

Beyond Race, Within Media:

How Third Culture Audiences Engage with Whitewashed Films of a Japanese Origin

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Abstract

Third culture kids (TCKs) are among the fastest growing population of multiracial individuals as well as part of a global migrant community. This ethnographic study is concerned with the perspective of TCKs, their life experiences, and their media engagement, particularly of whitewashed films of a Japanese origin. The study focuses on this niche because of the racial implications of whitewashed films. It aims to address and discuss race representation in the media through the perspective of TKCs, an overlooked multicultural audience. This research draws on the concepts of migrant media engagement, global and contra media flows, and Orientalism to frame TCKs' engagement with whitewashed films. It ultimately highlights the double-sided and complex nature of TCKs and their media experiences, determining that while they are indeed similar to other migrant communities, their third culture experience is what makes them stand out and conducive to learn from.

Keywords: third culture kids (TCKs), whitewashing, migrants, race, media consumption, global and contra flow, identity, culture

Introduction

Where is home to you? If you have to second-guess yourself and think about it, it's more than likely that you could be a third culture kid. Third culture kids (TCKs) have been argued to be perfect candidates to be global leaders because of their exposure to multiple cultures from a young age (Selmer and Lam, 2003; Lyttle et al, 2011) but for such an appealing image of culturally complex individuals, TCKs have so far been overlooked by Western scholarship. In this study, I will investigate the nuances of how culturally adept audiences such as TCKs engage with transnational media in order to contribute to the field and fill this gap. I will focus on the double-sided nature of the third culture experience, wherein TCKs may have a rich repertoire of media knowledge but also carry with them the struggles and traumas of being a migrant their whole lives.

TCKs are 'third culture' because of the fusion of their parents' cultures and the culture(s) they grow up with, creating an entirely new one for themselves. Fechter and Korpela (2016) define TCKs as:

"individuals who, having spent a significant proportion of their developmental years in a culture other than their parents' home culture, develop a sense of relationship to all of these cultures, while not having full ownership of any." (p. 424, emphasis added)

Current literature paints an admirable picture of TCKs as employable, open-minded, and insightful individuals who likely developed such traits from absorbing various cultural norms at their adolescent stages in life (Selmer and Lam, 2003). TCKs learn to acculturate in order to adapt to new environments, making them optimal communicators with a wide range of social skills compared to monocultural individuals (Lyttle et al, 2011). However, I hope to show that the umbrella term 'TCK' covers far too many kinds of people who identify as TCKs than when the term was first coined in the 1960s (Fechter and Korpela, 2016). The sheer number of different kinds of TCKs today offers plenty to explore for fields ranging from media studies to international relations, especially in an age where the fastest growing ethnicity is 'mixed race' (Smith, 2014).

I will be focusing only on TCKs who have lived in Japan and investigate how they consume whitewashed films. I am concentrating on this niche audience not only to control a study on such a vast group of people, but also because whitewashed films are a special sort of media with racial implications, a mix and mediation between Western (usually American) and Japanese media. I also aim to address and discuss topics of controversy such as whitewashing in Hollywood and race representation in the media through the perspective of TCKs.

This research will therefore investigate how audiences of a third culture upbringing engage with whitewashed films of a Japanese origin, and is framed by three subquestions:

1. What is the everyday experience of TCKs, compared to other more known migrant communities?
2. How are whitewashed films situated in TCKs' broader and overall media consumption?
3. What are the different ways that TCKs engage with whitewashed films?

I will draw on and contribute to relevant literatures of migrant and diasporic media engagement, global and contra flow, and Orientalism. I will then present the study's methodology of qualitative interviews, followed by a discussion of my findings. My research advocates the potential of this complex yet overlooked community, arguing that understanding their media engagement can make strong contributions to ethnographic media studies and that, being hybridised transnational citizens themselves, they can offer a "comprehensive understanding of the changing global (cultural) landscape" (Park, 2004, p. 277). I do this by focusing on the double-sided and complex nature of TCKs and their media experiences, exploring how while TCKs are indeed similar to other migrant communities, they are also quite different, and it is their third culture experiences and upbringing that are precisely why their understanding of media stands out from others.

Literature Review

In order to understand TCKs, it is indicative to know how other complex migrant communities engage with media. Although most migrant communities are commonly labelled ‘diaspora’, the term is not only difficult to define, but is ever-changing as a result of today’s globalising and technologically advancing world (Silverstone, 2002; Georgiou, 2013). Georgiou (2006) defines diaspora as communities who have relocated “in space and their ability, desire and persistence to sustain connections and commonality across the globe” (p. 2). This displacement is the defining quality that applies to many diasporic communities, but crucially, these communities also differ in many ways. In order to position TCKs as similar but different from other diaspora, I will provide an overview of various migrant communities, discussing who they are and how they engage with media in the context of their diasporic lives.

Media engagement in migrant communities

Many migrants, though not all of them, engage with media for practical purposes, usually to assist with adjusting to their new home, having been uprooted from their place of origin, and to stay connected to their ‘homeland’. Noteworthy about these communities’ media engagement is the generation gap. The first generation of Latin American migrants to move to Liverpool, for example, follow diasporic newspapers and magazines as a clear sign of yearning for their homeland and a way of “keeping their cultural background alive” (Bailey, 2007, p. 221). They also learn to negotiate new identities among mainstream media in Liverpool, particularly women who have moved to a new country where they may be the minority. Whereas at home, they may have only juggled political or gendered forces, in Liverpool, Latinas learn to negotiate their racial identity based on stereotypes produced by mainstream media of being ‘exotic’ and ‘sensual’ (ibid.)

Conversely, the children of these first generations, still in their developmental stages, learn to use media to simultaneously negotiate identities from both communities – that of their ethnic origin and

of their new home. Media acts as a key resource of cultural references and information needed to assimilate and integrate into both communities. The children of Greek and Cyprus diaspora regularly consume Greek pop music as a bonding experience to fit into the New York community (Georgiou, 2006). For the younger generations, their media engagement is central to the active production and reinvention of their hybridised identities (ibid.).

Many migrants use media to keep in contact with people elsewhere, whether they are family members left behind or other migrants in different countries. Dekker et al (2018) argue that smartphones are an imperative tool for Syrian refugees who rely on news, websites, and social media networks to inform their decisions and journeys out of their countries by validating rumours through family and friends who are already abroad. Madianou's (2012) extensive study on working Filipina mothers in London demonstrates the power of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in maintaining dual identities of being a mother and breadwinner. Having chosen to leave the Philippines primarily to afford better education and living standards for their children, ICTs as simple as video calls allow Filipina mothers to feel like and *be* mothers in spite of the distance (ibid.).

Migrant communities clearly engage with media that informs their identity in positive and negative ways. Kim's (2011) study of cosmopolitan East Asian women in London, a group of more financially able migrants, demonstrate both the impact of media on everyday experiences. Some Korean women produce a positive cosmopolitan identity to gain economic and social capital, having come from a media environment in Korea that associates the word 'cosmopolitan' with the urban middle-class, freedom, and subverted gender roles (ibid.). Alternatively, some Chinese and Japanese women must deal with the effects of British media's misrepresentations of their nations, which "foster a culture of fear, anxiety, and prejudice" (ibid., p. 293) towards these women. Part of their everyday lives therefore involve tackling moments of being stereotyped as sexualised and feminised Japanese, or denigrated as rowdy Chinese because of the media's perpetuations.

While there are evidently many kinds of migrant communities as well as many ways in which they engage with media, these examples are but a sliver of the plethora of current knowledge and will act as a framework in order to understand TCKs, particularly in how they overlap and deviate from these migrant communities.

Different and the same: overlapping identities

Building on current migrant research, we can see how TCKs simultaneously fit into and deviate from most diasporic communities. While TCKs, like other migrants, are also displaced, live in areas where they may be the minority, and share a sense of solidarity with other migrants (Sreberny, 2002), the biggest difference is perhaps their class and more mobile and comfortable lifestyles (Fechter and Korpela, 2016). I argue that, as the children of first generation migrant workers, corporate employees, diplomats, aid workers, and more (Lyttle et al, 2011), and as a result of these migrants' endeavours, TCKs are different because they are more financially and educationally capable (cf. Georgiou, 2006). Therefore, while TCKs are certainly a type of migrant community, they are significantly different from previous generations of migrants because, by definition, they are the next generation of more mobile, globalised, and hybridised citizens.

TCKs share various media practices with diasporic groups, such as engaging with media to connect to their 'homelands' and to integrate into their host countries. TCKs also share negative media experiences like exclusion and negative misrepresentations, demonstrated in Han and Budarick's (2018) study of African Australians victimised by misleading information in the Australian mainstream media. Additionally, TCKs are also in an opportune, if not odd, position of seeing their home media in a different light because of their displacement from their home country. Leung's (2004) study of Japanese expats living in Hong Kong demonstrates this diasporic ability of reading media, in this case Japanese dramas, as "mirrors of reality" (p. 98). The paired experiences of moving away from Japanese society and living as minorities in Hong Kong gives them a different, perhaps more insightful outlook on their own culture and identity that they may not have

gotten living in Japan. As my findings will show, TCKs also experience their home media like this – seeing their own culture mirrored back at them while being physically separated from the place.

Unlike the practical element of diasporic media engagement, most TCKs engage with media to form their identity. Their consumption involves seeking alternative and more representative characters in the media and negotiating two cultural identities – the ones inherited through their parents, and the ones of their host culture. Some of the closest examples of TCKs in current scholarship are therefore on Korean Americans and young Punjab teenagers in Southall. Both studies look at young people’s engagement with media: how watching dramas helps Korean Americans actively pursue memories of and connect to ‘home’, real or imagined (Park, 2004); and how sifting through different media allows youths to negotiate a hybridised identity in media atmospheres swamped by Western standards of beauty and diminishing misrepresentations of themselves (Gillespie, 1995).

Evidently, some characteristics of TCKs overlap with most diaspora, but there are also elements that set them apart, particularly the generation gap. While there certainly is work on diasporic groups who *are* TCKs, most scholarship on migrant media consumption uses ‘diaspora’ as a blanket term, unintentionally glossing over what sets them apart: their hybrid identities that are neither truly Western or authentically non-Western (cf. Ang, 2003). Our knowledge of diaspora are of the people who have indeed been uprooted, but differently from them, many TCKs are actually *rootless*. TCKs, similar to many diaspora, are “neither fully at home in nor totally detached from either” (Sreberny, 2002, p. 218) of the countries they are linked to, which gives them an insightful and evolving bank of cultural knowledge. Building on Vargas’s (2006) argument that the “media play a considerable role in the social and psychological development of adolescents” (p. 268), my findings endeavour to look closely at TCKs and their media consumption of whitewashed films, hoping to provide a fruitful perspective from a new breed of hybridised global citizens.

Whitewashing and its implications

Although whitewashing in cinema, particularly of Japanese films, has become increasingly popular in recent years, it has yet to be rigorously studied. To better understand its nuances and implications, it is imperative to first understand its interplay in the context of global and contra flows and, crucially, how culturally complex audiences such as TCKs might engage with these films. The term ‘whitewashing’ has recently become a buzzword in the media and discussions of popular culture (Frank, 2017; Rose, 2017; Yee, 2016). To be clear, I refer to a different ‘whitewashing’ than its original political definition of covering up something immoral, but refer instead to any instance where a position/character of colour is given to/played by a white worker/actor. Despite its current relevance and controversy, whitewashing is far from a new concept. Evidence of whitewashing in Hollywood can be traced back to films like *Breakfast at Tiffany’s* (1961), and as far back as white actors black facing in D.W. Griffith’s *The Birth of a Nation* (1915). Today, examples of whitewashing can be seen in American or British productions like *Aloha* (2015) and *Ghost in Shell* (2017).

Whitewashed roles most commonly manifest in Western remakes and adaptations. These remakes, normally of films originating from Hong Kong, Japan and South Korea, began trending in the early 2000s and have become one of Hollywood’s most effective methods of outsourcing by importing the films and relying on the labour of industries abroad (Xu, 2008). Astoundingly, this model proved that any film that performed well in East Asia would also perform well as a remake in North America “as long as the original ethnicity is changed to mainly white and Western” (ibid., p. 196). Xu (ibid.) identifies that the appeal of the remakes is the stories’ Asian, “exotic, erotic, feminine” (p. 193) aesthetic, and the ease at which creators can produce films without having to start from scratch. However, the alterations from the original film naturally create a new, Westernised version, which of course is the intent in any artistic remake: not to create an exact replica, but to put their own spin on the original source. These remakes are therefore simply

standardised Hollywood homogenisations, in other words, imitations of and separate from the original.

It is therefore important to question the grey areas of whitewashing and whether it can or should be seen as truly harmful to ethnic minorities, especially when Japanese fans and Japanese creators of the original films are more than happy to let Western producers create their remakes – whitewashed or not (McNary, 2017; Vlisides, 2017). What then are the negative implications of whitewashing, if there truly are any, when representatives of the film’s ethnic origins support and even advocate remakes that are highly likely to include some degree of whitewashing? Xu’s (2008) pragmatic discussion of the film industry reminds us of the artists of colour who have lost opportunities to take up impactful roles of representation. While the infrastructure of countries like China and India (ibid.) have indeed benefited from Hollywood’s outsourcing, the drawbacks for people of colour are not only the missed jobs nor the lack of representation, but also the concealment of the vast quantities of labour required and already put into the creation of the original films. The act of whitewashing is therefore clearly a matter of race, one that hinders vulnerable ethnic minorities and is embedded with lingering racial practices.

Whitewashing in the context of global flow

The power of media, particularly film and pop culture, to influence and inform is part of a nation’s soft power. Thussu (2016) claims that a country’s soft power is influential because it has “the goal of communicating a favourable image of a country or countering negative portrayals in an era of digital global flows” (p. 415). The US, for example, consistently uses its media’s soft power to promote its own economic and political interests (Thussu, 2007), apparent in Hollywood’s hugely influential role in shifting public opinion during the tensions of the Cold War era (Thussu, 2016). Based on the US’s success, in theory, soft power could do the same for Japan and other non-Western nations. However, some critique the effectiveness of the dissemination of Japanese media in actually making any impact, arguing that culture is not experienced simply through the capitalist

practice of nation branding and exporting goods (Iwabuchi, 2010; Iwabuchi, 2007). To contribute to these discussions of media like Japanese films for failing to carry true representations of Japanese culture, my study explores the extent to which TCKs comprehend aspects of culture and race in whitewashed films.

Japan: a contra flow to the Western global flow

Whitewashed films are an odd case because they are a form of media translated from its original (in this case, Japanese) version to a new (usually American) version. These films and their implications can be understood in the context of global and contra flows. Society is not only globalising with every passing day but is collectively placing more value on capitalist and commercial tendencies, reflected in the plethora of media content that circulates not necessarily to promote cultural exchange but more as a commercial imperative (Thussu, 2007). Of course there does exist a range of non-Western media products that breaks this steady flow of American cultural power – Japanese products being perhaps the most popular genre since the early 20th century (Levi, 2009; Farrell, 2009; Okuhara, 2009; Hatayama, 2009). Now at the tail end of the 21st century, non-Western products like Japanese manga, anime, and music, but also Korean dramas, KPOP, Nollywood, Bollywood and Latin American telenovelas have gained popularity around the globe (Thussu, 2007; Iwabuchi, 2015). This increase of non-Western genres brings an optimistic outlook for a future in abolishing inequality and gaining diversity in media (Thussu, 2007).

However, although the soft power of Japanese and other media has, to an extent, contributed to the contra flow against dominating US media, and while some scholars provide a synthesis of media flow within East Asia (Iwabuchi, 2015), current literature is still dominated by a binary, East-to-West dynamic that places Western media in the centre. Current research certainly sufficiently acknowledges the overwhelming and homogenising prowess of Western media as a dominating power in the global flow (Thussu, 2007), but this study aims to move away from this binary and highlight the intricacies within Asian and transnational communities and media. I aim to expand

scholarship by exploring the implications of consuming whitewashed films among audiences not necessarily of a single background, but of something more intricate that reflects the identities of many modern individuals today.

A matter of race and Orientalism

I argue that whitewashing in film is a matter of race and a manifestation of the Orientalist practices that are still deeply embedded into contemporary global society. Saïd (1979) defines Orientalism in many ways, all of which amount to the common theme that it is a way of thinking of Orient nations, people, and images, in terms of what they do for and how they fit into the European Western experience. According to Saïd (*ibid.*), the West is the original, the Rest (the Orient) is the Other, and even today, everything global society has done, is currently doing, and will do in the future will be tinged with the political and colonial history of orientalism, be it politics, academia, and even our national pop culture and media. In fact, he stresses that particularly in our electronic and postmodern world, various sources of new media only “[reinforce] ... the stereotypes by which the Orient is viewed” (*ibid.*, p. 26), which is certainly reflected by the aforementioned rising obsession of Japanese pop culture in North America.

The heart of Orientalism is the binary relationship between the East and the West: the idea of fitting the “East” into the story of the West, never quite vice versa, and never the story of the East told with the words of individuals from the East. To elaborate, Saïd (*ibid.*) emphasises the importance of knowing, or of knowledge as power, more specifically that with knowledge and information, dominating countries can hold power over the *dominated*. Countries in the Orient were and may still today be seen as wretched and uneducated, and it was the responsibility and, indeed, honour of white colonialists to “[bring] them out of the wretchedness of their decline and ... into rehabilitated residents of productive colonies” (*ibid.*, p. 35). To be sure, Orientalism’s core ideas stem from the notion of white nations ‘saving’ Oriental nations from their own decline by educating them, utilising them, and speaking for them:

“Still, he does speak for them in the sense that what they might have to say, were they to be asked and might they be able to answer, would somewhat uselessly confirm what is already evident: that they are a subject race, dominated by a race that knows them and what is good for them better than they could possibly know themselves.” (ibid., p. 34-35).

This precise notion of Western nations ‘speaking’ for Oriental nations parallels with whitewashed films where the Western remakes or whitewashed casting attempts to tell a story that is not really theirs in their own way and their own words.

Yet while the problematic implications of this idea of the ‘white saviour’ are blatant, what is perhaps more interesting to grapple with is the role in which people of colour, in this case, Japanese people, may knowingly play in this East-West dynamic. Yoshimoto (2003) argues that “Western arrogance and Japanese obsequiousness often go hand in hand,” (p. 66) and truly, the Japanese can be guilty of self-exoticisation, of encouraging Westerners to appreciate and immerse themselves in Japanese culture to various degrees. It is crucial for Yoshimoto to highlight this tendency of “Japanese who exoticize themselves to adulate Westerners” (ibid.) not for the purpose of placing blame on both sides but to emphasise the underlying superiority and inferiority complex inherent in many East-West exchanges. Yoshimoto reflects on Spivak’s notion of the way white men conveniently fill a void to play an Oriental’s rescuer from the reprehensible practices of their own society (Ross, 2009-2010). Although Western media have been historically guilty of making Oriental people as least threatening to the white man as possible (Rocchio, 2000), to this day, people of Oriental origin tend to revert to cultural identity performances to reflect the mysterious exoticness of their countries (Cabañes, 2009). What’s more, the American media’s intervention to promote and spread non-Western media, such as with Pokemon’s success via Warner Bros.’ support (Iwabuchi, 2010), arguably reflects the very Orientalist notion that Oriental countries need the West’s help to succeed.

The growing rise of non-Western media in the global flow and TCKs’ consumption of transnational media for essentially their whole lives are evidence of a new and maturing media plane. In a modern day of constant agitation and fear over issues of politics and race, one way for

everyone to move forward towards a more egalitarian society is to simply start *truly* listening to the stories of marginalised individuals. The best way to do that is to lift up vulnerable minorities to places where there are visible people of colour in positions of power and influence. Thusu (2016) contends that migrants, mobile people of colour, and diaspora are “a critical resource for soft power dissemination” (p. 425) which leads to how people of multicultural backgrounds will fit into my investigation. Current research focuses largely on East-West, Coloured-White dynamics, an approach that is limiting because it ignores a large population TCKs, middle-class, privileged, and highly educated people of colour who may originate from so-called ‘Oriental’ countries. I therefore aim to expand current research by considering these people of multicultural backgrounds and exploring how they engage with Orientalist implications in whitewashed films where stories of cultural minorities are told by white voices.

Research Design

Methodological Approach

To investigate the ways people of third culture backgrounds interpret and understand instances of whitewashing, I draw on data generated from interviews with self-identified TCKs. I chose a qualitative approach with the aim of gaining a depth rather than breadth of knowledge and insight, as qualitative methods are more capable of gathering complex information about people's behaviours, motives, and attitudes (Foddy, 1993). McAdam (1988) posits that qualitative research can give a more detailed picture of people's lives and opinions, which were necessary for my analysis. However, while qualitative methods are more suitable for and therefore dominant in social science research, like all methodological approaches, they also have limitations that must be acknowledged and, where possible, addressed and countered.

The limitations of qualitative methods like interviews are due to human nature and imperfection: people don't always say what they mean, frequently misinterpret questions, are easily affected by the cultural context of a situation, and are always changing, whether it be their characters, beliefs, or attitudes (ibid.). Whyte (1982) urges researchers to consider how idiosyncratic factors can impact the data, warning how the "mood, wording of the question ... and extraneous factors" can affect the participant's answers and reactions. It is only natural for people to react to their environments, and inevitable for that to have some impact on the interview but nevertheless, Whyte (ibid.) argues that the interview is one technique that allows us to conduct research with more legitimate and evidence-supported confidence.

Another drawback of interviews is the participants' individual limitations. Berger (1998) cautions that some participants can be shy or reluctant to speak freely and express their true feelings or thoughts, and might not even address all of the researcher's topics. However, countering these limitations, the strength of an interview's loose structure allows the researcher to probe and pursue

the topics that interest them while tailoring the interview to reveal more details. Berger (ibid.) argues that “the more people talk, the more they reveal (give away) about themselves” (p. 57) which can lead to deeper and more nuanced discussions of the research topics.

Another important limitation to address is the interpretation of the verbal data of the interviews (Flick, 2006). Researchers will have their own bias no matter how much they try to stay neutral and may not always interpret the interviewee’s words as they originally intended but I countered this by leaning on theoretical support and maintaining a critical eye on my interpretations at all times. It is useful to remember that the goal of interviews is to bring specific topics to light and to make the interviewees’ “implicit knowledge more explicit” (ibid., p. 156). By simply allowing the interviewee to speak freely about the research topics and later relating their interpretations to supporting theory, I was better equipped to make less biased and more appropriate interpretations.

Sampling Technique

I conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with self-identified third culture kids. One of the criteria of choosing my participants was that they had to think of themselves as a “third culture kid”. Upon making contact with each participant, I simply asked them, “Are you a third culture kid?” and provided a definition if necessary. As long as the participant confirmed that the TCK identity applied to them, they were a viable interviewee. All of my participants were young adults above 18 years old, aged 19-24 years. Most are studying or have recently finished studying their bachelor’s degree at a Western university (either a university in the US, UK, or Canada, or a Western university’s international sister campus). I interviewed 15 participants in total, 12 females and 3 male participants. The gender imbalance in the sample is due to having more female connections who quickly accepted the interview request. Additionally, as gender was not the prior focus of this study, I purposively requested interviews from participants who could contribute a diverse range of third culture experiences.

I used non-random or purposive sampling, where the samples chosen are not determined by chance. Deacon et al (1999) assert that although this method has conscious and deliberate research purposes, it should not be seen as a negative aspect because the subjects are part of specific social networks and backgrounds that have the cultural and social experience required to properly and knowledgeably discuss the research topics. I used the principle of maximum diversity when constructing my case selection criteria in order to capture a wide array of experiences and world-views. I tried to select a range of third culture experiences, including the different reasons they are TCKs (migrants, international school students, exchange students, multiracial individuals); the amount of time they spent in Japan (an exchange year abroad, their adolescent years, their birth country); the number of countries they lived in; and the extent to which they feel they assimilated into and adopted Japanese culture. Finally, to help direct a portion of the interviews, all participants were asked to watch at least one movie prior to their interviews from a list of whitewashed films I compiled (see appendix A).

Research Tool

For my investigation I utilised in depth semi-structured interviews. In what Fontana (2007) calls today's 'interview society', we see countless types of interviews in forms of market research, talk shows, therapy, opinion polling, and more, yet what they all have in common is that they are a way of "contemporary storytelling" (p. 12) that allows us to learn from people's life stories. Flick (2006) supports this notion that interviews enable researchers to explore in depth conceptualisations of their research themes and theoretical concepts through the lifeworlds of the interviewees. This is possible through the semi-structured interview's design which does not focus on sticking to the questionnaire but prioritises conversation and open-ended dialogue (Deacon et al, 1999).

A drawback of the semi-structured interview is its dependence on the interviewer's ability to build rapport with the interviewees. Particularly relevant for my research topics, Razon and Ross (2012) argue that culture and identity have a significant impact on the interviewees' responses.

Therefore, maintaining trust and confidentiality in a way that aligns my world-views with my participants' in a process Razon and Ross (ibid.) call 'alliance building' was crucial to ensuring fruitful interviews. This sheds light on another drawback of the interview: its demand on the researcher. While interviews admittedly require the most social skills from the interviewer, such as flexibility, good listening skills, empathy, and good humour (Deacon et al, 1999), it also means that I was able to tailor the interview to best suit my interviewees and give them the freedom they needed to best develop their answers. This ultimately provided me with richer data for my analysis.

I conducted the interviews in 5 stages:

1. I arranged to meet each interviewee at a convenient time for them at a coffee shop on university campus and secured seats that were quiet enough to be private but with enough background noise to avoid discomfort.
2. I asked the interviewee to read an information sheet (see Appendix B) that gave an overview of my research and explained the ethical implications and their rights to anonymity and confidentiality.
3. I began each interview asking them about the broader context of their lives to get an insight of the biography of their migration and third culture background.
4. I directed the interview towards my main research themes and focused on their views on whitewashing in film.
5. At the end of the interviews, I gave them a chance to add any more comments that they wanted to share, thanked them for their time, and offered to share the finished research should they be interested.

My virtual interviews with participants outside of the UK were done in the same stages but instead of meeting them at a coffee shop, I video-called individuals through their preferred social media channel, including Skype, FaceTime, and Facebook Messenger, and used QuickTime to record the audio of the interview.

I made sure not to follow my questionnaire (see Appendix C) too strictly and instead used it as a guide to ensure that all my research topics were being covered. This is because limiting the interview within the confines of the questionnaire would have also restricted my interviewees from speaking freely and going into more depth on points they deem relevant (Flick, 2006). I listened to and transcribed the interviews to draw key patterns and themes, using anonymised quotes in my findings to substantiate and illustrate my arguments (see Appendix D for a sample transcription).

Findings

Consuming media as a third culture kid

My research supports that a third culture upbringing informs and shapes an individual's understanding and consumption of media. According to my findings, the respondents' third culture upbringing influenced their understanding of whitewashing but to various degrees which can be categorised into three main opinions: those who express *general disfavour* towards whitewashing; those who say they are *unbothered* by it; and those who are vocally, almost *extremely against* it.

In contrast to individuals of a monocultural upbringing, TCKs' engagement with media is affected by their constant relocating. They are frequently surrounded by new people and new media environments, all of which give them access to different media resources and channels. Diane (female, Filipino) was exposed to regularly aired American films, cartoons, and Tagalog-dubbed anime. After moving to Japan, she gained access to original or English-subbed versions of anime, therefore growing up with a mix of media in three different languages: English, Filipino, and Japanese. Nadia (female, Thai) detailed the evolution of her own media consumption patterns based on her relocations:

In Thailand, KPOP was such a big thing. I was into ... JPOP as well. During that time I wasn't into Thai [media] at all. It's very stereotypical and doesn't gravitate to me. That's how I really wanted to learn Japanese and go to Japan. In Japan, I was into a mix of Japanese and American [media] – Japanese because I was there, American because it was an international school so I wanted to know what everyone was talking about. My roommate was really Americanized. Then in Canada, I was into *The Voice* and *Once Upon a Time*, so back to Western [media], because obviously it's Canada and my roommate was Canadian so that kind of influenced me. After I came here [London], since I live alone and surrounded myself with Asian friends, I went back to KPOP and everything is KPOP nowadays.

The result of being exposed to different kinds of people and places, and also to different sources of media gives TCKs more opportunities to compare and question these media resources. Cecilia (female, Korean) recognises the power of having different perspectives, saying that:

I feel like Korea, Japan and the States sometimes have conflicting perspectives of each other, so carrying all these different perspectives makes me want to dig into the facts rather than just accept what I'm told.

Another respondent, Chloe (female, Japanese-Irish), notes about Japanese media that:

There is quite a lot of hesitance in Japanese media to not cover certain topics. Depression is a big thing, suicide is a big issue, but you don't see it as main storylines, whereas American media is more out there about mental health issues. They're a lot more open.

TCKs' media consumption is also largely influenced by family members. The respondents would watch the same media as their siblings or parents, like Aqilah (female, Malaysian), whose brothers watched anime "so because they watched it, I watched it," and Cecilia, who watched Korean dramas with her parents on weekends and would later seek out more dramas online. Some respondents grew up surrounded by media dictated by older family members, like Mikaela (female, Filipino) who "never watched TV as much because I would always have to fight with my grandpa because he loved watching the tabloids." Respondents also enjoyed family time by watching certain media together or get recommendations of cultural media in order to learn more about their background:

Every Friday and Saturday my parents and little sister and I would have a movie night where we'd watch an Indian movie. It was a tradition growing up. I picked up my Hindi watching those movies. (Varun, male, Indian)

Every Sunday there would be these old cultural TV shows that were completely in Japanese and my mom would say, "Oh you should watch it 'cause it's Japanese history," so every Sunday we'd watch that show. (Chloe)

Remembering or rejecting: sifting through various cultural values

The variety of media TCKs grow up with shapes their daily lives as adolescents and adults. Tulia (female, Nepalese-British) grew up to be the person she is today: cheerful, positive, and kind, just like the main heroine in her favourite anime that aired on local Nepalese TV. Alternatively, similar to how other migrants can come to despise diasporic media from their 'home' countries (Georgiou, 2006), Cecilia expresses regret about her consumption of Korean dramas as a child, implicitly

reflecting on the feminine values and ideals she surrounded herself with at the time and now may not align with as much:

One thing I regret is watching Korean dramas a lot, because the whole ‘candy’ idea? She’s the girl who’s perfect and so nice and works all these part time jobs. Then a prince comes and saves her. She’s poor and meets a rich dude. I feel like I idolised the idea of being so kind to the extent that it just became pushover level and that’s something I regret.

Similarly, reflecting the notion that the social process of media consumption can inform people’s decisions and acts (Couldry, 2000, cited in Georgiou, 2012), TCKs refer to media to inform them on how to act in different situations in order to integrate into the culture. Alicia (female, Filipino) says that, “I think back to movies and think how situations would play out.” Varun echoes the sentiment, saying that, “When I started watching American TV shows, they started serving as a foundation for trying to teach you how to act in certain situations, like what to do on a first date.”

Another reason TCKs consume media is to reconnect with their cultural roots, usually after moving to the US or UK to pursue higher education, where they learn to become more independent and grapple with their own identities. As part of that process, they engage with media from their home culture to keep in touch with that part of their identities. Angela (female, Japanese-American) consumes media from Japan where she was born and raised to feel closer to home:

I had a whole stash of manga in my room, I have one book in my car or in my backup and I just read it to keep up with my Japanese. I rewatch Ghibli movies or Conan movies whenever I’m homesick or actually sick.

Similarly, after moving to the US for university and meeting other international Indian students, Varun began to harbour an interest in Hindi music and movies that he didn’t have before, finding himself “more and more interested in Indian movies ... to the point where I’ve started to appreciate them.” Much like migrants watching Asian dramas outside of Asia (Park, 2004; Leung, 2004), the respondents demonstrate a similar need to feel closer to ‘home’ and achieve this by consuming media from their home culture.

A world-view shaped by the third culture experience

The TCK experience as grounds for empathy and sensitivity

The third culture upbringing can inform TCKs' media consumption, shaping their world-view to have a particular sensitivity towards representation of race in media, even if the race is not their own. The frustrating experience of having their identity misunderstood on a regular basis fosters an empathy towards racial misrepresentation in media, such as in whitewashing. TCKs frequently want others to know their actual identity, despite their appearance, and regularly experience irritation at being labelled as an outsider in the country they call home. Growing up in Japan as a half-Japanese, half-American, Angela explains the almost impenetrable barrier multiracial children face on a daily basis, sharing that, "It was super annoying. If you don't look Asian, then you're not Asian. If you're not Japanese, then you're not Japanese, so you're going to be treated that way." This experience of wanting to assert a certain identity, and even the desire to *not* be associated with a particular identity, is common throughout TCKs:

*I wanted that recognition as a British person. Being South-East Asian, they see the Asian face first and I don't want them to assume straight away that I'm an international or exchange student. And I tell them I'm from Liverpool, I've lived here for 10 years, and they're surprised and I'm like yes, I'm *British*. (Tulia)*

Little kids [in Japan] would try to ... talk English. It's not like making fun but just kind of being a bit rude if anything. They don't understand. What my sister and I found funny was if we were faced with that, then we'd just switch to Japanese and watch their face fall. Serves you right. (Chloe)

At the same time, I don't like being seen as Thai. When I see Thai people along the streets, I don't want them to recognise me as Thai. I stereotype Thai kids here as rich, having parents with money, and a comfortable life. I don't want to be associated with that. I don't want to be seen [as if] I'm not working hard. I don't want to be associated [as a Thai person] that can't really comprehend English. Like a tourist. (Nadia)

The everyday experience of rejecting a forced singular identity through what Georgiou (2013) calls "reflexive individualism" (p. 103) allows TCKs to empathise when characters are not portrayed

truthfully. Because TCKs regularly experience racial misinterpretation, when a character on screen has been whitewashed, it can strike a familiar chord in them.

Common interests and connections

Many TCKs' media experiences reinforce the symbolic power of media in its ability to connect people through a "shared engagement with media narratives and technologies" (Georgiou, 2013, p. 104). The respondents felt that they could only connect with people with similar upbringings or media interests. Some explained that the media they consumed shaped them to identify with neither their ethnic or host countries' identities, but mostly to people with similar migrant patterns or people who consumed the same media. Diane felt that she was only able to connect with people of similar interests after leaving the Philippines:

It's so difficult in the Philippines where everyone is the same and from more or less the same [economic] background. When I moved to Japan and Singapore, the conversations opened up and it was really, really interesting to compare my experiences with other people. It was so satisfying to have similar interests with people who went through the same thing.

Diane demonstrated an affinity to connect with people not based on culture but on similar media tastes. She therefore resorted to an "alternative space of fantasy identification" (Gillespie, 1995, p. 197), gravitating towards a media that offers something she can deem acceptable or appropriate. However, it is notable that this claim or rejection of identities is a process, one that most TCKs struggle with. When Chloe turns 20, she will need to choose one passport and give up the other, which is proving to be an uncomfortable and difficult decision. She elaborated that, "I've never lived [in Ireland], I don't understand what it is, and it just ties into a lot of things like voting, jobs – things I haven't considered yet."

Additionally, because the majority of the respondents grew up surrounded by the dominant flow of Western media, *where* the media comes from clearly has lasting consequences. Upon moving to Britain for university, Chloe found that, "There isn't [anybody from] the same background so I get

along with people from the States because we watch the same stuff.” Evidently, compared to other migrant communities who consume media to *integrate* in their host cultures, TCKs rely on media to construct common identities (Park, 2004) and to be able to make any connections at all.

How relocating to the West breeds a more insightful understanding of race

It is common for TCKs, the majority of whom receive a Western or international education, to attend a Western university (usually in the US or UK) to pursue further education, demonstrated by the 15 interviewees who finished or are currently studying bachelors degrees in the US and UK. I argue that for the ones who physically relocate to the West, such as international school students, this is the shift that unveils differences in the media and people that surround them. This exposure from one society’s way of life to a new one reveals a lot about both societies, which Angela notes when discussing differences of gender equality between Japan and the US:

I feel like women are super not equal in Japan. They’re more objectified. I didn’t really realise that until I came here because I grew up there and felt like I was treated equally. But watching the anime now, especially the ones where they sexualise female anime characters in *everything*, even games and fantasy anime – they always have to be sexualised and I don’t *like* that. And I think Japanese girls are kind of okay with that because nobody ever said anything. Girls like those characters and they want to *be* those characters sometimes.

Implicit in Angela’s observation and relocation are her exposure to “new opportunities for ... alternative sets of representations” (Georgiou, 2012, p. 794) of women, as well as the need to negotiate new layers of her already hybridised identity, similarly to the Latina diaspora in Liverpool. The move to the West also allows TCKs to see how their home media is perceived by people unlike them, namely, Western audiences. All interviewees expressed either slight or high discomfort at the interest of Japanese media in the West, corroborating Kim’s (2011) notion that “the dialogue between Japan and the West is not one between equals” (p. 290):

I’m a bit worried, just because the ones that are being popularised are very narrow or from a specific area. If people are consuming that without taking that into account they might get the wrong impression that that’s the only thing going for that country. I would be happy that people are gaining awareness for that country but only if they’re taking into account that that’s not it. That’s not the only thing – there’s so much more. (Sierra, female, Japanese-Singaporean)

Notably, it is the relocation to the West that reveals the East-vs-West dynamic along with its worrying implications. “It’s just funny because ... I know they appreciate it in their own certain way ... so that’s *great*, I guess,” Alicia expressed uncertainly. Similarly, Cecilia felt uncomfortable, knowing that “they [anime] go viral for a reason, right? But people see those things and they assume things about Japan and ... it isn’t really true.” While respondents approved of Asia’s increasing popularity, taking that as a sign of its rising global status, the high interest bordering on obsession discomferts them, particularly due to perpetuated and lingering Asian stereotypes. This substantiates that the third culture experience – the various relocations and diversity of media TCKs grow up with – can indeed breed a sensitivity to issues around race. When discussing the imbalanced power dynamics of cultural appropriation, Cecilia eloquently demonstrated this awareness of racism as an “entrenched problem” (Rocchio, 2000, p. 6) in Western society:

The whole cultural appropriation thing, they’ll take what they like about the culture and discard the rest and disregard the people – that bothers me. Culture isn’t just an accessory or trend that you can take or use. They’ll just pick whatever’s convenient for them. And that’s not okay.

A different perspective: assimilation and apathy towards race in media

‘It really doesn’t matter’: an apathetic approach to whitewashing

The assumption may be that people of multicultural backgrounds would all have equally disapproving opinions regarding racial issues such as whitewashing. My findings show that conversely, a small portion of TCKs with varying media consumption patterns are actually apathetic towards the matter and, in their words, “really don’t care.” These TCKs went through the same challenging experiences of being treated as outsiders for most of their lives but, perhaps more successfully than other TCKs, managed to assimilate into groups to which they felt they could belong. The ways they did this were either by learning the language of the host country to a comfortable level or finding a community better suited to them in terms of common interests. As a result, because of the development of their life in their host countries and capability to assimilate,

these TCKs no longer felt bothered by discrimination based on race. Notably, the small portion of TCKs who expressed this apathy were all male, reiterating the notion that the third culture experience itself is gendered.

Varun first experienced this process adapting to his new life in Japan. With an active schedule of after-school clubs that exposed him to local Japanese children almost every day of the week, he was thrust into the experience of feeling like an outsider:

I had a lot of exposure to these Japanese kids and, in the beginning at least, it was extremely weird.

There was very little social interaction. Parents would look at you weird, like what is this *gaijin* (foreigner) doing here.

He later mentioned picking up enough Japanese from classmates to be able to hold conversations. He mentions the importance of language, claiming that it "shapes the way you think ... you won't really be able to think or truly relate to those people unless you speak the language," substantiating language's critical role in helping people empathise, assimilate, and connect with others (Park, 2004). His experience therefore describes a TCK who was initially excluded but by mastering the language, managed to assimilate to a point where he could not only communicate but also connect with people in Japan. In feeling that he could relate to and be part of his surrounding community, eventually he stopped feeling so much like an outsider. The development and outcome of a third culture experience like this suggests that regardless of the racial challenges, some TCKs find that they can overcome race as a barrier. Carrying a lesson like this into adulthood suggests that should they face racial issues in the future, they know from their previous experiences that they will more than likely overcome those future challenges as well.

Experiences like this nurture an attitude of apathy towards matters like whitewashing because these TCKs feel that they are not judged by race. Although he might have felt like a foreigner living in Japan and Singapore, Kenneth (male, Filipino) found a community in e-sports and felt that he

was only ever judged by his skill and talent. “Most of my life, I’ve been judged by my merit,” he says, and when discussing his thoughts on whitewashing, asserted that:

I don’t care. If you’re good at the role, then do it. Think of it as a cover. When you take someone else’s song and cover it, it’s not gonna sound like the exact same song. There’s nothing wrong with that, the only difference is that people are looking too much into the racial part and not taking the adaptation as it is. They’re just going, *oh, it’s not like the original source* – it’s not going to be! But that’s just me again where I don’t see race at all.

Simply put, the respondents who expressed these sentiments are unbothered by matters of race. Kenneth doesn’t “see [whitewashing] as a problem. They can say whatever they want, they just need to be prepared to receive backlash from both sides.” Other respondents demonstrated this indifference:

I don’t think anyone should do anything. I don’t believe in the concept of should. That’s why cultural appropriation doesn’t matter. You shouldn’t get angry at someone who doesn’t know, they don’t have a responsibility [to know]. (Ivan, male, Afghan-British)

I really don’t care. Like when Black Panther came out, it was the first time there was a [mainstream] black superhero. I didn’t really think of anything like that but that’s also because I’m not belonging to that race. There’s never been a brown superhero in Marvel movies and it doesn’t really matter. It would be a bother if you make it a bother. If you try to get offended then it’ll offend you. (Varun)

Accordingly, because culture ended up not mattering in *their* life stories, for these TCKs, culture doesn’t *really* matter. This group is noteworthy because they highlight the many nuanced layers of whitewashing that aren’t yet fully understood. This was clear whenever respondents used their knowledge of fields like film industries, history, and economics to inform and support their position, like Ivan who said, “It’s all about money. It’s all about business. I would pick whoever would give us the most money – a top, well-known actress,” or Kenneth citing the American film industry:

They think they know what’s going to sell based on data that they’ve had for the past 10 years but they’re failing to realise that ... information also grows exponentially so the data we had 10 years ago may not apply today.

Inconsistencies and gendered implications

However, despite the apathetic attitudes these TCKs portray, their interviews reveal that they are actually *not* consistently neutral about matters regarding race. The respondents still expressed frustration during moments of racial misunderstanding or moments when white people were seen as superior to them. Regarding Ivan's time studying abroad in Japan, he said, "I find this weird but I feel like people of colour put white people above other people of colour and I don't like that at all." Feeling that he had been more well-mannered and spoke better Japanese, he expressed irritation when the local Japanese students paid his white British classmates special attention.

Similarly, Varun expressed discomfort and exasperation at his American classmates' lack of awareness of Japanese people and culture, saying that, "When I say I grew up in Japan, everyone says, oh everyone watches anime there, did you have one of those body pillows? I'm like dude, no. Chill." The respondents were defensive for their countries and spoke out against white individuals who they felt had little to no true understanding of those cultures. Regarding classmates with an interest in Japan, Kenneth said:

People who think they know so much about Japan ... one girl was talking about 'I'm studying English so I can go to Japan and teach English!' It's really ... ignorant. This is going to sound a little elitist but I'd say a lot of the Western audience don't actually connect with [Japanese culture] on a deeper level. The way they do connect to it, to me, seems rather shallow.

These viewpoints reveal that discussions and negotiations of race are not and *should* not be restricted to 'white vs colour'. These TCKs demonstrate a more complex understanding of race, reiterating the need for scholarship and general discussion about racial matters to move away from the polarising dichotomy of East vs West. Crucially, this particular group reveals the gendered nature of racial discrimination in a TCKs' everyday life. Interestingly, the only respondents that expressed any apathy towards whitewashing were the male respondents, while the female respondents maintained concerned empathy. I argue that for any female, TCK or not, racial discrimination can be more blatant, sexualised, and linked to submissive and diminishing

stereotypes. The female respondents, like other female migrants, demonstrated an awareness of multiple identities regarding their gender *and* their national origin (Bailey, 2007). They were discriminated not only as Asians, but as *Asian girls*, introducing another layer of racial and gendered assumptions that the male respondents may not experience.

A vehement rejection of whitewashing: negative experiences and high media consumption

Rejection informed by negative third culture experiences

In contrast to the previous group's apathy to representations of race in media, another group displayed a higher sensitivity and more extreme rejection of whitewashing. Some TCKs are therefore informed not just by the third culture experience, but develop a hypersensitivity to matters of race when the third culture upbringing is paired specifically with high levels of media consumption and negative experiences in their host countries. When asked about where she calls home, a common question that throws off the average TCK, Aqilah talked about her difficulty fitting into the restrictive nature of Malay culture and instead preferred the freedom she experienced in Tokyo:

I've never felt at home here. The place I can call closest to home would have to be Tokyo because I really loved it when I lived there. It feels more liberating to be there than here. There are implications to doing certain things when you're in Malaysia. My mom's side of the family ... they're not open about third culture kids, which has caused rifts between my mom and her siblings.

In a similar manner, Mikaela discussed the challenges and abuse she faced adjusting to a new life attending Japanese public school immediately after moving from the Philippines, noting how it was much harder than her parents thought it would be. She said that today she feels no connection to Japan despite living there for nine years:

I was so eager to get out of that place because I had so many different bad experiences there. Listing it off: being bullied because of my race, being in public school [where] the bullying was not

just verbal, it was very collective in a physical way. And that was really hard to accept as a ten year old who didn't really choose to go there.

In these cases, the respondents eventually chose to reject certain countries, along with the culture and people, actively choosing not to associate with it, as Diane did with the Philippines:

I don't have any good memories. I don't remember much, but I don't like most of the memories that I remember experiencing in the Philippines. I guess on some level I disassociate with it and I don't want to think of myself as [Filipino]. In Japan, I felt a lot more at home.

TCKs like Aqilah, Mikaela, and Diane experienced similar migration patterns, received similar education, and have similar, if not the exact same, reasons as other TCKs for relocating. What complicates current knowledge of migrant acculturation (Lyttle et al, 2011) is that if their childhood experiences are negative enough, it can lead them to *choose* to reject those countries as their home.

Rejection informed by high media consumption

When negative experiences are paired with high media consumption, the extensive exposure to multiple media sources can lead to a high sensitivity to issues of race. Through this exposure, TCKs are more aware of different examples of media and have fostered a very keen awareness towards racial misrepresentations. The high consumption of media also gives them abundant opportunity to formulate opinions about that media and its corresponding issues.

The shift from television to the Internet plays a key role in a TCKs' evolving media consumption because the Internet's "immediacy and availability ... reinforces a sense of belonging" (Georgiou, 2006, p. 75). For Diane, "it was hard to find people who liked [anime] on the same level until [she] met people online", therefore it was through the Internet that she gained exponential access to the anime subculture. Curious to know more about her favourite series, she was exposed to different voice actors, as well as the boy bands, drama series, and other projects those actors were part of. In addition, Diane said that through the Internet, "I was introduced to fan art, fan fiction and whatnot, and it fuelled my passion for art basically and was eventually what made me go into art college."

Evidently, a history of high levels of media consumption can lead to an impressive level of devotion to and deep understanding of media, exhibited by Diane's discussion of inaccurate whitewashed live-action adaptations of her favourite anime series:

It bugs me when it ruins my immersion of the original. Sometimes it's kind of glaringly obvious. It sends this message, even if unintentionally ... [where] the main character saves a whole bunch of people who are non-white. It comes off as that white saviour thing, and honestly it bothers me.

Because anime has come to be such an important part of Diane's life – a part that has helped her connect with others and discover and nurture a passion for art, eventually pursuing it as a degree – she is understandably irked when whitewashing makes the film adaptation less faithful to the original.

The third culture experience of constant relocations paired with a high rate of media consumption can also develop a high sensitivity to race in media by allowing them to compare the people and media they are exposed to. Naturally, TCKs that have more frequent media engagement than others would have more opportunity to notice differences in that media. Cris (female, Korean) has a higher engagement with KPOP and Korean dramas than most people. Paired with the third culture lifestyle of not fully fitting in wherever she is, the differences in culture, people, and media became more obvious to her, particularly upon relocating to the US:

Coming here to the States – being raised in a homogeneous country and then coming here – everyone looks so different from each other [in New York] but there's *so* many different people, so that makes me more aware of these kinds of problematic things.

Moving forward: away from the West and towards a third culture

All of the respondents' perspectives – whether they expressed a general disapproval, complete apathy, or vehement criticism of whitewashing – illustrate an understanding of race more complex than that of monocultural people. Their perspectives reveal the nuanced ways a third culture upbringing shaped their current world-views and understanding of media. Because TCKs and mixed-race individuals are becoming an increasing percentage of the global population (Cohn,

2015), it would be conducive for scholarship to move away from discussions of race from a purely West-to-East or White vs Colour dichotomy and consider what we could learn from individuals who grew up with different and more complex understandings of race and culture. Additionally, because there are much more people who identify as TCKs today, to not take them into account as a valuable population would be the erasure of a vast global community of people with a diverse knowledge of different cultures, peoples, and media.

Building on Thussu's (2016) notion that mobile people of colour are a valuable resource to tap into regarding media and soft power, I argue that TCKs are not only equipped with the experiences and knowledge to make sense of broad and abstract concepts like culture and race. They are also incredibly articulate and reflective, likely due to their higher education and from learning to be adaptable at a young age. The respondents demonstrate not only this reflectiveness but also an awareness of their rare opportunities and privileged perspectives of the world:

How fortunate is it that we realise there was a problem? It would've been so sad, for me personally, if I didn't have any problem with it and I never got to learn there was a problem. That's so much sadder than to realise and correct our perception of things. (Cris)

I'm grateful for all of the negative things that happened. If it wasn't for that, I probably wouldn't have questioned a lot of things that was actually a bigger problem than my identity. (Mikaela)

What differentiates a TCK from someone of a monocultural background? The respondents spoke countless times of their personal everyday experiences of struggling to portray who they *are* versus who they *look* like. "We're not what we seem," said Aqilah, when discussing why it's easier for TCK's to identify problematic aspects of stereotyping, whitewashing, and cultural appropriation. "We know what you see on the surface is not all there is to it."

Conclusion

Contemporary society is undoubtedly changing, globalising alongside an equally evolving media playing field where Japan is arguably becoming one of the biggest players with their repertoire of successful “cool animations, games, and characters” (Iwabuchi, 2007, p. 63). This research investigated how third culture audiences, a new and hybrid population of contemporary individuals, engage with whitewashed films of a Japanese origin. The study was framed by three subquestions to explore TCKs’ everyday experiences, how whitewashed films are situated in their media consumption, and the ways they engage with whitewashed films.

To frame my research, I drew on existing literature around migrant media consumption, global and contra media flows, and Orientalism. I argued that while TCKs are certainly part of the migrant community, they are vastly different in that they are the next generation, of a different class, and are more hybridised. An understanding of whitewashing in the context of global and contra flow helped to make sense of its role and impact on a TCKs’ overall media consumption. Finally, I argued that deeply ingrained in all matters of whitewashing and race, whether reflected in the media or in our everyday lives, is a manifestation of lingering Orientalist practices.

I held in-depth semi structured interviews with 15 self-identified TCKs of various backgrounds. Based on my findings, I argue that the third culture experience is double-sided and complex, giving TCKs an upbringing and media knowledge that are indeed similar to other migrant communities, but also quite different, demonstrating that the third culture experience is ultimately what makes TCKs stand out from others.

Summary of findings

My research demonstrates the range of complex ways that the third culture experience heavily influences an individual’s understanding of media, race, and their own identities, echoing Lytle et al’s (2011) notion that “culture does not just surround an individual, but it also partly determines

who the individual will become” (p. 687). Accordingly, my findings show that the third culture experience and lifestyle – i.e. multiple relocations as a child, pursuing higher education at a Western university – help to nurture a diverse knowledge of media and culture. This diversity of knowledge introduces them to different values that they choose to reject or carry with them in the future, ultimately shaping the people they are today. Some TCKs directly refer to the media they grew up with to inform their decisions or to use as a character model, reflecting Georgiou’s (2012) argument that “media power does not just trickle down from the producers through media representations to consumers” (p. 792) and that the consumption of media is a complex social process.

My findings reveal another complex layer of the migrant experience: one of gendered marginalisation, echoing the challenges female migrants experience as Latinas in Liverpool (Bailey, 2007) or as female Punjab teens in Southall (Gillespie, 1995). The range of responses in my findings – apathetic male TCKs paired with female TCKs with both generally difficult as well as extremely difficult racial experiences – all demonstrate that the TCK experience, like other migrant groups, involves a complicated negotiation of identity. Particularly for females this can become more of a challenge, as their everyday can involve marginalisation from multiple fronts, including “their ethnicity, lack of citizenship rights, and gender relations within their own ethnic group and the broader society” (Georgiou, 2012, p. 794). While the gender imbalance in my sample suggests further exploration to support this gendered aspect, the respondents’ stories are no less valid nor their gendered challenges and negotiations any less difficult. My findings therefore reveal an underlying and more complex interplay of not just race, class, citizenship, but the crucial role of gender in the experiences of migrant communities.

While my respondents show that their third culture experience can certainly nurture awareness and sensitivity to race in media, they also prove that their relationship with media and culture is far more intricate, demonstrated alone by their various attitudes towards whitewashing. Despite their differing opinions, all groups understood the industrial and economic incentive and appeal, indeed

the “market potential” (Xu, 2008) of whitewashed films. They also all demonstrated an extensive knowledge of Othering and marginalisation that comes from their third culture upbringing.

What these TCKs’ wealth of media knowledge reveals is the limitations of the current system of media flow. Instead of homogenising to the media they’re surrounded with, the respondents demonstrated adeptness at analysing and filtering media and culture from various sources. As Iwabuchi (2015) rightfully argues, media soft power is not the most effective means of improving a nation’s standing and reputation, proven by TCKs who are multicultural and not Westernised. They claim aspects and qualities of Western society but do not and *cannot* identify as solely Western. As Thussu (2016) argued, despite a nation’s soft power successes, akin to Bollywood, the Hallyu wave (Jin and Yoon, 2016), and Japan, some nations are still regarded as their stereotyped caricatures. Hence, because of how racism is still institutionally engrained in our system, both in our private and public lives, even the forces of contra flow alone are not enough to erase the “history and memory of colonialism” (Iwabuchi, 2007, p. 72). This study reveals overall that the TCK upbringing can equip individuals with the media and cultural knowledge to navigate the system at a young age.

Contribution to scholarship and future research

As hinted, my exploration of the third culture experience proves that the structure of global and contra flows isn’t as homogenising as current scholarship illustrates. By being different from other migrant communities, TCKs help prove that while media play an irrefutably important role in an audience’s everyday lives, the audience’s cultural upbringing hold an even more crucial and influential role. My research on TCKs complicates current literature, primarily regarding the perception of migrants as existing in the lower ends of the social order (Georgiou, 2013). With their higher education, financial standing, and media literacy, and as a result of their migrant parents’ endeavours and struggles, TCKs represent a community of middle- to upper-class, hybridised cosmopolitan citizens (cf. Silverstone, 2002). The respondents’ readings of whitewashed films expose a labyrinth of media engagement within non-Western communities, one that has less to do

with East-West binaries and more to do with cross-cultural exchanges. This third culture perspective can benefit current and future intra-Asian research like Iwabuchi's (2010) studies on Japanese media consumption within Asia.

Of course, any and all consideration of TCKs should be taken with a pinch of salt. While this study and current literature may occasionally paint TCKs as perhaps the next, 'better' evolution of humans, they are still ultimately *only* human and face both the advantageous and disadvantageous realities of being a TCK. The respondents all echoed Kim's (2011) notion that despite their globalised and arguably 'better' lives and experiences, "the actual experience of inhabiting the world is often devoid of social affiliation and can be unbearably lonely" (p. 287). Above all, my research tries to learn from their experiences and stories, their challenges and triumphs, and from the very things they have learned about themselves. My findings build on that knowledge to contribute and expand current scholarship by exposing and exploring the double-sided nature of the third culture existence with the goal of learning from their upbringing and media knowledge.

Subsequent works can build on TCK research by exploring the practices of 'weeaboos' and 'otakus' (Sone, 2014), people who have extremely high consumptions of Japanese media, and the implications of their practices. Other future works can include more in-depth explorations of gender and other hierarchical divides *within* marginalised communities as well as their implications and consequences. What this study ultimately hoped to call attention to is the expanse of unlocked media knowledge held by multicultural individuals. If media has the capacity to shape the texture of our experiences (Silverstone, 2007) and if the ability to see ourselves in cultural products is vital to our need for identity confirmation (Rocchio, 2000), there is no better community to tap into for an abundance of experiences to learn from than the worldwide community of third culture kids.

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Appendix A

List of whitewashed films given to interviewees

List of films criticised as having whitewashed casting:

Ghost in Shell (2017)
Death Note (2017)
Breakfast at Tiffany's (1961)
Dragonball Evolution (2009)
Edge of Tomorrow (2014)
Kubo and the Two Strings (2016)
The Last Airbender (2010)
A Majority of One (1961)
Speed Racer (2008)

Or any film from this list: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whitewashing_in_film

Appendix B

Interviewee Information Sheet

School of Media and Communication



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Information Sheet for final year student dissertation project [‘A third culture understanding of whitewashing in films of Japanese origin’]

Hello, and thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

You are being invited to take part in a research project for my final year dissertation.

Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

What is the purpose of the project?

The aim of this project is to explore and expand our understanding of films of a non-Western origin from new perspectives, particularly that of a third culture kid’s perspective. This project will run until mid-May 2018. I will be collecting, recording audio of, and transcribing interviews about people’s third culture experiences and their opinions on whitewashing in films. The findings will contribute to current scholarship on film, media, and international communication, among other fields.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been contacted because I want to interview people who self-identify as having a third culture background and have lived in Japan for at least a year and have therefore been exposed to the life and culture there. I will be interviewing a range of people with such experiences.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given a copy of this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. You can still withdraw at any time without having to give a reason.

What do I have to do?

You will be asked to watch at least one film from a compiled list of films criticised for having whitewashed casting. You will be asked if you are willing to have your interview audio recorded. You will be given a copy of this information sheet to keep.

The interview will be like a conversation where we will talk about the project’s research topics and yourself in your own words. It will take between 60-90 minutes. I will ask you to talk about yourself, your experiences of being a third culture kid and your opinions and views on whitewashing, social and racial issues, and film industries.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

It is possible that some topics may be sensitive to discuss. You have every right to refuse to answer a question should you choose not to.



What are the possible benefits of taking part?

While there are no immediate benefits for those participating in the project, it is hoped that this work will contribute to much-needed research on a globalising population and how they consume media. It is also hoped that you will enjoy and find the value in having such discussions.

Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

All the information that I collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. You will not be able to be identified in the dissertation.

Will I be recorded and how will the recorded media be used?

The audio of your interview will be recorded. The audio recordings of the interview will be used only for analysis and for playback during transcription. No other use will be made of them without your written permission and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings.

Who is organising and/or funding the research?

As this is a final year dissertation for the completion of a degree, it is not a funded project and there have been no financial contributions to this research project.

Contact for further information

I hope that this information has told you what you need to know before deciding whether or not to take part. If you have any questions, you can contact me via the following:

Appendix C

Questionnaire

Interview Guide

Time per interview – 60:00

I just need to record your consent for ethical purposes. Can I just confirm that you agree to be interviewed?

A. Introductory questions and life story

1. Tell me about yourself. You can start off from the beginning, like where you were born, the places you've lived.

[Probe: educational background, countries lived in, amount of time spent in countries, degree to which they integrated in their local community, family background and history]

2. As a third culture kid, what media did you grow up with? Do you think it shaped the way you think now? If so, how? If not, why not?

[Probe: types of media consumed, how they consumed it, how they got access to the media (via friends, on the local channel, through school, etc.)]

3. What aspects of your third culture background and life have you enjoyed, and what aspects have been difficult?

[Probe: highs and lows of living abroad, troubles of adaptation, any skills they have acquired, stress or toll on relationships with family or friends]

B. Questions about Japan's cultural/soft power in the global flow

4. What do you know about Japanese cultural products, their film, manga, anime?

[Probe: their opinions and degrees of interest in the products, how they found out about them]

5. What cultural products do you regularly consume and enjoy?

[Probe: an underlying dominance of Western/American media, awareness of rising cultural products from non-Western countries]

6. How well do you think cultural products represent their nations?

[Probe: aspects of soft power/cultural branding, cultural products as promotional representations of countries, understanding of the impact of cultural products on people's perception of the nation]

7. What are your thoughts on the popularity of non-Western cultural products in Western nations?

[Probe: feelings/opinions of approval/disapproval and reasoning, understanding/awareness of East-West dynamic, understanding of consumption of non-W cultural products in non-W nations]

C. Questions about Orientalism and race

8. How do you feel about the way cultural products can display national stereotypes?

[Probe: examples in the media, degrees of harmless/harmful stereotypes]

9. What are your thoughts about the dynamic of people of colour and Westerners?

[Probe: examples in media and in real life of exoticisation and the white saviour, understanding of superiority dynamic, thoughts on what POC/Westerners think of each other]

10. Let's talk about the film you watched. What did you think about it?

[Have movies available to watch specific clips if interviewees require. Probe: general review of quality of film, thoughts on the white washed aspect and any feelings of approval/disapproval and the reasons]

11. In your opinion, why do you think Western producers might want to remake a film or whitewash certain roles?

[Should they bring up economic value of Hollywood stars, probe awareness of whitewashing's impact on industry/job opportunities for POC]

12. What do you think of the concept of a reverse white-washed film, where Caucasian roles are played by people of colour?

[Probe: people having double standards, economic/industrial aspect, issues of race]

13. How do you think Westerners and people from the original country, i.e. Japan, feel about whitewashed films?

[Probe: examples in the media or in real life, understanding of why W/POC might feel that way]

Appendix D

Sample Interview Transcript

Interviewee: Cecilia (Pseudonym)

Interviewer: Kari

Date and time: 3 March 2018, 21:43

Location: Virtually, via Skype

Audio file: 20180303 225429.m4a

Additional notes: n/a

Intvr: So I just need to record your consent for ethical purposes, so can I just confirm that you agree to be interviewed.

Cecilia: Yes.

Intvr: I'm just gonna start with some basic questions, mostly about yourself, so can you tell me about yourself? You can start from the beginning, where you were born, all the places you've lived, that kind of thing.

Cecilia: So I was born in Suwon, Korea, and then I moved to Japan like right before I turned 3 because of my dad's work. And then I've been in Japan until I got to university, in the States. Yeah!

Intvr: And were you in Kobe the whole time?

Cecilia: Um, yeah, so like different parts of Kobe.

Intvr: Did you only move once?

Cecilia: No, so I started off on the island, then Rokko Michi, then back to the island, and my parents are in Kyoto now.

Intvr: Where did you live there?

Cecilia: I don't remember that part there. [laughs]

Intvr: Were you in Korea for some time as well?

Cecilia: Um, yeah, my parents were there for like 2 years or so. Yeah, again, for work.

Intvr: How about your parents, were they born and raised in Korea?

Cecilia: Yeah, their first time in Japan was when they brought me over.

Intvr: Yeah, it's the same for us. It was a huge move for all of us.

Cecilia: Yeah, they're so brave honestly.

Intvr: And the rest of your family, relatives? Have they always been in Korea or do you have any other relatives?

Cecilia: I think everyone's in Korea except for my dad's uncle? He's in Canada, I don't know how or why [laughs] but yeah, he's there, so I guess one of his uncles and their family, so his daughters. Actually, this isn't really relevant but I found out recently she got scammed for – yeah, this dude had a family back in Korea but he dated her and married her for the visa. And she found out ... she's honestly so nice and so sweet and like, yeah. I don't think he ended up going through ... but I don't know. It was, yeah, a total shock.

Intvr: This is in Canada?

Cecilia: Yeah.

Intvr: You hear stories about that, immigrants and foreigners who marry to get visas.

Cecilia: Yeah, but I feel like usually ... in a lot of cases, like here, both sides know about it and they agree to it, you know?

Intvr: Yeah. So bringing it back to you, between all the cultures you've been surrounded with, like Korean, Japanese, and now Western, American. Is there a particular one that you gravitate more towards?

Cecilia: Um ... uhh ... I think international kids.

Intvr: Okay, that's interesting. Can you elaborate?

Cecilia: Yeah. I think international kids but also Japanese ... yeah. I guess I'm more comfortable with that. In the beginning the whole California culture was kinda weird for me. Like I was surrounded by SoCal people and it was strange.

Intvr: Really? So were you not able to connect with them very well then.

Cecilia: At first, but then apparently I got used to it and people assumed I was from SoCal too, so I guess I assimilated.

Intvr: Okay! But you did mention international students.

Cecilia: Yeah, yeah. Definitely, I feel like there's a connection. It's easy to ... talk to them? I don't know if that makes sense but yeah. I don't know, like with [Friend, name redacted for anonymity], I've noticed we're so similar. We literally have the same thoughts, I can just look at her and we have the same reactions, do you know what I mean? I think like upbringing and the culture you're exposed to definitely shapes ... the way you think.

Intvr: That's quite related to what I'm going to ask next. What kind of media did you grow up with and if that affected the way you think now?

Cecilia: Oh, yeah. Actually one thing I kind of regret is watching Korean dramas. A lot. Because ... they like, you know the whole candy idea? It's like ... she's the girl who's perfect and so nice, like she works all these part time jobs and she, y'know, then a prince comes and saves her, type of thing? You know ... she's poor and then she meets a rich dude type of thing? And I feel like I kind of idolised the idea of being so kind and ... I don't know, being like that to the extent that it just became pushover level and that's something I regret.

Intvr: Mm. And how long have you been watching Korean dramas?

Cecilia: I think I kind of grew up watching them before I could really understand fully? 'Cause I never learnt Korean, so my Korean was pretty bad growing up. Yeah.

Intvr: And did you watch, what other kind of media did you watch growing up?

Cecilia: While I was growing up, mainly Korean. Oh, like Disney movies?

Intvr: Oh, so a little bit of Western? American stuff?

Cecilia: Yeah, but not like American TV shows, like I definitely watch more now than before.

Intvr: Wait so you moved to Japan when, sorry?

Cecilia: It was like, 1999?

Intvr: Yeah, so in Japan did you watch Japanese stuff, did you listen to any Japanese music?

Cecilia: Oh, yeah! Yeah! I have vague memories of watching Japanese TV shows. When I was really little we still had the TV, so then we would watch Japanese ... game shows? I don't even remember for sure, I think there was a speed eating thing at one point.

Intvr: Like reality shows?

Cecilia: Um, yeah, honestly I can't remember too well, but I think we watched that.

Intvr: Okay, so bringing it back to what you said about culture, do you think that consuming a mix of Korean, a little bit of Japanese, a little bit of Western - that shaped the way you think now?

Cecilia: I think it definitely had an influence, but yeah I think that affected my expectations and kinda of ... like my impressions. 'Cause all I knew about the States basically was what I saw in movies and things like that.

Intvr: So it kind of shaped the way you think about those places presented?

Cecilia: Yeah.

Intvr: Okay, and about the Korean dramas - how did you access them? And when would you watch them?

Cecilia: So I started off watching them with my family, with my parents on weekends, and afterwards, when I got really into it, I watched it online, like read recaps. Remember I cried in math class 'cause I was so touched.

Intvr: Yes! [laughs] So you would watch them sometimes with your parents and after you gained interest, you'd look into it more on the Internet?

Cecilia: Yeah.

Intvr: Cool, so bringing it back to your third culture experience, 'cause you are a TCK, as you know.

Cecilia: [laughs]

Intvr: Do you consider any of those places home? You might get this a lot.

Cecilia: I think Japan. Out of all of those. Probably Japan.

Intvr: Did you go back to Korea frequently while you lived there?

Cecilia: I think once a year. And when I was little I loved going and I never wanted to leave Korea.

Intvr: But Japan is what you consider home right now?

Cecilia: Mhmm.

Intvr: Why do you think that is?

Cecilia: Probably 'cause I grew up there, so I'm just comfortable with the culture and things like that. I think my parents have also really gotten used to Japan, so it's more home to them than Korea. My mom's really into the cultural stuff, my dad's ... into whatever my mom's into [laughs].

Intvr: That's cute. So about your multicultural upbringing, being TCK, what aspects of that life have you enjoyed and what aspects have been challenging?

Cecilia: Um ... this is all me, but I feel like I haven't been immersed in a single culture? So it feels weird sometimes 'cause it feels like ... my passport and my citizenship is Korean but I'm not Korean *enough*.

Intvr: Do you feel that way in the States and in Japan?

Cecilia: In Japan it's more of a language barrier. I feel like ... like my mannerisms and things like that are also Japanese, so ... and the States, language wise it's the easiest and I got used to it now, but I was really homesick when I first came here. Yeah....

Intvr: It's the shock of being by yourself and doing things by yourself. It's a little bit scary.

Cecilia: That's true. For me I had [Friend]. I was lucky, 'cause we were roommates freshman year.

Intvr: That must have helped.

Cecilia: Yeah! Yeah, I love [Friend].

Intvr: Are you still housemates?

Cecilia: Yeah.

Intvr: And how about aspects of your life that you've enjoyed?

Cecilia: Hmm. I think being exposed to all these cultures helps me be ... less ... biased? Or I guess in some ways it helps me be more openminded. Because I feel like Korea and Japan and the States sometimes, they have conflicting perspectives of each other and of how things in history happened. So hearing all these different perspectives makes me want to dig into the facts rather than just accept what I'm told.

Intvr: So the exposure to many different cultures and perspectives that aren't even those main three – 'cause being in international school, you're exposed to others – so that's helped you be more open?

Cecilia: Yeah. International school, at least [School name redacted for anonymity] was pretty open. They didn't try to cut off kid's cultures. Like, all the Indian kids, I don't remember what the holiday was – they danced. Yeah, I forget what it was but. It was an SBC related thing. I can't believe I forgot it.

Intvr: It was a while ago. Was there anything else you think you might have enjoyed or found challenging? About the multicultural life?

Cecilia: I guess I always wish I could speak more languages.

Intvr: What languages would you say you speak then?

Cecilia: I would say, so English most, and a little bit of Korean, Japanese and Spanish, but I feel like I wish I could speak, like French [laughs]. And Chinese. Here, there are so many Chinese people here and I hear it

constantly, and I wish I could understand what they were saying. There are a lot of ... sometimes international exchange students from China, like legit exchange students will come, and they'll struggle with the vocabulary and I'll feel so ... how do I explain this? I wish I could speak the language so I could help them and connect with them like that, but.

Intvr: Okay. So I'm just going to narrow it down now to Japanese media. What do you know about Japanese media? What have you consumed of it? That includes TV shows, anime, manga, music, anything.

Cecilia: Oh my gosh. I love Japanese animation. I don't know how to pronounce – is it Ghibli? I always say the wrong one. Yeah. I think their films are so beautiful. I've always loved – and I always felt the style was so Japanese too, like the attention to detail and the aesthetic? [laughs]

Intvr: Which ones did you like of Studio Ghibli?

Cecilia: Um, ok. Oh! Howl's Moving Castle.

Intvr: That's a fan favourite. A lot of people like that.

Cecilia: And! Ahh, wait. I'll play a song for you, but *this* song. I think it's something about 'remember'...? I can't remember—oh, that's ironic. [laughs]

Intvr: [laughs]

Cecilia: Okay, hold on. It's the one that goes [hums song].

Intvr: [hums along]

Cecilia: Yeah, that one!

Intvr: That's Spirited Away.

Cecilia: Spirited Away! Yes! Yes. Yeah, that one song, I don't even remember where I heard it, but I've always loved it.

Intvr: Yeah. So you really like the aesthetic of Studio Ghibli, Japanese animation? Were there others you consumed of Japanese media?

Cecilia: Uh, I guess ... now, I feel like in some ways I get more exposure now, 'cause you know all the things that go viral? There's a lot of like. Weird Japanese shows, or Japanese products, or advertisements or media or whatever that go viral. But then sometimes it makes me ... uncomfortable because I feel like those things ... they go viral for a reason, right? And so like, because it's ... even in Japan it would be kind of strange type of thing but people see that and they assume things about Japan and the culture that isn't ... really true to what I've experienced? That stuff makes me uncomfortable. Um, I didn't really listen to Japanese music so in terms of music I guess I was more limited.

Intvr: What kind of music did you listen to?

Cecilia: Um, like Korean, or Western. Yeah, I mean I liked Joe Hisaishi's stuff.

Intvr: Oh, the Studio Ghibli composer?

Cecilia: Yeah yeah yeah. My first concert was him. Him live? Oh my god it was amazing.

Intvr: Wow? Where?

Cecilia: Yeah, oh my god. [laughs] I think it was in Osaka. I think it was in middle school or high school. And they have the huge screen down so they're showing the movie that the soundtrack was from and that was [gasp], the feels!

Intvr: Okay. Actually I wanted to ask more about that viral part of Japanese media not being really representative of Japan. So how well do you think certain cultural products represent their countries?

Cecilia: Um, I would say ... it depends. I was going to say that all the viral stuff was inaccurate, but when I think about Korea, a lot of stuff that is famous is like skin care products and I feel like that *is* accurate, in terms of the values and things? I think it's a case by case thing. But for Japan, I feel like a lot of it is ... kind of off, in terms of ... I don't know. I get this icky feeling sometimes [laughs]. They ... I don't know if they watch anime or whatever and they're always like ... I don't know! They'll just be like 'Senpai!' They'll speak nothing but they'll say 'Kawaii!' and I'm just like ughhhh! [laughs]

Intvr: [laughs] That's actually my next question about how you feel and what are your thoughts about the popularity of non-Western media in the West? That can be like anime, KPOP, K-dramas, 'cause those are *huge* right now?

Cecilia: Yeah ... I think it's cool! I think it helps ... although it perpetuates *some* stereotypes, I think it does help people be more openminded and receptive. So foreigners as well, foreign influences, like in terms of the Hollywave and KPOP, it definitely helped Japan become more open towards Korean people, I think.

Intvr: Oh? In what way?

Cecilia: Because ... after the war and things like that, Japan's impression of Korea was ... not that great. They looked down on Korea 'cause "we conquered you" y'know? But after people started getting into KPOP, it's like they want to go to Korea, they wanna learn more and like, when they meet Korean people, it's like "Oh my god!" They have something to talk about? And also, there was a wave of Japanese grandmas, like the rich grandmas who had a lot of time, so they would be learning Korean and travel to Korea, yeah.

Intvr: [laughs] Really? Is that still happening.

Cecilia: Um I would assume so, but 'cause I'm not in Japan, I don't know.

Intvr: You did mention whenever you saw certain anime going viral and people consuming anime in the West ... there's like a weird feeling? What runs through your head when you see their obsession?

Cecilia: I guess it's like conflicted. 'Cause on one hand it's like "Yay! You love Japanese stuff!" But on the other hand, "You *love* it!" [laughs] Like in a weird way.

Intvr: [laughs] What do you think their understanding of Japan is, based on their consumption of anime?

Cecilia: I think it's ... limited? They definitely get ... a skewed ... they see a skewed representation of the culture. But I guess the good part is that people who get really into anime *want* to go to Japan and learn more. So they *do* get more well-rounded, I think.

Intvr: Ok. I guess, building on what we were just saying about stereotypes, how do you feel about the way these media can display stereotypes about these countries?

Cecilia: It's frustrating. Yeah. Did you watch that Netflix series with Aziz Ansari?

Intvr: No, but I've heard of it.

Cecilia: Yeah, I think *that* was really good 'cause what happened there was they'd always have these ... he was an aspiring actor. So on these auditions they'd call for an Indian actor but the auditionees? They would

speaking perfect English, no accent. But they would be asked to have Indian accents. So the main character was like, “Wait, why do I have to do that, that’s not accurate. A lot of Indian people speak without an accent.” And they’re like, “But we wanna – that’s the character. The character is ... he doesn’t speak English.” On one hand you’re either having Indian characters but on the other, it’s like they want to limit these characters to what makes them comfortable or what’s convenient for them.

Intvr: Yeah, and what *they* understand of Indian people? Do you have any examples of how stereotypes have been frustrating? For you?

Cecilia: Watching him, I felt frustrated for him but also for me, when they have these Asian characters that are really like abrasive and speak with really strong accents, and they’re the comic relief characters? I think when I was little it probably was funny but now it’s not because that’s how people see us.

Intvr: Do you think that’s influenced the way some Westerners or anybody treats Asians, in your experience?

Cecilia: Yeah, there’s that whole thing about how Asians are weak and submissive, y’know? And I think it does. When they do those cultural studies and people behave the same way, they will be perceived as ambitious and taking initiative if they’re a certain gender or race and just being aggressive and hostile if they’re a different race.

Intvr: Yeah, there’s this one Pantene commercial, where a male boss is seen as a good leader whereas a female boss is seen as bossy.

Cecilia: Yeah. They actually did a study on that where they took transgender people? Literally the same person, same personality, but they found that when they switched from male to female, they got less recognition for their work and they were treated differently and it was a dramatic change, even though these people knew them before *and* after. It shouldn’t *technically* be a reason for them to be perceived differently but that gender switch *does* change workplace dynamic.

Intvr: That’s crazy. They’re the same person.

Cecilia: Yeah.

Intvr: Do you feel like that kind of thing happens with race as well?

Cecilia: Yeah. It would be interesting to do a similar study with race, but you can’t really ... change your [laughs].

Intvr: [laughs] That’s true. Cool! I want to know what are your thoughts on the dynamic of people of colour and Westerners. So if you’ve observed anything of the way people of colour (POC) and white people – how they interact and treat each other.

Cecilia: I guess the first thing that comes to mind is police brutality. And the difference in the way people treat POC and white people. Of course there are good cops out there, but a lot of times we hear about all these, I guess, prejudiced cops? That overreact to POC and constantly perceive them as threats and react to violence, even to children. And yeah, they dismiss wrongful treatment against them and blame it on the POC. Eh, I don’t know. The whole law system and incarceration is so biased against them.

Intvr: Yeah. And with all of these school shootings as well, like if it were a black man or POC, they’d immediately be prosecuted but whenever it’s a white man, they always blame it on mental health.

Cecilia: Yeah! Yeah! And the ironic thing is they always blame it on mental health and not gun laws, but they don’t improve mental health resources. It’s so halfhearted. Did you hear the defense for the guy who just did the Florida school shootings? It was something about how he was a gentle, troubled teen. He’s *gentle*, like a child – you know what I mean? And if he was black, they would have labeled him as aggressive, right away, like not even try to sympathise with him at all. If he was Muslim, they would have been like “terrorist”

immediately. There was ... more people have been killed by Americans within the States than by any terrorist, things like that. But they're constantly focused on foreigners.

Intvr: The facts are crazy. The US has more shootings in their schools than a couple of other countries combined.

Cecilia: Yeah, yeah. The new thing the NRA is trying to do is get teachers to be armed and that also doesn't make sense. A cop literally ... I can't remember when this was but a cop stopped a black teacher. And he had a permit to carry a gun, so he had one, right. He has the license and everything, and the cops shot him dead 'cause he saw the weapon and he perceived him as a threat, so it's like ... you say let's arm the teachers, clearly that's not safe either. And like, Japan and Australia as well, they passed really strong gun laws right after a huge shooting, and they have clear improvements.

Intvr: Have you seen on social media about the school children doing marches? And people are saying how children are acting like adults and adults are acting like children? But this is the point at where we'll manage to make change because the youth are doing something about it.

Cecilia: Yeah, and what's frustrating is also the reporters or the adults who are pro-gun, pro-second amendment, they're like, "The kids are behaving like kids and they're being childish in their response," but they *are* kids. They shouldn't *have* to be worrying about this. Some of the mothers are being outspoken about their kids' experiences and it's really heartbreaking 'cause one girl I remember, she's less than 10 and she was telling her mom how she wanted to get new shoes because her Skechers were light-up shoes and her mom was worried she was getting bullied, but the girl was worried that if she hid during a shooting, the shooter would see her shoes light up and find her. Yeah, and the mom was like, "Why is my kid worried about this kind of thing when she's only 6 and she shouldn't have to be worried about her safety at a school?"

Intvr: Wow. Okay, I'm sorry but I'll just bring it back to the media. It is relevant though but kind of flipping it, obviously that's how white people might see POC, but have you observed anything about the way POC might look at Westerners?

Cecilia: A lot of people, online as well, white people are constantly attacked? And sometimes it's justified but in other cases, it's a little too much. Like for example there was a white mom who was throwing a Japanese-style tea party for her daughter and she paid a lot of attention into the detail and she really tried hard 'cause that's what her daughter wanted and she got slammed online for cultural appropriation. The photo was literally a little girl ... leave that poor little girl alone, and all these Japanese people were commenting like, "I have no problem with this, stop slamming on her." Yeah, I feel like the line between cultural appropriation and actual genuine interest and acceptance is blurry a lot of times but we have to find that line.

Intvr: For you, how would you differentiate cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation?

Cecilia: Um ... I think it becomes appropriation when they want it for themselves but they don't like it on the actual people of that culture.

Intvr: That's an interesting way to see it.

Cecilia: I guess I see like, you know dreadlocks? White people do it and it'll be hip or cool, but when they see it on POC it'll be, oh, dirty, I can smell the weed. Who was it? It might have been Zendaya.

Intvr: It's Zendaya.

Cecilia: Was it her?

Intvr: She walked down the red carpet and she was slammed for wearing her hair that way 'cause, "Oh, yeah, I can smell the weed on her hair."

Cecilia: Yeah, I can't believe people say that in *this* day and these times. I can't believe someone said that and was about to say that on live TV.

Intvr: Do you know the result of that though? What happened because of that?

Cecilia: Didn't she have to apologise or something?

Intvr: Not just that. In response, Zendaya wrote this beautiful short essay about all of the wonderful people who *have* worn their hair like that and embracing that part of her culture, and Mattel? The people who make Barbies? They read that, they were so inspired, they made her a doll.

Cecilia: Oh, really!

Intvr: Based off of her outfit that night with the full dreadlocks and stuff.

Cecilia: Ohh, I love that!

Intvr: So that's online, but maybe have you observed anything about the way POC in their countries, like in Asia, Korea, Japan, etc. how they think of Westerners?

Cecilia: I think it's a mix of amusement and fear. Kinda weird ... so I recently heard this stand-up comedian. He was either black or half black, his skin was on the dark side, so he said that when he's walking on the streets at night, he'll see a white woman who's terrified of him and so he'll purposely walk really slow to let her get away from him or escape from him.

Intvr: That's so sad that he has to do that.

Cecilia: Yeah, and he walks really fast right, so he's aware of that, and he was joking about it, like, "Until the moment I pass you, it will appear as if I'm chasing you." [laughs]

Intvr: [laughs] That's kind of funny in a really dark way.

Cecilia: [laughs] Yeah. And I guess it goes back to the police thing. 'Cause I think we're taught differently? I think white people are taught to respect law enforcement, they'll protect you type of mentality, whereas black kids are "keep your head down". You know? Police is definitely not perceived as a protective force for POC, towards, for them.

Intvr: How about in your experience? How do you feel when police are around? 'Cause for me when they're around I'm always automatically making myself look as innocently as possible so I start acting really weird.

Cecilia: Yeah yeah yeah! [laughs] There's nothing wrong but I'm so scared! [laughs] One of the big things is guns. 'Cause in Japan if they carry firearms, it'll be those tiny ones so I feel okay, but here, one of my first days I was lost in one of the school buildings and there was a policeman there with his gun and I was so scared. But I asked him for directions and he was nice. [laughs]

Intvr: But that's so strange that they're allowed to do that. Is that common?

Cecilia: Sometimes campus police will be around.

Intvr: And they'll have massive guns on them?

Cecilia: I mean ... that's just their uniform. I guess. Maybe ... to me it was massive but to them it's probably a normal gun.

Intvr: That's true. To us commoners, any gun is a big gun for us. [laughs]

Cecilia: [laughs]

Intvr: Alright, cool, now I'd like to talk about the film that you watched, which was, please remind me?

Cecilia: Um, Hunger Games.

Intvr: Right. Did you watch it recently again?

Cecilia: Yeah, I rewatched the first and second one.

Intvr: Ok, so what did you think? Let's just talk about Hunger Games.

Cecilia: I think I like the books better?

Intvr: Yeah. What did you like more about the books?

Cecilia: I feel like just 'cause it's a movie they have to cut out a lot of the details and subtle parts, so for me it was ... 'cause I watched it with [partner's name redacted for anonymity] and he hasn't read the books. You know that *oshi* feeling? *Nanka oshi*?

Intvr: Oh, like almost there?

Cecilia: Yeah yeah, like I wish he'd been able to know these details.

Intvr: Ah. And ... did you actually ... 'cause when I read it I was not aware that Hunger Games was whitewashed, so were you aware?

Cecilia: No, I wasn't! And then I saw Wikipedia thing. 'Cause the list of films you sent me was of whitewashed [films], so I read the Wikipedia and realised there was controversy over casting but *while* I was watching, I didn't really ... that wasn't on my mind.

Intvr: And that was when you were rewatching it recently?

Cecilia: Yeah.

Intvr: So, you understand that the controversy was because Katniss in the books was described to be olive-skinned, dark hair, and to look basically *not* white, and for them to cast Jennifer Lawrence, how did you feel when you found out about that?

Cecilia: Not surprised, i guess. You know, Hollywood. The one thing I *did* notice was ... they had a lot of African American actors, like *some*, but they were always the contestants who dies without having *any* screen time, do you know what I mean? That kind of annoyed me a little bit 'cause that was their way of saying, "Oh, we hired people of all races," and things like that. Cecilia:

Intvr: But it's just as token-

Cecilia: Yeah yeah yeah!

Intvr: I get that, how sometimes they cast these side characters of POC just to say they are being diverse.

Cecilia: Yeah yeah yeah! I feel like that's almost worse.

Intvr: Have you heard of things like the new Death Note and new Ghost in Shell stuff and how these Hollywood companies have taken these originally Japanese anime products and they basically try to translate it for American audiences?

Cecilia: I'm not sure about Death Note but I heard about the controversy with Ghost in Shell.

Intvr: With Scarlett Johansson? What did you think when you heard about that.

Cecilia: I don't know, I guess I wasn't too strongly opinionated because cultural adaptations always happen? I guess it gets different when the setting *is* in the actual country. You know, like it'll be set in Japan or it'll be set in all these places and they'll have these white characters. Does that make sense?

Intvr: Yes, it does. Just to fill you in, that's kind of what it was.

Cecilia: Oh, it was?

Intvr: The setting – they didn't specify where but it was very Asian, like a mix of Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, China, and then the main characters running around were all white. It was weird though because their boss was Japanese and the bus would speak to them all in Japanese but they would speak in English the whole time. So in that case, what would you say?

Cecilia: Ok, in that case I think that's weird.

Intvr: Again, to give you context, with Death Note, it's the other way around. Everything is set in Seattle, all the characters are American, so it was clearly remade into an American setting. So would you say that's different?

Cecilia: I think it is, yeah. I feel like if they changed the setting to the States, obviously I wish they'd have been more, like, American isn't all white, there's no need for all the characters to be white or whatever, but I feel like that's a little less harmless than taking an Asian setting and inserting white characters into that.

Intvr: So just to build on that then, when it comes to whitewashing, what would you say bugs you about it? What actually bugs you about whitewashing?

Cecilia: I guess it's the whole cultural appropriation thing. They'll take what they like about the culture and discard the rest and disregard the people. That bothers me. Because culture isn't just an accessory or a trend that you can take and ... use? Yeah.

Intvr: Ok, so when it becomes cultural appropriation and these producers taking aspects of Japan and disregarding the rest of the entire country, that's when it becomes a problem?

Cecilia: Yeah, they'll just pick whatever's convenient for them. And it's like. Yeah, that's not okay.

Intvr: That's interesting because when you brought up cultural appropriation, I have to ask, what do you think then of the popularity of KPOP and how huge it's been in the rest of the world. 'Cause on one hand, KPOP is culturally appropriating American hip hop and they're basically taking hip hop culture, you know with the grills and the style and the bling and music style, so that's one layer. But another layer is that the popularity of KPOP, Kdramas, filtering into the States and the UK and all of their fans are starting to dress like Koreans, starting to use fashion and make up and skin products like Koreans, and learn the dances and say the cutesy Korean stuff and do the heart thing? So what do you think of that?

Cecilia: I think intentions play a big part, but I think it's cool that Korean trends and things like that are spreading throughout the world. And people using Korean skincare products and stuff like that, I think that's cool but with this stuff, there's a ... I don't like it if they're doing it to make fun of the culture. You know when they do it ironically or whatever. I think that can get offensive. But otherwise, it's like, I don't know, I think it's cool to have parts of Korean culture embraced.

Intvr: So when it's a true fan because it genuinely makes them happy, that's chill?

Cecilia: Mhmm, yeah. I think the whole hip hop thing is a different issue. Yeah. I think hip hop is more controversial 'cause a lot of times it takes roots from POC, right, so that is not okay either. Even in the States, there's a kind of ... I guess people are pushing for African American and Asian to unite in their fight against racial discrimination, 'cause sometimes they'll fighting each other, you know? Or dismissing the other's experiences, and that's not conducive to progress.

Intvr: Well said! [laughs] I think blasians are so important because they can unite both cultures.

Cecilia: Yeah, I think Japan ... remember that controversy of that half Japanese American girl who won some beauty pageant?

Intvr: Miss Universe! It's Miss Japan.

Cecilia: Oh yeah yeah yeah. And there was controversy because people were like, "She's not Japanese," it's like she *is*, you know?

Intvr: Mm. That was 2 years ago. The winner was African-American Japanese, but she's more Japanese than she is African-American, and last year Miss Japan was half Japanese half Indian.

Cecilia: Oh, really?

Intvr: Yeah so it happened again. And people were still not happy about that.

Cecilia: Yeah but I think that stuff is so cool, you know?

Intvr: Okay, so going back to films and whitewashed films. In your opinion, why do you think Western producers do it? Why do they remake, adapt, and whitewash these films?

Cecilia: Um, in terms of remake and adapting, I think that always goes on in the film industry. Even in Korean dramas, they often use Japanese dramas as the premise. You know *Boys Over Flowers*?

Intvr: Oh my god, yes, it's been remade like over 5 times.

Cecilia: [laughs] Yeah, so that stuff. So a lot of times it happens because the producers like the idea and I think ... that happens in music right? Like people pay homage to different musicians and things like that. But when culture gets involved it gets a little more murky.

Intvr: So why do you think then, why would they do that?

Cecilia: Why? I think it's so ... in order to appeal to ... again, this is kind of based on the stuff that happened in the Aziz Ansari's TV show but they were saying, one of the producers said, "We can't cast 2 main Indian characters, you know? People aren't comfortable with that yet." You know? So I guess producers have a need to produce what's going to sell with the public and what's going to make money, and so far, what they have known to succeed is whitewashed characters. And people are pushing more towards including different cultures 'cause that's a better representation of reality, and I think when actors get on board with that, it helps a lot. Yeah, there's ... oh, which is why, you know *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*? That's what I love about the show, is that they casted, they had like 2 African-American guys, 2 Latinas – I watched an interview with her, the ... what's her name, Stephanie?

Intvr: Beatriz?

Cecilia: Yeah yeah yeah! Her. She ... when she heard that Melissa Fumero got casted, she said she cried because there was no way they're gonna cast 2 Latinas, and she got the news and she was *so* happy.

Intvr: I love that.

Cecilia: Yeah. And the show *is* super popular. People love it. It worked!

Intvr: It's proof that it can be done. They're doing so well, not just with the race aspect but also with gender and LGBTQ aspect, you know with Rosa?

Cecilia: Yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah!

Intvr: I'm so glad you watched it.

Cecilia: [laughs] I know that the actor who plays Holt, when he found out that his character was gay, he made sure it wasn't going to be offensive or played as a humoured role.

Intvr: Do you know if he's gay in real life?

Cecilia: I don't think he is but I'm not sure.

Intvr: That's what I love about it, they do a lot of humour but it's always to poke fun at themselves, if that makes sense?

Cecilia: Ohh, I love that show!

Intvr: When does it come back?

Cecilia: I think they've threatened ...

Intvr: Yeah! The husband!

Cecilia: Yeah yeah yeah, oh my god.

Intvr: [laughs] Alright, sorry but to bring it back, what do you think of the concept of a reverse whitewashed film? So that would be when a Caucasian role, traditionally white character, is played by a POC.

Cecilia: Um. That's so hard for me to imagine.

Intvr: I can give an example. James Bond? Traditionally played by white British dudes for decades but now they're looking for a new James Bond and they're thinking of casting Idris Elba, do you recognise that name? He was in Pacific Rim?

Cecilia: I think that's cool! That kind of makes me happy. Yeah, they're actively, yeah. I guess the term 'reverse whitewash' kind of makes me feel weird. But ... maybe it's weird that the term is what bothers me. But I don't know, I don't see it as harmful? Replacing traditionally white characters with POC, I think that's a step in the right direction, like, including people?

Intvr: Then, regarding whitewashed films, let's start with Westerners. How do you think Westerners feel about whitewashed films? In your experience.

Cecilia: It depends, again. I think some people are ... they also want to see better cultural representation, and then other people don't really know that it's going on, because, that's all they've known so they don't see a problem with it.

Intvr: So they're not aware?

Cecilia: Yeah, yeah.

Intvr: And on the flip side, how do you think people from the original country, say Japan, how do they feel about whitewashed films?

Cecilia: Um, actually I feel like I keep saying it depends but I feel like that also depends? Because some people are more outspoken about defending their culture and other people, they don't really mind, if that makes sense.

Intvr: Yeah, no, it does! So in your experience, have you seen people express their opinions in that way? Sometimes they just don't care, sometimes they're defensive?

Cecilia: Yeah! I don't know if defensive, or protective would be a better word? Yeah. I can't think of a concrete example right now but I know I heard something about African American communities often have those, what is it, a barbecue or something where they'd all gather and they had this thing where if a white person was friendly to them, they'd be like, "Oh, invite Chad to the barbecue!" And then someone was unhappy about that, because it was like we're rewarding people for treating us like people, and that's not okay.

Intvr: Okay, do you kind of agree with that?

Cecilia: I think sometimes, yeah. The bar is set so low, what's expected and things like that, and it's time for that bar to go up higher. [laughs]

Intvr: Yeah, yeah. That's so true.

Cecilia: Yeah, that kind of makes me sad. The fact that ... I don't know.

Intvr: We have a long way to go.

Cecilia: Yeah...

Intvr: I just remembered, going back to how some Westerners are not aware of the implications of these? What do you think could make them aware?

Cecilia: More ... I was going to say more awareness. [laughs] But more ... I guess if they had more information? About the struggles that are going on and the inaccuracies and the harm that it does to the people of these cultures when their cultures are just taken and used and discarded. Yeah, you know how everyone denies being a racist, "I'm not racist, *but*." You know? [laughs] *No*, that is racism. I think people get defensive a lot.

Intvr: 'Cause they're not used to being called out.

Cecilia: Yeah! And a lot of times, the way that they're called out is ... of course it's frustrating but the way they're called out is so aggressive that that's their ... I know it's not fair to ask the people who are being repressed to be more patient but then, sometimes the approach really affects the way people respond.

Intvr: Absolutely. Okay, I wanted to touch on an earlier thing. I forgot to ask what media you consume now? I know in the past it was Kdramas and a little bit of Japanese stuff but how about now?

Cecilia: It's all American TV shows.

Intvr: Okay, and how do you access that?

Cecilia: Oh, online. It'll be British or American.

Intvr: So just streaming online? And Netflix?

Cecilia: Yeah. I used to have Netflix, I don't anymore, so just random sites.

Intvr: How do you decide which shows to watch?

Cecilia: I guess recommendations? When I had Netflix it was just what was on Netflix. Yeah, I think recommendations.

Intvr: Okay. Actually that's good on time and that's all of my questions. So the last thing I'll ask is do you have any other comments or anything you want to add to what we've been talking about?

Cecilia: I guess I'm curious about what other people have said.

Intvr: Naturally. I was planning to send the final version to all of you [interviewees].

Cecilia: Cool! That would be cool.

Intvr: I know you kept saying, "Oh, I feel like I keep saying it depends a lot!" but that's literally been my experience for every single interview. But if you don't have anything else to add about whitewashing, race, police brutality, popular culture...?

Cecilia: I guess the one thing I can add right now is I know that *I'm* Asian and I still have a lot to learn about Asian cultures and things like that. And all these cultural appropriation things, there's so much I don't know, even when my culture's the one that's targeted. So I think the need for more information isn't just for the whitewashers but it's also for everyone.

Intvr: Actually I just wanted to ask one last thing then, about being multicultural. What part do you think that's play in your understanding of all of this?

Cecilia: I think having exposure to different cultures helps me be ... like the police brutality thing, I have a concrete example of where it's different, you know? I grew up with a different type of culture, yeah, no, I grew up with a different type of culture so I see that this isn't the way it has to be, if that makes sense?

Intvr: You've seen examples where it doesn't have to be like that?

Cecilia: Yeah! Yeah.

Intvr: So just more awareness of what else is out there.

Cecilia: Yeah. That's a good way to put it. I'm sorry I'm not being eloquent right now.

Intvr: It's okay! That's it then!