other than their own. International students thus create a multicultural existence for themselves during their stay in Australia. Doing so allows international students to develop and expand their identities as transnational identities rather than solely home nation based identities. Our research also correlates with previous

studies on the importance, prominence and necessity of social networks for international students (e.g. Chang et al., 2012, Hendrickson et al., 2011).

Global Entertainment Media Creates Connections to Home and Transnational Identities

Regardless of the country participants come from, entertainment media allows for a subliminally active and continuous sense of belonging to the home nation through familiarity of content, the display of home culture, familiarity of characters and players, familiarity of language and so on (Lewis et al. 2013). Entertainment media is an avenue which allows participants the opportunity to replicate aspects of their everyday lives in the home country to the host nation. Work on migrants and the media for instance indicate that migrants enjoy consuming entertainment media from the homeland because they are able to identify with the productions. Cunningham and Nguyen (2000), for example point out that the Vietnamese migrants they spoke to watched Hong Kong (martial arts) films particularly those featuring Jackie Chan as well as Vietnamese films and television shows and listened to New Wave Vietnamese music which are Vietnamese cover versions of English songs while Lewis and Hiranon (2000) observe that watching Thai media productions allows the Thai diaspora who came to Australia in the 1980s and 1990s a form of cultural identification. The international students we interviewed consume entertainment media produced outside the homeland in conjunction with products and productions from the homeland. In other words, consuming global media productions (e.g. American films and television shows as well as listening to American and British music due to the overriding global distribution of Hollywood productions which occur both in their home countries and Australia), provides them with connections to home. This is because most participants watch the same kinds of films and television shows and listen to the same types of music as they do back in their home countries which they are able to access through online downloads.

The global entertainment media is also responsible in contributing to international students' transnational citizenship even before their arrival in Australia. This is because international students are already exposed to global entertainment through advancements in media technology which sees the rapid spread of media products and their messages (Hall, 1973, Staiger, 1993) across international boundaries. International students as transnational citizens with transnational identities ties in with Fox's (2005) theorisations of transnational citizenship not being restricted to physical movements of people. A condition of globalisation which creates transnational identities in individuals and groups occurs also through the flows of ideas and cultures (Appadurai, 1996) and, through exposure and use of communication and media technologies (Ang, 1984, Castells, 2000a, 2000b & 2004).

CONCLUSION

This research documents the importance of both social networks and entertainment media in allowing international students to identify with the homeland and with Australia. International student participants are able to create a sense of belonging for themselves while overseas because they are able to construct and maintain social networks with fellow international students from not only their home nations but from their home regions and elsewhere. Being friends with fellow international students from the homeland additionally provides them with connections to the home country as with their consumption of entertainment media. International students are able to access the globalised entertainment media they are exposed to in their home countries through digital technologies (e.g. online downloads) in Australia. In other words, international students' continued consumption of

entertainment media which is both global (e.g. from America) as well as produced in their home countries, is an anchor that allows them to keep connected to the homeland because of familiarity in everyday cultural practice. This study also suggests that the international student participants have transnational identities which are emphasised by the friends they make while in Australia. The social networks of international students are solidly made up of fellow international students not only from their home countries but increasingly from nations from the regions they are from as well as elsewhere. These social networks allow international students to form communities that are multicultural and multinational in make-up. This study however also notes a contradiction of international students as transnational citizens in Australia where their consumption of entertainment media and involvement in social networks have limited or negligible Australian content. In other words, they view very little or no Australian films or television shows, or do they listen to Australian music. Likewise they have very few or no Australian friends. While this paper presents initial findings of a wider comparative study looking at international student and transient migrant identities in Australia and Singapore, it allows for a richer understanding of international students as possessing flexible transnational identities rather than solely country-specific identities based on nationality, ethnicity and culture.

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