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Yoko Hisano
The Narratives of Adult Third Culture Kids:
Cultural Identity Development
and Psychological Support
Upon Re-entry to One's Home Country

ABSTRACT

This study explored the experiences of adults who grew up outside their parents' home country as minor dependents, as known as Third Culture Kids (TCKs), and how their experiences abroad as well as their reentry experience back home shaped their cultural identity development and their psychological health. The research used semi-structured interview questions and interviewed 12 adult TCKs who were of age 30 and over and lived in the US at the time when the study was conducted. One of the incentives for this study was to inform mental health providers to gain a deeper understanding of adult TCKs experiences.

The overall results showed that adult TCKs experiences as a child affects ones life even after several decades upon return to one's home country from their initial experience as TCKs. The research results suggested that it would be ideal for the clinicians to be adult TCKs or if not be informed of the common challenges and the process of grief and loss that TCKs typically experience during transitions. Also, the study showed the value and importance of having access to a community full of people who share similar experiences, not just upon return but also as an on-going support system.

Suggestions for future research includes expanding the population to adult TCKs who live in other countries outside of the US, changing the age range to 21 and older, including those who may not be associated to higher education or international education field, and interviewing a larger sample of population.

**THE NARRATIVES OF ADULT THIRD CULTURE KIDS:
CULTURAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT
UPON RE-ENTRY TO ONE'S HOME COUNTRY**

A project based upon an independent investigation,
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Social Work.

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2015

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CHAPTER 1.

INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction and Background of the Population

This study on Third Culture Kid (TCK) originated from my curiosity about how individuals who lived abroad as a child have come to make sense of their international experiences as an adult. This interest was reflected by my personal experience having lived abroad as a child and having experienced unique transitions as an adolescent, and how it influenced my worldview as an adult. Below is an excerpt that portrays TCK's experience.

Christine (a pseudo-name) was born in the US but moved abroad when she was about one year old. She has lived in several different countries throughout her childhood.

“I remember moving from Venezuela back to the US was really hard, it was really sad. I was 7 years old and I felt like; I realized that it was a big loss. Venezuela was a very awesome place to live, it was very different so we slept outside and we didn't have an indoor bathroom, it was very natural and we could sleep in hammock. And you know I went to school in Spanish and just feeling connected to the culture and life there... It's part of your life being formed, and I knew that my life was changing and I wasn't ever going to, that I was losing something.

I mean my very first memories of ever that something was wrong, I felt like an outsider (after returning to the US,) I got bullied and I didn't know how to interact with people.”

This story of Christine's was an example of how individuals living overseas as a child with their parents experience re-entry to their parent's home country. Ruth and John Useem (1993) created the term Third Culture Kid to describe an individual like Christine in the 1950s. The first culture is referred to the parents' country of origin. The second culture is the host

culture where they are living, outside of the parents' country of origin. In Christine's case it's Venezuela. The third culture is "occupied by a transient community of expatriates, including other families from around the world who availed themselves of American and British international schools, recreational clubs, commissaries, and other amenities" (Peterson and Plamondon, 2009). In other words, the parents of TCKs moved abroad for various reasons, and as dependents of the family system, these young family members had to move and make transitions accordingly to wherever their parents went. Walters and Faith define that "the 'third' culture refers to a created culture that is neither the 'home' culture nor the 'host' culture; it is the culture between cultures" (2009). Nowadays, TCKs has been the commonly used terminology to describe this population amongst those in the field, and adults with this experience are called adult TCKs or ATCKs.

The Third Culture Kid population is growing with the expansion of international business, diplomacy, and other services. Thus, it is not rare to meet individuals who have lived overseas during their childhood. I echo with the statement made by Vicki Lambiri, an intercultural consultant, that ATCKs are becoming increasingly visible and playing important roles in the public and private sectors (2005, p. 2).

2. Purpose of the Study

There are two distinct phases of adult TCKs' experiences that this study explored by interviewing individuals and asking semi-structured questions. The first phase was focusing on their experiences abroad that come with TCKs' initial exposure to loss and adjustment. TCKs experience losses in the areas of friendship, language access, familiarity to living situation, and many more. This transitional experience was explained using theories that discuss cross-cultural

adjustment stages as well as examining its effect on identity formation in the literature review section.

The second phase was the reacculturation upon repatriation when TCKs return to their home country. In Plamondon's paper, she stated that "TCKs often suffer from unique stresses, including frequent relocation, environmental disasters, political unrest and emergency evacuations; however, one stressor, "reverse culture shock" or reacculturation upon repatriation, can significantly affect identity development (2008, p. 9).

One of the reasons to study this population was because, "TCKs are different from immigrants in that TCKs rarely try to become citizens of the second culture and psychological research on TCK populations is sparse" (Peterson and Plamondon, 2009). By exploring adult TCKs' experiences, clinical social workers can benefit and "better serve adult TCK population by investigating the psychological components" (Barringer, 2000, p. 15). In addition, clinicians can develop deeper awareness to ATCKs' complex social identity. Professionals can "guide adult TCKs to understand themselves more completely" (Barringer, 2000, p. 15) to develop healthy coping skills and to thrive in this globalized society.

Lambiri further elaborated on a few areas of research regarding TCKs' transition issues in the article *TCKs Come of Age*. She captured this by expressing that, "TCKs know personally the emotional and psychological challenges experienced during the upheavals of a move to a strange new land. What strategies work best for coping with those challenges?" (Lambiri, 2005, p. 4). This question of hers supports my study that intended to investigate the elements of coping skills that adult TCKs have used over the years.

As mentioned earlier, this study was dedicated to gain a deeper understanding of adult TCKs and adult TCKs' experiences for clinical social workers and mental health service

providers. As an adult TCK myself who is aspiring to be a clinical social worker, I believe that the narratives of the participants provide clinicians with adult TCKs' perspectives on their reacculturation experiences, their formulation of cultural identity, and how they developed coping skills to maintain their psychological health. The sample population was individuals of ages currently 30 and older who live in the US at the time of the research. The participants were also limited to those who have the ability to express the facts and reflective thoughts of their experiences in English. The participants have lived in another country as a child with their family members for more than 3 years and have returned to their home country during their adolescent years, (which is between the age of 10 -19). I chose this age range in order to analyze a crucial period in one's development and I am using the definition by World Health Organization (2014). The returning to their home country component was crucial for this study as one of the key elements of this study is looking at the reacculturation experience that affects one's psychological health. For the purpose of gathering as diverse a pool of a sample population as possible, this study did not discriminate based on ethnic origin, nationality, or other demographic factors.

3. Research questions

There were four guiding questions for this study that were asked in the interview to understand adult TCKs experiences.

RQ 1. What was your experience as a TCK in developing your cultural identity?

RQ 2. What was your reacculturation/reverse culture shock experience like?

RQ 3: What kind of coping skills did you develop or use during transitions?

RQ 4. Are there professional services, support, and resources that you wish you had reflecting back on your experience up until now?

4. Limitations

The limitations of this study were that a) the research was qualitative, not quantitative, b) the sample population was of those who live in the US and speak English fluently, c) this research did not include those who moved abroad after the age of 18, but only those who lived abroad as a child with their family members and returned to one's home country (passport country) during their adolescent years, and d) the sample population was limited to those who were of age 30 and older at the time of the collection of data, and thus did not include TCKs who were below the age of 29.

The reason for the first limitation was because the purpose of this study was an in-depth exploration of individuals' stories and not mass data collection since adult TCKs experiences may not be as generalizable. The study was restricted to English language speakers and those who currently live in the US as mentioned as limitation b) was because of my own limitation as a researcher who primarily speaks English and I saw the value in conducting the interviews without the usage of translators. Limiting the study to those who currently lived in the US allowed me to have some controlled aspects since TCKs tend to already have various cultural factors influencing their views due to their overseas. Thus, the study may not have been as diverse as it could be if I had included participants who lived in other regions in the world, as well as if I had included other language speakers but created a delimited pool of study.

Although, the third limitation c) mentioned above excludes those who moved overseas after the age of 18 and those who moved abroad during their adolescent years to attend boarding school or for other purposes without their parents, this was important for this study. The reason being that the focus was on TCKs who lived abroad as a dependent family member implies their unique position of not necessarily having an option but to move with their family members. Also, living

abroad with one's family members have a unique set of qualities and impact on one's life and I wanted to understand that element in this research. The last limitation mentioned as d) was crucial as I was curious to find out how adult TCKs had processed their experience abroad during their adulthood. Thus I decided not to include those who might have just recently returned from abroad and may still be actively trying to understand their cultural identity as they experience their 20s.

5. Summary

In summary, the overall goal of this research was to understand how adult TCKs experiences are reflective in nature by first exploring adult TCKs experience of living abroad as a child and how they experienced adulthood upon their return to their home country. The second was to open up the discussion of what cultural identity means to adult TCKs and how they experienced the formulation of their cultural identity as adults. Third, this study was meant to discover the kind of coping skills that the participants used and developed along with a discussion on their views and experiences of mental health service providers. Lastly, the result of this study was to benefit the mental health professionals by providing insights about adult TCKs' experiences with clinicians. The following chapters include, Chapter 2. Literature review, Chapter 3. Methodology, Chapter 4. Findings, and Chapter 5. Discussions.

CHAPTER 2.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Who is Third Culture Kid?

TCK theorists Pollok and Van Reken stated that, “children are TCKs for many reasons and they are raised in a neither/nor world. It is neither fully their parents’ culture (or cultures) nor fully the world of the other (or cultures) in which they were raised” (1999, p. 4). Plamondon, who wrote her thesis on TCKs expanded the TCK theorists’ definition by stating that TCK are “individuals, from any country, who have spent many of their formative years in second and third cultures other than their parents’ first culture, who are often missionaries, military personnel, diplomats or in business” (2008, p. 7). Although there have been no researches stating accurate numbers of children accompanying parents studying abroad, MBA programs, for example, the growing number of individuals studying abroad implies the increase in TCKs as well. According to the Institute of International Education’s research, the number of international students studying at U.S. colleges and universities has consistently increased from 34,000 during the academic year of 1953/1954 to 886,000 in 2013/2014 (Open Doors, 2014). Many studies on TCKs had been on missionaries, particularly in the areas of cultural identities and acculturation process abroad, but very few had written on the psychological effects.

2. Stages of Cross-cultural Adjustment

Re-entry experience or reverse culture shock mentioned above was one of the later parts of cross-cultural stages that TCKs experience as they return to their parents’ country of origin. The re-entry experience is addressed in the later paragraph. Initially, during one’s transition to living abroad, an individual will typically go through a cross-cultural adjustment process. The U-Curve Model (Lysgaard, 1955) broke down the cultural adjustment experience into a few

stages such as the honeymoon, culture shock, and adjustment. These stages were not necessarily linear stages, but one can experience any aspects of them in any of their times abroad.

Particularly, in speaking to the culture shock stage, Brown and Holloway (2008) iterated that the experience was about the anxiety that was rooted in losing the familiarity in the known environments and having them replaced by unfamiliar strangeness (p. 34). They also articulated that this culture shock stage included the feelings of grief and separation anxiety (2008, p. 34).

What is unique about TCKs' experiences was that, on top of this general culture shock and adjustment phase that they go through in a new country and culture, they are also asked to follow their parents' rules and values from their home culture when at home and codeswitch (Hoesting and Jenkins, 2011, p. 18) with an anticipation that they would one day return to their country of the parents' origin. In other words, the complication for most TCKs was that they were expected to negotiate as a child between both the home country's and host country's cultural values and lifestyle that may contradict each other. This implied that "TCKs are constantly expected to change and adapt their cultural rules as they navigate unfamiliar cultural terrain" depending on the context" (Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2008. p. 756).

Another model that elaborated the Lysgaard's U-Curve (1955) was the W-Curve Model by Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963). NAFSA, a leading professional association dedicated to the field of international education, interprets the W-curve as a "conceptualization of two connected U-periods (or a "W" shape) that linked the phenomenon of initial entry culture shock with reverse culture shock" (La Brak, 2010). This model acknowledged and elaborated the transitional phase that every individual experiences when returning home.

In addition to the different phases that individuals experience during cross-cultural transitions, there are a variety of ways that TCKs and adult TCKs internalized their encounters,

and how they see the experience can be categorized in three ways. Hoersting and Jenkins talked about the different forms of engagement when TCKs come into a new cultural framework. The first one was the *integration* type, in which one maintains strong links to both host and home cultures. The second type, *assimilated*, was about developing relationship within the host culture at the expense of home culture contact. The third type, *separated*, described having strong relationships with their home culture and not with the host culture (2011). These different types of integrations addressed the unique and complex process that TCKs experienced.

On a more general note, Timmons talked about Smalley's (1963) theory to culture shock in her research on third cultural person that "language shock is one of the basic responses to a new culture and often the root of culture shock" (2004). Timmons also referred to another type of culture shock called the "role shock" (2004). It was the sensation of loss in one's role in social settings that they had played in their home culture as they adjust to new expectations in the host culture (2004).

3. Re-entry Shock

Although, not all TCKs and their family members return to their home country but stay in the host country or may go to another country, if and when they return, TCKs go through an experience called a re-entry shock. This repatriation experience can be also called as reverse culture shock or reacculturation. Sussman reported that although the psychological distress accompanied by one's return home has been recognized in the social science community, the research is still without much evidence (2000, p. 361). Sussman further described one of the perspectives of understanding cultural transitions of returning home using a study by Storti (1997) as a paradigm shift by changing the nature and meaning of home (2000). In addition, returning home does not mean that the physical structures and pop culture of home country or the

people that TCKs knew had not changed while one was away. This leads to a higher learning curve upon one's return to re-learn and to adjust to one's home country. This can require a different mindset, as there is generally unspoken expectation that going back home does not require adjusting. It can also be difficult to communicate and to describe life in another culture (Timmons, 2004).

Hoersting and Jenkins summarized a model explained by Sussman (2000) about re-entry process that broke it down into four types of cultural identity shifts: subtractive cultural identity shift, additive cultural identity shift, affirmative cultural identity shift, and intercultural cultural identity shift. The four categories explained different psychological responses of how individuals experience themselves during the re-entry process. According to Sussman, when expatriates experience high sociocultural adaptation, the more integrated they are into the host culture, the more the expatriates experience difficult repatriation with more long-lasting distress. This was explained as the process for both subtractive identity and additive identity shift (2000, p. 365).

Specifically, *subtractive identity shift* was described as those expatriates who identify less with their home culture and has low cultural flexibility. During the transitions, the repatriates who experience subtractive identity shift feel less comfortable with their home culture's values and norms and feel devoid of cultural identity (2000, p. 366).

Additive identify shift was described as those who identifies with their home culture moderately and with high cultural flexibility (2000, p. 365). This implied that one has an awareness of one's cultural background and also can adapt to other cultures relatively easily. The expatriates with this process feel more similarly to their host culture, in a way that their cultural identity starts to resemble more closely with the host cultures values, norms, and

behaviors. Upon their return to their home culture, they may have had more desires to interact with members of former host culture by participating or attending entertainment, sports, or culinary representations of the home culture, or continue to study of the host culture language. With both identity categories, subtractive and additive, they minimized the home-culture, isolate themselves from the home culture, but uncritically adopted the host culture's identity (2000).

Sussman also talked about the third identity category, *affirmative identity shift* as, "one in which the home-culture identity is maintained and strengthened throughout the transition cycle" (2000, p.366). For those expatriates who experienced transitions in such a way, they tend to have low adaptation to the host country, have high cultural centrality to their home-culture, meaning more connection to one's home country and thus be less likely to have flexibility to adapt to a new culture. Upon their repatriation, this group of repatriates would have heightened identification with home country nationals and have positive affect regarding their return (2000, p. 366).

Lastly, the intercultural or global identity shift explained about a group that would "hold multiple cultural scripts simultaneously and draw on each as the working self-concept requires" (2000, p. 366). This could be a result of earlier multiple international transitions that led this group of expatriates to have low cultural-centrality and high cultural flexibility which allowed them to have high adaptation (2000, p. 368). According to this model, intercultural identity shift "will result in positive affective and little repatriation distress" and "rather than having one pair of cultural glasses that defines and clarifies the world, these repatriates have multiple lenses through which to interpret a variety of culturally influenced behavior" (2000, p. 368). Sussman further explained that there are two crucial things in the process in order for intercultural identity shift to be a part of one's experience. The first was "to be actively aware of one's cultural

identity and its consequences,” (2000, p. 368) which was to own one’s cultural biases and perceptions and how it can impact others, prior to their journey abroad. The second was for the sojourners to be “actively cognitively processing cultural aspects of the self-concept and is aware of the changes in cultural identity” (2011, p. 368) during their cross-cultural transitions.

In a study by Fuyu Shimomura on Japanese returnees and their struggles as they reentered Japanese society after their international experiences, he reported the commonalities of their challenges being “back” in their home country. He articulated the very notion about the collectivistic culture that Japan values. He stated that, the collectivism created pressure on people to be harmonious. This can lead to having lack of acceptance of any kinds of difference – all of which creates tension within the returnees who gained different cultural norms by virtue of living abroad. Shimomura stated this by explaining that, “Japanese sociocultural practices are more likely to be associated with expectations that individual actors will behave in the expected similar manner, and those from other cultures who do not conform to the norms will be placed on the outside as ‘other’” (2014, p. 1).

It can be said that the bigger the cultural gap is between the home country and host country, the more difficult the reacculturation process would be. However, Shimomura also described research results by Yoshida et al. regarding the differences among TCKs’ cultural reentry process. The research showed that if individual TCKs found someone who accepted them for who they were when they first returned to Japan, they would have relatively smooth reentry experiences. Thus, the Simomura stated the importance of finding a returnee-accepting school for TCKs to feel accepted and welcomed by peer community (2014, p. 272) in order to support TCKs transitions.

A research study by Plamondon showed other positive effects of TCKs reacculturation experiences. In her research that focused on US Americans who lived abroad, she found a correlation that states as below:

Balanced and positive views of reacculturation and solid identity formation (both independent and communal) positively affect psychological health. Those that have a positive and balanced view of living abroad and in the United States (high score on reacculturation) and have a solid sense of self and have a strong sense of belonging within a community (identity) are more likely to have high levels of happiness and well-being (2008, p. 24).

The aforementioned statement addressed some of the positivity in TCKs' experiences, but one of the focal points of exploring TCKs' and adult TCKs' experiences lied in understanding their challenges: whether their intercultural experiences contribute negatively at all and, if so, how can clinicians better understand their psychological health?

4. Identity development and Global Identity Development

Another area to examine what the literature said about TCK and their unique experiences was how their international experiences affect their identity development. Moore and Barker explained that TCKs generally "face challenges in forming their sense of identity and sense of self" (2011). Unlike adults who travel abroad by choice, adolescents who experienced international relocations by following their parents' career tend to experience interruption in their identity development, because adjusting to a new environment becomes the focus of their attention and thus gaining a sense of self becomes secondary (Moore and Barker, 2011).

Research had found out that there are correlations between the number of repatriations that affects one's identity development and psychological health. Sussman (2000) stated that,

“not only do cultural transitions cause individuals to experience severe level of stress at any time but subsequent occurrences remain difficult or occasionally more distressing than the first repatriation” (p. 365). Research cited by Sussman showed that repatriation impacts negatively particularly on adolescent and high school students, college students and adult sojourners. Specifically, for adolescents, returning to their home country may not mean the same for adults as their sociocultural context change quickly due to their stages of their lives, which may cause more distress in settling into an unfamiliar home environment (2000, p. 361).

Thus, it was crucial to examine the correlation on how the stages of identity development and cultural identity development for TCKs and adult TCKs affect one another. According to Erik Erickson’s development model, adolescence is generally between ages 12 to 18. This is a period when individuals focus on discovering who they are as a person and exploring the inner self as member of a wider society and establishes philosophy in life (McManamy, 2008, p. 3). In addition, relationships with peers become more important as they explore the question “Who am I?” (Cramer, Flynn, & LaFave, 1997).

In the article addressing the TCKs as the invisible minority, McDonald stated that the key to a successful development and to become a healthy individual is to resolve each developmental stage is inevitable. But TCKs experience in having to adapt and/or acclimate to different cultures can limit or delay this process (2010, p.42). Consequently, they neglect traditional age-appropriate adolescent growth and go through adolescence later in life in comparison with their nontranscultural peers (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001).

Holdren used PolVan’s Cultural Identity Model (2009) to describe the “hidden immigrant” notion regarding TCKs and their relationship to their environment (2014, p. 9). Although this model seemed to oversimplify other identities that differentiate individuals such as

race, ethnicity, socioeconomic level, ableism, etc., it does give us a framework for understanding how difficult it is for TCKs and adult TCKs to identify themselves -- especially if they develop cultural values that are different from country of their passports or where their parents are from.

Table 1. *PolVan Cultural Identity Model: Cultural Identity in Relationship to Surrounding Culture*

Foreigner Look different Think different	Hidden Immigrant Look alike Think different
Adopted Look different Think alike	Mirror Look alike Think alike

In addition to the example, Walters and Auton-Cuff explained that TCKs form a sense of personal and cultural identity the same way everyone else does by learning from the environment and cues around them. Sussman talked about cultural identity as “the psychological counterpoint to national identity – the identity that describes the cultural self in content, evaluation, and structure” (2000). However, TCKs learned from many different cues, cultural rules, behaviors, and values from the various cultures they have experienced. Finding a sense of identity becomes a difficult and confusing task for most of them. They also articulated that research reveals that most TCKs either have a multiple sense of belonging or no sense of belonging at all. They gain flexibility from moving so many times, attending so many different schools, and living in so many different places that they feel both at home everywhere and nowhere. They feel rootless (2009, p. 756) and homeless.

Walters and Auton-Cuff further explored in their study of interviewing female TCKs with a question of “whether or not existing developmental models are appropriate ways to study TCKs, and currently there is a paucity of recent research in this area” (2009, p. 757). Walters

and Auton-Cuff's assumption lied in that "the cross-cultural TCK may approach the developmental crises differently, not necessarily have a better or worse resolution" (2009, p. 757). Regardless of whether one is a TCK or not, "identity development is often a complex process influenced by many factors" (2009) and thus for TCKs, this process can be even more so stressful. The research showed that transitions created unique challenges for TCKs in their identity developments because they had to "focus on surviving and adjusting rather than gaining a sense of who they were" (2009, p. 770).

5. Coping Skills

Examining the coping from a family stress theory, a transition to different country is a stressful event for children (Van der Zee, Ali, Haaksma, 2007). Different family deals with stress in different ways. The outcomes of potential stressful events are not only dependent upon the stressor itself, but also on the amount of family resources and perceptions of the stressful event (Van der Zee, Ali, Haaksma, 2007). As Hobfoll and Spielberger stated, "events are stressful to the extent they make demands that outstrip resources and that resources are those things that used to meet demands" (1992, p. 108) and children are the first to witness the changes in resources. Thus, when TCKs transitions both abroad and upon reentry, they are affected by how the family deals with (a) a threat of loss of resources; (b) actual loss of resources; or (c) the failure to gain resources after significant resource investment (Hobfoll, Spielberger, 1992).

How TCKs internalize their transitions and develop their own way of coping was another important area to explore in this study. Timmons' research study on third culture person's experience summarized the commonly shared areas of concerns categorized into six themes that emerged from the interviews. The themes summarized the commonly shared experiences and challenges such as reacculturation issues, sense of belonging, preparation for reentry,

marginalization issues, identity issues, and what it means to be third culture (2004, p. 213). Her phenomenological study also stated that there is a lack of research done in regards to coping skills for successful acculturation (2004, p. 229). This element of coping skills is invaluable in one's acculturation process. According to Lazarus, he defined coping as "an ongoing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person (1993, p. 237). Therefore, as mentioned earlier about some TCKs experiencing long-lasting distress, it was important to explore the ongoing effort to manage stress using different coping skills in this research.

6. Conclusion

In summary, the literature stated that adult TCKs, who have spent significant amount of years of their childhood outside of their home country, have not only gained cross-cultural experiences by the virtue of living abroad but also have developed a new way of living by combining their parents' culture as well as the new culture. This is the third culture that they are exposed within the expat community and the culture they have created. The experience comes with a challenge when they return to their home country that was explained as reacculturation. The example of Japanese expatriates and their re-entry experience described earlier iterates the value clash that happens when a returnee comes back with different cultural values that do not fit in to commonly desired sociocultural practices. Shimomura's study articulated that the cultural gap between the host culture and home culture impacts one's acculturation process – often making it more difficult to readjust. TCKs general adjustment experience can affect them psychologically too in addition to it's impact on their identity development as adolescents. Cultural identity model was used to explain TCKs sense of belonging that is affected due to their transient experience.

The gap in the past research was the lack of study done to find out what kinds of supportive factors such as development of coping skills and professional therapeutic services are effective for adult TCKs' and TCKs' acculturation and transition experiences. Thus, this study was conducted to explore diverse adult TCKs experiences and to identify key elements for successful reacculturation from psychological perspective. The results were organized to be valuable for clinical social workers and mental health providers to gain deeper understanding of this population.

CHAPTER 3.

METHODOLOGY

1. Introduction

One of the purposes of this research was to explore adult TCKs' experience of living abroad as a child and how they experienced adulthood upon their return to their home country. The second purpose is to open up the discussion of what cultural identity means to adult TCKs and how they experienced the formulation of their cultural identity. The third is to discover the kind of coping skills that the participants used and developed along with a discussion on their views and experiences of mental health service providers. The research questions are, "What was your experience as a TCK in terms of cultural identity development, reacculturation/reverse culture shock experience, and developing coping skills? Are there professional services, support, and resources that you wish you had reflecting back on your experience up until now?"

This study was intended to contribute to a deeper understanding of adult TCKs and TCKs experiences for clinical social workers and mental health service providers as of the narratives are meant to provide clinicians with adult TCKs' reacculturation experiences, their formulation of cultural identity, and how they developed coping skills to maintain their psychological health.

2. Sample Population

The sample population was individuals of ages currently 30 and older who live in the US, who has the ability to express the facts of their experiences and emotions in English. The participants have lived outside their parents' country of origin as a child for more than 3 years and returned to their home country between the ages 10-19. This age range was chosen in order to analyze a crucial period in one's development and I am using the definition by World Health Organization (2014). The returning to their home country component was crucial for this study

as one of the key elements of this study is looking at the reacculturation experience that affects one's psychological health. For the purpose of gathering as diverse pool of sample population, this study did not discriminate the ethnic origin, nationality, and other demographic factors. Initially, the research study was meant to interview individuals who were not from the US, but lived in the US as a non-US citizen with their family members. But after starting the recruitment process and receiving much more responses from US Americans who lived abroad, I decided to expand the criteria to be open to all nationalities, meaning those who lived outside of the home country at any country regardless of where they are from and where they lived.

3. Research Method

This study was conducted using a qualitative research method with an initial thought of using narrative analysis approach that focuses on individuals' stories. Narrative analysis was defined as "a form of qualitative analysis in which the analyst focuses on how respondents impose order on their experience and make sense of events and actions in which they have participated." (Engel & Schutt, 2013, p. 448). Using the constructivists-interpretivists' idea that there are multiple realities, rather than focusing on a single true reality, the study was carefully constructed with each participant's subjectivity in mind. The reality described here was subjective in nature as it can change depending on the context. The context also implied that the interactions between the autobiographer and the researcher influenced individuals' perceptions (Ponterotto, 2005, p. 130). Furthermore, the interactions between the researcher and autobiographer were instrumental in describing the lived experiences of the autobiographer; also, constructivism recognizes that the researcher's values and own lived experiences cannot be and should not be separated from the research process. This approach respected that the interactions have an impact on the outcome of the research (Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2008, p. 761).

4. Recruitment

The target audience was recruited to participate in an interview with one of three options: a face-to-face interview, skype-based interview, or phone interview. Once they agreed to be interviewed, they were be sent a face sheet that will asked them about their demographic data and the collected data was labeled by alphabets for confidentiality in order to protect identifying information. While there were challenges in recruiting such a nomadic population, as TCKs are “called hidden immigrants by Pollock and Van Reken (1999) as they do not have physical markers of being different,” (Plamondon, 2008, p. 27) there were many organizations that offer online and off-line resources and support for TCKs that are based in the US and in other parts of the world.

For example, Families and Global Transition, TCK World: The Official Home of Third Culture Kids, and TCK Academy are some of the organizations that are actively serving individuals and family members who lived abroad for job-related reasons. I also contacted professionals in intercultural education field as well as personal contacts on LinkedIn, facebook, listservs, and emails to forward the message to their network of people.

The ethical concern for this study was in regards to the nature of the dialogue that could trigger the participants in the study. Although one of the my intentions in the interviews were to have a therapeutic component for the participants by offering them time and space to reflect and share their thoughts, I was aware of the risk in stirring up emotions that had not been processed previously. In my effort to address the potential risk or triggers, I included a statement regarding the risk and stated the option of opting out at any point in the consent form. I also remained sensitive and aware during interview process of how the participants were responding to the interview.

5. Data Collection

The interview was approximately 45 minutes to 65 minutes in length. The questions on the face sheet included basic demographic questions such as country of origin, country of passport, country of where their parents were born and raised, family structure (who was in the family and who moved with them), how long they lived abroad, the age they were when they moved, their highest educational attainment, and what employment status they had at the time of the interview. The status question was asked in order to identify their current social location and how their past international experiences had been affected by their global experience as TCKs.

During the interview, there were five sets of questions that focused on their experience abroad, their cultural adjustment experience, coping strategies. Each category of questions had two to four sub-questions that asked about their experiences and help me understand the context of the environment that the participants lived through. The first category asked about the general experience abroad. The next category asked about the language spoken at home and in the host culture. I also asked about whether the participants noticed cultural difference such as holiday celebrations and dining culture. The third category was asking about their experience returning home including the challenges and positive aspects and what could have helped them to re-acclurate better. The fourth category asked about their cultural identity and their process in developing their identity. The last category asked about their coping skills during their transitions and their usage of mental health clinicians and what they thought the clinicians should know about TCKs experiences.

The validity of the research was connecting their international experience to their cross-cultural adjustment and reacculturation experience and identifying the correlation to their psychological health in that past as well their current coping mechanisms that they now actively

use. The reliability of the research will be addressed by receiving feedback on her interpretation of the transcripts from my thesis advisor.

In respect of the process leading to collecting the data from the interview, I asked the participants for their consent before using a voice-recording device. All the participants agreed to being recorded and transcribed. I downloaded and purchased an online software, onde software in order to record the skype-interviews directly as the interviews were conducted. Due to the weather condition and participants' location, all the interviews were held via skype and no in-person interviews were held. One of the challenges in this methodology was the sound quality when the interview is recorded on skype. In order to substitute for this, I also took notes as I facilitated the interview.

The interviews were transcribed to MS Word after the interviews. The transcripts were manually transferred to MS Excel from MS Word by copying and pasting the text to be coded into themes to be analyzed. In the data analysis section, I summarized the sample population's demographic backgrounds, their experiences abroad, their acculturation time frame, and the general impact on their mental health from their migratory experience. No inferential statistics to were used in this study. The qualitative analysis was done to explore the sample population's experience by coding the data, categorizing, and identifying themes.

The interviews were conducted and transcribed by the researcher myself. I was aware of my biases as an adult TCK who is ethnically Japanese, was born in Japan but spent 5 years of my childhood between age 5 and 10 years old in Dallas, TX with my family. I then moved back to Japan with my family and lived in there until I was 25. I have been living in the US since then for about 11 years, completed a Masters degree in International Education during this time, have worked in the International Education field serving international students and scholars in higher

education to help them adjust to life in the US, and met individuals who have lived across cultures in my professional and personal experiences.

6. Summary

In the discussion section, the themes and summary of the findings were addressed in relation to the research questions. The results in the areas of cross-cultural adjustment and acculturation experiences were linked to the theories that discussed the cross-cultural adaptation process. Other themes that emerged were identified by relevant theories to better understand the participants' experiences. Adult TCKs discussions on coping skills were addressed in relation to the coping as a process (Lazarus, 1993, p. 244) in order to identify adaptive coping skills shared by the participants.

CHAPTER 4.

FINDINGS

1. The Demographics of Research Participants

Out of 12 participants, 11 identified as female and one as male. The participants' age ranges from 30 to 59 and their current relationship status included single, married, and married with children. The educational attainment ranged from having an Associate's degree to completing a Ph.D. or JD program. In fact, seven out of 12 had completed a Master's degree, two had Bachelor's level as their highest educational attainment, and one each for Associate's degree, Ph.D. and JD. As for nationality, all but one identified as US American. Racially speaking, 10 of them identified as White, one as a mix of White and Native American, and one as Asian.

As a child, the participants lived in just one other country other than their parent's home country, to as many as seven countries between the times they were born until they were 18 years old. The countries were; Switzerland, Indonesia, Japan, Turkey, Philippines, Thailand, Poland, Norway, Taiwan, China, Australia, Austria, Russia, Jamaica, Yemen, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Kenya, Mali, Cote D'Ivoire, Costa Rica, Peru, Venezuela, Chile, and USA.

All participants grew up in a household with both parents, who were in heterosexual marriage, and had one or more siblings. Two of the participants had adopted siblings while growing up. The reasons for the participants' move abroad were due to their parents work assignments, such as a foreign service officer for US consulate, a researcher for US government agency, a teaching college professor and a researching college professor, a teacher for international school, and an employee for a private company

2. Themes

In analyzing the interviews, I applied the thematic analysis to code the narrative data in order to capture the patterns that emerged during the interviews. There were six themes that emerged in this process, in regard to the participants' overall experiences and factors that influenced the participants' worldview. The first theme was about the context of the participants, meaning the framework of their experiences such as political and social situation of the host country. The second theme addressed the transition itself, the challenges of returning to one's home country, their re-entry and reacculturation process, and what resources or opportunities they had to ease their re-entry experience. The third theme focused on the participants' sense of identity and how they have come to view home. The fourth theme was on coping skills and the outcomes of their experience as TCKs. The fifth was on their experience of grief and loss during their transitions. The last theme was the participants' experiences with mental health service providers and suggestions they have for clinicians.

A. Contexts

The first two themes were categorized in order to understand the context of participants' experiences. Eight participants indicated a political and social situation of the host country where safety was a concern for the family members. Several of them also mentioned being required to have domestic workers and how the family adjusted to the new household structure whether they kept the workers or found other families to hire their assigned workers.

“It wasn't safe. We were not allowed to mingle with the locals, including the servants because of the safety issue. We don't trust the local people because they are poor, so that's the situation, we have to be careful.”

“Poverty in Bangladesh was mind numbing. That was the first country where also because of the culture of the country, we had a real time house help... because when you move into a house there, you basically took on the responsibility providing jobs for people in the house. It was expected. It was really strange. We didn't adjust to that well. It was a pretty extreme situation.”

Related was the participant's parents' mindset to international living as well as how their parents dealt with the participants' transitions as a child. Some parents were intentional about keeping the family in tact by eating dinners together, setting up home spaces with each transition in order to re-create a sense of home for the participants.

“When we moved around, my mother said that she would always, immediately unpack the boxes and create our rooms wherever we went so that our room looked familiar and the same. Put the same color of bedding and what not. And that helped.”

“I think their main emphasis was in that we were a family, so wherever we lived were home, so we didn't feel we weren't living at home, we always felt like home. We always had dinner together. We always cooked, we never had a cook.”

On the other hand, other participants noted that their parents were not aware of the difficulties that the participants experienced by living abroad, and did not facilitate or create space to talk about the feelings that came up during the transitions. A couple of the participants noted that their parents had negative views in the host country, which eventually affected the participants' views of their time abroad as well.

“They didn't help me through it. I don't think they realize that it would have effects on kids. It's just part of life. So they were like, okay, we're moving. Looking back

and as an adult, you know, maybe that move was hard, or something. So I think they were a little bit unaware and they didn't help guide me through as much as they should guide a child through."

"I don't think my parents could understand it. I think too, they didn't want to feel guilty. And I have great parents and supportive and all that but... my family is not very, some families are just open and communicative, I know it's the Japanese in them but they don't talk about stuff like that, about sadness or depression."

"I heard my parents say, oh this is so disgusting, so unsafe, unsanitary, but at the same time, my dear female worker is so sweet and caring and then she offered some sweets that she made and my mom said, don't take it, you never know how she made it. So you're torn apart in two different cultures. I probably didn't enjoy as much as I could be?, so sometimes I was really fascinated by my curiosity to new things but because my parents were worried too much and didn't enjoy as much."

B. Transition Experiences and Reacculturation

Half of them talked about the transition challenges, which described their sense of confusion that they experienced upon return to their home country as an adolescent. Their responses were related to how they experienced friendships at school and in social settings such as, feeling like an outsider and not fitting in, and not being able to explain themselves. Several of them also expressed their behaviors being different from their peers and not knowing what the norms were. A couple of them talked about their experience on how odd they feel when they introduce themselves when they first meet people.

"You know I *felt like an outsider*. I got bullied and I didn't know how to interact with people."

“So I came in, *I was the new kid*. No one knew what the Philippines was, so they just started calling me pretty derogatory names.”

“I’ve been here for about 10 years. Everyone grew up here has shared experiences and never left this town. Grew up, went to school, married, had kids. And that’s not my experience so *I don’t fit in*.”

“Later when I did make friends, they told me how weird they thought I was because I would carry around my papers everywhere, like my passport, because I thought you had to.... *Like I didn’t know how to dress*. In Moscow, when we went to school, we dressed nice. Like black pants and cute top, cute shoes, make up, whatever. And when I come to college and everyone is in jeans or pajama pants.”

“When I came back, I thought I was, but before my college years, *I don’t know how to explain my experience*, or why I feel the things differently from others, I can’t explain. I can’t describe, don’t know how to justify why I feel or doing those things”

“The question about *where you are from*, it’s just, the default question that everyone asks you, *I have no idea how to respond to this question*.”

“When people ask me where I’m from. *It depends* on my mood and what I think the person is actually trying to find out. Sometimes I’ll say, oh I lived all over the place and sometimes people are like, oh cool and they don’t ask me anything else. Sometimes I’ll say I’m a global nomad, and if the situation is like getting to know you situation, then I’ll say, oh I grew up in Austria and Russia.”

Another area of challenge was that the participants were unprepared that things had changed for those who moved abroad, and for those who stayed in the same place and was

surprised at how the change affected the participants experience in connecting with others upon their return.

“But what I found out was, as soon as my school started, *I realized that I did not fit there anymore*. The people that I was close to before, I didn’t think that I had things in common anymore, what I thought was interesting or important in life, they didn’t understand and honestly, I kind of felt like their values were shallow, so there was a big disconnect between me and my peers and had been and who they would be.”

“The fact was that *things had changed*. We said this as sort of a dawning later—that if you’re gone 3 years, people change 3 years in one direction and you change 3 years in the other direction, so it’s 6 years of an experience. So that was a surprise.”

Many spoke to their feelings of being connected to people or the lack of connection to others who shared similar experiences, when they shared about their successful reacculturation process. A couple of them spoke to their experience of reading the book written about TCK, “Third Culture Kids: Growing up Among Worlds by David C. Pollock and Ruth E. Van Reken,” and learning the vocabulary that explained about other TCK experiences helped them verbalize their experiences. Also, having a purpose during their transitions and using their international experience to help others was mentioned as something that was helpful for their reacculturation.

“Many of my classmates were also military kids so there were some buffers between the local kids and the military kids. So I felt *connected* to my other classmates who had shared experience.”

“There was a newsletter that teenagers put together. Just being around them and having those experiences and my life fits in, *there’s other people who’s been through this* was helpful. So I think the newsletter, the around the world in a lifetime newsletter really helped. Being with other kids, and being able to talk about what was hard, and my family and friends. That really helped, *having the place to have common experiences* of coming back to the US.”

“There’s the one main book (Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds, Pollock and Van Reken)... And that made me realize that I am different. And an understanding why you feel an affinity, a *connection* to other third culture kids.”

“To being a liaison for international students and other American students who are like me, who had these amazing experience but also still trying *to find a place*, wanting to be a support for those people, I ended up being a president of the international student group.”

In discussion about a better way to transition back, many participants wished they had more parental support during transitions, having had the space and opportunity to talk about the transition whether in group setting or in individual counseling, and being connected to other TCKs to meet others who shared experiences.

“I think, *if my parents had understood* the challenges of transitions, kind of parented me through that instead of being so absent”

“I would have wanted them to use some of those resources and *talk through* stuff and be more emotionally available and to process stuff more, to verbally kind of like, rather than, just kind of letting it be like, oh... this is... I don’t know...Rather

than just letting it happen... *active parenting* and through active guidance about the cross-cultural transitions instead of treating it like it's just like going to the park.”

“I was definitely depressed so and I’m sure some *talk therapy* was all I needed to understand, Yes, this was hard.”

“I found that the students who went to international orientation generally had an easier transitions because *connected with other TCKs* and international students.”

“*Working with a counselor* during the fall, particularly when I first, very first moved back to the US as a college student, I think would have been helpful. Because, trying to figure out everything in my own 17 year old brain was a little daunting really”

“I actually think that *having support group or a peer group*; There’s something about going to a group with an intention to go through a certain kind of shared agenda about the hard things that you don’t necessarily bring up easily in conversation would have been really positive.”

Two of the participants spoke to the value of changing perspectives in ways that they looked at their home culture that helped them or would have helped them in order to make smooth transitions back home.

“The first semester I begged my dad to let me come home, I didn’t want to stay. I hated the United States. I didn’t like any of the people here, they were all idiots. And then I guess it was maybe in October or November my dad came back to the States for some reason, I met up with me, he said one simple thing that really affected, my entire life since then. You’ve lived all over the world. You’ve happily adjusted at every single culture where you lived in, you never had a problem

adjusting, *why can't you adjust to the culture of the United States*. And that's when I realized, I had been expecting, thinking that I didn't have to adjust, so as soon as I realized that *this is another new culture*, let me figure out what people are talking, as soon as I did that, I had no problem interacting. But it took him explicitly telling me, that *you must*."

"To treat going back to the passport country as *going to a foreign country*. To be kind of trained that way... that hey you're gonna enter something different, and you've already got some tools in hand to make that kind of adjustment, but you have to recognize that you have to apply them and it's gonna take some time. And what you said also. There's a hopefulness in saying that any place can become your home, but it takes an intentionality."

C. Sense of Identity and Sense of Home

When talking about cultural identity and national identity, almost all of them shared that they acknowledge their passport country as their national identity. Also, participants shared that being around other TCKs helped them feel more at home, compared to when they were with non-TCKs. Also, the word "chameleon" was used by three of participants when they described themselves. For some, time also seemed to have shaped the way they relate to their experiences and identity compared to when they first moved back to their home country.

"I don't think of myself as Japanese as one bit, I'm American and that's what my *passport* says. But culturally, I'm pieces of all the places that I've lived."

"When I'm in this Third culture kid type of communities I still feel at home."

"When people ask me where I'm from. It depends on my mood and what I think the person is actually trying to find out. Sometimes I'll say, oh I lived all over the

place and sometimes people are like, oh cool and they don't ask me anything else. Sometimes I'll say I'm a global nomad, and if the situation is like getting to know you situation, then I'll say, oh I grew up in Austria and Russia"

"The identity I have is the identity of a third culture kid. I mean, I still don't connect to being an American. And I mean, I know that my passport and by birth, I'm not Australian or Russian or else, even if I wanted to be."

"This is my *passport* country for good and for bad and so it gives me certain rights and responsibilities and demands some of those from me."

"I'm such a *chameleon*. I change wherever I go, pretty much. Probably with whomever I'm hanging out with."

"I never knew what my personality was because well, I'm all of them, I can do that, I do that, I do that. I can be an introvert or an extrovert, depends on the context you know, so it's kind of like a *chameleon* but then who am I really."

"I'm a bit of a pleaser, a cultural *chameleon* so that I can fit in a lot of different groups. It took until I got a little older to realize that I don't have to fit into them all."

"The longer I've been in the States, the stronger that identity is becoming and weaker my third culture kid identity is becoming. 20 years ago, when I moved to the States, if you had asked me where I'm from, I'd say, *I'm not from anywhere*, and had I known about third culture kids, I would have said, I'm a third culture kid. Ten years ago, first I'd say **I'm a third culture kid**, I'm not from here, but now that I've been in the same place for years, my first response would be, *I'm from the States.*"

“I bought the book on TCK, I think it’s called Growing up as TCK. When I read the book, I just found it very interesting. In terms of, I mean one of the things that came up in the book was the idea of moving. And that staying in one place starts to feel unsettled, in terms of, not necessarily feeling like any place is going to be home permanently but that wherever I am for a period of time that’s where my home is.”

D. Coping Skills and Outcomes of TCK experience

The coping skills that participants used as a child and as an adult varied and most of them used multiple techniques during their transitions. They talked about reading, writing, engaging in physical activities, talking to family members, praying, focusing on academics, being involved in the community and in leadership positions, friendships, traveling, changing the living space, creating art, practicing mindfulness, and using cognitive behavioral therapy techniques.

“Mostly being a person of faith, ‘cause it is my biggest coping strategy. *Praying*, having strong relationships in general, and *connection with god, with family, with friends, and with myself*. Trying to have healthy *self-care*, like taking care, knowing who I am and doing things that I like and not just doing things for other people.”

“*Journaling* has also and always been important to me. *Keeping in touch with friends* back home has been important”

“So, definitely friendships with others who were of like -circumstance. I *read* a lot. If I just couldn’t handle it, there was always a book to escape into. And *I wrote*. Um... I don’t think I was great poetry, but it was helpful poetry for me to...even some of the *physical things*, you know really to engage physically with my

surrounding helped me to feel grounded to it, so hiking, camping, skiing, you know.”

“I think actually *academics* have been a huge part of my coping skills. Kind of uniformity in that, wherever you go, it’s a place where I found a lot of value, oh I can, it’s something I can do even everything else is kind of crazy or up in the air.”

“Again I think it helps that I work at the university and now I’m a Rotarian so now I’m involved in the rotary project so those things have enabled me to...and I try *stay engaged*. So I *volunteer in the community*, I serve on the board, I serve in leadership positions, just go to work and go home and watch TV. And actually I’m a runner.”

“Finding some way to *provide cross-cultural experience* for other people to facilitate those experiences is something that is really important to me.”

“I think self-awareness goes a really long way, recognizing patterns, you know, I’ve had mindfulness, CBT has helped in recognizing emotions don’t really control your life.”

Some shared that they didn’t develop the best coping skills while they experienced depression and anxiety and acted on unhealthy behaviors.

“So you come as a seventh and eighth grader, and the kids who will only be friends are the ones on the fringe. You don’t have anything else going on and don’t have any friends. And then you have to work your way into finding your group of people so I used to hang around with a girl who used to take shots of vodka and I had never ever heard of anything like that, kids were smoking pot and no one in

Tokyo was smoking pot. I *developed an eating disorder*. I'm sure it's from that. I don't know if I would have anyways."

"I actually went through a pretty bad bout of depression in college, and actually I needed to get treatment. So, freshman year was pretty hard. *I did a lot of drinking, which was not very healthy.*"

"*I don't have the best coping skills*. I probably drink more than most people. I still smoke cigarettes which is something I picked up"

For many adult TCKs, they talked about how they had chosen to live their lives differently, specifically in regards to parenting. They noted that they have been intentional with their children, particularly in terms of facilitating discussions, offering resources for smooth transitions, and being aware of the impact of their experiences and perceptions towards their children. Some stated that although they do not have children yet, they would be more intentional in supporting their children, if and when they lived abroad. Some also reflected on their frequent moves as a child and had wished they lived in one location longer, they wished not to move too frequently during their children's adolescent years to give them a different experience from theirs.

"With my own kids, I always asked them, what were three things you would miss about this place? And then quickly ask them, three things that they are excited about the new place?"

"I look back and I think *how differently I parent*, but I do that at a place of loss because I worked so hard to do things differently with my children. To listen and to not make my life theirs because had we kept on moving, their international life would have been about us."

“I haven’t had the opportunity to have kids but if I had kids yet, but if I had kids I would be *more intentional* to read books and talk about it and how they are feeling. And maybe have them talk with other people as well about what it’s like to be in different cultures.”

“So I was determined, you *shouldn’t put your opinion before people experience something*. I want to see how people feel. I never want to say something, take their advantage away of seeing things in a more positive way.”

“When we considered our return to the US, yeah the same way where are our children in their stages of development.... *of when our children would be making those adjustments* was definitely part of our consideration.”

E. Positive Outcomes of Overseas Experiences and Re-entry

Although some of them had difficulty coming up with the positive part of their re-entry all of them talked about how positive their international experience had been for them. A couple of things were mentioned in the interviews, such as bonding as a family, gaining new perspectives, and educational opportunities.

“I was really close to my family growing up. I have four brothers, built in friends. To me, the parts that were hard were worth it because of the advantages that I got out of, the good *education*, the *close relationship with family*, the cultural experiences, *learning and seeing the world* and traveling was so worth it.”

“Just *being open minded*, and really loving, really open and interested in different cultures and loving different cultures. I mean, not enough people are like that. That’s something that is pretty important. Being able to build bridges... At least

wanting to build bridges across different culture, subcultures, and different socioeconomic class as well.”

“Although I’m grateful that I have a *global worldview* and kind of the compassion and empathy that comes from having lived abroad.”

“I think on some level, sort of an understanding of *multiple points of view*, is more readily than other people do. I think many people have a mindset of I’m right and this way is right. And I automatically look at the other side; there are so many ways of doing things, these can all be okay.”

“There are two things. *I don’t expect anything now*. Before I used assume that I’m going to certain. It’s okay either way, so uncertainty is okay. I’m not asking for comfortableness no matter what I do. So something frustrating that comes up and that’s uncomfortable, whether it’s mentally or physically, that’s what it is. Uncertainty and uncomfortable is okay.”

“The *education* was phenomenal. It was the international baccalaureate. It was probably one of the most beautiful countries on the planet.”

F. Grief and Loss in Transition

Many participants spoke to their experience of loss and grief in regards to the location, experience itself as well as the people they met during their transitions. A participant shared her sense of loss about her experience in the following statement.

“I remember moving from Venezuela back to the US was really really hard, it was really sad. I was 7 years old and I felt like, *I realized that it was a big loss*. And I remember, we lived on a river, so we had to cross the river on a ferry to get to this part of the trip back to the airport. I remember crossing the river and feeling kind

of isolated and realizing... I think it was a formative part of my life. And I realized that I wasn't ever going to have the experience again and be, to have that life again. *That life was just gone.* The whole time, the whole entire life, the culture, the experience."

"And I think, so with each successful moves, it took a lot out of me to lose the friends that I had, to say goodbye. It was really sad... So the first time I experienced *grief was when, moving back and I was 13*, which is a terrible age anyway. But there was nothing. I was plotted into the school and everyone's been there since kindergarten."

"I was sad as a kid and strange to say that I'm still glad I had those experiences. I remember being really sad and depressed and anxious..., until I got help. It was exciting and moving, like an euphoria and my life was disrupted, *everything who wasn't my blood relative was gone.* So it was hard. I remember crying in third grade."

"I don't know about grieving, *I've come to terms with it.* I think it's especially hard that some of my favorite places, especially Pakistan, in any ways in the future, it being me being able to go there or it being the same to when we were there."

"Honestly, I don't know if it ever did get resolved. Whatever you call it, *the sense of loss and grief that follows you.* I'm not saying that I'm extremely depressed person, but there have been moments when I wondered, what is the root reason for feeling this way. And it's a lot to do with accumulation of feelings that was never talked or addressed or pinpointed."

Interestingly, participants spoke about that the sense of loss and grief that came with transitions in two different ways. Some said that it made it harder for them to say goodbye and others said, it was easy for them to make new friendships and to say goodbye.

“Do you bother making new friends, so people go different ways. Some people are like, have friends for however long and I’ll leave them and that’s okay. For me there’s a desire for genuine deep friendship and wondering do I go all the way investing the time, if it’s not going to last. There’s some instability that comes with that. I think that’s a piece that I’ve struggled a lot with. Cause when you don’t have permanency, that’s really going to be really hard.”

“I think that each time that I moved, I experienced that in a very deep way. At times, there were times when I was ready to move and it was okay, in some ways, transitions where I know that a group of people was going to be leaving, can still be harder for me than other people. I think there’s a grieving about relationships that goes back to that, that is more complicated than other people.”

“As TCKs always want to immediately make friends, and I have made the same mistakes of immediately telling them deep stories and the friends would be like, hold on, that’s too much.”

“In 7th grade, I don’t want to move, I’m just getting to make some friends and now I have to leave and try to make new friends again. Feeling like cultural outsider and not just a cultural outsider but... I felt like a social outsider.”

G. Experiences with and Suggestions for Mental Health Service Providers

All but three reported that they had utilized counseling services either as an adolescent or as an adult. Three of them shared that they had not necessarily spoken with counselors about

their experience as a third culture kid because they were dealing with other specific issues, but as they shared in the interviews, they were aware that their past experienced affected them.

“I think that the mental health professional to deal with this specifically would be really be *in touch with the experience themselves, and had empathy and resources*. And *I’ve gotten hurt a lot by people who are somewhat monocultural* by being told that I need to be different. That I need to be more American, you need to act more White or you need to realize that you are from this culture.”

“I had this relationship with this older woman. (She) was just terrific. So and I worked with her a lot. I built a relationship with her over the phone. We got to Washington and saw in person and that was incredibly helpful. And that was the first counseling I ever had... about *the grief and sadness and just putting words to it and loss and life, tears and all the things that I was never allowed to do before*. Because I was really lucky girl to have all those experiences as my parents would say. So... you know. I think it’s a really important thing to have, a framework, a vocabulary.”

“(What was helpful was) **allowing the space to grieve**. I mean, not feeling guilty because, there’s so much guilt because the kind of third culture kid I was. It was a lot of privilege. You didn’t make a lot of money but you had rich experiences and we lived a really nice expat life style so you felt, if you are a sensitive kid like me, you felt bad complaining because you’re lucky. So why am I feeling so sad? So allowing the space for the grieving.”

“I look for someone who understands models of transitions and transition stress, and models of cross-cultural issues of reentry of grief and loss for TCK. **Grief**

and loss and transitions and all of that because I've seen so many times when things get mislabeled and misdiagnosed because there's not an understanding" "I would want them to understand that the ideas of the hidden immigrant and the big three that TCKs seem to struggle with: identity, belonging and purpose, and then embedded in the grief process." "There's that shell of survival and resilience that you gotta break through. 'Cause there's that whole thing of "yeah, I'm fine," or "yeah, I can make friends, throw me anywhere and I'll be okay." Underneath that, there's that kind of trauma. So I think understanding that, third culture kids are pretty good at *face*, that concept in Asia, you keep face, and you don't really let on if something is not going well."

CHAPTER 5.

DISCUSSION

The following discussion addressed the findings in relation to the research questions, the four key theories described in the literature review, and the themes that came up in the interviews. In this study, the emphasis was on exploring the experiences and reflections of adults who grew up outside of their parents' home country as minor dependents. Specifically, in this study I looked at how adult TCKs intercultural experiences as well as their reentry experience back to their parents' home country shaped and affected their cultural identity development and psychological health.

The following Research Questions (RQs) were used to navigate the study.

RQ 1. What was your experience as a TCK in developing your cultural identity?

RQ 2. What was your reacculturation/reverse culture shock experience like?

RQ 3: What kind of coping skills did you develop or use during transitions?

RQ 4. Are there professional services, support, and resources that you wish you had, reflecting back on your experience up until now?

In the section below, the answers to the research questions (RQ) were described by applying the themes and data from the Findings Chapter. The themes that emerged from the study were: context, transition experiences and acculturation, sense of identity and sense of home, coping skills and outcome of TCK experience, positive outcomes, and grief and loss.

1. Summary of Responses to Research Questions

RQ 1. What was your experience as a TCK in developing your cultural identity?

The first theme described the context and the fifth theme on positive outcomes of their overseas experiences and re-entry speak to this question. Although the participants did not seem to develop a concrete new cultural identity, the results speak to the experiences that later impacted the development of their cultural identities.

For example, the participants shared their insights on having to experience different social, political, and cultural norms abroad and how their family's views of the experience affected their own worldview, making them more open-minded and understanding of multiple perspectives. Relationships with friends and family members were also talked in a way that suggested the levels of connections or disconnections to others even as adults. Those finding reflected what has been addressed in the literature review by Moore and Barker that for children, adjusting to a new environment becomes the priority in life, which interrupts their identity development process (2011). For those adult TCKs in their 30s, they seemed to be having an

ongoing struggle with their cultural identity and feeling ambivalent when describing what home meant to them. On the other hand, the older the participants were, the more they seemed to have gained a sense of who they are in relation to their experience as TCKs and could articulate where they stand in their cultural identity.

RQ 2. What was your reacculturation/reverse culture shock experience like?

The second theme talked about the participants' sense of confusion, not fitting in, and feeling like an outsider upon their return. The participants' responses also spoke to their experience of being lost in the process of re-entering their parents' culture, but being expected to adjust smoothly. The participants who returned to the same school after being away for a few years also stated that they noticed how much they themselves as TCKs have changed and also noticed their classmates had changed, which created a difficulty in re-adjusting as well. This was addressed in the literature review in regards to the difficulty that adolescents experience upon their re-entry to their home country that tends to cause them more distress in the process of settling into a home environment that may not be familiar, compared to their parents (Sussman, 2000).

The third theme that emerged from the study on the participants' sense of identity and sense of home answered this question regarding the participants' reacculturation experience. Although the participants shared that their passports identify their national identity, many of them seemed to have been ambivalent regarding their cultural identity, with some of them using the term "chameleon" to describe themselves. This point was also articulated in the literature review: most TCKs either have a multiple sense of belonging, or no sense of belonging at all (Sussman, 2000). Another significant finding from the study was that they shared their comfort in being around other TCKs regardless of how many years had gone by since they had lived

overseas or whether or not any of them lived in the same country. It was the shared experience of living abroad as a child and having the experience of not fitting in that created the bonding amongst other TCKs.

RQ 3: What kind of coping skills did you develop or use during transitions?

At first, some of them had difficulty articulating whether they had used any strategies, but eventually shared what they used to do as well as what they do as an adult. The majority of the participants talked about using a variety of activities to manage their stress during their transitions. The activities they described included, reading, writing, exercising, journaling, art, praying, meditating, maintaining friendships, talking to family members, and that they are an ongoing activity that for some had changed over time. The coping skills seemed to have served them in a way to maintain consistency in their lives while their lives were constantly changing. This connects back to the literature review, in which I described studies showing that coping is an ongoing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person (Lazarus, 1993).

RQ 4. Are there professional services, support, and resources that you wish you had, reflecting back on your experience up until now?

The major findings from the research suggested that many participants experienced lack of emotional support from parents during transitions and wished that the parents understood their struggles as TCKs. This lack of parental support could be partially related to the different ways in which each family unit deals with stress, especially during their international assignments that require parents themselves to adjust to new situations. The results also suggested that the participants wished to have had opportunities for meaningful connections after they returned to their home country, such as being connected to other TCKs at student orientations, support

groups with other TCKs, group counseling, or individual counseling. This was relevant to what Yoshida et al. said about TCK and their reentry process in that, “if individual TCKs found someone who accepted them for who they were when they first returned to Japan, they would have relatively smooth reentry experiences” (2014). This seemed to be true in my study from what the participants said about their experience in that, although they may have eventually learned to adjust to living back home, they shared that if they had had other resources when they first returned, their transitions could have gone smoother for them.

In regard to suggestions and ideals for a clinician working with adult TCKs, although it is not necessary, the participants stated that it would be ideal for a clinician to also be ATCK, that is, someone who had an experience being a TCK themselves and understands the complexity of growing up as TCK. This may be related to the hidden immigrant notion in PolVan’s Cultural Identity Model (2009) that because TCK may look like any other clients on the surface level and may not have differences from an immigration angle, their experiences have been different from the majority population and they usually think differently. Therefore, in addressing the uniqueness of adult TCK’s experiences, the study suggested a few things for clinicians. First, it is important to understand what the process is like in terms of grief and loss during cross-cultural transitions for TCKs. Second suggestion for clinician was to assess where the clients are in their grief process and adjustment process as an adult TCK. This included introducing the concept of TCK, resources, and the communities that exist, if the client is unaware of them. The third was to allow the clients to grieve about their experiences and to facilitate dialogues that lead to making meaning of their international experiences. In addition, as adult TCKs often develop flexibility and adaptability to be like chameleons, they stated that it is important for clinicians to be aware that the adult TCK clients may be guarded. This implied that an adult TCK client may

not talk about their complex inner world as a child growing up abroad, but present himself or herself as any other client. This chameleon-like characteristic of adult TCKs can be useful in social settings, but can be problematic in clinical relationships. Because if an adult TCK decides to see a clinician to address issues that seem unrelated to their experience being a TCK and do not share all the details of their cross-cultural transitions, the clinician would be uninformed of key factors during their formative years that may be influencing the current presenting problem as adult TCK client. Hence, in order to have a culturally informed and effective therapeutic work, it would be not only helpful but also crucial for clinicians working with adult TCK clients to be well versed to TCK experiences.

2. Limitations

This study was significant in addressing the unique experiences reflected by adult TCKs about their journey, but the scope was limited in that it was a qualitative research and that only 12 individuals were interviewed. In addition, the participants had to have access to computer and Internet including facebook, LinkedIn, or my's email recruitment on listservs for International Educators. The fact that many professionals in the field of International Education had attained a Master's degree or higher, and that I also has a Master's degree in International Education may explain why the participants in this study tended to have higher educational attainment than the general population.

Another limitation of this study was that all the study participants spoke English and lived in the US at the time of the interview, which excludes many other adult TCKs who do not speak English as well as those in different geographic locations around the world. As a consequence, all except for one participant are US Citizens and consider their home culture to be the US.

The third limitation was that this study did not include those who lived abroad after the age of 18, or those who continued to live abroad and did not return to their home country before the age of 18. Lastly, because this research only studied those of age 30 and older, the study did not capture those who have closer memories of their experiences abroad as well as their most recent challenges of experiencing reverse culture shock.

3. Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the limitations mentioned above, a few avenues of further research could enhance the understanding of this population. First of all, I would suggest expanding the study to a larger sample of research participants beyond the scope of 12 participants, and a sample who are not necessarily connected to higher education and international education, but instead come from a variety of socioeconomic and educational background. In addition, it would be a good idea to recruit participants who may not necessarily speak English, and also those who live outside of the US to gather experiences of ATCKs around the world. Lastly, the research would have offered a broader range of insights if I had interviewed adults aged 21 and older.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study's results showed the complexity of adult TCKs' experiences as children and as adults, and that the re-entry process continues and the overall experience affects one's adult life. One of the significant findings in the study was that although the number of years that an individual lives in one's home country as an adult may help them feel at home, that may not fully be a solution to adult TCKs for them to not have a sense of feeling lost. The fact that most of the participants shared that they feel most at home when surrounded by other adult TCKs even several decades after they had returned from their initial experience as TCK implies the value of having access to a community full of people who share similar experiences, not just

upon return but as an on-going support system. Those participants who were in their 30s tend to be more at the stage of actively processing their cultural identity and their sense of home, compared with the older participants who have come to their own conclusions or acceptance of their ambivalence and difference as adult TCKs. The study demonstrated that although adult TCKs had experiences that made them feel conflicted about their sense of home and identity, they all shared that it was a significant and meaningful experience living abroad as a child, and desired for their children to experience something similar, as the experience offered them worldly perspectives – but with more support and resources.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A. Human Subject Review Approval Letter



School for Social Work
Smith College
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063
T (413) 585-7950 F (413) 585-7994

January 6, 2015

Yoko Hisano

Dear Yoko,

You did a very nice job on your revisions. Your project is now approved by the Human Subjects Review Committee.

Please note the following requirements:

Consent Forms: All subjects should be given a copy of the consent form.

Maintaining Data: You must retain all data and other documents for at least three (3) years past completion of the research activity.

In addition, these requirements may also be applicable:

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of the study (such as design, procedures, consent forms or subject population), please submit these changes to the Committee.

Renewal: You are required to apply for renewal of approval every year for as long as the study is active.

Completion: You are required to notify the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee when your study is completed (data collection finished). This requirement is met by completion of the thesis project during the Third Summer.

Congratulations and our best wishes on your interesting study.

Sincerely,



Elaine Kersten, Ed.D.
Co-Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Cara Segal, Research Advisor

Appendix B. Human Subject Review: Approval Change

RESEARCH PROJECT CHANGE OF PROTOCOL FORM – School for Social Work

You are presently the researcher on the following *approved* research project by the Human Subjects Committee (HSR) of Smith College School for Social Work:

The Narratives of Adult Third Culture Kids: Development of cultural identity and coping skills
Yoko Hisano
Dr. Cara Segal

.....

I am requesting changes to the study protocols, as they were originally approved by the HSR Committee of Smith College School for Social Work. These changes are as follows:

1. Description of Research Project
Change from “in the US as minor dependents of parents” to “outside of their parents’ home country as minor dependents”

2. Participants: b) Specific Eligibility Requirements

Change from “The participants would have lived in the US as a child between their family members and” to “The participants can be from any country of origin but have lived abroad as a child with their family members for more than 3 years and had returned to their home country between 10-19 years of age.”

3. Email announcement:

Criteria: Change from “Lived in the US” to “Lived abroad”, and also add the following criteria “Currently reside in the US.”

4. On LinkedIn:

Headline: Recruiting participants: Adult Third Culture Kids who lived abroad and moved back home during your teenage years.

Subtext: Please email me if you have lived abroad with your family members as a child for more than 3 years, and returned to your parents’ home country between 10 -19 years old. I’m recruiting participants for a research study for my thesis for a MSW degree at Smith College on third culture kids who are currently over 30 years old. Contact me via private message at xxxxx@smith.edu to set up an interview or for more information. Thank you!

5. On Facebook:

Hello! Please kindly forward this research study. Have you lived abroad with your family members as a child for more than 3 years and returned back to your parents’ home country between 10-19 years old? I’m recruiting participants for a research study for my thesis for a MSW degree at Smith College on third culture kids who are currently 30 years old or older on their development of cultural identity and coping skills upon their re-entry. I can be reached at xxxxx@smith.edu to set up an interview or for more information. Thank you for sharing!

6. Informed consent

Introduction: Change from “have lived in the US with your parents as a minor dependent as a foreigner for 3 or more years” to “lived abroad with your parents as a minor dependent for 3 or more years”

7. Informed consent

Purpose of Study: Change from “grew up in the US” to “grew up abroad”

[DESCRIBE ALL PROTOCOL CHANGES BEING PROPOSED IN NUMERIC SEQUENCE;
BE BRIEF AND SPECIFIC]

.....

 x I understand that these proposed changes in protocol will be reviewed by the Committee.

I also understand that any proposed changes in protocol being requested in this form cannot be implemented until they have been fully approved by the HSR Committee.

I have discussed these changes with my Research Advisor and he/she has approved them.

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understood the information provided above.

Signature of Researcher: Yoko Hisano

Name of Researcher (PLEASE PRINT): Yoko Hisano **Date:** 1/13/2015

PLEASE RETURN THIS SIGNED & COMPLETED FORM TO Laura Wyman at LWyman@smith.edu or to Lilly Hall Room 115.

****Include your Research Advisor/Doctoral Committee Chair in the 'cc'. Once the Advisor/Chair writes acknowledging and approving this change, the Committee review will be initiated.*

.....

Appendix C. Informed Consent Form

**Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Smith College School for Social Work • Northampton, MA**

.....

Title of Study: The Narratives of Adult Third Culture Kids: Development of cultural identity and coping skills

Investigator: Yoko, School for Social Work, Contact: xxx-xxx-xxxx

.....

Introduction

You are being asked to be in a research study of adults who grew up in another country as minor dependents, to study and their intercultural experience and their reflection on their development of cultural identity as well as how they coped during transitions. You were selected as a possible participant because you are over 30 years of age, lived abroad with your parents as a minor dependent for 3 or more years, and experienced moving back to your country of origin between ages 10 – 19. Please read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences and reflections of adults who grew up abroad as a child, as a minor dependent, of parents living and working abroad as expats. In addition, this study looks into how your cross-cultural experiences as well as experience going back home shaped your cultural identity development and affected you emotionally. The narratives and the results will be used for clinical social workers and mental health providers to gain deeper understanding of individuals who grew up as third culture kids.

This study is being conducted as a research requirement for my master's in social work degree at Smith College School for Social Work. Ultimately, this research may be published or presented at professional conferences.

Description of the Study Procedures

- If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following things:
 - You will complete a Face Sheet attached to this consent form. Please email me back the Face Sheet with your initials on the top of the form.
 - Participate in a one-time interview that will be held either in-person or skype or phone that will last between 45 minutes to 60 minutes that will be recorded by a voice recorder.
 - There may be email correspondence after the interview for clarification of the interview content.
 - If you agree to do a skype or phone interview, please sign this consent form and mail it to xxxxxxxxxx as soon as possible.
 - If you agree to do an in-person interview, please sign this consent form and bring the signed copy to the interview.

Risks/Discomforts of Being in this Study

- There are no reasonable expected risks in this study but the researcher is aware of the sensitivity of the topics covered in the interview and therefore, will make time and space to pause the interview or stop the interview at anytime if any emotional distress or discomfort arises.

Benefits of Being in the Study

- The benefits of participation are to have space and opportunity to reflect on your unique intercultural experiences and narratives of your life by sharing your story.
- The benefits to social work/society are that the summary of the research results will inform the clinicians about Adult Third Culture Kids' experiences in general and help them learn about the unique challenges that TCKs and Adult Third Culture Kids experience during their transitions.

Confidentiality

- Your participation will be kept confidential. In addition, the records of this study will be kept strictly confidential. All research materials including the face sheet, recordings, transcriptions, analyses and consent/assent documents will be stored in a secure location for three years according to federal regulations. In the event that materials are needed beyond this period, they will be kept secured until no longer needed, and then destroyed. All electronically stored data will be password protected during the storage period. We will not

include any information in any report we may publish that would make it possible to identify you.

Payments/gift

- You will not receive any financial payment for your participation.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

- The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you. You may refuse to take part in the study *at any time* (up to the date noted below) without affecting your relationship with the researchers of this study or Smith College. Your decision to refuse will not result in any loss of benefits (including access to services) to which you are otherwise entitled. You have the right not to answer any single question, as well as to withdraw completely up to the point noted below. If you choose to withdraw, I will not use any of your information collected for this study. You must notify me of your decision to withdraw by email by April 30, 2015. After that date, your information will be part of the thesis.

Right to Ask Questions and Report Concerns

- You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered by me before, during or after the research. If you have any further questions about the study, at any time feel free to contact me, Yoko at xxxxxx@smith.edu or by telephone at xxx-xxx-xxxx. If you would like a summary of the study results, one will be sent to you once the study is completed. If you have any other concerns about your rights as a research participant, or if you have any problems as a result of your participation, you may contact the Chair of the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Committee at (413) 585-7974.

Consent

- Your signature below indicates that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant for this study, and that you have read and understood the information provided above. You will be given a signed and dated copy of this form to keep.)

.....

Name of Participant (print): _____

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Researcher(s): _____ Date: _____

.....

[if using audio or video recording, use next section for signatures:]

1. I agree to be [audio or video] taped for this interview:

Name of Participant (print): _____

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Researcher(s): _____ Date: _____

2. I agree to be interviewed, but I do not want the interview to be taped:

Name of Participant (print): _____

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Researcher(s): _____ Date: _____

Appendix D. Recruitment Email

Hello,

I am a graduate-level social work student. I'm conducting a study on the experiences of third culture kids (TCKs), those who lived abroad with their parents as a child. This study is for a part of a thesis for a MSW degree at Smith College School for Social Work.

If you or anyone you know meet the criteria and are interested in participating in this research by talking about the international experience, please contact me.

Criteria:

- Currently age 30 or older,
- Lived outside your home country as a child (with your family members) for more than 3 years,
- You returned to your home country (where your parents are from) between 10-19 of age, and;
- You currently live in the United States and have access to skype, phone, or can meet in person.

Please email me at xxxxx@smith.edu to set up an interview (skype, phone, or in person) that is confidential or if you have any questions about the study. Thank you in advance for your time and interest.

Regards,

Yoko

Appendix E. Face Sheet

**Face Sheet for the Research Study
Smith College School for Social Work • Northampton, MA**

Title of Study: The Narratives of Adult Third Culture Kids: in their cultural identity development and in usage and development of coping skills for psychological support

Researcher: Yoko Hisano

Following are questions asking about your demographic background to facilitate smooth dialogue during the interview.

NOTE: Please send back within the next week as an attachment to yhisano@smith.edu.
Please change the document with your first and last initial of your name and TCK_Research Study. (Ex) YH_TCKResearchStudy.doc

1. Current Age: _____

2. What is your preferred gender?

Female Male Other _____

3. History of countries you lived in: _____

Eg) England (0-6) -> South Africa (6-8) -> USA (8-16) -> England (16-26) -> USA (26 – now)

4. Your parents' home country (s): _____

5. Ethnicity origin (or Race): _____

6. What is the highest level of education?

Completed some high school

High school graduate

Completed some college

Associate degree or equivalent

Bachelor's degree or equivalent

Master's degree

Ph.D., Law, or Medical degree

Other advanced/professional degrees beyond a Master's degree

7. What was the family composition like? _____

Eg) one older sister, one half-brother, one younger brother, and mother and step-father.

8. How would you describe your current status? _____

Eg) Parenting full-time, student, employed part-time, employed full-time, owner of a company

Thank you very much for your time. I look forward to hearing your experience.

Appendix F. Interview Questions

1. What was your experience like living abroad?
 - a) What was your experience at school like?
 - b) What type of school(s) did you attend?
 - c) What were the demographics of students at school and people in the community?
2. What was it like at home in terms of language usage and cultural norms?
 - a) What language was spoken at home with your parents and siblings?
 - b) Did you notice cultural differences – holiday celebration, dining culture,
3. How was it returning home?
 - a) What was the reason for the return?
 - b) What was positive and challenging about your return?
 - c) What would have helped you reacculturate better?
4. How would you describe your cultural identity?
 - a) What was the process like in developing your cultural identity?
 - b) Does your cultural identity and national identity mean the same thing to you?
5. In reflecting back on your experience until now, how would you describe your coping skills – stress management during these years?

- a) What coping skills did you use during your transitions both when you were abroad and when you returned home
- b) What coping skills do you use as an adult?
- c) What has been your experience with professionals in mental health field, if any?
- d) What are resources that you wish you had in thinking about? your experiences?