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An exploration of factors associated with reentry adjustment of U.S. foreign service spouses

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ABSTRACT

This study was undertaken to provide information about U.S. Foreign Service spouse reentry adjustment in the published social work literature. The purpose is to inform social workers and others working with spouses and repatriates regarding the reentry phenomenon and to inform the development of intervention strategies in working with repatriates and their families in other occupations requiring extended overseas stays.

One hundred fifty-eight Foreign Service spouses who are members of the Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide (AAFSW), a Foreign Service spouse organization, responded to a mixed method questionnaire covering a range of reentry issues. These issues included demographic characteristics and traits of the spouses' last overseas assignment and last reentry experience.

There were three clusters of quantitative findings: primary were the family systems factors, with greater reentry adjustment difficulties for younger spouses with fewer and younger children; overseas adjustment factors, with more reentry difficulties for spouses who participated in fewer activities overseas; and reentry factors, with greater readjustment distress for spouses whose reentry experience was more difficult than anticipated, those with less job satisfaction, and who had been in the U.S. for a shorter period of time. Qualitative results found: the return to familiar surroundings makes subsequent reentries easier, and more reentry information before reentry and the availability of counseling to those at risk would be helpful.

AN EXPLORATION OF FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH REENTRY ADJUSTMENT OF U. S. FOREIGN SERVICE SPOUSES

A project based upon an independent investigation,
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study explores factors which are associated with the reentry adjustment of U.S. Department of State Foreign Service spouses. The term "reentry adjustment" in this study refers to the re-adaptation to the home culture after an extended sojourn abroad; a "sojourn" is a period of time spent overseas, at least 1 year in duration. The rationale for looking at the spouse and family members of the employee instead of the employee is that she/he may have experiences and reactions to the adjustments required during reentry which are different from the employee. As is discussed later, reentry research has shown that reentry can be the most difficult part of the moving cycle to and from an international location.

The theoretical framework of a "person-in-environment" perspective is applied to Foreign Service spouses as they operate in relationship to the larger social systems of the U.S. Department of State, the Foreign Service lifestyle, and the family. This perspective will be used as a lens through which to view and better understand the Foreign Service spouse reentry experience and the factors which impact that adjustment.

Some people go through a period of "reentry distress" as part of their reentry adjustment from an overseas sojourn. "Reentry distress" refers to the psychological, emotional, and physical symptoms of returning home; these symptoms can range from a sense of not belonging to anxiety and depression (Gaw, 2000). This psychological distress is also referred to as "culture shock" (Fray, 1988, Church, 1982), the shock of

coming into a new (or in the case of reentry, returning to one's own, culture). This study explores factors that may be associated with culture shock, also known as the problems of reentry adjustment or reentry distress among Foreign Service spouses.

Foreign Service Officers (FSOs) are the professionals who carry out the foreign policy mission of the U. S. Department of State, the cabinet level entity charged with developing recommendations for and conducting the day to day foreign policy of the U.S. government. According to the U.S. Department of State/Human Resources Office (2007), there are 6,488 Foreign Service Officer (FSO) generalists in the U.S. Foreign Service, serving in U.S. embassies and consulates overseas in political, economic, consular and administrative capacities, and in Washington, D.C. at the U.S. Department of State or at special missions, like the U.N. and consulates in the U.S.

The Foreign Service lifestyle is characterized by assignments to overseas posts, and assignments back home (reentries). This cyclical pattern of going overseas and returning home may present unique challenges in terms of how people adjust after returning to the home environment. This study will look specifically at the experience of the spouses and family members of U.S. Department of State officials during reentry, after return from accompanied assignments (assignments with the employee) overseas.

The experience of repeated international sojourns and reentries and the transitions necessitated by this lifestyle is not limited to Foreign Service Officers and their families alone. The number of Americans living and working overseas has increased from 2 million in 1988 to 6.6 million in the year 2000 (U.S. Department of State/Consular Affairs, 2006). This group encompasses people from a variety of professions, including students, teachers, businessmen, missionaries, aid agency workers, volunteers and

government employees. Although the extent of reentry adjustment problems is not known, it is a potentially increasing problem as more Americans than ever live and work overseas and experience one or more reentries (Onwumechili, Nwosu, Jackson & James-Hughes, 2003).

Previous studies, primarily in the fields of psychology, but also in education and business, have been descriptive, describing the reentry distress of the individual, or proscriptive, looking at predictive variables for the individual's reentry distress. Most previous studies, with a few exceptions, have researched the reentry experience of the individual who is sent overseas as an employee, student or missionary. This study differentiates itself from most previous studies in the fields of psychology, education and business by looking specifically at the experience of spouses and family members during reentry, and not the individual employee. It looks at factors that have been investigated previously in the reentry literature, such as age, gender, length of the previous overseas assignment, activities and interactions overseas, in terms of impact on reentry adjustment, and factors which have been identified as needing further research, such as location of overseas assignment (Rohrlich & Martin, 1991), the effect of multiple reentries on a population (Onwumichili et al., 2003), and changes in one's cultural identity (Sussman, 2002) with one or more sojourns abroad.

Further, this study adds to the limited research available on spousal reentry adjustment from overseas (Black & Gregersen, 1991), distinguishing itself from the primary body of previous research focused on the experience of the employee, to those who accompany the employee overseas and, as stated by Fenzi (1994) are "married to the Foreign Service". It provides research data to the topics of Foreign Born and male

spouse reentry adjustment, currently found only in the anecdotal literature on Foreign Born (Bender, 2002) and male spouses (Kerr, 2002). It also adds empirical data to the unpublished and popular literature about the impact of an international mobile lifestyle on families (Steinglass & Edwards, 1993; Hughes, 1999; Pollock, 1999), and to the social work literature on family structure (Carter & McGoldrich, 1984), applying it to internationally mobile families. Finally, this study contributes the social work "person-in-environment" perspective to social work research and knowledge of reentry adjustment which, according to Marzin (2004), and this researcher's search of the literature, appears very limited. Thus, it is the intent of this research to bring more information about the reentry process to the field of social work.

This study is informative in broadening the area of inquiry of reentry studies beyond its current focus on the individual sojourner adjustment of the employee, to include a study of factors useful to social work clinicians in their work with a wide range of populations that may include accompanying family members. As the purpose of this study is to learn about the challenges spouses and family members face during reentry for which they may need counseling or therapeutic intervention, it is consistent with the social work values of helping those who are in need, in pain and experiencing emotional difficulties in their lives. It will look at the experience of the whole person, widening the lens of psychology to include not only the internal world of the person, but also the external world, meaning the social factors that may be contributing to psychological distress during reentry. Additionally, this study looks at a wider gamut of factors than most previous reentry studies, allowing practitioners to rule in or rule out individual or

clusters of factors that may be useful in understanding and treating their internationally mobile clients.

This study is intended to provide information about Foreign Service spouse reentry adjustment in the published social work literature. The purpose is to inform social workers and others working with spouses and repatriates regarding this phenomenon, and to also inform the development of intervention strategies in working with repatriates and their families in other occupations requiring extended overseas stays, as it may impact the psychosocial adjustment of some of their clients and family members.

This study is rare in the field of social work in that it focuses on a population, specifically the spouses of government officials whose work requires extended overseas stays, and the range of psychosocial issues related to the spouses' adjustments when they return home. This study opens up an interesting area for research not only due to the limited literature on spouse reentry adjustment, but also the readjustment of spouses who experience at least one, and usually multiple sojourns and reentries. This is significant because we live in an increasingly more globalized world, in which not only are more people going overseas and returning, but some are doing so multiple times. Understanding the factors that impact U.S. Foreign Service spouses upon reentry, those with single reentries and those with multiple reentries, will be useful to the social work profession for working with people within and beyond the U.S. Department of State and government agencies, who are internationally mobile, such as businessmen, workers for volunteer/nonprofit organizations, missionaries, and people associated with educational institutions (students, teachers, researchers) and their family members.

More studies of reentry are needed in the field of social work to increase practitioners' understanding of reentry adjustment difficulties. It is hoped that the findings of this study will help increase awareness and understanding among clinical practitioners of the special situations faced during reentry by accompanying spouses and family members, who may present with symptoms of reentry distress upon return home that are related to their reentry adjustment.

A review of the literature follows in the next chapter, which includes a review of the Foreign Service lifestyle, related reentry literature, and the theoretical framework of this study, the social work person-in-environment perspective.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

To better understand the concepts of reentry and reentry adjustment, the following review of the literature will explore the Foreign Service lifestyle, reentry theories, and previous studies on the reentry experience. It will then discuss general family systems, psychosocial development and family life cycle theories, which taken together constitute the theoretical framework informing this study and analysis of findings. It will conclude with a discussion of the extant literature on spouse repatriation, and a review of the related literature in the field of Social Work.

Reentry adjustment is a relatively new terminology for what was previously referred to as "reverse culture shock" although both of these terms continue to be used in the literature. A common conceptual definition of reentry adjustment is, "the process of readjusting, reacculturating, and reassimilating into one's own home culture after living in a different culture for a significant period of time" (Gaw, 2000). Reentry adjustment also can have a component of psychological distress that the individual goes through, which is associated with the reacculturation to the home milieu (Fray, 1988; Sussman, 2002).

As the reentry process is experienced by Foreign Service spouses as individuals and as members of a family unit, this literature review will first provide some background on the U.S. Foreign Service, and will review the Foreign Service lifestyle, reentry theory and the family life cycle, followed by reentry and spouse studies.

The U.S. Department of State and the Foreign Service Lifestyle

The U.S. Department of State (USDOS) is the lead foreign affairs agency of the U.S. government, with headquarters in Washington, D.C. Its mission is, "To create a more secure, democratic and prosperous world for the benefit of the American people and the international community" (USDOS website, October, 2006). Foreign Service Officers (FSOs) represent the U.S. government, serving in 265 embassies, missions and consulates in 180 countries, and at home. They serve in both developed and underdeveloped countries on assignments that usually range from 2 to 4 years each. The State Department requires that at least one assignment be at a "hardship post", an overseas posting where living conditions are more challenging than in the U.S., with poorer sanitation and quality of healthcare, higher crime rates and reduced availability of goods and services. Hardship posts are located generally outside of Western Europe, Canada, and Australia; employees serving at these posts receive an additional differential ranging from 10 to 35 percent of salary (USDOS website, October, 2006). In attempt to help families stay connected with their home countries, there is a period of 3-4 weeks allowed once every two years for "home leave", which is intended to help families re-experience American life, which is not to be confused with the experience of "reentry" as discussed in this study. Home leave is short-term in nature, not longer-term as is reentry, and it is intended to help employees and families stay in touch with American society, during which time most families visit relatives in various parts of the U.S.; however, due to its short duration of 3-4 weeks once every two years, it is viewed as a vacation, and not considered a reentry. A reentry requires a period of a least one year, in which employees

and their families set up residence, locate jobs, send children to school and remain as semi-permanent residents for a period of 1-6 years.

The majority of FSOs (Foreign Service Officers) on home assignment serve in Washington, D.C. During any one year approximately two-thirds of the officers serve overseas and approximately one-third return to the U.S. This estimate has recently changed with the increase since 2003 in FSOs serving unaccompanied tours (without spouse or family) in Iraq and Afghanistan, a situation in which the families return to or stay in the U.S. for a year or longer without the employee. The number of families affected in this way has not been calculated, but a return home without the employee could add to the reentry distress of the spouse and family members.

FSOs are required to be U.S. citizens, but their spouses may be native born or foreign born, and can choose to become naturalized U.S. citizens. Some are U.S. citizens who grew up living in both the U.S. and overseas. The number of spouses married to Foreign Service Officers is not calculated, nor is it known how many spouses and families reenter the U.S. each year with the FSO, or unaccompanied. The number of reentries a spouse makes depends on the FSO's career interests and the needs of the Foreign Service, but the number of reentries can range from 1 to perhaps as many as 10, or even more.

Each return calculated as a reentry to the U.S. in this study is for a minimum of 1 year, but generally lasts for at least 2 years, with a maximum stay of 6 years allowed by the Department of State per reentry assignment. Overseas assignments, other than assignments to Iraq and Afghanistan and other unaccompanied danger assignments, range from 2 to 4 years in duration each (US Department of State/Family Liaison Office, 2006).

Some families return to the U.S. for briefer periods of time for additional training; returns for a period of less than one year are not considered to be reentries, but short-term stays in the U.S., usually in temporary housing, with plans to return overseas after completion of a period of training. Some FSOs and their families serve a succession of overseas postings before they have a reentry, and some have one or two overseas postings prior to a return to serve in the U.S.

The FSO's job is to advocate for American foreign policy, protect American citizens abroad, and bolster U.S. business overseas. They work within one of five career tracks which are: economic, political, consular, administrative and public diplomacy (USDOS website, October, 2006). Within each of these five "tracks", as they are commonly referred to, FSOs overseas develop host country contacts, coordinate and negotiate areas of common interest to the U.S. and host country, explain American foreign policy, defend American interests, and protect American citizens living in the host country. When assigned to Washington, D.C., FSOs analyze and assess conditions overseas, and make recommendations for the management of situations overseas and the development of U.S. foreign policy. Some FSOs, assigned to U.S. cities other than Washington, DC, service immigrant populations applying for U.S. citizenship and communicate with foreign business interests in key cities. Foreign Service Officers do not make foreign policy, but they do work to improve relations according to current guidelines and priorities, and their recommendations can lead to the development of or changes in foreign policy.

The lifestyle of the Foreign Service Officer involves frequent moves due to assignments of 2 to 4 years at any one overseas post. Some FSOs move from post to post

and may spend many years overseas before returning to the U.S., while others may return more frequently. Assignments are made both on the basis of personal choices and in the interests of the U.S. Department of State as officers agree to be available to serve worldwide. While living overseas, the officer's position may necessitate entertaining, to make and maintain host country contacts, travel in fulfillment of job responsibilities, and living in countries under varying conditions of wealth and poverty, crime rates, quality of health care, pollution levels, and availability of goods and services (USDOS website, October, 2006). For the FSO, moving from embassy to embassy and back home again, the work environment – that is, the employer, the USDOS, its policies, procedures and paperwork -remain the same. This is not so for the spouse and family, who move post to post and adjust to a new environment, from living in a new country, learning a new language, adapting and organizing the home, attending a new school system, and attempting to acquire goods and services needed by the family

Marriage to a FSO includes marriage to the lifestyle demanded by this position, as well. The Foreign Service spouse and family live a life of continual and successive beginnings and endings, transitions and adjustments. The international moving process has been described as, "… not just a physical activity. It requires an overabundance of mental and emotional energy," and responsibilities for the details of the move often fall on the spouse who frequently is minimally and temporarily employed or not employed overseas or at home, and has more time (Pascoe, 2000). Each move requires a "starting all over again, just when [one had] the routine down in the last place" (Kelly, 2002). Securing employment is often a challenge for spouses overseas. There are barriers due to work permit restrictions, low salaries and limited opportunities. The USDOS has

increased its efforts to sign bilateral work agreements and provide some spouse employment, usually nonprofessional, in overseas missions (Linderman & Hess, 2002) and on the local economy. Upon return home, the spouse may have difficulty locating and competing in the workplace due to lack of a continuous career path and recent work experience, especially professional (Pascoe, 2000).

The experience of the spouse has been chronicled in popular writing, often referring to her/him as " the trailing spouse" (Fenzi, 1994), "eligible family member" (Linderman & Hess), or "dependent" (USDOS website, December, 2006), and often carries the primary responsibility for meeting the many needs of individual family members, which if left unmet, can cause unhappiness and insecurity in the process of changing environments (Pascoe, 2000). Dorman, in another popular publication (Linderman & Hess, 2002), looks at the pluses and minuses of a Foreign Service lifestyle, which include the plus of travel as "traveling to amazing places" vs. the minus of "getting amazing illnesses", and "gaining a world perspective" vs. "you no longer entirely fit in the U.S. and lose touch with American culture" and the plus of "you have friends all over the world" vs. the minus of "your friends are always all over the world". Overseas living can be a move up in terms of income, housing and social life, due to the extra hardship allowances for some locations, government-sponsored living quarters for entertaining, and opportunities for socializing based on need to make local contacts and a general need for increased social life when extended family is not present. However, this also means that a move back to the U.S. can mean a move down in terms of income, housing and social life, according to Pascoe (2000), and this may lead to distress.

Much has changed for Foreign Service spouses over time. Today the spouse does not have official responsibility for entertaining overseas that was required of wives prior to the "Policy on Wives" of 1972, which, "declared spouses to be independent individuals with no responsibilities to the Foreign Service agencies… However, everything changed, and nothing changed", according to Fenzi (1994). Although more luncheon – rather than dinner – contacts occur today than was true in the past, entertaining still has a function in the Foreign Service, providing the opportunities necessary for officers to make local host country contacts (Fenzi, 1994). Today there are more services available to spouses, both overseas and at home, with the establishment of the Family Liaison Office (FLO) at the State Department in the late 1970's, formed as a result of the new Policy on Wives and the need for increased services to families, a reform presented to the Department of State by the Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide (AAFSW), a spouse membership organization. The primary mission of the FLO Office is to assist spouses and families overseas and at home. The FLO oversees the Community Liaison Officer (CLO) program overseas, which consists of Community Liaison Officers, who serve at 160 of the 180 U.S. missions around the world. The CLO is charged with assisting family members overseas in adjustment to the post and foreign community, in a type of paid peer support model. CLOs are generally not professionals in the helping careers, but rather spouses who are interested in the position and are selected by a committee at post, using guidelines provided by the FLO office in Washington, D.C., as well as criteria considered important at each mission. In Washington, D.C., the FLO office provides resources for returning job seekers, evacuees from overseas posts, and provides assistance locating schools in the Washington, D.C.

area, but does not have the resources to engage in counseling for spouses except for emergency referrals (Fenzi, 1994; FLO office, 2006).

Despite these changes, the lifestyle requires many adjustments, which put a strain on spouses and their families (Fenzi, 1994; Linderman & Hess, 2002; Pascoe, 2000). This study focuses on the adjustment of Foreign Service spouses after their return home, and factors that are associated with the reentry adjustments spouses experience. Before addressing spousal reentry, however, reentry theory will be discussed.

Reentry/Reverse Culture Shock Theory

The experience of reentry was first written about as early as 1935, but first received serious study by Scheutz (1945), who recorded observations of World War II veterans he called "homecomers", who experienced difficulties fitting in when they returned home, especially in the areas of social relationships with family and friends and cultural adaptation to a society that had changed while they were gone. In addition, friends and loved ones had not experienced what they had, and it was difficult to relate to everyday concerns at home. Perceptions of the phenomenon of reverse culture shock, however, were built upon the theoretical construct of culture shock, or the problems of adjusting to the foreign culture of sojourn, which came to prominence in the 1950's and early 1960's (Gaw, 2000). The rationale for the post-war interest in culture shock was the increase in government-sponsored exchange programs at the time (Lysgaard, 1955).

A ground-breaking qualitative study of overseas adjustment in 1955 looked at the reported experiences of 200 Norwegian Fulbright grantees after their sojourn to the U.S. (Lysgaard, 1955). The researcher conceptualized the Fulbrighters' adjustment in the foreign U.S. culture to have followed a "U-curve" that was composed of three unique

stages. The initial stage was characterized by a good adjustment during which the grantee engaged in a new adventure and was busy getting settled in (0-6 months). This was followed by a second stage in which there was a greater need for friendships with Americans, but language deficiencies made this difficult, and loneliness set in (6 – 18 months). The third stage was a time of satisfaction and integration, when the grantees accomplished making friendships and became more a part of a social group (18 months and more). Lysgaard (1955) provided a theoretical understanding of an observed phenomenon, which has become known as the "U-curve hypothesis" and the beginning of the stage theory of cross-cultural research.

Oberg (1960) provided a definition for the problems of adjustment to new cultures as "culture shock, which is precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse". An anthropologist, Oberg used the term to describe the problems observed among Americans in Brazil who were working on a local health project. He elaborated on Lysgaard's adjustment stage two by adding a sense of hostility and aggressive attitude toward the host country as the differentiation from the home country was realized, and added an additional transitional stage during which sojourners begin to adjust to the differences prior to greater cultural integration. Lysgaard (1955) and Oberg (1960) defined the construct "culture shock" and provided a model which depicted it.

Once the new sojourners started returning home in numbers, there were observations that they were, unexpectedly, experiencing difficulties readjusting to their home country. In 1963, a mixed method cross-sectional study, both qualitative and quantitative, looked at the experience of 400 American students studying in France and

the experience of 5,300 American Fulbright and Smith-Mundt grantees after their return from many parts of the world (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963). From this study, the researchers proposed a continuation of the U-curve hypothesis to explain difficulties encountered by returnees. They called it the "W-curve", or a double-U, and it became known as the "W-curve hypothesis", which demonstrated that the adjustment phases of the U-curve were similar to those of the sojourner returning home. The U-curve and W-curve theoretical constructs form the foundation upon which reentry adjustment research has been conducted for the past forty years.

Recent reacculturation research has, however, argued that culture shock and reverse culture shock are not similar, but are in fact quite different processes. The U-curve and W-curve are illustrative, but reacculturation has its own characteristics not shared by acculturation (Onwumechili, Nwosu, Jackson & James-Hughes, 2003).

The re-conceptualization of the reacculturation phenomenon integrates issues arising from the expectations of sojourners as well as family members and friends in the home country. Based on the findings of Adler (1981), Brislin and Van Buren (1974), Rogers and Ward (1993), Sussman (1986), Uehara (1986), Rohrlich and Martin (1991), this reconceptualization is summarized by Omwumechili, Nwosu, Jackson and James-Hughes (2003) and Sussman (1986) as:

1. Sojourners do not expect to have difficulty when returning home,
2. Returnees do not expect changes in their home country,
3. Returning sojourners are not aware they have changed,
4. Families and friends do not expect the sojourner to have changed, and
5. Returnees find others have little interest in their overseas experiences.

The findings of the aforementioned studies represent a reformulation of the experience of the sojourner after returning home. Previously, culture shock involved adjustment to a foreign land ,while reverse culture shock involved the return home, both of which had similar adjustment processes. However, more recent research has explained the fundamental difference between culture shock and reverse culture shock as sojourners did not expect anything to be unfamiliar when they returned home, though they had such expectations when going overseas. Recent research has shown, then, that actual experience of reentry can be quite different from one's expectations of it (Adler, 1981; Rogers & Ward, 1993). Repatriation was now re-conceptualized as the return of a stranger to a land they had anticipated to be familiar (Onwumechili et al., 2003). Along with this altered view of the reentry experience, the term "reentry adjustment" came to be preferred over reverse culture shock (Sussman, 1986).

Reentry Research

Reentry research in the past thirty years has attempted to further understand the process and identify factors that are associated with reentry distress, to help determine who is affected by it and why.

Occupational groups serve as organizing categories for reentry studies and provide greater validity within and across groups. Reentry studies have been conducted among college students (Gaw, 2000; Rohrlich & Martin, 1991; Martin, 1986; Martin, Bradford & Rohrlich, 1995; Uehara, 1986; Brabant, Palmer & Grambling, 1990; Huff, 2001; Raschio, 1987), missionaries (Moore, 1987; Huffman, 1989), Japanese high school students (Furukawa, 1997; Yoshida et al., 2002; Yoshida, 2003), teachers (Sussman, 2001) and business managers (Sussman, 2002; Black & Gregersen, 1991; Gregersen &

Stroh, 1997), U.S. Peace Corps Volunteers (Adler, 1977, as cited in Adler, 1981; Harris, Louis & Associates, 1969, as cited in Hirshon, Eng, Brunkow & Hartzell, 1977) and American soldiers' reentry after combat (Doyle & Peterson, 2005; Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, 2006).

Studies of Predictors of Problems in Reentry Adjustment

Some studies have looked at possible predictors of reentry adjustment problems and expectations of sojourners (Moore, 1987; Sussman, 2001, 2002; Yoshida et al., 2002; Huff, 2001; Rohrlich & Martin, 1991; Martin, Bradford, & Rohrlich, 1995; Huffman, 1989; Martin, 1986; Furukawa, 1997); other studies have described the impact of reentry adjustment on sojourners, and the range of adaptations observed (Huffman, 1989; Brabant, Palmer & Gramling, 1990; Uehara, 1986; Raschio, 1987; Yoshida, 2003; Gaw, 2000; Martin, 1986; Storti, 2003). Three studies (Martin, 1986; Huffman, 1989; Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, 2006) were a combination of both. The populations studied were Americans, with the exceptions of Japanese students (Furukawa,1997; Yoshida, 2002, 2003) and mixed foreign students from developing countries (Brabant, Palmer & Gramling, 1990). It is interesting to note that, according to Sussman (1986), research studies on Japanese children are more numerous than other nationalities (Hoshino, 1983, Kobayashi, 1978, La Brack, 1980, Tsuruta, 1976, White, 1980, Yokoshima, 1977, as cited in Sussman, 1986), which "reflects the social concern of reintegration into the 'group' as quickly as possible".

Many of the predictor studies found demographic factors to be significant in predicting reduced reentry distress. Some studies showed an association between being at least 15 years of age or older at the time of reentry and less reentry distress (Huff,

2001; Yoshida et al., 2002; Moore, 1987). Among adults, those who are older have been found to have less distress during reentry than those younger (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963). Other studies have found an association between marriage and reentry distress. Moore (1987) and Huffman (1989) found that individuals who were married had less reentry distress than those who were single. Studies which looked at gender differences found mixed associations between gender and reentry distress. An association between being male in gender and reduced distress during reentry was found in three studies (Brabant, Palmer & Grambling,1990; Huffman 1989: Yoshida et al., 2002) who studied students from Latin/Asian/African countries, American adult missionaries, and Japanese students in the U.S., respectively. However, Rohrlich and Martin (1991) found that being female in gender predicted slightly less reentry distress among American students returning from Western European countries. However, the variation in these mixed results between gender and reentry adjustment could be differences between gender roles in the home culture and the country of sojourn.

One demographic factor not included in the data of these studies, with the exception of Gaw (2000), is racial/ethnic background of the participants. Gaw, however, did not report results by racial/ethnic group, the reason for which can only be speculated, but may be due to numerous biracial ethnicities in the sample (one-half was non-Caucasian) with too few participants in each racial/ethnic group to analyze; still, a comparison of reentry adjustment between Caucasian/non-Caucasian ethnicities would have been interesting and valuable information. These previous studies are utilized to inform this study, and the spouses' racial/ethnic background as they self-identify are

included in the demographic information; however, the number of non-Caucasian participants is too low to make comparisons.

Rohrlich & Martin (1991) found interesting results in their study of 500 American study abroad students, which showed that a higher degree of interaction, particularly in terms of participating in activities and discussions with host country nationals, was associated with higher student satisfaction with their lives while overseas, but lower satisfaction with their lives upon return. The Rohrlich and Martin (1991) study will be used to inform this study to compare activity levels overseas and reentry adjustment upon return among Foreign Service spouses.

Other researchers found having positive family relationships in the home culture was a predictor of reduced reentry distress (Yoshida et al., 2002; Huff, 2001; Martin, 1986). Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) using a cross-sectional design with both qualitative and quantitative methods, and Huff (2001) and Rohrlich & Martin (1991) using fixed relational cross-sectional designs, looked at the location of the country of sojourn as a reentry predictive factor. Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963), studying American Fulbright grantees from the U.S., found greater satisfaction upon reentry among those who had sojourned to Europe than those who had been in the Near and Middle East or Latin America. They concluded that this was due to greater communication problems and value dissonance between the American grantees and the local population in the non-European locations. Huff (2001) found that American missionary children who accompanied their parents to Central and Southern Africa reported their parents facilitated their independence more than those whose parents had been in Central Asia. Rohrlich and Martin (1991) found that American students who

went to Spain had less satisfaction with their lives upon return than students who went to Italy and England. The conclusion drawn was that perhaps life in Spain was more unfamiliar than life in France and England, contributing to difficulty readjusting to the home culture. These studies are reviewed as they better inform this study, which looks at whether there are any differences in reentry adjustment based on the location of the sojourn.

Predictive factors of interest to this study also include those of adaptation to the host country and changes in cultural identity (Rohrlich & Martin, 1991; Sussman, 2002), in fixed relational cross-sectional design studies. The Rohrlich and Martin (1991) study of 250 American college students, discussed previously, found an inverse relationship between communication with host country nationals and satisfaction during reentry. This laid groundwork for Sussman (2001) who developed the Cultural Identity Model, and in testing it on American teachers who taught in Japan, found that sojourners whose home cultural identity is positive and remained positive during the overseas transition, were less likely to experience distress upon reentry; those who returned with a negative home cultural identity, and a more positive identity with the host country, were more likely to have greater difficulty during reentry.

Cultural Identity Model

Sussman (2002) perceived cultural identity as dynamic and changeable as a result of the overseas transition and the sojourner's changing view of her/himself. One item in Sussman's survey assessed sojourners' self perceptions as more global or international persons as a result of their overseas experience. The researcher found that sojourners' cultural identity was negatively related to reentry distress – that is, those with higher

home culture (U.S.) identity had lower reentry distress and greater life satisfaction; however, those sojourners who reported a more global cultural identity also had higher satisfaction with their lives. This was supported in a qualitative cross-sectional study of eight women of unspecified nationalities who had lived in three or more cultures. The findings showed the eight women had developed an international identity (Leembruggen-Kallberg, 1997) characterized by greater human understanding, tolerance and openness toward others. However, the global identity was attained after months or years of loss of place, belonging and sense of their own identity. In a study of eleven American returning college students, Raschio (1997) found that reentering students experienced reverse culture shock, but also reflected a more global perspective. The concept of cultural identity change is reviewed as it informs this study.

The concept of a global or international perspective is primarily addressed in a growing body of literature regarding children who are called "Third Culture Kids (TCKs)" or "global nomads" (McCaig, 1994, as cited in Pollock, 1999). "Third Culture Kids" is a term first coined by Drs. John and Ruth Hill Useem in the 1950's (Pollock, 1999) for children who accompany their parents on overseas sojourns and return home when the assignment(s) are concluded. For many of these young people most of their lives are spent overseas. Dr. Ruth Useem noted, and the literature has supported, that TCKs often experience difficulties upon reentry due the lack of a sense of belonging to both the home culture and the host culture, identifying instead with a third culture, which is a global or international perspective (Pollock, 1999; Eakin, 1988; Useem 1973, 1993, as cited in Pollock, 1999; Cockburn, 2002). In their studies of expatiates in India in the 1950's, Drs. Useem observed that the expatiates had formed a lifestyle and culture that

was different from their home or host culture, that the cultures were formed generally among occupational/representational groups, and that these groups were closely tied in a culture that they shared. In particular, the children of these expatriates demonstrated problems upon return concerning issues of identity and change, grief and loss, especially during the first five years when a sense of security develops, and the adolescent years when a sense of self and peer relationships develop (Cockburn, 2002). This was contradicted somewhat by Steinglass and Edwards (1993), in an unpublished study for the U.S. Department of State on family readjustments, in which it was found that among 35 families reentering to Washington, D.C. from overseas assignments, younger children exhibited more behavioral and social problems than older children, though specific ages for "younger" and "older" were not given.

Psychological Preparedness

Sussman (2001), in addition to developing the cultural identity model, built upon the findings of Adler (1981) and Martin (1986) regarding the unexpectedness of reentry difficulties. Specifically, she was interested in psychological preparedness for return and its association with reentry distress among 44 American managers. The researcher found an inverse relationship, that repatriates who were least prepared for reentry had more reentry distress. Sussman (2001) also found that sojourners who experienced reentry distress were more likely to attribute it to external causes rather than internal processes. The issue of pre-departure information received prior to reentry informs this study.

Studies of the impact of reentry adjustment on sojourners found a range that included both positive and negative effects, and a few looked at reentry as having both

benefits and challenges (Adler, 1976, as cited in Uehara, 1986; Uehara,1986; Leembruggen-Kallberg, 1997; and Raschio, 1987).

The positive effects found were personal growth in patience and objectivity, improved language skills, greater human understanding, tolerance and openness to others and cultural differences, and the ability to synthesize intercultural experiences into a "tapestry of life" (Leembruggen-Kallberg, 1997, Raschio, 1987; Uehara, 1986).

The negative effects reported were an overall sense of feeling different, changed friendships with loss of support from previous friendships (Martin, 1986; Brabant, Palmer & Gramling, 1990; Yoshida, 2003), loss of place and sense of belonging (Leembruggen-Kallberg, 1997), and the negative effects of increased psychological distress resulting in limited use of available student support services (Gaw, 2000). Two studies (Raschio, 1987; Martin, 1986) utilized mixed method cross-sectional designs with both qualitative and quantitative data, which enriched the data collected but may have reduced the number of respondents willing to answer the questions. The positive and negative effects on spouses of the Foreign Service lifestyle is an important part of this study.

Reentry Adjustment and Individual Values Change

Uehara (1986), using a fixed relational cross-sectional design, investigated the psychological, social and physiological reactions involved in reentry adjustment, and found changes in value structures in the individual contributed the most to feelings of loneliness, anxiety, apathy, loss, and relationship problems. This finding was shared by Adler (1977, as cited in Uehara, 1986) in her study of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers, Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) in their study of Fulbright grantees, and Raschio (1987)

in his study of American college students. Uehara's study (1986), which included 74 American college students returning from overseas studies and a control group of 58 American college students who had taken long trips domestically, found not only a greater amount of value changes among the international sojourners, but also reaffirmed that reentry was different from domestic return home and substantiated the greater amount of distress associated with reentry. This study looks at value changes in terms of participants reports of difficulties with cultural reintegration, interpersonal relationships and feelings of grief and loss.

Issues of grief and loss are further discussed by Lester (2001) in a theoretical dissertation on reentry adjustment, in which the researcher developed the Lester Global Reentry Adjustment Module (L-GRAM), a program designed to assist returnees in resolving their reentry adjustment difficulties. The researcher discussed a triad of losses for those returning from a sojourn overseas, composed of the loss of multiple cultures, the loss of the international culture of their group abroad, and the loss of the home culture as it had changed while the sojourner was overseas. These losses, Lester (2001) perceived, are experienced by returnees as personal losses, and the lack of social support from families, friends, and employers results in a situation of disenfranchised grief. The issue of grief and loss was also addressed by Stringham (1993), who in a qualitative cross sectional study of three missionary families at alternating time frames in the reentry process, expressed longings for differing aspects of their life overseas, and deep emotional turmoil from the absence of their previous role identity and cultural losses. These studies are reviewed as they inform issues of grief and loss in this study.

The importance of social support from families and friends was also found to be very important in determining stress among military commanders' spouses (Massello, 2007), with social support negatively correlated to stress. The sampling frame was spouses living overseas, not spouses after reentry, and a state of emotional stress is not as severe as emotional distress, but the support of families and friends appears not only to be shown in research, but intuitively as well.

The reentry studies discussed thus far look at the experiences of culture shock and reentry as a two-part process, going overseas and coming back home. In today's world, however, many occupations take people back and forth between overseas and home a number of times. This is a typical experience for Foreign Service Officers and their spouses, and presents the question in this study of whether the reentry experience is different when the sojourner spouse has gone through the cycle of overseas assignment and return more than one time. For this, multiple cyclical curves theory is discussed next.

Multiple Cyclical Curves Theory and Foreign Service Spouses

Limited references were found in the literature regarding multiple sojourners, people who have experienced more than one reentry, as is the case with U.S. Department of State Foreign service spouses, and whether multiple reentries make reentry adjustment more or less difficult. One theoretical article (Onwumechili et al., 2003) posits the concept of "cyclical curves" or "multiple reacculturation" to explain multiple reentries. The cyclical curves are a continuation of the W-curve theory, and each sojourn-reentry cycle completes an additional W-curve. Leembruggen-Kallberg (1997) in a qualitative cross-sectional study of eight women who had lived in three or more cultures, found a repetitive pattern of adaptation cycles in acculturation to varied new cultures, begging the

question of whether there is a pattern of adaptation cycles to multiple reentries, or whether repeated reentries are easier or more difficult. Sussman (2001), in her study of 44 returned American business managers, found that 11 had more than one reentry experience, and of the 11, 8 reported that subsequent reentries were as difficult or more difficult than the first. This study investigates the issue of multiple reentries in the U.S. Foreign Service, and whether there appears to be an association between the number of reentries and the level of difficulty reported among spouses in this group..

There is also disagreement in the literature regarding the effect of the overseas experience on reentry adjustment. One school of thought is that those who adapt well to life overseas have greater difficulty with reentry adjustment than those who do not adapt well (Montgomery, 1984, Smith, 1975, as cited in Sussman, 1986), believing that the changes in attitudes and perceptions from the overseas sojourn make it more difficult to integrate into the home culture. The other school of thought is that sojourners who adapt well overseas have less difficulty with their reentry adjustment than those who do not adapt well overseas (Adler, 1981, as cited in Sussman, 1986), as they have learned coping skills in adjusting to a new place and have developed a wider cultural perspective. In an unpublished study of 35 Foreign Service families and their adjustment to relocation, commissioned by the U.S. Department of State (Steinglass & Edwards, 1993), it was found that for adult members of the family, there was little carry-over between previous experiences at post and their current adjustment in the U.S., but that previous experiences at post were negatively associated with the reentry experience in the U.S. for children. . This study is informed by both schools of thought and the previous unpublished Foreign

Service study to determine in this group of spouses, whether the type of adjustment to the last overseas posting is associated with reentry adjustment.

As stated in the Introduction, the theoretical perspective for this study is the ecological approach to the person-in-environment perspective. In this study, this refers to how the spouse interacts with, relates to, influences and is influenced by the larger social systems within which she/he operates. The family is one of the three larger social systems identified in the Introduction with which the Foreign Service spouse relates and interacts, the other two being the U.S. Department of State and the Foreign Service lifestyle. Indeed, as the Foreign Service family goes through multiple moving cycles and other life changes together, the mutual influence of the spouse and family cannot be overlooked in this study. The literature review therefore now turns to a brief review of the theories of family systems, individual psychosocial development, and the family life cycle to provide the framework in which this research looks at family dynamics. This literature is reviewed as this study addresses spouse reentry adjustment from the person-in-environment perspective, viewing spouse adjustment in relation to larger social systems in her/his environment, among which the family is primary.

Person-in-Environment: An Ecological Perspective

This study utilizes the ecological perspective of the person-in-environment framework, which describes the person as operating in relationship with larger social systems in their social environment. This perspective has long been used as a fundamental belief system in social work practice, and encompasses a range of thought regarding the relationship between factors internal to the person, and external. It integrates previous thought, strongly influenced by the field of psychology, that

individual factors are the cause of a person's problems, with the latter belief that problems are caused by external factors in the environment and social situations (Cooper & Lesser, 2002; Kondrat, 2002), thus looking at both the person and their environment. The relationship between the person and his/her environment in the ecological approach is one of mutual influence of one upon the other (Kondrat, 2002). According to Saleeby (1992), it is focused on the idea of the "goodness of fit" between the individual and his/her environment, and central to the ecological idea is "how the individual's needs, capacities, and opportunities for growth and the individual's ability to adapt to changing external demands are met by, provided for, and challenged by the environment". Further, this study views human beings not just as actors within the larger social systems, but as Kondrat (2002) stated, "co-constructors of their larger social environments"

General Family Systems, Psychosocial Development and Family Life Cycle Theories

General family systems theorists perceive the family as a natural social system. The members of the family system share deep emotional attachments, history, perceptions of the world and sense of purpose. This deep relationship between members leads to a fundamental belief in family systems theory, that any change in one member affects all other members of the family (Goldenburg & Goldenburg, 2004).

Carter and McGoldrick (1984, as cited in Armour, 1995) conceived the Family Life Cycle theory from family systems theory and Erikson's stages of individual development from early childhood through old age. Erikson (1950, as cited in Berzoff, Flanagan, & Hertz, 1996) developed a theory of psychosocial development, which states that individuals grow and develop over the period of their entire lives (Berzoff et al., 1996). The eight stages of individual psychosocial development, according to Erikson

are: infancy, early childhood, play stage, school age, adolescence, young adulthood, adulthood, and old age. Carter and McGoldrick (1984, as cited in Armour, 1995) conceptualized families, like individuals, as developing over time.

In this new conceptualization, Carter and McGoldrick (1984, as cited in Armour, 1995) observed six stages in the Family Life Cycle:

1. Unattached Young Adult – This is a period of emotional separation from one's family of origin and taking responsibility for oneself.
2. Newly Married Couple – The newly married couple establishes their way of living together as a couple in a relationship that allows for the development of each. Also important at this stage is finding a mentoring relationship and establishing a career.
3. Family with Young Children – The couple system needs to make space for a new generation to enter the system, taking on the challenges and satisfaction of parenting roles.
4. Family with Adolescents – The family needs to develop flexibility to deal with adolescents and allow them more freedom with the previously set boundaries. The married couple also needs to attend to midlife relationship and career challenges.
5. Launching Children and Moving On – At this stage, the family adjusts to "exits and re-entries" into the system by children and grandparents. Family relationships need to be realigned with adult children and aging parents, and disabilities and death of grandparents become new challenges.

6. Family in Later Life – The family generational roles shift at this stage. Issues of the death of a spouse or adult child arise. The system is focused on supporting the younger generation and maintaining the older generation.

According to the family life cycle theory, families move through time in a series of stages of experience, each with developmental crises and tasks. The challenges of each stage affect all members of the family system. From a family systems and family life cycle perspective, the particular stresses of "third culture kids" or "global nomads" (Pollock, 1999; McCaig, 1994, as cited in Pollock, 1999; Eakin, 1988; Cockburn, 2002) can be seen as affecting each member of the family. This can also apply to the impact of the parents' adjustment on the children, as was found in the Steinglass and Edwards (1993) unpublished study for the U.S. Department of State, which showed that children's adjustment to return home is related to their family's, and that the mother may have more psychological influence on their readjustment than the father. The influence of the spouse on family members, and vice versa, is explored in this study.

O'Donnell (1987) developed a model of the family life cycle as it applies to a missionary family, combining family life cycle stages, individual psychosocial stages, and mission stages of assignment overseas and return. The point where all three stages intersect is referred to as the family's "current developmental status". This model adds to the family life cycle model and applies to the situation of families that cross between home and host cultures. O'Donnell's model depicts families going through three developmental stages at the same time: the family life cycle stage, the developmental stage of each individual in the family system, and the stage of acculturation or reacculturation the family is in with respect to the career pattern. This model provides

useful information for looking at the family of the Foreign Service spouse; not only is the family going through life cycle stages and transitions, each individual in the family unit is going through stages and transitions also, with the additional frequent transitions into and out of cultures, including reentry back to the U.S.

The employee spouse, as family systems theory states, can also affect the accompanying spouse and vice versa. In a secondary analysis of quantitative data of from a study of 101 Israeli military couples who move frequently, Westman & Etzion (1995) concluded that occupational stress is more than a work problem – it is a family and spouse-to-spouse problem as well. They found that an officer's spouse is exposed to the stressors of the career and social disruption caused by frequent moves and affected by them, and the stressors affect one another bi-directionally. However, in a study of 346 American Army spouses who lived in Europe (Burrell, Adams, Durand, & Daly, 2006) found that the number of moves in a military career was positively correlated with a sense of well-being, Army satisfaction and marital satisfaction, but it was the absence of the employee spouse on deployments of thirty days or more that had a strong negative correlation with the same three variables. An inter-relationship of spouse-to-spouse repatriation adjustment among international corporate employees and their spouses was found by Black and Gregersen (1991), who raised the possibility that the employee and spouse adjustments were similar due to the mutual influence of one upon the other.
The Foreign Service spouse also lives her life in relationship to the cross cultural lifestyle of internationally mobile spouses, and the literature on the experiences of these spouses is explored next.

Literature on Spouses

The literature on spouse repatriation is limited. The corporate world has investigated reentry adjustment for employees and families, to determine factors that impact the returned employee's job performance. U.S. business research has determined that approximately 25% of employees who return from assignments overseas leave their company within one year of repatriation, costing international corporations great financial and human resource losses (Black, 1989, as cited in Black & Gregerson, 1991). This research led to further investigation of the factors associated with high employee attrition upon return, including the readjustment of the spouse.

In this endeavor, two studies with similar methodologies and questions investigated the adjustment of the corporate employee's spouse as well as the employee. The first study was conducted by Black and Gregerson (1991) in a fixed relational cross-sectional study of 125 American businessmen and spouses who returned to the U.S. after overseas assignment; the other, conducted by Gregersen and Stroh (1997) with 104 Finnish corporate employees and spouses who returned to Finland after an overseas assignment. The results of the two studies agreed that a lower social status upon return home and poorer housing had a negative relationship to reentry adjustment for both employees and spouses. Both studies hypothesized that pre-return training would be significant in minimizing reentry distress, but were unable to determine this factor due to a restricted number of participants who had received pre-return training.

The results of the two studies differed, however, on three factors: the association between age at reentry, total length of time overseas, and length of time since return

home and reentry adjustment. Black and Gregersen (1991) in their questionnaire sample of 125 American repatriates and 76 spouses who had sojourned to 26 different countries around the world, found that age had a positive relationship with reentry transition, and total length of time spent overseas had a negative relationship with reentry adjustment for both employees and spouses. Interestingly, the length of time since reentry, which averaged 9 months for the sample, did not appear to be related to reentry adjustment for either employee or spouse, except for the employee's work adjustment. Gregersen repeated this study (Gregersen & Stroh, 1997) with a Finnish sample of repatriates (125) and spouses (56) who sojourned to 31 countries around the world. In contrast to Black and Gregersen's study (1991), Gregersen and Stroh found that age was not necessarily related to reentry adjustment for Finnish employees and spouses, nor was the total length of time overseas; however, the length of time since reentry did appear significant for both the Finnish repatriate employees and their spouses.

The differences in the results of the two studies were: the older sojourners and those who had spent shorter periods of time overseas were found to have less reentry adjustment difficulty for the American sample, but these factors were not at all related for the Finnish sample; the length of time since reentry was found negatively related to reentry adjustment for the Finns, but not at all related for the Americans. These differences were attributed to cultural differences between the two countries by Gregersen and Stroh (1997), with Finland being a more homogeneous culture and more predictable to the homecomer than the U.S.; or, additionally, could be the tendency of Finnish employers to allow more "home leave" trips back to re-acclimate employees and families to the home culture during overseas sojourns. Both studies inform this study as

they were unique in considering the readjustment of the spouse as well as the employee, identifying the influence of one partner upon the other, and identifying factors for continued research regarding the influence of housing, social status, pre-return training, age, total years lived overseas and length of time since reentry. However, since these studies' methodologies involved sending questionnaires to both partners, it cannot be determined whether the answers reflected individual perceptions of the employee and spouse, or were derived together. These two studies also inform this study regarding findings on the effect of age, total length of time overseas, and length of time since reentry on the reentry adjustment of spouses.

There is an anecdotal literature (Hughes, 1999; Fenzi, 1994; Linderman & Hess, 2002) by Foreign Service family members, which describe the Foreign Service spouse as:

1. An expert mover, as mobility anywhere in the world is required.
2. Being the "wife of" instead of an identity easily transferable to a new location.
3. An unpaid employee and unofficial representative of the Foreign Service, who should have knowledge of foreign languages and foreign affairs, though not required.
4. An expert party organizer and planner for small to large groups at short notice.
5. Not likely a career person due to mobility requirements, though short-term work between moves is possible.
6. An unofficial representative of the U.S. government.

The spouse experience in the U.S. Foreign Service has changed since the early days, when American culture supported the role of the non-career spouse, representational entertaining was required, and a spouse was also evaluated on the career

employee's annual review. No longer are spouses required to serve in representational (official) capacities, though some still do to establish host country contacts for the employee, and no longer are they evaluated on the Employee Efficiency Review (EER). However, as noted by Hughes (1999), who wrote about the role of the Foreign Service spouse from her experience growing up as a "third culture kid" (TCK) in a U.S. Department of State family, a career in the U.S. Foreign Service still probably affects spouses more than any other occupation, due to the required international mobility and frequency of moves by the entire family.

Foreign Service spouses are not all born and raised in the U.S. Some are born in the U.S. and raised overseas, and some are Foreign Born spouses, born and raised overseas, who may or may not be U.S. citizens. The difficulties experienced by Foreign Born spouses is documented in a popular press book (Bender, 2002), in which the author, a Foreign Born spouse herself, writes anecdotal accounts of the experiences she and others have had accompanying the Foreign Service employee. The Foreign Born spouse, according to Bender (2002), not only experiences culture shock during overseas assignments, but also when serving in the U.S., as it is not her/his native culture. An arrival in Washington, D.C. or another U.S. city might, in fact, be more difficult for the Foreign Born spouse than arrival at an overseas, due to the lack of a support structure as offered in an Embassy community overseas, especially in regard to housing and a closer community of spouses in similar situations. This study will address the situation of Foreign Born spouses in attempt to determine whether they as a group have more distress upon "reentry" than American born spouses or American spouses raised in the U.S. and overseas.

A relatively new phenomenon is the presence of male spouses in the U.S. Foreign Service. The number of male spouses is still small, estimated to be about 15-20% (FLO, 2007), but increasing, as the number of women now admitted to the Foreign Service has greatly increased over the past five years. There has not been a study on male Foreign Service spouses, but the increasing trend will require future investigation (FLO, 2007). One male spouse (Kerr, 2002) took a poll of the adjustment of seven male spouses to the U.S. Foreign Service, who accompanied their wives on assignment to Poland. He found that three of the seven men he interviewed were successful in living the lives of trailing spouses, three were not, and one was too new to the experience to know. The three who were successful reported they had surmounted their difficulties by themselves; the three who were less successful expected more support and assistance with their particular situation from the U.S. Department of State, though they had not received it. The author stated that more needs to be known about the problems of the male Foreign Service spouse to prevent attrition of talented female Foreign Service Officers.

Gender differences were also found in a study of U.S. military commanders and their spouses, though not in regards to reentry adjustment, with wives of commanders reported to have higher levels of stress than the husbands of commanders, when controlled for representative numbers in each group (Massello, 2007). This finding was not necessarily related to gender, however, as it was determined there were differing levels of participatory expectations in the military for the male and female spouses groups; however, it was the only study found which attempted to look at male spouses. This study has included male spouses in the sample, and looks at whether the male spouses who responded indicated difficulties in reentry different from the female spouses.

Social Work Literature Related to Reentry Adjustment

This study is largely intended to help inform social work professionals about reentry adjustment difficulties and the experiences that may be unique to accompanying spouses and family members that may affect their reentry process. Only one previous study in the field of social work was found that investigates the experiences of families with an internationally mobile lifestyle (Steinglass & Edwards, 1993), which has value to this study in that it addresses issues of family members, but does not focus on the reentry phase of international moves., In addition, the Steinglass and Edwards (1993) work is an unpublished pilot study not available to the general public. With the exception of the unpublished Steinglass and Edwards study (1993) of Foreign Service families for the U.S. Department of State, additional literature in the field of social work is almost nonexistent regarding reentry adjustment and intervention strategies (Choi, 2003; Marzin, 2004). In particular, Choi (2003) addresses general interventions by social workers in the corporate world which could help mitigate the numbers of international corporation employees who leave overseas assignments early or leave the company after repatriation. He (Choi, 2003) outlines a role for occupational social workers beginning with assessing the prospective overseas employee and spouse adaptability to a foreign environment, organizing pre-departure training for employee and spouse, overseas support systems, and job location assistance and repatriation counseling in preparation for reentry. However, the author does not further specify the social work repatriation intervention strategy for social workers, nor has such a strategy been found in the literature.

Marzin (2004), using a quantitative cross-sectional design, studied the general reentry adjustment knowledge base of social workers in a sample of 31 social workers

with MSW degrees or higher, 24 of whom were respondents to a survey sent to alumnae of the Smith College School for Social Work, and 7 others recruited in snowball fashion. Amongst these 31 highly trained social workers the researcher found some, but limited, knowledge of the reentry phenomenon. Those most knowledgeable had personally experienced overseas travel. The sample size was too small to make generalizations about social workers knowledge of reentry, but Marzin (2004) made recommendations for future social work research of individuals experiencing reentry distress and the inclusion of reentry adjustment in social workers' training.

The reentry experience of U.S. Foreign Service spouses has not been found in the empirical literature nor reported in the reentry literature, with the exception of the unpublished, contracted study of families by Steinglass and Edwards (1993). This study has been conducted to provide more information in the social work literature.

The methodology utilized in conducting this study, including the specific research questions, research method, data collection, sample, and data analysis used is discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to understand the factors associated with the reentry adjustment of U.S. Department of State Foreign Service spouses in the context of the social work profession's person-in-environment perspective. Foreign Service spouses are married to Foreign Service Officers, otherwise known as diplomats, who serve in embassies and missions overseas and on assignments back to the U.S. The term "reentry adjustment" in this study refers to the spousal re-adaptation to the home culture after an extended sojourn abroad (Gaw, 2000). Further, reentry research (Gaw, 2000; Onwumechili et al., 2003; Sussman, 1986, 2001, 2002) has shown that many people experience a period of "reentry distress", which refers to the psychological, emotional, and physical symptoms of returning home, which can range from a sense of not belonging to anxiety and depression.

The primary research question of this study is, "What factors are associated with the reentry adjustment of U.S. Foreign Service spouses?" An exploratory descriptive cross-sectional design is used, and the method is quantitative and qualitative, with the majority of the study quantitative in nature.

There are also four sub-questions in this study, which are:

1. What are the demographic characteristics of a national membership group of Foreign Service spouses?

2. What relationship exists between the demographic characteristics of a national membership group of Foreign Service spouses and their reentry adjustment?
3. What relationship exists between selected non-demographic variables as reported by a national group of Foreign service spouses and their reentry adjustment?
4. Are reentries distressful for Foreign Service spouses?

Research Method and Design

The research design used in this study is an exploratory descriptive cross-sectional design with a mixed method, both quantitative and qualitative. The rationale for the use of this method is: (a) to find whether there is a relationship between the independent and dependent variables, in order to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon of reentry adjustment as experienced by U.S. Foreign Service spouses, and (b) to learn more about the individual experience of the spouses. As research on U.S. Department of State spouses has not been found in the published empirical reentry literature, there is little known about reentry adjustment in this population outside the popular press and anecdotal accounts. Further, the nature of Foreign Service life, with multiple assignments both overseas and back home, provides a new dimension to reentry adjustment thought, that of multiple reentries.

Data Collection Instrument and Data

The data collection instrument used in this study is a 50-item questionnaire composed primarily of quantitative, but also qualitative data (see Appendix B). The quantitative questions seek information which is either demographic or nondemographic using a yes/no, numerical or multiple choice answer format; the qualitative questions are

open-ended and seek information which is impressionistic. The research is retrospective in nature, in that the questions refer to participants' experiences with situations in the past.

The demographic data is composed of questions framed by this researcher from frequently researched demographic characteristics, using a yes/no and numerical answer format. The nondemographic data is composed of a yes/no, numerical and multiple choice format framed by this researcher from previous reentry research, family systems and personal knowledge.

The demographic data collected includes the following: whether participants were born and raised in the US, foreign born and raised, or raised in the US and overseas; their current location in the US or overseas; their age, gender, racial/ethnic identity; educational level, family composition, current employment and educational status; and the participants' current marital status, years as a Foreign Service spouse, and total months lived overseas. These correlate to questions 1-13 of the questionnaire (see Appendix B). Some of these variables have been investigated in previous reentry research, as discussed in the literature review, but rarely and not as extensively, among spouses.

The non-demographic independent variables in this study include some concerned with the last overseas assignment prior to reentry, followed by others concerned with the last reentry. The reason these two periods of time were chosen is to gain more information regarding the influence of the last overseas assignment on the subsequent reentry experience, as posited in some of the reentry literature (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Huff, 2001; Rohrlich & Martin, 1991; Gregersen & Stroh, 1991), and the influence

of the process of reentry itself, as found in other reentry literature (Adler, 1981; Martin, 1984; Sussman, 1986, 2001, 2002; Lester, 2001). The overseas information researched in this study includes the region of the participants' last overseas assignment, the level of hardship at the overseas assignment, life satisfaction at the last assignment, employment/volunteer work and degree of participation in activities overseas, and whether reentry information was received prior to the last reentry. The post-reentry information researched includes: the length of time since the last reentry, family composition at reentry, volunteer involvement and employment after reentry, and the participants' "cultural identity change" after serving overseas. Information was sought regarding the last reentry in this study, as it was assumed that the most recent reentry would be the most easily remembered. These variables are contained in questions 14-40 and 42-44 of the questionnaire (see Appendix B).

The cultural identity change scale used in this study was developed by Sussman (2002) and is composed of three questions (questions 42-44) which, in at least a preliminary way, appeared to indicate cultural identity change after an overseas sojourn. These questions assess whether the respondents sense a change in their cultural identity with yes/no answers to three statements that determine whether they felt "less American", "part of a host culture" or a more "global person" after returning from their last overseas assignment. Two changes were made to the Sussman scale to make these questions, which had been designed for teachers who sojourned to Japan, more applicable to Foreign Service spouses who had lived in many different parts of the world. Question 43 was changed from Sussman's "I feel more Japanese since my assignment" to "I feel/felt more a part of a host culture I lived in than a part of the U.S. culture", and the initial

words to each question "I feel …" was changed to "I feel/felt…" , as most spouses in the sample were beyond the six month initial reentry period. The validity and reliability of these items was not measured by Sussman (2002). The scoring is done by comparing the yes and no responses for each question to the total reentry adjustment scores.

The demographic and nondemographic independent variables are then correlated with the dependent variable, reentry adjustment, to determine if there is an association between the variables and the reentry adjustment of the study participants.

The dependent variable, reentry adjustment, is measured using the standardized Homecomer Culture Shock Scale (HCCS), a 23-item self-report scale developed by Fray (1988) to measure the reverse culture shock of American missionary children returning home to the U.S. The HCSS was designed as a measure of adjustment problems and concomitant psychological reentry distress, and was shown in Fray's study (1988) to have a positive significant correlation with three psychometrically derived instruments that measure depression, anxiety, and alienation. Fray's results showed a correlation with the Trait Anxiety Scale of .45, with the Beck Depression Inventory of .42, and a lower, though still significant, correlation with the Dean Alienation Scale of .27.

Fray's Homecomer Culture Shock Scale (HCSS) is comprised of five subscales: Culture Distance (CD), Interpersonal Distance (ID), Grief (GR), Culture Shock (CS) and Moral Distance (MD). This study utilizes a 20-item HCCS without the MD scale, as did Huffman (1989) in her 20-item questionnaire for adult missionaries, and as Fray did in his analysis. The reliability coefficient of the CS scale (which is a sum of the CD, ID, and GR scales) was found by Huffman (1989) to be .80, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .92 for internal reliability. Fray (1988) found in a test-retest of the HCSS,

that the CS scale had a reliability coefficient of .80. The HCSS as used in this study is found in question #41 a-t (see Appendix A).

The HCSS is scored by the degree to which each statement is reported by the participant to have applied to her/him during the first six months of reentry, on a likert-type scale from 1 (Not True of Me) to 5 (Very True of Me). The CS scale, the total sum for all items, indicates the reentry culture shock score of the participants; the higher the score, the more difficult and the more psychologically distressful the reentry adjustment. The total sum of the CS scale has a range of 20 (Not True of Me), indicating low reentry culture shock/reentry adjustment difficulties, to 100 (Very True of Me), indicating very high reentry culture shock/reentry adjustment difficulties).

This researcher changed Fray's questions from the present tense to the past tense, as the Foreign Service spouses who were participants were responding to their memories of their last return, which was more than 6 months in the past. An example of this is the statement, "I experience difficulty with the overall pace of life", which was changed to "I experienced difficulty with the overall pace of life". Also, one of Fray's 20 items which did not apply to the Foreign service spouse population, "I feel apprehensive about American dating practices", as by definition spouses are married, was replaced by, "My closest friends were people who had overseas experience".

The qualitative data in this study is composed of two open-ended short answer questions which ask about the spouses' reentry experiences during their last reentry, and suggestions for assisting future spouses. These questions are open-ended so participants may share what they consider important and to add the rich data of personal individual experience to inform this study and future research.

Sample and Recruitment of Participants

The study sample is composed of 158 Foreign Service spouses (154 female and 4 male) who responded to a questionnaire sent to 580 potential participants, a return rate of 27 percent. The age range of the respondents is 29 to 97; the racial/ethnic composition of the sample is 143 Caucasians, 6 Hispanics, 3 African Americans, 5 Asian/Pacific Islanders and 1 who identified herself as "½ Hispanic and ½ Caucasian".

The participants are drawn from the total membership of the Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide (AAFSW), an approximately 600-member multi-ethnic organization for spouses of U.S. Department of State Foreign Service Officers (FSOs), excluding the approximately 30 members who are also employees of the U.S. Department of State. All participants are spouses who have accompanied the FSO employee overseas on assignment and have experienced at least one reentry to the U.S. The sample is composed of both male and female spouses. Exclusionary criteria was limited only to those who are currently employees of the U.S. Department of State and anyone who has not experienced a reentry. The sampling technique used in this study is nonrandom, to allow for the maximum number of respondents.

Participants in this study were recruited from the AAFSW membership using two methods: (a) first, an advance announcement of the study was sent to AAFSW members who subscribe to "Livelines", an AAFSW Yahoo groups online communications used by some AAFSW members, to inform members of the nature of the study and the forthcoming questionnaire (see Appendix A, "Livelines Announcement"), and (b) second, the questionnaire (see Appendix B, "Foreign Service Spouse Questionnaire") and informed consent forms, (see Appendix C, "Informed Consent Form") were mailed to all

AAFSW members on the current membership list (see Appendix D, "Institution Approval Letter"), excluding members who are employees of the U.S. Department of State. Members received an extra copy of the informed consent form for their records. Those who chose to participate were asked to fill out the questionnaire and sign one copy of the informed consent and return it, along with the completed questionnaire, to the researcher in a pre-stamped self-addressed envelope. Diversity was sought in the sample by including both male and female spouses and spouses of all racial and ethnic groups.

The participants in this study were protected according to the basic ethical principles of research involving human subjects: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. The potential respondents were treated as autonomous agents by receiving, along with the questionnaire, the informed consent form detailing their rights of choice to participate (see Appendix C, "Informed Consent Form"). The subjects' beneficence and justice to the individuals choosing to participate was considered by this researcher throughout the study, in development of the study design, and instrument, conduct of the study, and the data analysis. The potential benefit of understanding more about their own reentry and assistance to other spouses was stated in the informed consent form accompanying the questionnaire (see Appendix C), but the possibility of slight risk was also addressed, with a list of local and national resources for seeking help should the questionnaire evoke issues in need of attention. Further, the documentation as required by the Human Subjects Review (HSR) Board of the Smith College School for Social Work was submitted, reviewed, and approved by the HSR committee (see Appendix E).

The researcher in this study is a Foreign Service spouse and familiar with overseas living with the U.S. Department of State and the experience of multiple

reentries. Though this has been controlled for as much as possible, there could be an information bias due to closeness to the material. There is also the possibility of selection bias, as the researcher is a member of AAFSW, though only recently joined. In the case where a spouse is personally known by the researcher, she/he has not been included in the study.

Data Analysis

The data analysis of this mixed method study utilizes statistical techniques for the quantitative data and content analysis for the qualitative data. The data in this study did was not normally distributed, that is, it did not constitute a normal bell-shaped curve, so nonparametric tests were used for the analysis. The distribution of the data was determined by looking at the skewness and kurtosis of the variables being tested. Since the Culture Shock scale had a kurtosis greater than 2.00 (2.86), which indicated the data was not normally distributed, nonparametric measures were used.

The nonparametric tests utilized in this study were the Mann-Whitney U, the Kruskal-Wallis, and the Spearman's rho. The Mann-Whitney U is the non-parametric test of difference used when you are comparing two groups; it is used in the same situations where we would normally use t-tests to compare the means of two groups. Instead of comparing the means of two groups, it compares the mean ranks of two groups. The Mann-Whitney is used frequently in this study's analysis to compare the culture shock of two variables, such as two age groups, to find out if there is a difference in culture shock between the two groups. The Kruskal-Wallis is the non-parametric test of difference when used there are more than two groups being compared, in place of the Oneway Anova parametric test. The Spearman's rho is the nonparametric alternative to

the Pearson correlation coefficient, used in this study to determine whether a correlation exists between two variables.

The findings from the data analysis, including tables to demonstrate these findings are reported in the next chapter, Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV
FINDINGS

This study is designed to explore singular or clusters of factors which may influence the difficulty or ease of the reentry process by looking at spouses in the context of the external structures and demands with which they negotiate their lives. The findings include primary source information of the challenges of being a Foreign Service spouse reentering the U.S., and how spouses manage and act as co-constructors of their lives.

The primary research question in this study is, "What factors are associated with the reentry adjustment of U.S. Foreign Service spouses?" Research sub-questions were generated to help organize an understanding of the results. The sub-questions are:

1. What are the demographic characteristics of the sample?
2. What relationship exists between the demographic characteristics and their reentry adjustment?
3. What relationship exists between specified nondemographic sample characteristics and reentry adjustment?
4. Are reentries distressful for Foreign Service spouses?

The results of this study are both quantitative and qualitative. As the primary findings are quantitative, they are reported first, followed later in this chapter by the qualitative findings.

Overall Study Findings

The quantitative results are divided into descriptive and relational findings. The descriptive findings are one-variable results which describe the sample, and include demographic and nondemographic independent variables (which apply to both overseas and reentry experiences), and the dependent variable, composed of the 20 items that make up the Culture Shock Scale (or reentry adjustment) of the HCSS (Fray, 1988). The relational findings are the associations and correlations found between two variables, which are the independent variables and the dependent variable.

Descriptive Findings

- The demographic characteristics of the sample were: primarily female, Caucasian, 62.5 (mean) years of age, highly educated, married to an Foreign Service Officer (FSO) for 25.8 (mean) years, with an average of 2.32 children each; 40% were working, 30% were volunteering and 10% were retired fulltime at the time of the study.
- The nondemographic characteristics of the sample at their last overseas assignment were: primarily satisfied with their last overseas assignment, participated often in activities, almost 80% volunteered and 45% were employed, and of those who worked, most were satisfied with their jobs. Prior to their return to the U.S., most had not received reentry information.
- The nondemographic characteristics of the sample at reentry showed the majority (80%) had experience with previous reentries, while 20% were on their first reentry. 50% of the sample had been back in the U.S. for a long time, 10 or more years, and one-quarter had been back for a shorter time, three years or less. One-

half had young children and adolescents at reentry, and the other half had older children. They quickly became involved in their new lives, with two-thirds locating employment and volunteer work within the first six months, and 80% reported a high level of satisfaction with their jobs.

- The reliability statistics showed that the Cronbach's Alpha for the Total Scale of the HCSS, which measures Culture Shock (CS), is .943. This compares favorably with the Cronbach's Alpha of the CS scale used by Huffman (1989) of .92.
- The reentry culture shock (known as reverse culture shock or reentry adjustment difficulty) for the sample was low, with a mean level of culture shock at 35.67 on a scale of 20 – 100. This means that the level of reentry distress for this sample was halfway between slight to moderate on the HCSS scale (Fray, 1988).

Relational Findings

- Age and Culture Shock. A younger group of spouses ages 20's-40's had more culture shock than an older group ages 50-70's and above.
- Time as a Foreign Service Spouse and Culture Shock. Spouses who had been married to a FSO for a shorter period of time had more culture shock in reentry than those who had been married for a longer period of time.
- Number of Children and Culture Shock. Spouses with more children were found to have less culture shock than spouses with fewer children.
- Ages of Children at Reentry and Culture Shock. Spouses with older children had less culture shock than spouses with young children.
- Participation in Specific Activities Overseas and Culture Shock. Spouses who participated more in certain activities overseas (embassy activities, hosted

representational events, attended representational events, and made friends and interacted with the embassy community) had less culture shock than those who participated less in these activities.

- Participation in General Activities Overseas and Culture Shock. Spouses who participated in more activities in general, including embassy, representational, expatriate community activities and interacted with host country nationals, had lower culture shock in reentry than those who participated less in these activities.
- Length of Time Since Reentry and Culture Shock. Spouses who had been in the U.S. for less than 24 months had a higher level of culture shock than those who had been in the U.S. for more than 24 months.
- Obtained Information After Reentry and Culture Shock. Spouses who obtained reentry information after reentry experienced more culture shock than those who did not receive such information after reentry.
- Reentry Experience More Difficult Than Expected and Culture Shock. Spouses who stated their last reentry was more difficult than expected had more culture shock than those who stated their reentry was not more difficult than expected.

Qualitative Findings

- The first reentries are the most difficult.- the later reentries are less difficult.
- The challenge in later reentries is dealing with family readjustment to reentry.
- The return to familiar surroundings makes subsequent reentries easier.
- The Foreign Service lifestyle has pros and cons; friendships that are missed the most.
- The final reentry before retirement is also very difficult.

- More information about reentry is needed.
- Counseling or additional support should be made available for spouses and families

Specific Study Findings

The following section covers the descriptive, relational, and qualitative findings of this study in greater detail, including tables to help in understanding the results.

Descriptive Findings

Descriptive Demographic Findings

The sample is primarily female (154 female, 4 male), mostly U.S. born and raised (74.9% compared with 16.5% foreign born and 8.9% born and raised in the U.S. and overseas), ranging in age from 29 to 97 years of age, and the distribution somewhat skewed to an older population, with a sample mean of 62.5 years of age. They are primarily Caucasian (144 participants, 91.1% of the sample) with smaller representations of African American (3), Hispanic (6), Asian/Pacific Islander (5) and Hispanic American (1). As a group they are highly educated with 86.6% having a college or higher degree, married to a Foreign Service Officer for an average (mean) of 25.8 years (mean), with an average (mean) of 2.32 children per spouse. At the time of the study, 40% of the sample worked and 30% volunteered, with 20% retired and 10% unemployed.

Membership demographic data are not tabulated by the Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide (AAFSW), nor is data on spouses tabulated by the U.S. Department of State. However, the data gained from this study is thought to be reflective of the membership (AAFSW, 2007). The general Foreign Service spouse population, however, is thought to be younger in age, higher in the percentage of males

(estimated at 15-20%) and more diverse in racial/ethnic background, as a larger number of younger, female and minority FSOs have been hired in recent years (FLO, 2007).

These demographics are different from most previous reentry studies, in part by intent, as spouses and not employees were being studied, and by definition they are married, which is different from most studies done on singles populations, such as high school and college students, overseas teachers, and missionary children. The sample also includes male and female spouses not found in previous reentry research, and collected data on racial/ethnic background of participants, found only in Gaw (2000). The sample demographics by average age for this sample was older (62.5) compared to the American business executives and spouses studied by Black and Gregersen (1991), who averaged 41 years in age.

The following tables, 1-14, illustrate these descriptive demographic findings. Table 1 shows the vast majority of the sample (74.7%) was born and raised in the U.S. Foreign Born spouses were a smaller but significant component (16.5%) of the sample, and those who were raised in the U.S. and overseas was the smallest group (8.9%).

Table 1

Born and Raised

Where	*Frequency*	*Percent*
In the U.S.	118	74.7
Overseas (Foreign Born)	26	16.5
U.S. and Overseas	14	8.9
Total	158	100.0

Table 2 shows the majority (86.1%) of the sample was living in the U.S. at the time of the survey.

Table 2

Living U.S. or Overseas

Where	*Frequency*	*Percent*
Living in the U.S.	136	86.1
Living Overseas	22	13.9
Total	158	100.0

Table 3 shows the distribution of the sample by age group. The age range was from 29 to 97 years old and the median age was 62.5. The standard deviation was 13.75 years, which indicates that 90% of the sample was between 49 and 75 years old.

Table 3

Age Group Distribution

Age Range	*Frequency*	*Percent*	*Cumulative %*
20's and 30's	11	6.9	6.9
40's	13	8.2	15.1
50's	41	25.9	41.0
60's	41	25.9	66.9
70's and above	52	33.1	100.0
Total	158	100.0	100.0

Table 4 shows the vast majority of the spouse sample is female (97.5%).

Table 4

Gender

Gender	*Frequency*	*Percent*
Male	4	2.5
Female	154	97.5
Total	158	100.0

The racial/ethnic identity of the sample is primarily Caucasian (91.1%), as shown in Table 5, with Hispanics (3.8%), Asian/Pacific Islanders (3.2%) and African Americans (1.9%) also represented.

Table 5

Race

Racial/Ethnic Identity	*Frequency*	*Percent*
Caucasian	144	91.1
African American	3	1.9
Hispanic	5	3.2
Asian/Pacific Islander	5	3.2
Other (Hispanic/Caucasian)	1	.6
Total	158	100.0

Table 6 shows the marital status of the sample is primarily married (83.5%).

Table 6

Marital Status

Marital Status	*Frequency*	*Percent*
Married	132	83.5
Divorced	5	3.2
Separated	2	1.3
Widowed	19	12.0
Total	158	100.0

The range in the length of time the respondents had been Foreign Service spouses (married to a Foreign Service Officer) was between 26 months (2.16 years) and 744 months (62 years). Table 7 shows the mean, median, mode and standard deviation of the number of months the sample has been Foreign Service spouses. It shows that 90% of the sample has been a FS spouse for 174.82 to 449.18 months, or 14.6 to 37.4 years.

Table 7

Months FS Spouse

Statistic	*Value*
Mean	310.12 (25.8 years)
Median	312.00 (26.0 years)
Mode	360.00 (30.0 years)
Standard Deviation	137.18 (18.6 years)

The sample is a highly educated group, with 97.5 % with some college or higher degree, 43% with post graduate/masters degrees, as shown in Table 8. The 15 spouses with "other" degrees were 8 PhDs, 3 JDs, 3 RNs, and 1 Masters equivalency.

Table 8

Education

Education Level	*Frequency*	*Percent*	*Cumulative Percent*
High school	4	2.5	2.5
Some college	17	10.8	13.4
College degree	53	33.5	46.9
Post grad/Masters	68	43.3	90.4
Other	15	9.6	100.0

The number of children each spouse has ranges from 0-6. Table 9 shows the range, frequency and percentage of the number of children per spouse.

Table 9

Number of Children

Number of Children	*Frequency*	*Percent*
0	10	6.3
1	15	9.5
2	72	45.6
3	44	27.8
4	12	7.6
5	3	1.9
6	2	1.3
Total	158	100.0

In Table 10, it is shown that the mean number of children for this sample is 2.32, the median is 2.00, and the mode is 2. The mean number of children per family is similar to the U.S. average of 2.33, a statistic which covers all family income levels of children under age 18 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2007).

Table 10

Number of Children per Spouse/Family

Number Valid	158
Mean	2.32
Median	2.00
Mode	2

The ages of the spouses' children at the time of the study are organized by their birth order, with the first child being Child 1, the second child being Child 2, etc. Table 11 shows the number of respondents with 1 child, 2 children, etc. and the mean age range for each child by birth order. It also shows the 13 respondents have no children. The sample's children at the time of the study ranged from 1 to 66.

Table 11

Statistics on Ages of Sample Children at Time of Study by Birth Order

Statistic	*Child 1*	*Child 2*	*Child 3*	*Child 4*	*Child 5*	*Child 6*
Number	145	130	*58*	*16*	*5*	*2*
Not Applicable	13	28	100	142	153	156
Mean Age	34.35	32.23	34.45	41.94	50.40	45.00

Table 12 shows the age range of the sample's children at the time of reentry, which for all was in the past, and for some, many years ago. The numbers for this table were achieved through a calculation made by taking the children's' current ages and subtracting the number of years it has been since their reentry.

Table 12

Ages of Children at Last Reentry

Statistic	*Child 1*	*Child 2*	*Child 3*	*Child 4*	*Child 5*	*Child 6*
# Valid	144	127	57	16	5	2
Mean	22	20	18	17	19	17
Median	23	21	20	16	17	17
Youngest	1	0	1	6	5	12
Oldest	43	41	36	33	31	22

Table 13 describes the employment, volunteer, and retirement status of the sample at the time of filling out the questionnaire. Some categories overlap as many spouses reported they were doing more than one activity, such as working and volunteering. The table indicates approximately 10% is unemployed and 20% is retired, and of the remaining 70%, approximately 40% is working and 30% is volunteering. It is interesting to note that 7.6% described themselves as self-employed, a relatively new way of gaining and maintaining employment for mobile spouses.

Table 13

Employment Status

Level of Employment	*Frequency*	*Percent*
Unemployed	16	10.1
Employed Part-time	21	13.3
Employed Full-time	24	15.2
Volunteering	27	17.1
Volunteering and Employed	9	5.7
Retired	32	20.3
Volunteering and Retired	17	10.8
Self-employed	12	7.6
Total	158	100.0

There were only 2 out of the 158 spouses who were students at the time they took the questionnaire, as shown in Table 14. These spouses indicated that 1 was a full-time student, and 1 was a part-time student.

Table 14

Student

Student Status	*Frequency*	*Percent*
Student	2	1.3
Non-student	156	98.7
Total	158	100.0

Descriptive Non-demographic Findings

Overseas. The descriptive nondemographic findings of the sample while overseas showed a majority of the participants were mostly or completely satisfied with their last overseas assignment (79.1%), despite the fact that a small majority (51%) were assigned to hardship posts. The largest proportion of the sample (32.9%) was last assigned overseas to Europe and Eurasia, an area of the world which is considered to be closer culturally to the U.S. than the other 5 regions included in the study.

The findings also showed that the spouses were socially active as a group while overseas, with the majority "always or most of the time" participating in activities with host country nationals and other foreigners. It was only in one of the activity areas, the participation in embassy and embassy community activities, that the spouses' rated themselves as less active. They were also active in terms of employment and volunteering overseas. While on their last overseas assignment, 79.1% volunteered and of the 58.1% sought employment, 79.6% were employed. Further, those who were employed were completely or mostly satisfied with their jobs (78.5%) and/or their volunteer work (89.3%). These statistics are helpful to social work practitioners in working with other spouses in reentry, to look at the impact of what spouses do when overseas and its possible relationship to their reentry adjustment. Tables 15-26 demonstrate these descriptive nondemographic findings.

Table 15 shows that the largest number of spouses in the sample went to Europe and Eurasia (32.9%), and the smallest number went to the Near East (7.6%), on their last overseas assignment.

Table 15

Region of Last Assignment

Region	*Frequency*	*Percent*
Africa	25	15.8
East Asia and the Pacific	23	14.6
Europe and Eurasia	52	32.9
Near East	12	7.6
South and Central Asia	16	10.1
Western Hemisphere	30	19.0
Total	158	100.0

Table 16 makes it clear that the sample was almost equally divided between spouses who went to hardship posts vs. non-hardship posts on their last overseas assignment, with a slight majority having gone to a hardship post.

Table 16

Hardship Posts as Last Assignment

Hardship Post?	*Frequency*	*Valid Percent*
Yes	79	51.0
No	76	49.0
Missing Value	3	1.9
Total	158	

Table 17 refers to the responses of study participants to the question, "All in all, I was satisfied with my life at the last assignment," as self-reported, and shows that as a group, the spouses were quite satisfied with their lives prior to returning home.

Table 17

Life Satisfaction Overseas

Degree of Satisfaction	*Frequency*	*Percent*
Completely Agree	81	51.3
Mostly Agree	44	27.8
Somewhat Agree	20	12.7
Somewhat Disagree	7	4.4
Mostly Disagree	3	1.9
Completely Disagree	3	1.9
Total	158	100.0

Table 18 shows spouse participation in eight areas of activity overseas by the responses to the question, "While overseas I…", completed with one of the following:

Activity 1 – Participated in embassy activities.

Activity 2 – Participated in activities in expatriate organizations.

Activity 3 - Hosted representational events.

Activity 4 – Attended representational events.

Activity 5 - Interacted with host country nationals.

Activity 6 – Interacted with the larger expatriate community.

Activity 7 – Made friends and interacted mainly with the embassy community.

Activity 8 – Made an effort to learn as much as possible about local overseas culture.

Table 18 shows the level of participation of the sample in each of the 8 activity areas.

Table 18

Activities at Last Overseas Assignment

Level	*Act. 1**	*Act. 2*	*Act. 3*	*Act. 4*	*Act. 5*	*Act. 6*	*Act. 7*	*Act. 8*
Always	51.9	17.7	37.3	41.8	49.4	29.3	10.1	77.8
Often	34.2	46.8	25.3	34.2	36.1	49.0	38.6	17.7
Sometimes	13.3	25.9	22.8	20.9	13.9	20.4	44.3	4.4
Never	.6	8.9	13.9	3.2	.6	1.3	7.0	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

* Act. is an abbreviation for the word "Activity"

Table 18 (above) shows that the majority of the sample was active "Always" or "Often" in 7 out of the 8 activities. A majority was less active "Sometimes" or "Never" only on Activity 7, which addressed whether the spouses made friends and interacted mainly with the embassy community. These results show that most people were active, and they were most active in embassy activities (Activity 1), representation that involved entertaining local host country officials (Activities 3 and 4), and in relationships with host country nationals than in personal relationships within the embassy (Activity 7).

Table 19 demonstrates that the majority of spouses did volunteer work at their last overseas assignment (79.1%).

Table 19

Volunteer Work at Last Overseas Assignment

Volunteer work?	*Frequency*	*Percent*
Yes	125	79.1
No	33	20.9
Total	158	100.0

Table 20 shows that 78% of the spouses volunteered one day or more per week.

Table 20

Time Volunteered at Last Assignment

Days Volunteered	*Frequency*	*Valid Percent*	*Cumulative %*
Every day	6	4.9	4.9
2 + days/week	50	40.7	45.5
1 day/week	40	32.5	78.0
< 1-3 days/month	19	15.4	93.5
Total	123	100.0	100.0
Missing	35		

Table 21 shows a high level of spouse satisfaction (89.3%) with their volunteer work.

Table 21

Satisfaction with Volunteer Work Overseas

Level	*Frequency*	*Valid Percent*	*Cumulative %*
Completely Agree	51	41.8	41.
Mostly Agree	58	47.5	89.3
Somewhat Agree	10	8.2	97.5
Somewhat Disagree	3	2.5	100.0
Total	122	100.0	

Table 22 shows that over 50% (58.2%) sought employment during their last overseas assignment.

Table 22

Sought Employment on Last Overseas Assignment

Seek Employment?	*Frequency*	*Percent*
Yes	92	58.2
No	66	41.8
Total	158	100.0

Table 23 shows that 79.6% of those who sought employment overseas obtained employment outside the home, and another 5.4% indicated they had been self-employed.

Table 23

Obtain Employment Overseas

Obtain Employment?	*Frequency*	Valid *Percent*	Cumulative %
Yes	74	79.6	79.6
Self-employed	5	5.4	85.0
No	14	15.1	100.0
Total	93	100.0	
Missing	65		
Total	158		100.0

Table 24 shows the range in the length of employment at the last overseas assignment was 1 to 48 months, with 78.2% employed for 1-24 months. The mean and the median were similar (19.99 and 20.00) and the mode was 24 months (not shown).

Table 24

Length of Spouse Employment Overseas

Time in Months	*Frequency*	*Valid Percent*	*Cumulative %*
1 -12	28	35.9	35.9
13 - 24	33	42.3	78.2
25 - 36	13	16.6	94.9
37 - 48	4	5.1	100.0

Table 25 shows most employed spouses were employed in their field of interest.

Table 25

Employment in Field of Interest Employment at Last Assignment

Field of Interest?	*Frequency*	*Valid Percent*
Yes	66	82.5
No	14	17.5
Total	80	100.0
Not Applicable	78	
Total	158	

Table 26 shows that 78.5% of the 80 who were employed overseas mostly or completely agreed that they were satisfied with their overseas employment.

Table 26

Job Satisfaction at Last Overseas Assignment

Level	*Frequency*	*Valid Percent*	*Cumulative %*
Completely Agree	32	40.5	40.5
Mostly Agree	30	38.0	78.5
Somewhat Agree	15	19.0	97.5
Mostly Disagree	1	.6	100.0
Total	79	100.0	
Missing – N/A	79		
Total	158		

Reentry. The descriptive nondemographic findings of the sample during their reentry showed that most (78.3%) did not receive reentry information prior to their last return. Of those who did receive information, less than half (42.1%) of the information came from the Community Liaison Office (CLO) at overseas posts or the Family Liaison Office in Washington, both of which are charged with assisting spouses and families. The sample indicated that most had experienced reentry before, with 80% having had 2-9 reentries, and 20% on their first reentry. One-quarter of the sample had been back in the U.S. for three years or less and a large number had been back for over 10 years (50%). The sample also indicated that at the time of the last reentry, approximately 50% had young children or adolescents, and approximately 50% had children who were being launched or were grown and gone.

As was true overseas, most had become involved in volunteer work and/or employment soon after their last reentry. Almost two-thirds (63.3%) engaged in volunteer work, and of these, almost two-thirds (64%) began volunteering within their first 6 months back and 84% volunteered within their first year back. In addition, almost two-thirds sought employment (63.3%), and of these, 92.2% obtained employment. They found employment relatively quickly, with 65.3% of those seeking employment obtaining it within the first 6 months and 82.1% obtaining it within the first year back in the U.S. Further, of those who sought employment, most were employed in their field of interest (83.3%) and 80.9% said they were completely or mostly satisfied with those jobs. Tables 27-44 provide the descriptive nondemographic frequencies for this study.

Table 27 shows that more than three-quarters of the respondents did not receive reentry information while they were overseas. There was 1 missing value.

Table 27

Reentry Information Received Before Reentry

Received Information?	*Frequency*	*Valid Percent*
Yes	33	21.0
No	123	78.3
Not Applicable	1	.6
Total	157	100.0

Table 28 shows the use of online information prior to reentry was low, 13.9% of the entire sample. The spouses who answered Not Applicable (N/A) or gave no answer were de facto stating they had not used the internet.

Table 28

Online Information Before Reentry

Use Online?	*Frequency*	*Percent of Sample*	*Valid Percent*
Yes	22	13.9	21.4
No	81	51.3	78.6
Total	103	65.2	100.0
Not Applicable	50	31.6	
No Answer	5	3.2	
Total	158	100.0	

Table 29 addresses what reentry information was most useful to the sample. This question was answered by 38 spouses, with 120 indicating the question was not

applicable to them (110). or no answer was given (10). Of those who answered, the Community Liaison Office and the Family Liaison Office (CLO/FLO) were most useful.

Table 29

Most Useful Information Received Prior to Reentry

Information Source	*Frequency*	*Percent*	*Valid Percent*	*Cumulative %*
CLO/FLO	16	10.1	42.1	42.1
AAFSW	8	5.1	21.1	63.2
Retirement Seminar	4	2.5	10.5	73.7
Friends, family	9	5.7	23.7	97.4
Regional Psychiatrist	1	.6	2.6	100.0
Total	38	24.1	100.00	
Not Applicable	110	69.6		
No Answer	10	6.3		
Total	120	75.9		
Final Total	158	100.0		

Table 30 shows the study participants' lengths of time overseas between a previous reentry and their last reentry; i.e., how long they were assigned overseas before their last reentry. This shows that 54.2% of respondents were overseas for three years or less. The entries labeled "0" indicate those spouses who had not had been overseas before accompanying the employee overseas. Likewise, those labeled "0-1" year had been overseas for less than one year. There were three missing responses to this variable.

Table 30

Years Overseas Between Reentries

Number of Years	*Frequency*	*Valid Percent*
0	11	7.1
0-1	6	3.9
1-2	28	18.0
2-3	39	25.2
3-4	9	5.8
4-5	15	9.7
5-6	11	7.1
6-7	12	7.7
7-8	4	2.6
9-10	12	7.7
Over 10	8	5.2
(Range up to 23 years)		
Total	155	100.0

Table 31 shows the number of reentries the sample has made of 1 year or longer in duration, which are those that apply to this study. The zero in the number of reentries column indicates those who have been in the U.S. for less than one year (on their first reentry), but were on assignments to the U.S. for a period of at least two years.

Table 31

Number of Reentries Longer Than One Year

Number of Reentries	*Frequency*	*Valid Percent*	*Cumulative Percent*
0	3	1.9	1.9
1	30	19.1	21.0
2	48	30.6	51.6
3	43	27.4	79.0
4	18	11.5	90.4
5	9	5.7	96.2
6	3	1.9	98.1
7	1	.6	98.7
8	1	.6	99.4
9	1	.6	100.0
Total	157	100.0	

Table 32 shows the length of time since the participants' last reentry. The range in time is from 1 month to 46 years, with the highest frequency 10 years or longer in U.S.

Table 32

Length of Time Since Last Reentry

Years Since Reentry	*Frequency*	*Cumulative Percent*
1 Year or Less	16	10.1
1 – 2 Years	9	15.8
2 - 3 Years	15	25.3
3 - 4 Years	9	31.0
4 - 5 Years	8	36.1
5 – 6 Years	2	37.3
6 – 7 Years	7	41.8
7 – 8 Years	5	44.9
8 – 9 Years	2	46.2
9 – 10 years	6	50.00
10 Years and Over	79	100.00
(Range is 11-46 years)		
Total	158	

Table 33 shows the reentry family composition of the sample at the time of their last reentry. It is notable that nearly 20% (19.7%) had young children, nearly half the sample (45.6%) had young or adolescent children (45.6%), and 54.45% had children who

were being “launched” or were “grown and gone”. There are 11 missing values, 10 of which represent participants who had earlier stated they had no children.

Table 33

Reentry Family Composition

Family Life Stage	*Frequency*	*Valid Percent*	*Cumulative Percent*
Young Children	29	19.7	19.7
Adolescent Children	38	25.9	45.6
Launching Children	32	21.8	67.3
Children Grown and Gone	48	32.7	100.0
Total	147	100.0	

Table 34 shows that almost two-thirds of the sample engaged in volunteer work after reentry.

Table 34

Reentry Volunteer Work

Volunteer Work?	*Frequency*	*Percent*
Yes	100	63.3
No	58	36.7
Total	158	100.0

Table 35 demonstrates the length of time after reentry that respondents began volunteer work. As shown in Table 30, there were 58 missing values representing the 58 respondents who did not engage in volunteer work after reentry.

Table 35

Time in Months Until Reentry Volunteer Work Began

Time Until Began Volunteering	*Frequency*	*Valid Percent*
0 - 6 months	64	64.0
7 - 12 months	20	20.0
13 - 24 months	5	5.0
25 months or over	11	11.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 36 shows that 63.3% of the sample sought employment after reentry.

Table 36

Sought Employment After Reentry

Seek Employment?	*Frequency*	*Valid Percent*
Yes	102	63.3
No	56	36.7
Total	158	100.0

Table 37 shows the time after reentry when respondents began to seek employment. The majority of those who sought employment (65.3%) began to seek it in

the first 6 months of their reentry. There were 56 missing values, those who did not seek employment.

Table 37

Reentry Time to Seek Employment

Time to Seek	*Frequency*	*Valid Percent*
0 – 6 months	66	65.3
7 – 12 months	17	16.8
13 -24 months	6	5.9
25 months and over	12	11.0
Total	102	100.0

Table 38 shows that of the 102 who sought employment after reentry, 95 (92.2%) obtained employment.

Table 38

Obtained Employment in Reentry

Obtain Employment?	*Frequency*	*Valid Percent*
Yes	95	92.2
No	7	7.8
Total	102	100.0

Table 39 shows that 60.6% of those 95 who obtained employment did so in the first 6 months. There is one value missing.

Table 39

Months to Obtain Employment

Number of Months	*Frequency*	*Valid Percent*
0 – 6 months	57	60.9
6 -12 months	15	16.0
12 months – 2 years	5	5.4
2 – 3 years	10	10.7
3 – 4 years	4	4.3
4 - 6 years	3	3.3
Total	94	100.0

The next table (Table 40) shows that a large majority of those who attained employment after reentry were employed in their field of interest (83.3%). One person answered the question who had not answered the previous employment questions.

Table 40

Reentry Employment in Field of Interest

Field of Interest?	*Frequency*	*Valid Percent*
Yes	80	83.3
No	16	100.0
Total	96	

A large majority of the people employed after reentry were mostly or completely in agreement they were satisfied with their employment (81.3%), as shown in table 41.

Table 41

Job Satisfaction in Reentry

Level of Satisfaction	*Frequency*	*Valid Percent*
Completely Agree	37	38.5
Mostly Agree	41	42.7
Somewhat Agree	10	10.4
Somewhat Disagree	1.9	3.1
Completely Disagree	2	2.1
Total	96	100.0

The following three tables, Table 42 – 44, show the descriptive data from the Sussman Cultural Identity Change Scale (Sussman, 2002). Table 42 shows the "Yes" or "No" responses to the statement, "In some ways I feel/felt 'less American' than I did before my spouse's international assignment(s)", to which 75% of the spouses disagreed.

Table 42

Sussman 1: "Less American" After Assignment(s)

Feel "Less" American?	*Frequency*	*Percent*	*Valid Percent*
Yes	36	22.8	25.0
No	108	68.4	75.0
Total	14	8.9	

Table 43 shows the "Yes" and "No" responses to the second Sussman Cultural Identity Change statement, "I feel/felt more a part of a host culture I lived in than a part of the U.S. culture", to which 86% of the spouses disagreed.

Table 43

Sussman 2: Part of Host Culture

Part of Host Culture?	*Frequency*	*Percent*	*Valid Percent*
Yes	22	13.9	13.0
No	135	85.4	86.0
Total	157	100.0	

Table 44 shows the "Yes" and "No" responses to the third Sussman Cultural Identity Change statement, "I feel/felt that I a/was a more global or international person after my spouse's assignment", which was agreed to by a large majority, 94.9%.

Table 44

Sussman 3: More Global Person

More Global Person?	*Frequency*	*Percent*	*Valid Percent*
Yes	149	94.3	94.9
No	8	5.1	100.0
Total	157		

Descriptive Findings: The HCSS Culture Shock Scale Frequencies

HCSS mean. The descriptive, or frequency, findings for the Homecomer Culture Shock Scale ({HCSS}Fray, 1988), the measure used in this study to determine reentry adjustment (also known as homecomer culture shock, reverse culture shock, reentry distress), showed that reentry distress was relatively low for the sample of Foreign Service spouses.

The HCSS utilizes a likert-type scale for 20 items to determine whether the aspect of culture shock being measured pertained to the respondents during their first 6 months of their last reentry. The scale ranges from "Not True of Me", which is equal to a score of 1, to "Very True of Me", which is equal to a score of 5. The possible range in each respondent's answers, then, for the 20 items is from 20 to 100. The range of frequencies on the HCSS (the sum of all items) in this sample is 20 to 96. The mean of all HCCS items was 35.67, as shown in Table 45, which shows that the level of overall reentry adjustment difficulty and distress was in the slight to moderate range.

Table 45 also shows that the kurtosis and skewness values of the Culture Shock Scale data and demonstrates that the frequencies for this data are not normally distributed. This means that the data in this study does not follow a normal bell-shaped curve.

Table 45

Culture Shock Scale Statistics

Culture Shock (total)

Statistics	*Value*
Valid	154
Missing	4
Mean	35.67
Median	31.50
Standard Deviation	14.43
Variance	208.49
Skewness	1.56
Standard Error of Skewness	.195
Kurtosis	2.68
Std. Error of Kurtosis	.389
Minimum	20.00
Maximum	96.00

Sample distribution. The high kurtosis and skewness for this sample indicates that the frequencies for this sample do not follow a normal bell-shaped curve. Figure 1 (see Appendix G) is a histogram chart which shows the frequencies for this sample on the Culture Shock scale. As the Culture Shock scale is the sum of all the items on the HCSS (Fray, 1988), the histogram demonstrates in pictorial chart form that the majority of the responses were skewed to the left of the curve, toward the lower range of scores on

the HCSS. This indicates that the responses to the statements for the total HCSS were closer to the low end of the scale than would be expected in a normal bell-shaped curve distribution, and the level of culture shock, difficulties in reentry adjustment and level of reentry distress for this sample was relatively low.

HCSS frequencies. Tables 46-65 show the distribution of responses to the 20 HCSS items. Table 46 which represents the statement, "I experienced difficulty with the overall pace of life", shows that for almost one-half (44.6%) of the sample, with 1 missing value, the overall pace of life in the U.S. was not a problem. For another 48.5% of the sample, however, there was slight to moderate difficulty with adjusting to the pace of life in the U.S.

Table 46

HCSS Pace of Life

Degree of Difficulty	*Frequency*	*Valid Percent*
Not True of me	70	44.6
Slightly True of Me	42	26.8
Moderately True of Me	34	21.7
Mostly True of Me	7	4.5
Very True of Me	4	2.5
Total	157	100.0

Table 47 shows that 45.2% of the sample did not agree that "Homesickness or nostalgia for my country of overseas residence was a common feeling" during their reentry. For another 43.3% there was slight to moderate nostalgia or homesickness.

Table 47

HCSS Homesickness for Overseas Country

Degree of Difficulty	*Frequency*	*Valid Percent*
Not True of me	71	45.2
Slightly True of Me	43	27.4
Moderately True of Me	25	15.9
Mostly True of Me	7	4.5
Very True of Me	11	7.0
Total	157	100.0

Table 48 demonstrates that 47.8% of the respondents did not find the statement, "I found that people related to me on a more superficial level than I was used to" true of their experience; another 36.3% reported a slight to moderate sense of superficiality.

Table 48

HCSS Superficiality in Relationships

Degree of Difficulty	*Frequency*	*Valid Percent*
Not True of me	75	47.8
Slightly True of Me	36	22.9
Moderately True of Me	21	13.4
Mostly True of Me	17	10.8
Very True of Me	8	5.1
Total	157	100.0

In table 49, 73.2% disagreed with, “I felt anger at having had to leave my overseas home”.

Table 49

HCSS Anger Leaving Overseas Home

Degree of Difficulty	*Frequency*	*Valid Percent*
Not True of me	115	73.2
Slightly True of Me	11	7.0
Moderately True of Me	15	9.5
Mostly True of Me	9	5.7
Very True of Me	7	4.5
Total	157	100.0

In table 50, half disagreed with, “I was bothered that things felt unreal to me.”

Table 50

HCSS Life Felt Unreal

Degree of Difficulty	*Frequency*	*Valid Percent*
Not True of me	84	53.5
Slightly True of Me	37	23.6
Moderately True of Me	23	14.6
Mostly True of Me	8	5.1
Very True of Me	5	3.2
Total	157	100.0

Table 51 shows that the statement, “Feelings of loss hit me when I thought of my overseas residence” was not true for 47.8% of the sample. Another 40.1% showed slight to moderate sense of loss.

Table 51

HCSS Feelings of Loss

Degree of Difficulty	*Frequency*	*Valid Percent*
Not True of me	75	47.8
Slightly True of Me	39	24.8
Moderately True of Me	24	15.3
Mostly True of Me	11	7.0
Very True of Me	8	5.1
Total	157	100.0

Two-thirds of the respondents (68.6%) indicated that they were not in agreement with the statement, “I found there were many unspoken social customs I did not understand”. The responses are noted in Table 52.

Table 52

HCSS Unspoken Customs

Degree of Difficulty	*Frequency*	*Valid Percent*
Not True of me	107	68.6
Slightly True of Me	32	20.5
Moderately True of Me	11	7.1

Mostly True of Me	5	3.2
Very True of Me	1	.6
Total	157	100.0

Table 53 shows that the statement, “I was critical of the American lifestyle”, was slightly to moderately true to over half (55.6%) of the participants, and not true at all to under one-third of the respondents (31.2%).

Table 53

HCSS Critical of American Lifestyle

Degree of Difficulty	*Frequency*	*Valid Percent*
Not True of me	49	31.2
Slightly True of Me	52	33.1
Moderately True of Me	40	25.5
Mostly True of Me	9	5.7
Very True of Me	7	4.5
Total	157	100.0

Table 54 shows a small majority of the respondents (55.8%) indicated the statement, “I seldom felt understood by others” was not true of them.

Table 54

HCSS Seldom Understood by Others

Degree of Difficulty	*Frequency*	*Valid Percent*
Not True of me	87	55.8
Slightly True of Me	39	25.0
Moderately True of Me	18	11.5
Mostly True of Me	7	4.5
Very True of Me	5	3.2
Total	156	100.0

In table 55, a large majority of almost three-quarters (74.8%) of the respondents thought the statement, “I felt at odds with local religious standards” was not true of them.

Table 55

HCSS At Odds with Religious Standards

Degree of Difficulty	*Frequency*	*Valid Percent*
Not True of me	116	73.4
Slightly True of Me	14	9.0
Moderately True of Me	14	9.0
Mostly True of Me	5	3.2
Very True of Me	6	3.9
Total	155	100.0

Table 56 shows that a slight majority (52.9%) of the respondents replied that "Feelings of not fitting in were common to me" were untrue for them.

Table 56

HCSS: Feelings of Not Fitting In

Degree of Difficulty	*Frequency*	*Valid Percent*
Not True of me	83	52.9
Slightly True of Me	41	25.9
Moderately True of Me	16	10.2
Mostly True of Me	9	5.7
Very True of Me	8	5.1
Total	157	100.0

Table 57 has responses to "I felt uncertain about what people expected of me."

Table 57

HCSS: Uncertain of Expectations of Others

Degree of Difficulty	*Frequency*	*Valid Percent*
Not True of me	100	63.0
Slightly True of Me	31	19.7
Moderately True of Me	18	11.5
Mostly True of Me	4	2.5
Very True of Me	4	100.0
Total	157	100.0

Table 58, however, shows that only one-third (33.8%) of the respondents agreed with the statement “Americans’ wealth and spending habits upset me”.

Table 58

Americans’ Wealth and Spending Habits

Degree of Difficulty	*Frequency*	*Valid Percent*
Not True of me	53	33.8
Slightly True of Me	47	29.9
Moderately True of Me	26	16.6
Mostly True of Me	21	13.3
Very True of Me	10	6.4
Total	157	100.0

Table 59 shows most spouses did not agree with, “I often felt alienated and alone”

Table 59

Felt Alienated and Alone

Degree of Difficulty	*Frequency*	*Valid Percent*
Not True of me	97	61.8
Slightly True of Me	29	18.5
Moderately True of Me	17	10.8
Mostly True of Me	7	4.5
Very True of Me	7	4.5
Total	157	100.0

A majority of the spouses (58.6%) responded that the statement, “I experienced difficulty identifying with the U.S.” did not apply to them, as shown in Table 60.

Table 60

Difficulty Identifying with the U.S.

Degree of Difficulty	*Frequency*	*Valid Percent*
Not True of Me	92	58.6
Slightly True of Me	44	28.0
Moderately True of Me	12	7.6
Mostly True of Me	5	3.2
Very True of Me	4	2.5
Total	157	100.0

Table 61 shows “I was uncomfortable with my day to day social interactions”.

Table 61

Uncomfortable with Day to Day Social Interactions

Degree of Difficulty	*Frequency*	*Valid Percent*
Not True of me	110	70.1
Slightly True of Me	27	17.2
Moderately True of Me	13	8.3
Mostly True of Me	5	3.2
Very True of Me	2	1.3
Total	157	100.0

Table 62 shows 68.8% disagreed with the statement, “I felt confusion about life”.

Table 62

Confusion About Life

Degree of Difficulty	*Frequency*	*Valid Percent*
Not True of me	108	68.8
Slightly True of Me	27	17.2
Moderately True of Me	13	8.3
Mostly True of Me	5	3.2
Very True of Me	4	2.5
Total	157	100.0

Table 63 shows 79.0% disagreed with, “I had fears of not being accepted”.

Table 63

Fear of Acceptance

Degree of Difficulty	*Frequency*	*Valid Percent*
Not True of me	124	79.0
Slightly True of Me	18	11.5
Moderately True of Me	10	6.4
Mostly True of Me	4	2.5
Very True of Me	1	.6
Total	157	100.0

Table 64 shows 75.2% disagreed with, “Most of the time I wished I had not left my overseas home”.

Table 64

Wished Had Not Left

Degree of Difficulty	*Frequency*	*Valid Percent*
Not True of Me	118	75.2
Slightly True of Me	20	12.7
Moderately True of Me	9	5.7
Mostly True of Me	5	3.2
Very True of Me	5	3.2
Total	157	100.0

Table 65 shows “My closest friends were people who had overseas experience”.

Table 65

Closest Friends

Degree of Difficulty	*Frequency*	*Valid Percent*
Not True of me	28	17.8
Slightly True of Me	28	17.8
Moderately True of Me	35	22.3
Mostly True of Me	39	24.7
Very True of Me	27	17.2
Total	157	100.0

Relational Findings

Demographic Associations with Reentry Adjustment

The demographic factors found to be associated with reentry adjustment were age, the number of months as a Foreign Service spouse, the number of children spouses had at reentry and the ages of the first 1-3 children upon reentry. There was no association found between those who were US, foreign born, or born and raised in the US and overseas and between gender or racial/ethnic differences, due to the small representation of male and non-Caucasian participants.

Some demographic variables were not analyzed: whether a spouse was currently living overseas or not, his/her current marital status, and his/her level of education, as by definition the sample was married, they were a highly educated group, and whether they were currently living in the US or overseas was not related to their previous reentry adjustment.

Some of the results are reported using a ranked order, in which the relationship between two variables is determined by difference in their mean rank, in which one variable is thought to be statistically higher than the other; others are reported using two-tailed nonparametric measures, which means a relationship or association may exist between two variables, but there was no prediction that one would be higher than the other. The following tables, tables 66-70, show the demographic associations found in this study.

Age. Table 66 shows a significant difference between two age groups (20's to 40's and 50's to 70's and above) in their reentry adjustment. A Mann Whitney test was

run, and the significant difference found (U=855.5, p=.001, two-tailed) indicated that the younger group had a higher mean rank (greater culture shock) than the older group.

Table 66

Age and Homecomer Culture Shock 1

Mann Whitney-U Test

	Age Categories	*Number*	*Mean Rank*	*Sum of Ranks*
Culture Shock	20's -40's	23	105.80	2433.50
	50's and above	131	72.53	9501.50
	Total	154		

As a higher mean rank on the Culture Shock scale of the HCSS (Fray, 1988) means a higher level of culture shock, this test suggests that the younger group of spouses reported more culture shock than the older group. The association that can be made from this information is that as spouses get older, the amount of culture shock they have upon reentry goes down. This may be due to the knowledge accumulated with aging, as the spouse acquires more experience with the process of reentry.

This finding, a negative relationship between culture shock and age, was further confirmed when a second nonparametric measure was run with this data, the Spearman Rho correlation test (rho=-.377, p=.000, two-tailed). The Spearman rho also showed that as age went up, culture shock went down. The test was significant at the .01 level, as shown in Table 67.

Table 67

Age and Homecomer Culture Shock 2

Spearman's Rho Test

		Age	*Culture Shock*
Age	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	*.377
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	154	153
Culture Shock	Correlation Coefficient	*-.377	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	153	154

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Length of time as a Foreign Service spouse. A second demographic finding was a negative correlation between the length of time a participant was as a Foreign Service spouse and reentry adjustment. Specifically, as time as a Foreign service spouse increased (as measured in months married), culture shock went down, as shown in Table 68. This correlation was significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Table 68

Months as Foreign Service Spouse and Homecomer Culture Shock

Spearman's rho Test

		Culture Shock (total)	*Months as FS Spouse*
Culture Shock (total)	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	*-.356
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	154	151
Months FS Spouse	Correlation Coefficient	*-.356	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	151	155

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Number of children. The number of children each spouse had was found to be associated with reentry shock. Table 69 shows that there was a negative correlation between the number of children and homecomer culture shock when a Spearman's rho test was run; as the number of children went up, the spouses' culture shock went down. The correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

Table 69

Number of Children and Homecomer Culture Shock

Spearman's Rho Test

		Culture Shock	*N of Kids*
Culture Shock	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	*-.162
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.045
	N of Spouses	154	154
N of Kids	Correlation Coefficient	*-.162	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.045	.
	N of Spouses	154	158

*Correlation at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

At first, this correlation appears to be counter-intuitive. One would think that reentry would become more difficult, and therefore reentry culture shock increase, with an increase in the number of children in the family. However, this is the opposite of what the results show. An interpretation of this finding may be that as the number of children in the family goes up, culture shock goes down because during reentry, spouses with children are more occupied. Put another way, when there are children to be concerned about, there may be less time to focus on oneself and one's own problems, dissatisfaction and loneliness.

Age of children at last reentry. The age of the spouses' children at the time of the last reentry was found to have a negative correlation to the spouses' culture shock, i.e., the older the child(ren) the less the culture shock of the spouse, as shown when a Spearman's rho test was run (Table 70).

Table 70

Age of Children at Last Reentry and Homecomer Culture Shock

Spearman's rho

		Culture Shock	*Age at Return Child 1*	*Age at Return Child 2*	*Age at Return Child 3*
Culture Shock	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	*-.184	*-.235	-.193
	Significance (2-tailed)	.	.029	.009	.158
	N	154	140	124	55
Age at Return Child 1	Correlation Coefficient	*-.184	1.000	*.970	*.915
	Significance	0.29	.	.000	.000
	N	140	144	127	57
Age at Return Child 2	Correlation Coefficient	*-.235	*.970	1.000	*.934
	Significance	.009	.000	.	.000
	N	124	127	127	57
Age at Return Child 3	Correlation Coefficient	-.193	*-.915	*.934	1.000
	Significance	.158	.000	.000	.
	N	55	57	57	57

*Correlation at the 0.05 level of significance (2-tailed)

Table 70 also shows another result which reinforces the finding of a negative relationship between the number of children and reentry adjustment shown in Table 69, that with more children, culture shock goes down. It shows that the older the child(ren), the less the culture shock of the spouse. This means that spouses who come home with very young children have a harder time during reentry, which appears to overshadow any effect of any difficulties during adolescence. In terms of the Foreign Service lifestyle

this makes sense, as domestic help is affordable and available overseas, but not in the U.S. In the context of the Foreign Service spouse in her environment, then, the older the children are, the more they can take care of themselves, the easier the reentry.

Nondemographic Associations with Reentry Adjustment

The nondemographic factors found to be statistically significant associations with reentry adjustment were: the degree of participation in activities overseas, the length of time since reentry, the amount of job satisfaction in reentry, the difference in reentry expectations vs. experience, and information received after reentry. The following tables, tables 71-78, show the nondemographic relational findings from this study..

Participation in activities overseas. Table 71 shows the correlations between participation in certain activities overseas and the reentry adjustment of the participants. As a guide to understanding the table, the eight activities measured are listed first.

Activity 1: Participated in embassy activities.

Activity 2: Participated in activities in expatriate organizations.

Activity 3: Hosted representational events.

Activity 4: Attended representational events.

Activity 5: Interacted with host country nationals.

Activity 6: Interacted with the larger expatriate community.

Activity 7: Made friends and interacted mainly with the embassy community.

Activity 8: Made an effort to learn as much as possible about local overseas culture and society.

Table 71

Activity Participation Overseas 1and Homecomer Culture Shock

Spearman's rho

Activity 1	***Correlation Coefficient***	.271
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001
	N	154
Activity 2	Correlation Coefficient	-.012
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.881
	N	153
Activity 3	Correlation Coefficient	*.244
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002
	N	153
Activity 4	Correlation Coefficient	*.276
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001
	N	154
Activity 5	Correlation Coefficient	.064
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.432
	N	154
Activity 6	Correlation Coefficient	-.064
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.433
	N	153
Activity 7	Correlation Coefficient	*.187
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.20
	N	154
Activity 8	Correlation Coefficient	.083
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.308
	N	154

* Correlation is significant at the .05 level

Table 71 indicates a positive weak correlation at the .05 level of significance was found between the following activities and reentry adjustment: Activity 1 (participation in embassy activities), Activity 3 (hosted representational events), Activity 4 (attended representational events) and Activity 7 (made friends and interacted mainly with the embassy community). As the activity level was reverse scored, a positive correlation between these four activities and culture shock means that as participation in these activities overseas goes down, reentry culture shock goes up. There was no significant correlation found between the other four activities and culture shock.

The meaning of this finding is:

- the LESS the spouses participated in embassy activities overseas
- the LESS they hosted representational events
- the LESS they attended representational events
- the LESS they made friends and interacted mainly with the embassy community
- the MORE culture shock they experienced on reentry.

This finding also shows no statistical correlation between the following and reentry culture shock:

- the participation level in activities in expatriate organizations
- the amount spouses interacted with host country nationals
- the amount they interacted with the larger expatriate community
- the amount they made an effort to learn about overseas culture/society

This finding was somewhat countered, however, when a second test was run to look at the relationship between participation in all eight of the activities overseas and reentry culture shock, not just the participation in individual activities. The sum of the

respondents' participation levels in all eight activities was found to have a positive correlation to reentry culture shock at the .05 level of significance, as is shown in Table 72. As in the previous test, a positive correlation means the more participation in the total group of activities, the lower the return culture shock, since the activities were reverse scored.

Table 72

Activities Participation Overseas 2 and Homecomer Culture Shock

Spearman's rho

		Culture Shock	*Activities Total*
Culture Shock	Correlation Coefficient	1.00	*.218
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.007
	N	154	154
Activities Total	Correlation Coefficient	*.218	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.007	.
	N	154	158

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level

Time since reentry. A significant negative relationship was found between the length of time since reentry and homecomer culture shock. Table 73 shows participants in the U.S. for less than 24 months had more culture shock than those in the U.S. for 24 months or longer.

Table 73

Length of Time Since Reentry and Homecomer Culture Shock

Mann-Whitney Test of Ranks

	Time Since Reentry	*N*	*Mean Rank*	*Sum of Ranks*
Culture Shock	Less than 24 months	22	107.09	2356.00
	More than 24 months	132	72.57	9579.00
	Total	154		

Cultural identity. A significant relationship was found between cultural identity and reverse culture shock in two out of the three items of the Sussman (2001) Cultural Identity Change scale. Table 74 shows a higher mean rank (more culture shock) for those who responded "Yes" to the statement, "In some ways I feel/felt 'less' American than I did before my spouse's international assignment(s)" than those who responded "No".

Table 74

Sussman "Less American" and Homecomer Culture Shock

Mann-Whitney U

	Sussman "Less American"	*N*	*Mean Rank*	*Sum of Ranks*
Culture Shock	Yes	34	101.36	3438.50
	No	106	60.67	6431.50
	Total	140		

The second question on the Sussman Culture Identity Change Scale (Sussman, 2001) had a similar result. Spouses who responded "Yes" to the statement, "I feel/felt more a part of a host culture I lived in than a part of the U.S. culture" had a higher mean rank (more culture shock) than those who responded "No", as shown in Table 75.

Table 75

Sussman Part of Host Culture and Homecomer Culture Shock

Mann-Whitney U

	Sussman Part of Host Culture	*N*	*Mean Rank*	*Sum of Ranks*
Culture Shock (Total)	Yes	20	110.78	2215.50
	No	133	71.92	9565.50
	Total	153		

However, the third Sussman Culture Identity Change item, "I feel/felt that I am/was a more global or international person after my spouse's assignment" did not show a significant difference in culture shock between those who responded "Yes" and those who responded "No", when a Mann-Whitney U Test was run. In the descriptive findings for this statement, however, there was a considerable difference in the number of spouses who responded "Yes" and those who responded "No" (See Chapter IV, p. 81).

Obtained information after reentry. A Mann-Whitney U test of ranks was run to determine the relationship between spouses who obtained reentry information post-reentry vs. those who had not and culture shock. It was found that those who obtained

information after reentry had a higher mean rank (more culture shock) than those who had not received information after reentry. At first this appears counterintuitive, but those who received information after reentry were those who sought it out, and despite receiving information, still struggled with reentry.

Table 76

Obtained Information After Reentry and Homecomer Culture Shock

Mann-Whitney U Test

	Obtained Info. At Reentry	*N*	*Mean Rank*	*Sum of Ranks*
Culture Shock	Yes	70	90.34	6323.50
	No	84	66.80	5611.50
	Total	154		

Job satisfaction after reentry. Table 77 shows a Spearman's rho correlation test found a weak positive correlation between job satisfaction and reentry culture shock. As job satisfaction was reverse-scored, this means as job dissatisfaction increased, culture shock also increased.

Table 77

Job Satisfaction in Reentry and Homecomer Culture Shock

Spearman's rho

		Culture Shock	*Job Satisfaction*
Culture Shock	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	*.247
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.16
	N	154	94
Job Satisfaction	Correlation Coefficient	*.247	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.016	.
	N	94	96

Reentry experience more difficult than expected. A Mann Whitney U test found a significant difference in culture shock by whether reentry was more difficult than expected. As shown in Table 78, participants who responded "Yes", reentry was more difficult than expected, had a higher mean rank, meaning greater culture shock.

Table 78

Reentry More Difficult Than Expected and Culture Shock

Mann -Whitney U Test

	More Difficult	*N*	*Mean Rank*	*Sum of Ranks*
Culture Shock	Yes	49	113.79	5575.50
	No	105	60.57	6359.50
	Total	154		

Qualitative Findings

The qualitative findings in this study are the responses provided by the participants to two short answer questions. In the first question, the spouses were asked to describe their reentry experience in their own words; in the second, they were asked what the State Department could do to help with the reentry of Foreign Service spouses and families. Their responses cover four topic areas: the first reentries are the most difficult, the challenge in later reentries is dealing with family reentry adjustment, the return to familiar surroundings makes subsequent reentries easier, and the Foreign Service lifestyle has pros and cons, with friendships missed the most, and the final reentry in retirement is also difficult. The researcher has utilized content analysis to derive these major findings.

These are the voices of 158 Foreign Service spouses who have given many years of combined service to the U.S. government's foreign policy interest abroad and at home. They range from 29 to 97 years old and represent up to 75 years of State Department history. Each one is a person speaking from her/his own experience, the person in their environment, providing information on how understanding and constructive change can be brought to the larger State department system within which they operate.

Description of reentries

The first (early) reentries are the most difficult – the later reentries are easier. The sample indicated that their first reentries, done earlier in their career, were more difficult than their later reentries after the experience of several returns. Examples of this perspective follow:

"This last reentry was okay, but the previous one (my first) was harder, especially with a 4 year old and feeling lonely and isolated. The older I have gotten, and the longer in the Foreign Service, the easier my reentry has been".

The first reentry was considered more difficult as the spouses had not known what to expect:

"The first time we came back was the hardest. There was so much we had to do that we didn't expect and we didn't know how to get it done. This was my seventh reentry and it wasn't so bad – you know what you have to do and just go get it done."

"After the first reentry, you know what to expect".

The first reentry was also considered more difficult due to a lack of sense of community and support they had felt overseas. The result for some was loneliness and depression:

"I remember feeling lonely, bored, depressed at times. No one understood our lifestyle or cared about it. That included extended family."

"I was depressed and lonely for at least a year. I needed support, but it was hard to be assertive and ask for it when you are emotionally thrown off course."

The first reentry was considered difficult due to the cost of living and range of choices found in the U.S.

"Reentry the first time was very difficult, from comfortable overseas living to reduced income and masses of expensive merchandise offered and needed".

"Choices were the most difficult to get used to. So many decisions to do anything. I went to take a break from decisions (housing, tires, cereal, soap) and asked

for a soda at an ice cream parlor and burst into tears when the person asked me, “Large? Medium? Small? For here or to go? With syrup or without?”

The challenge in later reentries is dealing with family readjustment to reentry. The spouses indicated that in later reentries, they were coping with their family members’ readjustment difficulties more than their own. The difficulties of adolescent and employee spouse reentry adjustments were mentioned most often:

“My reentry was fine, but my daughter’s was difficult, returning as a high school junior. She had to make all new friends, whereas overseas everyone is a new kid on the block and accepted right away”.

“Coping with my husband’s ‘hard landing’ and depression for 9 months was very stressful”.

“It was difficult for me to watch our teenager try to adjust, and, then, my husband, who felt stifled by the bureaucracy and missed the interaction with foreign nationals”.

The return to familiar surroundings makes subsequent reentries easier. The participants overwhelmingly agreed that a major part of handling reentry distress was returning to familiarity:

“We moved back to DC and a family home, in a neighborhood where we had many friends”.

“This was not a difficult reentry as we were previously established in home, community and church”.

However, those who had not returned to familiarity reported a more difficult reentry:

"We were thrown into an unknown city (Miami) without any help. I feel very lonely and I want to leave as soon as possible".

"Dealing with family, school, finding a house, getting around a new city, and startling a new job all at once is just too much".

The Foreign Service lifestyle has pros and cons; Friendships Missed the Most.

The spouses agreed that Foreign Service life had its challenges and opportunities, but it was the loss of, or separation from, friendships made in the host country that in the end made it most difficult to move.

"I am happy to be back in the U.S. for the shopping, the convenience, the ease of communicating in English! But I will always miss my homes, friends and relationships I developed overseas".

"I was happy to be free of Embassy confines and rules, but missed my friends at post a great deal".

"I enjoyed the Foreign Service and benefited from living overseas".

"As a State Department spouse, one gets used to moving, to making again new friends, and to once again finding where one "fits" in a social set-up. It is the people you meet along the way and the friendships you make and keep, that make it all worthwhile.

The final reentry to retirement is also very difficult. A number of spouses pointed out that the last reentry for the purposes of retirement, was also bittersweet, as it was mixed with a sense of loss of career, lifestyle, and a sense of fitting in:

"We knew that the last reentry would precede retirement. So all of the retirement issues were facing us, and the sense of loss on leaving our last post was perhaps more, knowing it was our last post".

"My last reentry was a "retirement reentry" that presented its own challenges – separation from a global lifestyle and pursuit of a new course in life. After 38 years of moving, starting from scratch, building a "spouse" role and coping with home leaves and reentries, I learned that I am the one who must adapt. But as comfortable as I am, I continue to be "standing on the outside looking in".

However, one respondent had a solution for this sense of felt loss: "I came back, didn't like it, and went back overseas again after retirement".

What the State Department Could Do to Help Spouses with Reentry

Many of the respondents, as the mean age of the sample was 62.5, were married to retired Foreign Service Officers, and therefore elected not to speculate on what might be helpful to spouses and families in reentry. Those who did, however, can be summarized in two points: more information about reentry is needed and how to access it, and counseling should be available for spouses and families in distress.

More information about reentry is needed and spouses need to know how to access it. There was general agreement that information about what to expect in reentry was not readily available to employees and spouses, as in the following statements:

"They (the State Department) need to be sure people know that reentry can be difficult. Many assume that because they are coming home, it will feel like home".

(From a former OBC trainer and FLO staff person) "Though included in overseas training, employees and family members departing to go overseas are not able to hear the reentry message. Help to publish periodic articles in publications to raise general awareness of the issues".

"Help people get the information they need according to where they will be living: school information, car registration and insurance, medical needs are what all returnees need".

A major point made was that reentry information was not lacking as much as information about how to access it, as in the following statements:

"The most helpful information is knowing how to get the information they need".

"They need a better and more effective way of getting to people. Not everybody knows about the resources State has".

"The responsibility for reentry information should be the CLO's job. I think they have the responsibility, but they don't do it".

"The State Department does a lot through FLO, but they just need to get the word out more. I worked at FLO and knew what they offered, but many did not use/know about their services".

Counseling or additional support should be made available for spouses and families in distress. Some respondents felt that counseling services should be extended beyond just employees, to permit sessions with spouses and families who need more help in coping with reentry. The following statements were a sample of these comments:

"Counseling for spouses in reentry should be available for those who need it. Focus help on those in their first reentry".

"Provide more personal support for people in stressful reentries".

"A debriefing session for the employee and spouse would be helpful, to provide some reentry information and referral assistance if needed".

"Counseling should be available for teenagers with someone who understands the reentry problems they have".

"I was going through a very difficult time this last reentry as my husband was sent to Iraq directly from our last posting. I managed to get a one-time visit with a State department psychiatrist that made all the difference in my ability to carry on. I think those who are struggling should have this benefit".

A discussion of these findings as they relate to previous research, the social work person-in-environment perspective, and as they may apply to Foreign Service and other spouse sojourners returning home, for the explicit understanding of social work practitioners working with these populations, concludes this study in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The person-in-environment (PIE) lens is used in this study as it provides an overarching perspective for social work professionals to understand the reentry client's presenting problems, focusing primarily on the social environment of the sojourner client with the demands of a mobile lifestyle. The ecological model of this perspective is particularly useful in the study of reentry, as sojourners and the institutions they represent are in a situation of mutual influence, in which both benefit most when their needs are reciprocally met. Families are the employee's primary support system, and accompanying spouses and family members who are functioning well in the overseas and home environments benefit the family, the spouse, the employee and the employing institution. The family systems model, based on the effect of members of the family system upon one another, is useful in conjunction with the person-in-environment perspective to help in the understanding of this interconnection, and is of particular use in the study and treatment of sojourners who live within a family context. It is used in this study as accompanying spouses, male or female, generally fulfill more of the caretaking and support role in the family; when there is distress in the support system neither the family nor the employee functions well.

This study has identified a number of factors which, when viewed through the person-in-environment or family systems lenses, form clusters that are useful to social work practitioners in understanding the reentry adjustment among Foreign Service

spouses and other accompanying spouse populations. Three clusters have been identified here: the family systems, person-in-environment overseas and person-in-environment reentry clusters.

The Family Systems Cluster

The family systems cluster helps to understand how certain demographic and intra-familial factors are associated with the reentry adjustment of the spouse. First, this study found that the age of the spouse was a factor in her/his reentry adjustment, the younger the spouse, the greater the likelihood of distress after reentry. Second, the length of time the spouse has been married was shown to affect her/his reentry distress, with those married for shorter periods of time more likely to suffer reentry distress than those who have been married longer. Third, the number of children and their ages has been shown to affect the spouse's reentry adjustment, with fewer and younger children more likely to cause greater distress. Fourth, this study found the inter-familial effect from the qualitative data, which points to the additional stress caused by the employee's own job and reentry adjustment, as well as the child-parent effect of the children who are going through their reentry adjustment. Individually, these factors have been shown in this study to cause reentry distress among spouses, but together they may cause even greater distress.

This study has supported previous reentry studies which have shown an association between age and reentry adjustment in adults (Gullahorn and Gullahorn, 1963) and in children (Steinglass and Edwards, 1993; Huff, 2001; Yoshida et al, 2002; Moore, 1987), namely that the younger the age, the greater the reentry adjustment difficulty. However, this study has added new information by showing the intra-familial

effect of the ages of the spouse and the children. In other words, no previous studies were found that addressed the effect of the ages of the children on either the spouse or the employee's reentry adjustment.

This study has also added new information to previous studies which have shown that being married is a factor which reduces reverse culture shock (Moore, 1987; Huffman, 1989). This study has found that not only does being married appear to be a protective factor for reentry distress, but also the longer the spouse is married, the lower the level of reentry distress.

The implications of these findings is that younger spouses with less or perhaps no previous reentry experience tend to have reverse culture shock, and the more factors in the cluster that present, the greater may be the culture shock and the more readily may it be observed by the social work practitioner. These findings are helpful to social work practitioners, as they are based upon readily obtained demographic information useful in the assessment of a client's situation and may guide treatment to include the dynamics of the family system.

Person-in-environment Cluster: Spouses Overseas

This study found a second cluster of factors associated with the reentry adjustment of spouses, based on how the spouses interacted with their environment while overseas.

The first factor is the finding that spouses who are more frequent participants in activities while they are overseas have less difficulty with reentry adjustment than those who participate less often. The implication of this finding is that those who are more

active and more sociable outside the home are less likely to have a difficult reentry than those who are more isolated and do not participate in activities while overseas.

The second factor is the finding that, when the analysis discriminated between specific kinds of social activities a Foreign Service spouse engages in overseas, spouses who participate more in embassy community and U.S. Department of State activities (i.e., hosting and attending more representational events, making more friends and interacting more with the embassy community) have less reverse culture shock than those who participate more in non-embassy/U.S. Department of State activities. The implication of this finding is not only that participating in activities overseas is helpful in reducing reverse culture shock, but that the key factor is involvement in embassy/U.S. Department of State community events, activities and friendships, not to the exclusion of the other non-embassy activities, but as an important part of a spouse's social interactions overseas. This finding supports the previous research of Rohrlich and Martin (1991) who found that American college students studying abroad who were more interactive with host country nationals (i.e., went on outings, discussed important issues) were more satisfied with their life overseas, but less likely to be satisfied with their life upon return home than those students who were less interactive with host country nationals. In this study, also, it was found that satisfaction with one's life overseas is not associated with reverse culture shock (see Ch. IV, Table 70).

The third in this cluster of person-in-environment factors overseas is cultural identity change. This study found, in using the 3-item Cultural Identity Change Scale of the Cultural Identity Model (Sussman, 2001), that those individuals who reported "Yes" they had felt less American upon return to the U.S., and "Yes" they had felt more a part

of a host culture where they had lived than the U.S. (see Appendix B, questions #42-44) experienced significantly more reverse culture shock than those who answered "No" to these questions. The implication of this finding is that spouses whose cultural identity changes from "more American" to "more a part of a host culture" experience more reverse culture shock upon their return home, as an important part of their identity changed, at least temporarily, after their overseas assignment.

Sussman's (2001) additional finding on the Cultural Identity Change Scale, which addressed the respondents' sense of being "a more global or international person after my spouse's assignment" was only partially supported in this study. The overwhelming majority (94.9%, Table 44) of spouses' responses indicated that they felt they were more global or international people after their last reentry, but no relationship was found between feeling more global or international and their reentry adjustment. Sussman (2001) had found, as had Leembruggen-Kallberg (1997) that those who had developed a more global perspective had found greater satisfaction with their lives. The question of more or less satisfaction with their lives after return was not asked in this study, so the previous results can only be partially supported. It is known from this study that satisfaction with their lives overseas was not associated with lower reentry distress upon return.

Together these three findings form a cluster of "person-in-environment" reentry factors that help to understand how the overseas social environment is associated with the Foreign Service spouses' reentry adjustment. The implications of these findings are that social activity while overseas is associated with less reentry adjustment difficulty upon return home, but spouses need to also maintain some grounding in their own American

culture through participation in embassy/company community activities. Those who participate less in their own community activities and more in host country activities may experience greater culture shock upon return home, and an important reason for this is they have undergone to some extent, a cultural identity change.

Person-in-Environment Cluster: Spouses in Reentry

This study found a third cluster of factors associated with the reentry adjustment of Foreign Service spouses, based on their experiences with return to the U.S. The cluster is made up of the respondents' answers to a question on expectations/experience, comments on their own reentry experiences, and responses to the HCSS (Fray, 1988).

At the core of the cluster is the spouses' response to the question, "Was your reentry experience after your last return more difficult than anticipated?" Those spouses who answered "Yes" had a much higher culture shock score than those who answered "No" (see Appendix B, question #48). This means a primary characteristic of the reentry phenomenon as first identified by Adler (1981), that the experience of reentry is more difficult than the sojourner expects it to be, was supported in this population of Foreign Service spouses.

A second factor in the reentry cluster is the finding that the spouses' first reentry, or at least reentries early in the career, were more difficult than their later reentries, which came after the experience of several returns (see Appendix , qualitative question #49). Statements like the following from a veteran Foreign Service spouse explain this point well, "The first time we came back was the hardest. There was so much we had to do that we didn't expect and we didn't know how to get it done. This was my seventh reentry and it wasn't so bad – you know what you have to do and just go get it done."

A third factor in the reentry cluster of person-in-environment findings is the wide range of variation in interpretation of expectations versus experience. For one respondent, the experience was more difficult than her expectations as she felt her State Department mobile lifestyle was not understood or appreciated by others, stating, "I remember feeling lonely, bored, and depressed at times. No one understood our lifestyle or cared about it. That included extended family". For others it was about the basics of reduced income and increased needs (such as furniture), as stated by a spouse, "… (going) from comfortable overseas living to reduced income and masses of expensive merchandise offered and needed". These responses show that after reentry, the reality of some expectations, such as being closer to family again and having American conveniences and shopping, were not found to be as they had been anticipated, and varied widely between individuals.

The HCSS (Fray, 1991) showed other areas of experience unexpected by the sample in the areas of grief and loss and cultural dissonance. Two items on the HCSS (see Appendix B, questions #41b and #41f) were considered true by over 50% of the sample regarding issues of grief and loss, "Homesickness/nostalgia for my country of overseas residence was a common feeling for me" and "Feelings of loss hit me when I thought of my overseas residence". Regarding cultural dissonance, four items on the HCSS were considered true of the spouses' experience by over 50% of the sample. These items were: "I experienced difficulty with the overall pace of life", "I found that people related to me on a more superficial level than I was used to", "I was critical of the American lifestyle", and "Americans' wealth and spending habits upset me" (see Appendix B, questions #41a, 41c, 41h, 41m).

Anticipated Findings Not Found

The most anticipated finding that was not shown in the results of this study was any significant difference in reverse culture shock for Foreign Born spouses as compared with spouses who were US born and raised. Due to their experience of being born and raised in another culture, it was expected that a significant difference would have been found; however, in this sample, which contained a sufficient number of Foreign Born Spouses to determine any such difference (26 out of 158 respondents), none was found. In addition, there was no significant difference found in the reverse culture shock of spouses who had been born and raised in both the US and overseas. Although no significant difference was found, there was a difference in the mean rank when the variables of Born and Raised in the US versus Overseas were analyzed for their association with the dependent variable, culture shock. A higher mean rank (greater culture shock) was found for spouses Born and Raised Overseas (81.68 vs. 68.07). This result does show that there is more culture shock experienced by Foreign Born spouses, but that the culture shock is not great enough to consider it a statistically significant difference.

A second anticipated result that was not found was a difference in culture shock between male and female spouses. However, when the mean culture shock value for the small number of male respondents (4) was calculated, although it was slightly higher than for female spouses, (38.75 for the men compared to 35.67 for the group as a whole), this difference was not statistically significant. It may be indicative of some distinction between the two groups, however, due to the small number of male spouses who

responded to the survey, it is not possible to determine if the differences reached statistical significance.

A third finding that was anticipated but not found was any difference in culture shock by racial/ethnic group origin. Again, this is due to the small number of participants from non-Caucasian groups (6 Hispanics, 3 African Americans, 5 Asian/Pacific Islanders and 1 who identified herself as ½ Hispanic and ½ Caucasian). The mean culture shock for the group of 15 non-Caucasians was 34.86, slightly below the 35.67 for the spouses as a whole. These spouses were born and raised in the U.S., were highly educated and showed that their experience was not very different, if at all, from that of Caucasian Foreign Service spouses.

Implications of the Findings for Social Work Practice

Based on the findings, there are clear implications for social work practice:

1) Younger spouses and first-time returnees are more likely to experience reentry adjustment difficulties, and are going to be in greater need of supportive services from practitioners who understand the problems of those who are facing reentry for the first time. An important aspect of counseling may be the non-fulfillment of expectations the spouse had regarding what life in the U.S. would be like versus their experiences in reentry.

2) Spouses with younger children and fewer years of marriage are more likely to experience reentry adjustment difficulties, even if they have previously adjusted to reentry during previous returns when they did not have children. Spouses with younger children may be in need of supportive, strengths-building counseling and perhaps child development and couples counseling services, from practitioners who understand the

problems of reentry and how it affects the spouse personally and as caregiver for the family system that is also undergoing reentry distress.

3) Spouses who are socially active in a variety of activities while living overseas, which include involvement in embassy (or American) activities, events and friendships appear to receive a preventive benefit in terms of reentry adjustment. Spouses who do not participate in American/embassy events, but participate strictly in host country activities, may not receive this benefit and may in fact experience greater culture reverse culture shock upon their return home.

4) Spouses facing retirement or in retirement also have special needs and may be in need of special counseling services after reentry from their last overseas assignment, involving role loss and development of a new life for themselves and the retired employee.

5) Spouses who return on assignment to a new location in the U.S. where they have not lived before have a more difficult time adjusting on return than spouses who go to a city where they have lived before, and supportive assistance should be anticipated as necessary for this group.

6) Spouses who returned to familiar surroundings reported that subsequent reentries were easier, including return to the same city, neighborhood, home, schools and churches.

Suggestions for the Sponsoring Institutions

The sample was asked in a qualitative question (see Appendix B, question #50) to offer suggestions regarding what would be helpful for the sponsoring organization to do (in this case the U.S. Department of State) to help with the reentry of spouses and families. The responses the spouses gave are as follows:

1) More information about reentry is needed and spouses need to know how to access it. Respondents frequently stated they did not know how to get or find reentry information. Many stated they needed practical information prior to their departure from overseas regarding vehicle registration, finding good schools, how to register their children for school, and insurance issues, according to the city of return assignment, and did not know how or where to access it. One former FLO staff person suggested periodic articles in department publications to raise general awareness of the reentry issues, stating that training is included during the preparatory courses to go overseas, but the reentry message is not heard at that time. The participants were very appreciative of the work the FLO and CLO offices have done on the behalf of families, but also felt that the CLO overseas needs to provide more reentry information to those returning to the U.S., and some suggested a Washington, DC contact person for returnees in the FLO office.

2) Counseling or additional support should be made available for spouses and families in distress. Some respondents felt counseling services should be extended beyond employees (such as the Employee Consultation Service, or ECS), to permit sessions with spouses and families for evaluation and referral for those who need ongoing assistance coping with reentry distress. Other suggestions were de-briefing sessions with the reentering employee and spouse, special counseling or group sessions for teenagers coping with return issues, and counseling for spouses and families who are coping with separation when the employee is sent to dangerous locations, as Afghanistan and Iraq.

3) Continuation of the successful employment assistance program, or development of a spouse employment program in organizations and corporations that do not already have one. The U.S. Department of State's FLO (Family Liaison Office) employment

assistance program was praised by respondents. This finding, in combination with another finding that job satisfaction for the spouses was very positively associated with reentry adjustment success, indicates that this program is not only appreciated, but working and helping spouses. The suggestions for improvement in this program included assistance in finding part-time positions and more help finding positions appropriate to their level of skills.

Applicability of Study Findings and Future Research

The applicability of this study's findings to spouses and families from other sponsoring agencies, institutions or corporations is thought by this researcher to be quite high. This is because many of the same issues for spouses present themselves despite the exact nature of the employee's work, as they are accompanying spouses who are tasked with making the adjustment to another culture, from culture to culture, and home again while operating within the rules and regulations of the employer and the demands of being the primary caregiver in the family.

Future research in the area of spouse reentry adjustment is encouraged. A new scale designed for measuring reentry adjustment for accompanying spouses would be very useful. Further, the HCSS (Fray, 1988) is 20 years old and needs to be updated for the concerns of younger returnees, male spouses and spouses of color.

An additional suggested area for future research is in the meaning of friendships for internationally mobile spouses. This study found that friendships made overseas appeared to be a major loss felt by returning spouses, who found themselves gravitating to people after return who had also been overseas. This information caused this researcher to wonder, "What is it that is so special in these relationships made overseas?",

"Why are these friendships difficult to duplicate after return to the U.S.?", and "Do friendships made during sojourns overseas take on greater significance where there is less emphasis than in the U.S. on material wealth?"

Study Limitations

The HCSS reentry adjustment scores found in this research showed that Foreign Service spouses experienced a relatively low level of reentry distress (35.67 on a scale of 20 to 100), but one qualification needs to be made to these findings. This study utilized the membership list of an organization of Foreign Service spouses, the AAFSW (Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide), as its sampling frame. The sample was composed of AAFSW members who responded to a recruitment questionnaire. Those respondents were primarily over the age of 50 (mean age 62.5), and therefore the sample is representative of an age grouping whose experience was skewed in the direction of more experience with the reentry process. The low level of reentry distress among spouses in the Foreign Service population as a whole could be deceivingly low as a larger number of returning employees and spouses are relatively new recruits. Whenever possible, an effort should be made to include higher numbers of recently returned sojourners in future reentry studies for the clearest possible results. The analysis of the data used in this study took this into consideration, using methods of analysis that still made it possible to determine what groups of spouses were more affected by reentry than others, but whenever possible the sample should clearly represent the population studied.

Conclusions

The value of this study is, foremost, that it adds information and greater understanding of the reentry phenomenon to a limited literature on the topic currently available in the Social Work profession. In turn, it has brought a social work perspective into the discourse of reentry research.

This study has added a social work conceptual framework, the person-in-environment perspective, along with the family systems model, to assist social work practitioners and others working with repatriates to understand the inter-relatedness of the organization, the employee, and the family, especially in regards to those who lead an internationally mobile lifestyle. Additionally, this study looks at a wider gamut of factors than most previous reentry studies, allowing practitioners to rule in or rule out individual or clusters of factors that may be useful in understanding and treating their internationally mobile clients.

The beneficiaries of this additional knowledge are the spouses and families who accompany employees overseas and back home, not just the spouses of Foreign Service Officers (FSOs), for much of the information gained in this study identifies factors that go beyond the particular sponsoring organization. It addresses instead internationally mobile spouses who are more likely to suffer reentry distress. When this information is accessed by practitioners and others, it can assist spouses and families in understanding their situation better, the causes of their distress can be normalized, and an agenda can be developed to help alleviate the distress.

However, in order to be beneficial to spouses and families, practitioners and sponsoring organizations first need to make the information regarding the problems of

reentry adjustment and factors which indicate a greater susceptibility to reentry distress more widely available. A primary recommendation from the spouses studied was the need for reentry information to be more widely distributed. Their second recommendation was for counseling resources to be more widely available to those returning home. Third, as spouses in this study have shown, programs targeted at providing the tools for reentrants in constructing a new life at home, such as employment assistance, contribute to fewer reentry adjustment difficulties.

The focus of institutional structures is, understandably, on the primary task at hand, which for international businesses and other organizations means getting people on the ground overseas, and programs have been put in place to assist in this process for the employee and, sometimes, the accompanying spouse. Now more emphasis needs to be placed on the reentry process, not just for the reentering employee, but for the spouse and family as well, for the well-being of the entity is interconnected with the viability and well-being of the family structure.

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Appendix A

Livelines Announcement

A study of the reentry experience of Foreign Service spouses is being conducted by Sharon Maybarduk, a candidate for the Masters in Social Work degree at Smith College School for Social Work. The AAFSW has approved this study and the questionnaire, which Ms. Maybarduk will be sending to AAFSW members, both domestic and international. AAFSW members are encouraged to participate as the study results may be helpful to Foreign Service spouses and family members returning from an overseas assignment. Watch for the questionnaire in the mail!

Appendix B

Foreign Service Spouse Questionnaire

QUESTIONS 1-12 Pertain to Basic Demographic Data.

1. a).Were you born and raised in the U. S.?
   Yes ____ (If yes, go to q. 2)
   No ____ (If no, go to q. 1b)

   b). Are you a Foreign Born spouse? (Born and raised overseas, U.S. citizen by marriage to an FSO).
   Yes ____(If yes, go to q. 2)
   No ____(If no, go to q. 1c)

   c). Were you raised as a U.S. citizen growing up both in the U.S. and overseas?
   Yes ____ (If yes, go to q.2)
   No ____ (Please explain, and go on to q 2) _____

2. Are you currently living overseas? Yes ____ No ____

3. What is your age? ____

4. What is your gender? Female ____ Male ____

5. What is your racial/ethnic identification?
   Caucasian ____
   African American ____
   Hispanic ____
   Asian/Pacific Islander ____
   Other (please specify): _____

6. What is your current marital status:
   Married ____
   Divorced ____
   Separated ____
   Widowed ____

7. How many years were you/have you been a Foreign Service spouse? ____ years

8. What is your highest educational level?

Less than High School diploma	____	
High School diploma	____	
Some college	____	
College degree	____	
Post graduate/Masters degree	____	
PhD degree	____	Other _____

9. How many children do you have? ____

10. What are their ages? _____

11. Are you currently (choose one):

Unemployed	____	
Employed part-time	____	
Employed full-time	____	
Volunteering	____	
Volunteering and employed	____	
Retired	____	Other _____

12. Are you currently a student? Yes ____ No ____
    a. If yes, are you in school full-time? _____ In school part-time? _____

QUESTIONS 13-29 Pertain to Your LIFE OVERSEAS AND YOUR LAST OVERSEAS ASSIGNMENT. Should you currently be overseas, the last overseas assignment refers to the last overseas assignment prior to your last reentry.

13. How many years <u>total</u> have you lived overseas? (Please include any years spent overseas before the Foreign Service, if applicable) ____ years

14. In which region of the world (check one below) was your last overseas assignment?

____ Africa	____ Near East
____ East Asia & the Pacific	____ South & Central Asia
____ Europe & Eurasia	____ Western Hemisphere

15. Was your last country of assignment a hardship post as designated by the U.S. Department of State)? Yes ____ No ____

16. Please circle the number below that most closely reflects your level of agreement with the following statement about life satisfaction during your last overseas stay:

"All in all, I was satisfied with my life at the last assignment"

1	2	3	4	5	6
Completely Agree	Mostly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Completely Disagree

Question 17 Pertains to Your Activities <u>During Your Last Overseas Stay</u>:

17. (a-h) While overseas I:	(Check one):
a. Participated in embassy activities	Always ____ Often ____ Sometimes ____ Never ____
b. Participated in activities in expatriate organizations	Always ____ Often ____ Sometimes ____ Never ____
c. Hosted representational events	Always ____ Often ____ Sometimes ____ Never ____
d. Attended representational events	Always ____ Often ____ Sometimes ____ Never ____
e. Interacted with host country nationals	Always ____ Often ____ Sometimes ____ Never ____
f. Interacted with the larger expatriate community	Always ____ Often ____ Sometimes ____ Never ____
g. Made friends and interacted mainly with the embassy community	Always ____ Often ____ Sometimes ____ Never ____
h. Made an effort to learn as much as possible about local overseas culture and society	Always ____ Often ____ Sometimes ____ Never ____

QUESTIONS 18- 25 pertain to volunteer or paid employment outside the home during your last overseas assignment. If you are currently overseas, please think about the overseas assignment prior to your last reentry:

18. Did you volunteer outside the home? Yes ____ (Go to q.19) No ____ (Go to q. 21)

19. On the average, what would you say was the amount of time you spent volunteering outside the home while overseas?
    Every day ____
    2 or more days/week ____
    1 day/week ____
    1 to 3 days/month ____
    Less than 1 to 3 days/month ____

20. Please circle the number below that most closely reflects your level of agreement with the following statement about your volunteer work during your last overseas stay:

"All in all, I was satisfied with my volunteer work."

1	2	3	4	5	6
Completely Agree	Mostly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Completely Disagree

21. Did you seek paid employment outside the home at any time while overseas?
    Yes ____ (Go to q. 22) No ____ (Go to q. 26)

22. Were you able to obtain employment while overseas? Yes ____ (Go to q. 23) No ____ (Go to q. 26)

23. In total, approximately how long were you employed outside the home during your last overseas assignment? ____ months or ____ years

24. Was your employment in your field of interest? Yes ____ No ____

25. Please circle the number below that most closely reflects your level of agreement with the following statement about your employment during your last overseas stay:

"All in all, I was satisfied with my job."

1	2	3	4	5	6
Completely Agree	Mostly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Completely Disagree

QUESTIONS 26-29 Refer to the Time Prior to Leaving Your Last Overseas Assignment.

26. I received State Department reentry information/training prior to my departure from the last assignment. Yes ____ (go to q. 27) No ___ (go to q.29)
27. I utilized online resources to get information about reentry. Yes ____ No ____

28. In the space provided below, please indicate what was the most useful part of any reentry information you received prior to your last reentry?

_____

_____

QUESTIONS 29-47 Pertain to Your REENTRIES TO THE U.S.

29 . How many reentries/returns to the U.S. have you had? ____
a. Of these, how many have been for more than one year?

The following questions pertain to your LAST REENTRY to the U.S.

30. How many years did you live overseas between a previous return to the U.S. and your last return? ____ years

31. How long has it been since your last reentry? ____ years ____ months

32. In parts "a" and "b" below, please select the item(s) that best describe(s) your family at the time of your last reentry.
a. Family with child(ren) ____ Yes (Go to q. 32b) ____ No (Go to q. 33)
b. Please select one of the following that best describes your family at the time of your last reentry:
Family with young child(ren) ____
Family with adolescent(s) child(ren) ____
Family launching child(ren) and moving on ____
Family with children grown and gone ____

33. Did you become involved in volunteer work after your last reentry? Yes ____No ____

34. How long after your last reentry did you become involved in volunteer work"
____ months or ____ years

35. Did you seek paid employment outside the home following your last reentry?
Yes ____ (Go to q. 36) No ____ (Go to q. 41)

36. How long after your last reentry did you seek paid employment?
____ months or ____ years

37. Were you able to obtain employment following your last reentry?
Yes ____ (Go to q. 38) No ____ (Go to q. 41)

38. How long after your last reentry were you able to obtain employment?
____ months OR ____ years

39. Was your employment in your field of interest? Yes ____ No ____

40. Please circle the number below that most closely reflects your level of agreement with the following statement about your employment following your last return to the U.S.

"All in all, I [am/was] satisfied with my job."

1	2	3	4	5	6
Completely Agree	Mostly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Completely Disagree

41. The following statements refer to your life <u>during the first six months of your return to the U.S. from your last overseas assignment</u>. Using the 1 -5 scale, indicate your agreement with each item by circling the appropriate number.

a. I experienced difficulty with the overall pace of life.

NOT TRUE OF ME	SLIGHTLY TRUE OF ME	MODERATELY TRUE OF ME	MOSTLY TRUE OF ME	VERY TRUE OF
1	2	3	4	5

b. Homesickness/nostalgia for my country of overseas residence was a common feeling for me.

NOT TRUE OF ME	SLIGHTLY TRUE OF ME	MODERATELY TRUE OF ME	MOSTLY TRUE OF ME	VERY TRUE OF ME
1	2	3	4	5

c. I found that people related to me on a more superficial level than I was used to.

NOT TRUE OF ME	SLIGHTLY TRUE OF ME	MODERATELY TRUE OF ME	MOSTLY TRUE OF ME	VERY TRUE OF ME
1	2	3	4	5

d. I felt anger at having had to leave my overseas home.

NOT TRUE OF ME	SLIGHTLY TRUE OF ME	MODERATELY TRUE OF ME	MOSTLY TRUE OF ME	VERY TRUE OF ME
1	2	3	4	5

e. I was bothered that things felt unreal to me in the U.S.

NOT TRUE OF ME	SLIGHTLY TRUE OF ME	MODERATELY TRUE OF ME	MOSTLY TRUE OF ME	VERY TRUE OF ME
1	2	3	4	5

f. Feelings of loss hit me when I thought of my overseas residence.

NOT TRUE OF ME	SLIGHTLY TRUE OF ME	MODERATELY TRUE OF ME	MOSTLY TRUE OF ME	VERY TRUE OF ME
1	2	3	4	5

g. I found that there were many unspoken social customs I did not understand.

NOT TRUE OF ME	SLIGHTLY TRUE OF ME	MODERATELY TRUE OF ME	MOSTLY TRUE OF ME	VERY TRUE OF ME
1	2	3	4	5

h. I was critical of the American lifestyle.

NOT TRUE OF ME	SLIGHTLY TRUE OF ME	MODERATELY TRUE OF ME	MOSTLY TRUE OF ME	VERY TRUE OF ME
1	2	3	4	5

i. I seldom felt understood by others.

NOT TRUE OF ME	SLIGHTLY TRUE OF ME	MODERATELY TRUE OF ME	MOSTLY TRUE OF ME	VERY TRUE OF ME
1	2	3	4	5

j. I felt at odds with local religious standards.

NOT TRUE OF ME	SLIGHTLY TRUE OF ME	MODERATELY TRUE OF ME	MOSTLY TRUE OF ME	VERY TRUE OF ME
1	2	3	4	5

k. Feelings of "not fitting in" were common to me.

NOT TRUE OF ME	SLIGHTLY TRUE OF ME	MODERATELY TRUE OF ME	MOSTLY TRUE OF ME	VERY TRUE OF ME
1	2	3	4	5

l. I felt uncertain about what people expected of me.

NOT TRUE OF ME	SLIGHTLY TRUE OF ME	MODERATELY TRUE OF ME	MOSTLY RUE OF ME	VERY TRUE OF ME
1	2	3	4	5

m. Americans' wealth and spending habits upset me.

NOT TRUE OF ME	SLIGHTLY TRUE OF ME	MODERATELY TRUE OF ME	MOSTLY TRUE OF ME	VERY TRUE OF ME
1	2	3	4	5

n. I often felt alienated and alone.

NOT TRUE OF ME	SLIGHTLY TRUE OF ME	MODERATELY TRUE OF ME	MOSTLY TRUE OF ME	VERY TRUE OF ME
1	2	3	4	5

o. I experienced difficulty identifying with the U.S.

NOT TRUE OF ME	SLIGHTLY TRUE OF ME	MODERATELY TRUE OF ME	MOSTLY TRUE OF ME	VERY TRUE OF ME
1	2	3	4	5

p. I was uncomfortable with my day to day social interactions.

NOT TRUE OF ME	SLIGHTLY TRUE OF ME	MODERATELY TRUE OF ME	MOSTLY TRUE OF ME	VERY TRUE OF ME
1	2	3	4	5

q. I felt confused about life.

NOT TRUE OF ME	SLIGHTLY TRUE OF ME	MODERATELY TRUE OF ME	MOSTLY TRUE OF ME	VERY TRUE OF ME
1	2	3	4	5

r. I had fears of not being accepted.

NOT TRUE OF ME	SLIGHTLY TRUE OF ME	MODERATELY TRUE OF ME	MOSTLY TRUE OF ME	VERY TRUE OF ME
1	2	3	4	5

s. Most of the time I wished I had not left my overseas home.

NOT TRUE OF ME	SLIGHTLY TRUE OF ME	MODERATELY TRUE OF ME	MOSTLY TRUE OF ME	VERY TRUE OF ME
1	2	3	4	5

t. My closest friends were people who had overseas experience.

NOT TRUE OF ME	SLIGHTLY TRUE OF ME	MODERATELY TRUE OF ME	MOSTLY TRUE OF ME	VERY TRUE OF ME
1	2	3	4	5

QUESTIONS 42-44 Pertain to Your Feelings in the <u>First Six Months</u> Following Your <u>Last Reentry.</u>

42. In some ways I feel/felt "less" American than I did before my spouse's international assignment(s). Yes ____ No ____ N/A/ ____

43. I feel/felt more a part of a host culture I lived in than a part of the U.S. culture. Yes ____ No ___

44. I feel/felt that I am/was a more global or international person after my spouse's assignment(s). Yes ____ No ____

QUESTIONS 45-50 Refer to Information Obtained After Your Last Return to the U.S., and Your Overall Reentry Experience.

45. I obtained reentry information from (check all that apply):
    State Department Family Liaison Office (FLO) ____
    Overseas Briefing Center(OBC) ____
    AAFSW ____ N/A ____

46. I utilized online resources to get information about reentry. Yes ____ No ____

47. In the space provided below, please describe the most useful part of any reentry information you received after your last reentry.

_____

_____

_____

48. Was your reentry experience after your last return more difficult than anticipated ?
    Yes ____ No ____

49. In the space provided below, please describe your reentry experience in your own words.

_____

_____

_____

50. What do you think the U.S. Department of State could do to help with reentry for Foreign Service spouses and their families?

_____

_____

_____

Thank you very much for your participation in this research project!!

Reminder: Please send the completed questionnaire, along with one signed copy of the Informed Letter of Consent, in the enclosed envelope. Thank you!

Appendix C

Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

Dear Potential Research Participant,

My name is Sharon Maybarduk, and I am a graduate student at the Smith College School for Social Work and a member of the Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide (AAFSW). I am conducting a study of the experience of Foreign Service spouses returning to the United States following extended stays overseas. This research will be used in partial fulfillment of the Master's of Social Work degree at Smith College School for Social Work and for future presentation and publication on this topic.

You have received this questionnaire because you are a Foreign Service spouse and member of AAFSW. As this is a study of Foreign Service spouse reentry experience, if you have not had at least one reentry to the U.S., please disregard this questionnaire. The Board of Directors of AAFSW has given their permission to have this study conducted among their membership. Your participation will consist of completing the enclosed 10-page questionnaire, and returning it to me in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope. The questionnaire will take approximately 30 to 45 minutes to complete. It includes questions about you and your experience with overseas stays and returns to the United States as a spouse of a Foreign Service Officer.

A potential benefit of your participation in this study is that you will have the opportunity to reflect on your experience as a spouse of a FSO. By participating in this study, you will also be contributing to our understanding of the experience that spouses, family members of FSOs and others with repeated overseas extended stays and reentries have, and the types of services that may be helpful to families with similar experiences. While your participation is appreciated, there is no compensation for participating in this study.

Your privacy and the protection of any and all information you provide will be taken very seriously. Your answers to the questions will be kept separate from your name and other identifying information and will be stored in locked files to which no one but me, my research advisor and a data analyst has access. We will keep this information strictly confidential. As required by Federal guidelines, this information will be kept in locked files for a period of three years, after which time it will be destroyed. If any publications or presentations result from this research, no information identifying any of the participants will be used; in publications or presentations the data will be presented as a whole and when brief illustrative quotes or vignettes are used, they will be carefully disguised.

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study without negative consequence to you. You may also refuse to answer any question. It is possible that some of the questions may be emotionally difficult for some people. A list of local resources, should you wish to talk to a professional, is attached.

If you have any questions or wish to withdraw after sending in the questionnaire, please contact me at the telephone numbers and address above. There is no penalty for withdrawal, but this must be done before **the deadline for receipt of the questionnaire and signed consent form of May 15, 2007, when the results will start to be tabulated**. You may notify me of your decision to withdraw, but no later than May 15; should you choose to withdraw, all materials pertaining to you will be immediately destroyed. You may contact me with any questions at 571-214-2703 or smaybard@email.smith.edu.

Thank you very much for your participation. Please sign and return this form with your completed questionnaire in the envelope provided. Please retain the extra copy of this form which has been provided for your records.

YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTOOD THE ABOVE INFORMATION, THAT YOU HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, YOUR PARTICIPATION AND YOUR RIGHTS, AND THAT YOU AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

Signature of participant: _____ Date: _____

Appendix D

Institution Approval Letter

AAFSW

Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide

5555 Columbia Pike #208

Arlington, VA. 22204-3117

February 28, 2007

To Whom It May Concern:

Regarding Ms. Sharon Maybarduk's thesis project: "An Exploration of Factors Associated with Reentry Adjustment of United States Foreign Service Spouses":

Ms. Maybarduk has requested that the Board of Directors of the Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide (AAFSW) support her in her thesis project by providing permission to utilize the membership list of AAFSW - including names and addresses of all current members - as a sampling frame for her study, and to approve of all materials that will be sent to our members (including study announcement to appear on the web-based member discussion board; informed consent; and questionnaire). The Board of Directors has granted this permission and has approved all materials, as above.

As AAFSW does not have a Human Subjects Review Process, by this letter I am requesting Smith College School of Social Work (SSW) Human Subjects Review (HSR) Committee complete the required review of Ms. Maybarduk's research proposal. The AAFSW Board of Directors will abide by the standards related to the protection of all participants in the research approved by SSW HSR Committee.

Sincerely,

Ms. Judy Felt, President,
AAFSW

formerly: Association of American Foreign Service Women, 1960 -1999
5555 Columbia Pike • Suite 208 • Arlington, Virginia 22204-S882 • 703/820-5420 • Fax 703/820-5421

Appendix E

Approval Letters

SMITH COLLEGE
School for
Social Work

smith college
Northampton, Massachusetts
01063 T (413) 585-7950 F
(413) 585-7994

March 23, 2007

Sharon Maybarduk
Reentry Study P.O.
Box 8176
Reston,VA 20195

Dear Sharon,

The Human Subjects Review Committee has reviewed your documents. You have done an excellent job and there are just a few things that need attention and revision before we are able to give final approval to your very interesting study. They are as follows:

In the Application

You describe the questionnaires you have adapted and their sources. Have you written for permission to use them, or are they in the public domain? Please check this out.

You say throughout that there is minimal risk. It probably would be wise to delete this. It isn't necessary and for some who have had a painful time, it might be quite difficult to go through the questionnaire. In the Application, under **Risks** just start with "Due to the nature..."

You say under **Informed Consent Procedures** that they can "withdraw at any point". You have a date in the Consent. You don't want them withdrawing on July 1st. Also say, you will destroy all material pertaining to them should they withdraw.

Reading questions 13-29, they seem to imply that your participants are now all on US soil. Do you mean that or do you also want people who are currently abroad?

Your referral list is very brief. You might include NASW and the Mental Health Association. I believe on their national phone line, they refer to local people.

In the Informed Consent, tell them that should they withdraw, all materials pertaining to them will be immediately destroyed.

As soon as these few matters are clarified, we will be able to give this project our final approval. Please indicate any changes you make by typing in color or in bold or by underlining. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Ann Hartman, D.S.W.
Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Beth Lewis, Research Advisor

SMITH COLLEGE
School for
Social Work

Smith College
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063
T (413) 585-7950
F (413) 585-7994

March 27, 2007

Sharon Maybarduk
Reentry Study
P.O. Box 8176
Reston, VA 20195

Dear Sharon,

Your amended materials have been reviewed and all is now in order. We are therefore now happy to give final approval to this most interesting study.

Please note the following requirements:

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

Maintaining Data: You must retain signed consent 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.

Good luck with your project. I hope you get lots of recruits.

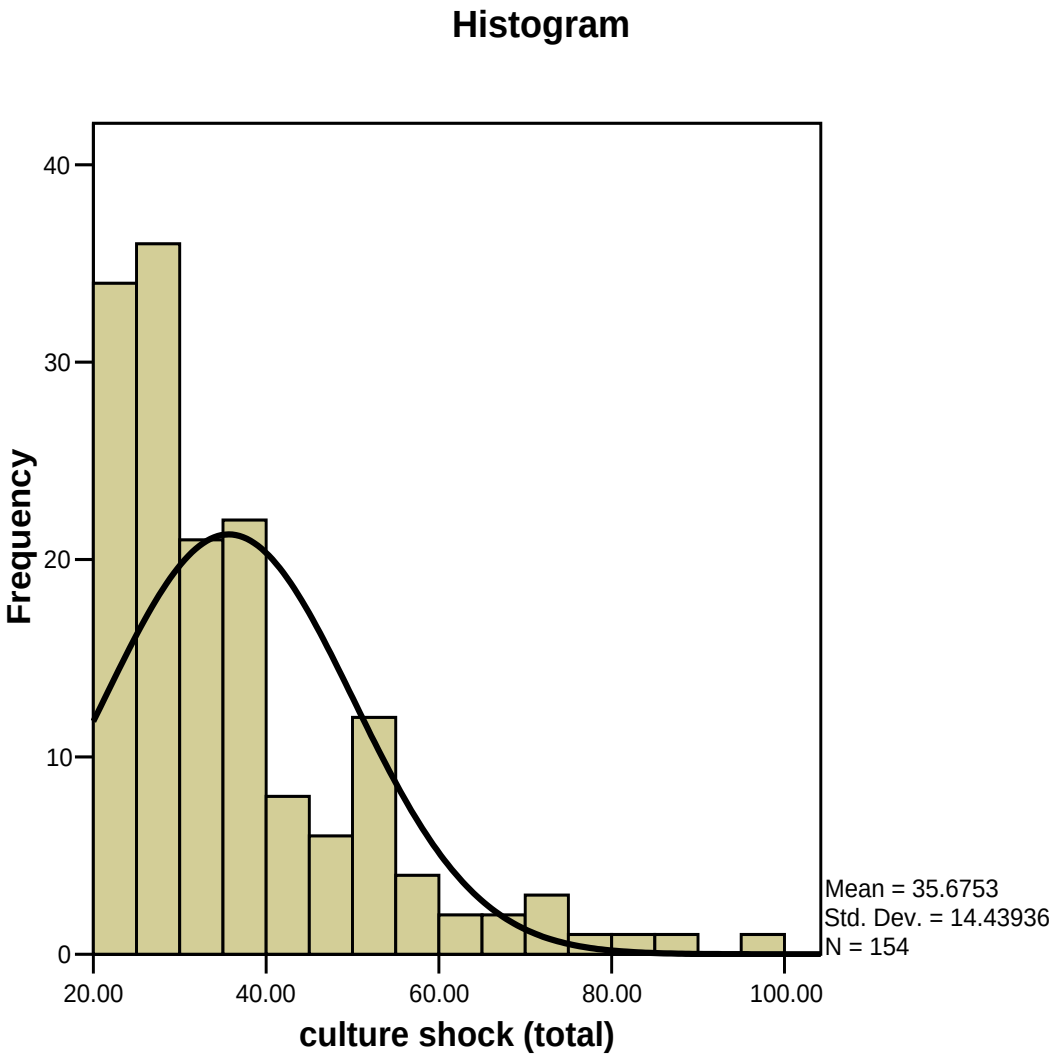
Sincerely,

Ann Hartman, D.S.W.
Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Beth Lewis, Research Advisor

Appendix F

Histogram of Homecomer Culture Shock Scale Frequencies


Histogram
Frequency
40
30
20
10
0
20.00
40.00
60.00
80.00
100.00
culture shock (total)
Mean = 35.6753
Std. Dev. = 14.43936
N = 154