THE THIRD CULTURE KID (TCK) EXPERIENCE:
ADULT-TCKS’ REFLECTIONS ON THEIR MULTICULTURAL CHILDHOOD,
ITS IMPACT ON STUDENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS IN U.S. CLASSROOMS
AND THEIR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MULTICULTURAL TEACHER
EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES

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by

Gretchen L. Espinetti

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A dissertation written by

Gretchen L. Espinetti

B.S., American International College, 1977

M.A., The George Washington University, 1982

Ph.D., Kent State University, 2010

Approved by

__________________________,  Director, Doctoral Dissertation Committee

Vilma Seeberg

__________________________,  Member, Doctoral Dissertation Committee

Kenneth Cushner

__________________________,  Member, Doctoral Dissertation Committee

Elizabeth W. Brooks

Accepted by

__________________________,  Director, School of Foundations, Leadership & Administration

Shawn M. Fitzgerald

__________________________,  Dean, College and Graduate School of Education, Health, and Human Services

Daniel F. Mahony
The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand, describe, interpret, and query about the third culture kid (TCK) phenomenon through the research participants’ (TCK) lived experiences and the interplay of this TCK lived experience and acculturation with their student-teacher relationships in U.S. classrooms. This study intended to provide knowledge for all educators so they can become more culturally responsive in their work with diverse learners in U.S. schooling.

The present study was grounded in the hermeneutic phenomenological tradition, using collective case study methodology and in-depth interviews. Based on the Adult-TCKs’ recall of their lived experiences, the researcher and research participants collectively made recommendations for U.S. multicultural teacher education and the preparation of all teachers for working with this growing population of learners, third culture children, in U.S. classrooms and schools.
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Thank you to Adult-TCKs for telling your stories so the world can truly know the
lives that you have lived and what brilliant gifts you are to the world, true “GEMs!”
DEDICATION

This research study is dedicated to my son, Enrique, who is now an Adult-TCK. Thank you for entering my life with such zest during a terrific typhoon in Okinawa and for giving me so much joy as I have watched you grow and develop through the years. You are not only an incredible, internationally-focused young man, but also a well-informed global citizen. My hope for you is that you will continue to be a global educational mediator (GEM) who is not only willing, but will also continue your strong desire to help inform and change lives for a more peaceful, respectful, integrated world.
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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND

“My home is everywhere but nowhere; the world is my home.”

(Enrique Espinetti, Adult-TCK, 2006)

Introduction

As many scholars in the multicultural teacher education field have repeatedly described (Banks, Sleeter, etc.), the U.S. P-12 population has become increasingly diverse over the last two decades. According to various predictions, this diversity in student population in the United States by 2020 (and perhaps even by 2010) could represent approximately 40% children from diverse cultural backgrounds. The time has come to not only uncover, explore, and describe adult third culture children’s (A-TCKs) voices through their stories about their multicultural childhood and their schooling experiences in the United States, once they entered for the first time or reentered their parents’ home culture, but also to propose recommendations to multicultural teacher education in the preparation of teachers for working with these diverse learners.

For the purpose of this present qualitative study, third culture children (TCKs) are defined as those children who were born or raised in cultures (western or non-western) outside of their parents’ home(s) of origin because of their parents’ occupations or interests and then, either (re)enter or (re)integrate into the United States for schooling.

Adult third culture children (A-TCKs) are defined as those third culture children who are at least 18 years of age or older. Adult third culture children are the participants in this qualitative research study based on their TCK childhoods.
Third culture children (TCKs) develop their own life patterns differently than those children who are born and raised in one location or culture. Even though third culture children may appear physically similar to “mainstream” children in U.S. classrooms, they can think very differently based on their multiple cross-cultural experiences and multicultural childhood. Van Reken (personal communication, March 9, 2003) advocated for the inclusion of TCKs in U.S. schools: “there is a definite lack of recognition for what TCKs have learned from all these cultural experiences and what they can bring to their U.S. public school experiences and to the U.S. educational system as a whole.”

This present qualitative study not only investigates selected A-TCKs’ understanding of the TCK phenomenon, but also presents their reflections on a multicultural childhood and acculturation process with student-teacher relationships in U.S. classrooms. The interplay of the TCK lived experience and acculturation with student-teacher relationships is intended to provide a theoretical framework for examining and interpreting the student-teacher relationships between TCKs and their teachers in U.S. classrooms and schools and how an individual’s acculturation process impacts these relationships. From their experiences, they make recommendations for multicultural teacher education. The study draws out implications from how A-TCKs can inform all educators in teacher preparation about the interplay of student-teacher relationships and students’ acculturation processes in our U.S. classrooms and schools, specifically for the TCK population.
Statement of Problem

When my son (for the first time) and I returned to the United States, he was about to enter fourth grade in a public school in a small New England town. Still, more than 15 years later, I remember his White female teacher asking me the following two questions about him within the first weeks of fourth grade. The first question was, “Does he speak English?” In disbelief, I asked her if she had talked with him and why she was asking. I proceeded to inform her that he had heard and spoken English (and some Spanish) from birth with his father and me although his in-home caregivers in Okinawa, the Philippines, and Korea were local nationals and native speakers of Japanese, Tagalog, and Korean, respectively. I told her that he was being raised bilingual and bicultural; and more importantly, I said he had led a “third culture kid life.” She exclaimed, “His name, Enrique, is so interesting!” Perhaps she thought he was Hispanic and possibly assumed that his native language was Spanish. Her second question was, “Did he make up these stories that he writes and talks about or did he really experience them?” Again, I was surprised that she would question what she thought was his imagination, but I simply told her that he really did experience what he retold in writing and in conversations.

My son’s years of schooling in the United States from the fourth grade through high school seemed plagued by questions of divided interest, disbelief, and sometimes intrigue from his teachers, some peers, and parents of his peers. From these initial personal experiences (and countless others) as a mother of a TCK and from my interactions with all of his White male and female teachers in his U.S. schooling, certain questions have remained for me over the years. An aching question is how many third
culture children remain silent or silenced in our U.S. schools because of the ignorance, bias, lack of knowledge, or limited preparation of teachers for working with this diverse population of learners?

One of the A-TCK participants in this study (referred to as EE) expressed his concern about teachers and schooling in a personal communication in April 2008.

There is this cultural difference coming from overseas to the United States for schooling (as a TCK). You experience a lot of stereotypes. From my experiences in U.S. schools, teachers did not use my overseas experiences as lessons in the classrooms. There was an ignorance from teachers (particularly in high school) about cultures, especially Asian, and stereotypes of those cultures. Teachers were not welcoming to (curriculum) options other than what was written in textbooks. They did not use students as curriculum resources in learning. In the younger grades, I did not understand what was going on. But by eighth grade, I realized that in general “something was missing” in my (U.S.) schooling experiences. I suppose a lot depends on the demographics of the school, community and teachers’ backgrounds as well as teachers’ knowledge of their students. Growing up in this (TCK) life and building trust with teachers is so important.

Drs. John and Ruth Useem, intercultural researchers and anthropologists, in the 1950s first developed the term, third culture kids (TCKs). Their definition referred to children whose parents’ work took them abroad to live and who spent a significant part of their childhood outside the parents’ culture(s). The Useems further described TCKs as those children who lived between two cultures, specifically between western and
non-western. They proposed that, over time, TCKs were not fully part of their culture of
origin nor fully part of the host country or countries in which they lived; but they were
part of a third culture, thus creating a merging of the two (or more) cultures into a
thirdness. This thirdness concept was also discussed by Cook-Sather (2006).

Over the years, third culture has been used more generally, regardless of whether
the cultures lived in represent western or not. Western for this present study is simply
defined as cultures that have adopted cultural values, beliefs, and traditions commonly
associated with Western Europe. Other noted consultants and scholars in the TCK field
have described TCKs as cross-cultural children, trans-culture kids, unknown
ambassadors, hidden immigrants, global nomads, lost foreigners, absentee Americans,
and cultural chameleons, to name a few of the most widely used terms. TCKs are raised
in and by a diverse community including international business men and women,
educator parents, military personnel, diplomats, missionaries, Peace Corps members, or
members of international aid organizations. These unique children are socialized in and
to the third culture rather than in or to the parents’ culture of origin or the host culture(s).

The number of TCKs has increased from the 1950s when the term was mostly
used in and around the diplomatic and missionary fields to the most recent U.S. Census
2000, when more than 3 million Americans were reported to be abroad in some capacity.
This statistic leads to the projection that, more than likely, many of these Americans
could be raising third culture children. The U.S. Census 2000 figures do not include
citizens from other countries raising their children in the TCK world. Ruth Van Reken, a
TCK author and consultant, in a personal communication (March 9, 2003), pointed out
that because the U.S. Census does not recognize third culture children as a category, this
group of children has not been included in any previous or current Census survey.
Furthermore, because there are no data on the population of Americans living abroad, it is
even more difficult to estimate how many TCKs have entered or reentered the United
States and are enrolled in our U.S. classrooms today. Many myths (and facts) are
presented on the U.S. Census website, attempting to explain the reasons why Americans
working abroad are not included in the Census data, and why the resistance from the U.S.
Census still exists as this governmental office prepares for the 2010 data gathering
process.

In a telephone conversation with the Director of TCK Services at the non-profit
organization, Interaction International (personal communication, October 2007), U.S.
schools seem very resistant to the concept that TCK children exist in our classrooms and
thus, do not seem very open at this time to in-service workshops where teachers could
become aware of and understand this unique culture of children and then apply new
knowledge of the TCK phenomenon in working with third culture children more
effectively in their classrooms. The researcher of this present study proposes using TCKs
as valuable resources and educational mediators in all U.S. classrooms, especially in
student-teacher relationships.

Third culture children are not a new population as Pollock and Van Reken (2001)
argued; “They have been a part of the world’s population from the earliest migration
periods but have been largely undefined, unrecognized, silent, and in multiple ways,
invisible, particularly in schooling” (p. xxi). Pollock and Van Reken (2001) proposed
that TCKs are a prototype for the future because of how the world has changed. She proposed that TCKs can act as resources and assets in our classrooms, schools, and communities as well as in the world at large. They can help educators “get a glimpse at how other educational systems ‘school’ their children so that we don’t just look at the (U.S.) American way of doing schooling” (personal communication, August 2001). A broad public awareness of TCKs in the United States is not as widespread as in Japan, for example.

However, a growing awareness of this population of children has been sparked by other noted consultants, researchers, and scholars representing the TCK field, such as the late David Pollock, Barbara Schaetti, the late Norma McCaig, Ann Baker Cottrell, Paulette Bethel, and of course, the late John and Ruth Useems. Both Pollock and Van Reken (1999) claimed that “TCKs have a culture to call their own and are not outsiders anymore” (p. 16). They also claimed that there are two universal interplaying truths about TCKs: “they are raised in a cross-cultural world and they live in a highly mobile, global world” (p. 22). All of the ongoing global migration and expansion is prompting a dramatic paradigm shift in how third culture children are perceived, according to the late David Pollock (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999). Pollock and Van Reken believed that TCKs have much more than a textbook understanding of global culture(s); “what they know best is how to adapt to transition and change. Growing up in a third culture means always feeling at home” (pp. 254-255). Confronting cultural hurdles and navigating boundaries and borders is the norm for third culture children. “Home,” the third culture, is the total sum of all the places that TCKs have lived while being raised abroad. As EE
proclaimed, “I wear this key that I bought in Ireland around my neck as a symbol of home is wherever I make it.”

This concept of home is important for teacher educators and teacher candidates to examine during the inquiry process in teacher education programs to prepare teachers for working with a variety of diverse learners. ‘Home’ requires a broader, more global perspective in defining what this notion means. However, from my professional observation over the last 30 years, most of the teacher education courses that I have previewed specifically at one public university and one private college (where at times, I taught) have provided a general overview of diversity in the context of exceptionalities (special needs including giftedness) and/or an overview of diverse issues (race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, to name a few), but very little foundational content related to linguistic and cultural diversity including the phenomenon of third culture children (TCKs).

**Statement of Purpose**

This study attempts to uncover in the context of A-TCKs’ retrospective stories, their own perceptions of their multicultural childhood and entry or reentry to U.S. schooling. What were those multicultural and schooling experiences like? What are their responses to the experiences and what are their reflections on the interactions with their U.S. teachers? In this qualitative study, the researcher examines how the TCK context shapes interpretation and the relationships between TCKs and their perceived worlds.

The design of the study is immersed in the philosophy of “the art of interpretation of meaning” from hermeneutics and “the study of understanding” from phenomenology.
The researcher and A-TCK participants in this qualitative study described, explored, interpreted, and queried the nature of the TCK phenomenon and its complexities not only to seek a deeper understanding of this phenomenon, but also to interpret the interplay of acculturation and student-teacher relationships with TCKs’ schooling experiences from A-TCKs’ perspectives. Based on the interviews and recommendations from the A-TCK participants, this researcher intends this study to co-inform multicultural teacher education on how to better prepare teachers for their 21st century classrooms.

Heidegger (1962) explained “the act of interpretation as an innate characteristic of humans. Meaning is given to words from interrelationships in our world,” and Gadamer (1975) claimed that “all understanding is interpretation and all interpretation takes place in the medium of language. Language is the middle space where understanding and agreement take place between two people concerning the phenomenon.” In this study, therefore, collective case study methodology was used to gather data from in-depth interviews with the research participants, the A-TCKs.

An initial review of TCK literature reveals a rather limited body of knowledge and understanding about the impact of being raised in westernized or non-westernized cultures outside the United States and the TCKs’ schooling experiences upon entry or reentry to the U.S. public educational system. In reviewing dissertation abstracts related to the subject of third culture children, this researcher located 11 quantitatively, qualitatively, or mixed method-designed dissertations from the mid-1970s through 2005. Although there have been numerous practical books, narratives, biographies, personal stories and papers, organizations particularly targeting the TCK population such as
Interaction International, cross-cultural conferences, and blogs written about personal TCK experiences. The research literature also revealed several theoretical models that could be applied to explain aspects of the TCK experience, for example, Thomas and Znaniecki’s (1984) discussion of interplay in crossing cultures, Berry’s (2005) acculturation model, Wooten and McCroskey’s (1996) emphasis on student-teacher relationships, Davis’ (2003) significance of social interaction and relationships, Pianta and Stuhlman’s (2004) explanation of relational trust, and Ezra’s (2003) discussion of connections in the acculturation process within the international school context.

From conversations with U.S. consultants on TCK issues, there seems to be a focus on working with international schools and their teachers where TCKs exist and are recognized as such, rather than on domestic U.S. schools. This qualitative study attempts, through a small selected case study group of A-TCKs, to unlock their voices about being raised in westernized or non-westernized multicultural childhoods, the impact of involuntary mobility, and their (re)integration into the U.S. (westernized) public school system. What are their responses to their TCK experiences? What were their relationships with U.S. teachers like? What can future U.S. teachers learn from the A-TCK voices—their lived multicultural stories, reflections, relationships and recommendations?

According to Ruth Van Reken (personal communication, March 9, 2003), third culture children are still a “virgin” topic because most research in the TCK world has examined the experiences of TCKs in western-based cultures, but very little to almost no research has focused on TCKs’ experiences in non-westernized cultures. This researcher
also observed this trend in the literature regarding multicultural teacher education, especially the impact on preparation of teachers.

**Research Questions**

The following key research question (#1) guides the present qualitative study of meaning-making of the TCK phenomenon, with two additional research questions for further exploration, understanding, interpretation, and query:

1. How do western or non-western multicultural childhood experiences impact the TCKs’ later (re)entry and (re)integration in U.S. (westernized) public school settings and impact their schooling experiences?
2. Do TCKs bring this “third culture” into their (re)entry and (re)integration into U.S. schooling; and if so, how?
3. How can A-TCKs inform multicultural teacher education? What recommendations do A-TCKs have regarding how we can better prepare teachers in the 21st century for working with this growing population of P-12 learners in the United States?

Interview questions were developed from these three research questions for semi-structured interviews with the selected participants (see Appendix A).

**Significance (Need) of the Study**

This present qualitative study is significant and relevant in adding a knowledge base to the fields of third culture children phenomenon and multicultural teacher education. Multicultural teacher education will need to be continually involved in reviewing curriculum and foundations courses on college/university campuses to ensure
that not only is the content current and relevant to our 21st century classrooms, but also that the trends and needs of migration in the context of globalization are followed closely and continually, thus, effectively integrated into all teacher education programs in the United States.

This qualitative study also seems timely considering the body of knowledge in multicultural education, nationally and globally, at a time when intense accountability and accreditation standards are driving and mandating not only how departments, schools, or colleges of education and their universities are addressing diversity in their faculty, candidates, courses and programs (a requirement of NCATE, one teacher education accrediting agency in the United States), but also how all teachers are prepared to work with diverse learners.

Additionally, this study seems very relevant to the current immigration debate in the United States, concerns about the data collection for the next U.S. Census in 2010, and how the United States and domestic policy view other cultures. In this global world, how can we acknowledge, preserve, and value each A-TCK participant’s story while understanding the impact of the TCK phenomenon on our individual and collective lives?

Personally, this study fulfills a lifetime goal of understanding more profoundly the TCK phenomenon, A-TCK perspectives on their prior schooling experiences, and the overall impact on A-TCKs’ lives. The genesis of this study developed in late September 1983, when my son was born in Okinawa. A personal question about the meaning of the TCK experience has not only intrigued me for more than 20 years, but has also been at the core of my passion for this topic in the teaching and learning context throughout my
career in multicultural education. Particularly in the last 10 years, I have had a strong desire to relate the TCK experience, its impact on individuals who lived it, and its application to our preparation of multicultural teachers to work with these diverse learners in our 21st century classrooms in the United States. The longevity of my initial intrigue, personal experiences and long-term dedication to the topic of the TCK phenomenon as a qualitative researcher are supported by Stake (1995), who stated, “there is no particular moment when data gathering begins. It begins before there is commitment to do the study—background, acquaintance with cases, first impressions” (p. 49).

Summary

One of the intentions of this study is to spark not only a general awareness of this population of learners in our U.S. classrooms, but also to acquire a deeper understanding of the third culture children life experience. From a personal communication with Ruth Van Reken and from my own personal experience, TCKs are children who often go unnoticed and untapped.

It is this researcher’s belief that contextual factors, sociocultural in particular, play a major role in TCKs’ relationships in a learning environment, especially when they entered or returned “home” (to the United States) for schooling, after being raised abroad in multicultural contexts. Clifford Geertz (1973) explained, “culture is located in the minds and hearts of people who are at the same time actors and creators of social interactions/mediators of culture” (p. 4). There is a link between the social and the cultural.
There is much to be learned about third culture children and even more from TCKs and A-TCKs. The need for continuing research as well as respect for the TCK lived experience is clear. As is true with most research, there are more questions to be raised than answers. What are the problems that TCKs encounter in their entry for the first time or reentry in U.S. public schools? How do they respond to teachers and to the U.S. public educational system? What are the challenges and successes for them in the acculturation process? How do we prepare teachers in the 21st century for working with this growing population of P-12 learners? These are interesting questions to ponder and discuss individually and collectively.

Imbedded in this study is what Bahktin (1984) stated, “truth is not to be found inside the head of an individual person; it is born between people collectively searching for truth in the process of their dialogic interaction” (p. 110). It is apparent that substantial reform in our schools is needed; but first, reform has to be conceptualized as an institutional process that involves changing the total school environment through a rethinking of the integration of multicultural education. Knowledge, insight, and understanding are needed to work effectively with all diverse learners, and, as this study proposes, to validate the TCK population in our schools and to better equip teachers in today’s classrooms to work with this specific cultural group. For, in fact, TCKs have a shared heritage even though each TCK has a unique story and lived experience.

“The future depends on humanity’s ability to transcend the limits of individual cultures.” (Hall, 1976)
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

“The question is no longer whether education will be influenced by globalization, but rather how education has the potential to serve the public by cultivating critical questioning about the kind of society we wish to be building, and the kinds of needs social systems should serve.” (Christine Sleeter, 2003)

Overview

This chapter presents a summary of the literature relevant to the third culture child (TCK) phenomenon, beginning with definitions and descriptions of third culture children and other emerging terms, as well as an overview of this multicultural childhood and its unique complexities. The interplay of the TCK lived experience and acculturation (immersion of cultures) with student-teacher relationships in U.S. classrooms, specifically emphasizing the importance and significance of relational trust (and possibly identity conflict), is presented as the theoretical framework of the present study. In this chapter, key points from multicultural teacher education are examined as well as the significance of migration in the context of globalization.

A basic assumption behind this study is, as Campano (2007) contended, “the increasing rich diversity of students in our schools is not a problem, but rather an opportunity that benefits all learners in a classroom community” (p. 251). Twenty-first century classrooms in the United States are an intermingling of identities, where our students are already global citizens through a comparative cultural and often transnational framework. They have crossed borders and negotiated borders of race, class, gender,
language, generations, and other diverse backgrounds, either locally, domestically, or internationally; sometimes domestically AND internationally. Campano (2007) further believed that “the deepest intellectual resources in classrooms are the students themselves. One of the most powerful ways students can share their knowledge, partake in their own education, and intervene on their own behalf is by telling their stories” (p. 251). For the purposes of this study, we examined a collection of A-TCKs’ stories of their TCK lived experience, their acculturation process, and their student-teacher relationships in U.S. schooling.

**Description of Terms**

First, descriptions of the terms, third culture children (TCKs) and adult third culture children (A-TCKs), are presented to describe the original definitions and then to share how the terms are continually changing, broadening, and being redefined by not only what is occurring in the world, but also by how TCK researchers, consultants, and scholars such as Van Reken, Bethel, Schaetti, and the late McCaig are interpreting and reflecting new knowledge and understanding. Additional terms, cross-cultural kids (CCKs) and global nomads (GNs), are described because although these terms are sometimes used interchangeably for TCKs, there are distinctions to be made especially by Van Reken, Schaetti, and McCaig. After a description of these terms, the (TCK) multicultural childhood and its unique complexities are described in more detail including Pollock’s *RAFT model* that he developed to explain the transitions that TCKs experience.
**Third Culture Kids (TCKs)**

Drs. John and Ruth Useem created the term, third culture kids (TCKs), in the early 1950s to basically mean children whose parents’ work took them abroad to live. The Useems called the first culture the home of the parents, the second culture where they lived, and the third culture *interstitial* or *culture between cultures*, thus, a *third culture*.

Pollock and Van Reken (2001) described a TCK as “a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental (birth to age 18) years outside the parents’ culture(s). The TCK builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any” (pp. 26-29). Over time, Ruth Van Reken and the late David Pollock broadened the definition to include children taken abroad because of “refugee” matters, those who enter another culture but live in the same country, or children of immigrants and refugees. They expanded the term to include domestic experiences as well as global.

**Adult Third Culture Kids (A-TCKs)**

Adult third culture children, A-TCKs, are those third culture children who are at least 18 years of age or older. But, as adult third culture children remind us, once a TCK, always a TCK.

**Cross-Cultural Kids (CCKs)**

Ruth Van Reken (2007) further expanded the concept of TCKs by including the crossing of cultural borders by these children either domestically, internationally, or both. Van Reken defined cross-cultural kids (CCKs) as those who have lived in or meaningfully interacted with two or more cultural environments for a significant period.
of time during their developmental years. She has broadened the representation of groups in her description by including not only TCKs, but also children of bi/multi-cultural parents, children of immigrants, children of refugees, children of minorities, some international adoptees, and domestic TCKs.

**Global Nomads (GNs)**

McCaig (1992) differentiated third culture children as global nomads and described them as “anyone who has ever lived abroad before adulthood because of a parent’s occupational choice or whose parents were/are abroad independently for career purposes” (p. 2). McCaig believed that global nomads “share the experience of growing up in culture(s), not their own and experience moving multiple times” (p. 2).

Schaetti and Ramsey (1999) concurred that global nomads are individuals “whose lives have had frequent geographic transitions and multiple cultural influences” (p. 3). They further described global nomads as “people of any age or nationality who have lived a significant part of their developmental years in one or more countries outside their passport country because of a parent’s occupation” (p. 1).

Schaetti and Ramsey (1999) pointed out that global nomads share four characteristics:

1. Change (adaptable, flexible, rootlessness, multiplicity of relationships everywhere)

2. Relationships (making and losing friends, existing in liminal space)

3. Worldview (multiple points of view, combining inquiry, curiosity, and ambiguity)
4. Cultural Identity (multiple cultural traditions and at times culturally marginal, feeling comfortable nowhere or feeling at home everywhere). (pp. 2-3)

Cook-Sather (2006) explained that this *betwixt and between* space in the context of teacher preparation (which she borrowed from Victor Turner’s and William Bridges’ insights who in turn have borrowed from Van Gannep’s work in the 1960s) is the “transition that unfolds in the bridge of what is to what can or will be” (p. 110).

In this liminality, an in-between space, what happens to TCKs? Is there a transformation in their transitions between cultures? How can we use an understanding of Cook-Sather’s *betwixt and between*, the essence of liminality, to be a (cultural) bridge for third culture children and adult third culture children abroad as well as in the United States? How can we use this concept of liminality in teacher preparation for candidates to understand the TCK phenomenon and the acculturation process?

**The TCK Phenomenon: Unique Complexities**

When Pollock and Van Reken (1999) initially wrote their invaluable book on third culture children, they provided a solid description of third culture children and detailed chapters on the complexities of living a multicultural childhood with involuntary mobility; including its many challenges and advantages. Although Pollock and Van Reken did not use an acculturation model to describe what they know about TCKs, my interpretation of the issues seems to fit the acculturation model very well and that is why I have chosen it. Pollock and Van Reken provided perspectives that are interdisciplinary from anthropology, psychology, and sociology.
What initially impressed me while reading this thorough text and upon my work as a doctoral candidate was a distinct confirmation of the life lived by my son (now an A-TCK) and me, as the mother of a TCK during a seven-year period, in three distinct ‘non-western’ cultures. As observed by Schaetti (2000), now I had a name and a map for this lived experience and a more concrete pattern for our life as well as for other TCKs and their families. Somehow I knew this TCK lived experience was not just a “nice, privileged life,” as some have referred to our life abroad in Okinawa, the Philippines, and Korea.

Furthermore, I realized the complex cultural, emotional, physical, geographical, and, at times, spiritual experiences that are embedded in the TCK phenomenon and our particular lived experiences in these three ‘non-western’ cultures. Pollock and Van Reken (2001) reminded us that “TCKs are raised in a neither/nor world” (p. 6). This “neither/nor world” suggests that TCKs are not raised completely in the parents’ culture(s) nor completely in the other culture(s) in which they lived. So what and where is their neither/nor world? As McCaig (1992) explained, “we aren’t really rootless. We’re rooted differently. Our root system is defined more by people, less by places” (p. 1).

Third culture children’s significance is increasing as explained by Pollock and Van Reken (2001); “the TCK experience as a microcosm of what is fast becoming normal throughout the world” (p. 7). Even though A-TCK stories are unique with particulars that represent their individual lived experiences, commonalities of this shared experience are visible especially when third culture children and adult third culture kids
meet at a conference or workshop, in classes, or in daily social interactions. Although living cross-culturally in a highly mobile manner is true for most TCKs, the following four characteristics identified by Pollock and Van Reken (2001) could vary depending on where the third culture kids have lived overseas and what took them to particular nations (with their parents) from the beginning:

1. Distinct differences—physical, political, religious
2. Expected repatriation—an assumption that usually the TCK will move back to the parents’ country of origin
3. Privileged lifestyle—support, “benefits,” special stores, local national service help, travel
4. System identity—values, standards, expectations of the government, company, corporation, or religious agency which sent the parents to work in a particular nation or culture. (pp. 22-23)

Cowley (1991) supported Pollock and Van Reken’s characteristics of TCKs by stating, “TCKs create their own home (third culture) which combines all the cultures they have lived in or identify with not by location but in a state of mind” (pp. 117-118).

The description of TCK characteristics is further supported by Kidd and Lankenau (2001) in their conclusion that “U.S. educators are not always aware of who they are, what they might need, and what special gifts they have to offer” (p. 1). Kidd and Lankenau recommended these four strategies for supporting TCKs in their transition to U.S. schools:

1. Recognize and draw upon TCKs’ strengths that they bring to the classroom.
2. Strive to help students feel a part of the class and school.

3. Provide support for academic transitions.

4. Foster students’ multicultural identities. (p. 1)

These four strategies are not difficult to understand, but how would they look in a real classroom? What would the interactions between teachers and TCKs look like? The Department of Defense schools (DODEA) and international schools may be able to provide effective examples from teachers and classrooms, as these settings have long worked with this population of learners, particularly in the TCKs’ transition among classrooms, schools, and cultures. David Pollock’s RAFT Model, which I see as an acculturation model, could also provide insights for teachers who are unaware or unfamiliar with the TCK population.

Pollock (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001) developed his RAFT Model as a framework to discuss the transition process of TCKs, especially as they move overseas initially or back and forth between cultures. Pollock’s RAFT model can be defined by four social, psychological and cognitive concepts: reconciliation, affirmation, farewells, and thinking. How might A-TCKs in this study respond to Pollock’s RAFT Model? Might this model be revealed in the interviews with these Adult-TCKs? How could this model be used in teacher preparation and in U.S. schools to help teachers understand the TCK phenomenon and A-TCKs’ lived experiences?

These questions are important because the number of third culture children appears to be increasing each year based on migration statistics from the World Bank and U.S. Census, and from more individual accounts and organizations who are vocalizing
TCK and A-TCK stories. Conferences now specifically target issues about TCKs and their families; and even college and university campuses such as Lewis and Clark, Houghton, Gordon, Cornell, Wheaton, Hope, Taylor, and Bethel, to name a few, are acknowledging TCKs in their higher education careers by offering support groups, programs, and other creative social links. These colleges and universities demonstrate their commitment to this distinct group of college students by understanding their unique TCK background. However, most of these colleges and universities are either private and/or private Christian in their foundational nature. Where are the public higher education institutions in this knowledge base on the TCK phenomenon and commitment to diverse college learners? This is an important question to examine as Cochran-Smith and Zeichner (2006) reported that most teachers are prepared in baccalaureate programs at public institutions in the United States.

An increasing number of TCK organizations are emerging or have expanded through the years, such as TCK Interact, TCK World, Global Nomads International, Interaction International, Military Brats online, Missionary Kid Connection, Aramco-brats.com, and most recently, TCKID Academy. These organizations are providing more and more valuable information to the community of TCKs, their families, and other individuals interested in the TCK phenomenon as well.

The Girl Scouts, for example, have recognized the changing “face” and needs of Girl Scouts when their girls go abroad with their families and when they return “home” to their passport country. The Girl Scout organization as a global outreach to young girls is responding with significant resources in more than 90 countries including the United
States. As Pollak (2004) announced, “the phenomenon of the TCK has increasingly touched Girl Scout troop leaders in the U.S. and abroad” (p. 1). How are other international groups such as 4-H and Boy Scouts responding to the needs and changes in their particular members? This is an interesting question to consider as we think about our communities and the supporting resources for third culture children (and their families) locally, nationally, and globally as they cross cultures. We must consider acculturation as we look at all these organizations and situations.

**Theoretical Framework of the Study:**

**An Interplay of the TCK Lived Experience and Acculturation With Student-Teacher Relationships in U.S. Classrooms and Schools**

Thomas and Znaniecki (1984) discussed the role of interplay in crossing cultures and the resulting impact on social change. Their concept of interplay is an interesting process for TCK researchers to consider in unlocking a deeper understanding of the multicultural lives of TCKs who leave “traditional worlds behind and enter new worlds” (Coser, 1977, p. 36) and for A-TCKs themselves to reflect on their own shared multicultural experiences, to understand their individual experiences, the complexities of this multicultural life (challenges and benefits in these contexts), and to suggest recommendations for pre-service and in-service teachers in U.S. schools. The interplay of high mobility, internal/external tensions and confusion about loyalty and values, multiple worldviews, and cross-cultural enrichment provide a multitude of perspectives to further examine.
In this present qualitative study, the interplay of the following sociocultural processes, the TCK lived experience and acculturation with student-teacher relationships, is intended to provide a theoretical framework for examining and interpreting the student-teacher relationships between TCKs and their teachers in U.S. classrooms and schools, and how an individual’s acculturation process impacts these relationships. However, depending on the individuals (TCKs), their prior immersion in cultural experiences, and their individual adjustments in entry or reintegration in U.S. schools, the outcomes in their student-teacher interactions may vary. This qualitative study examines the relationships as recalled by the A-TCKs in their U.S. schooling experiences and how their TCK experiences and the acculturation processes affected these relationships.

Acculturation (Immersion in Cultures)

Berry (2005) defined acculturation as “the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members” (p. 698). Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits (1936) described acculturation as “those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous firsthand contact with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups” (p. 149).

Acculturation parallels the process of socialization. For the purposes of this study, the researcher examines the socialization within school contexts between student and teacher, believing that schools are complex systems of social interactions and interpersonal relationships that are inherently imbedded in the educational process. The focus of the study remains at the social outcomes (affective perspectives) level rather
than on academic achievement (cognitive results). Berry (2005) proposed a “psychology of group relations framework” that examines contextual factors first, then the processes within acculturation and then the outcomes (ranging from harmony to conflict).

Orozco (2007) defined acculturation similar to Berry’s description, but added a distinction. In Orozco’s description, acculturation is defined across three distinct types: *dissonant, consonant, and selective*. Of the three, selective acculturation promises the strongest foundation for TCKs (applied from immigrants in general) moving through the acculturation process and demonstrating that the larger community plays a key role.

Berry (2005) argued that although “acculturation has been happening for ‘millennia,’ globalization has increased the need for examining the relevance of how groups relate to each other and change in relation to living together” (p. 700). He further argued that “work on acculturation must be based in examining its cultural contexts. We must not only understand both (all) cultures that are in contact but also the individuals who are in contact” (p. 702). These cultural contexts are defined by Berry as “two original cultures, the two changing groups, and the nature of their contact and interactions” (p. 698).

Berry (1997) explained that “acculturation is one of the most complex areas of research” (p. 5). From cross-cultural psychology, the interplay of cultural contexts (the cultural) and individual behavioral development (the psychological) is being investigated and researched. According to Berry, “all cultural groups must determine how to acculturate through cultural maintenance and contact or participation through four strategies, assimilation, separation, integration, or marginalization. Acculturation
involves mutual accommodation. Cultural diversity enhances society’s adaptability” (p. 9).

Ezra (2003) discussed the connections of culture, language, and personality in the process of acculturation within the international school system and international mobile children. She described international mobile children as “children who move frequently due to their parents’ employment as diplomats or staff of global corporations” confirming what Pollock, Van Reken, and the Useems have described as third culture children. Within the international school system, Ezra described what characterizes these schools in particular is “the western educational focus, aligned with U.S. and/or European schools” (p. 124). She also explained that the acculturative process experienced by these international mobile children is “not an easy or painless process” (p. 125). As these children move in and out of cultures, including entering or reentering their home cultures, the acculturative process is repeated as a continuous wave. This wave can produce challenges as well as opportunities for these children.

One of the opportunities afforded by this highly mobile lifestyle is expanded worldviews and often a development of strong cross-cultural skills. Because of the interplay of culture and thinking, language and personality play a key role especially in developing relationships with peers and teachers. The relationship process is influenced by social and affective factors; and as Ezra (2003) proposed, these two factors “determine acculturation, how completely a person adapts to learning a new culture and language” (p. 138). Teachers, according to Ezra, “should make efforts to lower children’s affective filters within the classroom by providing a relaxed and happy classroom environment” (p.
and “should take into account their students’ cultural backgrounds when creating a
caring, supportive classroom community” (p. 144). Ezra concluded by stating that “more
research by schools and governments is needed in the future to address the transitions of
children and their reentry to their “home culture.”

Storti (2001a) reported that much literature has been written and researched
regarding cultural adjustment, but little has been written on reentry, reverse culture
shock, readjustment, and reintegration, specifically as it relates to TCKs. However,
perhaps by reviewing research on reentry and cross-cultural transitions from Adler
others, we can discern the challenges and benefits of “returning home” for TCKs and
A-TCKs. These are complicated and difficult experiences, deeply personal and
culturally-based, demonstrating that reentry is an experience. For Storti, home is familiar
places, people, routines, and predictable patterns of interaction. When one enters/reenters
“home,” there is a sense of being “a stranger in your own land” and “a strangeness of
home.” Often, one feels temporarily homeless during the readjustment. And, as Orozco
(2007) further reminded us,

The potential for cultural disconnect increases as the demographics continue to
change in schools but the teacher population remains the same, predominantly
white, female. An understanding of culture is necessary in examining the
apparent disconnect and understanding of the acculturation process experienced
by TCKs. (p. 9)
Over many years, hundreds of definitions have been developed and proposed about culture. Recently, one definition in particular struck this researcher as significant in understanding TCKs and their lived experience in the context of multicultural childhoods. Pennycook (1994) had this to say about cultures:

Cultures have been reflections of the world mirrored in the eyes of the members. Foreign cultures are not arbitrarily or randomly different from one another. They are instead mirror images of one another’s values, reversals of the order and sequence of looking and learning.

Also, as Cushner and Brislin (1996) reminded us, “culture is a collective creation and is socially constructed by human beings in interaction with others” (pp. 6-7). Edward Hall (1990) additionally reminded us that “man did not evolve culture as a means of smothering himself but as a medium in which to move, live, breathe, and discover his own uniqueness.” All of these definitions of culture ask us to deeply acknowledge that culture plays a significant role in our identity and development, and that an understanding of culture is essential for the multiplicity of acculturations particularly for third culture children.

What is the role of culture in teaching and learning and in reform and restructuring our schools and teacher education? Noddings and Pang (in Ramsey, 2004) suggested that teacher preparation (and professional development) should train educators to place learners and their cultures at the center of learning to acknowledge, respect, and build upon the knowledge and experiences learners bring to the classroom and to affirm their cultural background. They also recommended that we not hold teacher preparation
in isolation, but rather view it in the larger context of examining diversity of experiences, values, and beliefs that teachers in schools and faculty in teacher education bring to the teaching-learning context. What is a possible key in the teaching/learning process? One possibility is the interplay of the TCK lived experience and acculturation with student-teacher relationships in U.S. classrooms.

**Student-Teacher Relationships**

Davis (2003) proposed that social interaction and relationships play a significant role in children’s cognitive and social development. What is difficult to define is what makes a “good” relationship in the student-teacher context. Davis examined three approaches to studying these relationships: “attachment, motivation, and sociocultural” (p. 207). In her study, Davis defined ‘good’ relationships as “those with low levels of conflict and accompanying high levels of closeness and support” (p. 209).

The sociocultural approach/perspective holds the most relevance for this present study, suggesting that the quality of the student-teacher relationship may reflect the interpersonal culture of not only classrooms but also of schools. According to Davis (2003), in her examination of classroom size, the physical structure of classrooms and social pressures internally and externally, as well as the co-constructed knowledge within the context of these relationships and understandings by students and teachers, the sociocultural perspective involves the “ecological and social constructivist.” A key shift in perception of the interpersonal culture of classrooms and schools, is what Davis reported from Oldfather. Davis cited Oldfather’s (1995) findings that as students move from elementary to middle and then onto high school, the relationships between students
and their teachers changed; there was an increasing distance in the relationships. Davis explained that “few studies have examined students’ perceptions of their interactions with teachers and in the cultural differences of students in shaping the quality of their relationships” (p. 222). Ogbu (1993) supported Davis’ concern, explaining that these “differences in cultural frames of reference” (p. 483) can influence the quality of student-teacher relationships.

Pianta and Stuhlman (2004) strongly supported Davis through their study of 490 children and families from preschool through first grade. In this study, they found that “student-teacher relationships play a role in children’s ability to acquire the essential skills for school success. The quality of children’s relationships with teachers is increasingly recognized as a contributor to school adjustment” (p. 444). Alfie Kohn believed that we need to “transform classrooms and schools into caring communities, build relationships into nurturing and trusting partnerships, and create classrooms genuinely defined by children’s needs” (cited in Watson & Ecken, 2003, pp. xiv-xv).

Who could argue with these qualities for our classrooms in the United States? Krall and Jalongo (1998) would agree with Kohn and offered many suggestions for how teachers can create caring communities in their classrooms, including establishing mutual trust and learning to adjust to the needs of all students. They surmised that in order to foster “dynamic classroom interactions, teachers must acknowledge children’s perspectives first. Caring teachers pay attention to beginnings, endings, and transitions” (p. 87).
According to Pianta and Stuhlman (2004), we need to examine this relational process in addition to the typical cognitive component on which the accountability movement is focused. Relational trust is important to examine in this relational process. Relational trust was defined by Bryk and Schneider (2003) as “the distinct role relationships that characterize social exchanges of schooling, teachers with students, teachers with teachers, teachers with parents, and all groups with the school principal” (p. 41). Wooten and McCroskey (1996) proposed that “trust is a necessary component of any student-teacher relationship for maximal learning to occur” (pp. 94-100). Trust building is an essential part of acculturation. Pianta (1999) concluded that these student-teacher relationships are constructed in the context of the classroom community where all participants are responsible for the affective (as well as cognitive) learning.

Howes and Ritchie (2002) supported Pianta’s concept of the context of the classroom community as a building block for trust between students and teachers. “Positive student-teacher relationships are constructed in classrooms where both learning and social relationships are valued. These relationships are not static and are always evolving” (p. 1).

Watson and Ecken (2003) presented nine keys to building effective and trusting student-teacher relationships:

1. Get to know your students
2. Get to know and work with their families
3. Show you care and like them
4. Share ourselves as teachers
5. Do nice things for students

6. Recognize that all students want to belong, be loved, and are unique

7. Help one another for supportive interactions

8. Use inclusive language (we as a classroom)

9. Examine self as a teacher/person and attitudes/understandings. (p. 12)

These keys are simple to understand and yet, do we not assume that every effective teacher inherently knows them? It appears not. Kohn (in Watson & Ecken, 2003), Wooten and McCroskey (1996), and Watson and Ecken (2003) seem to all agree that there is not only a need for transforming our classrooms into nurturing environments with trusting relationships, but also that this need maximizes learning for all involved in the educational process. What are some of the components of relational trust?

Bryk and Schneider (2003) proposed components of relational trust in thinking about reform in school:

1. Social respect

2. Personal regard

3. Competence in core role responsibilities

4. Personal integrity. (p. 41)

Bryk and Schneider (2003), through their longitudinal study of 400 elementary schools in Chicago, found that “relational/social trust played a central role in school reform efforts. They contended that they have found the ‘missing ingredient,’ a strong bond of trust among all constituents in the educational process” (p. 44). However, their study lacked the students’ perspective. In their study, teachers, principals, and parents,
but no students, were interviewed and/or self-reported information. According to Bryk and Schneider, Meier believed that from her study of a middle school in Harlem, building trust was a key component among teachers, parents, administrators, and students. Bryk and Schneider also referred to Kruse in their study, who concluded that this examination of relationships and trust “has received too little attention” in research.

Bryk and Schneider (2003) argued that “relational trust is the connective tissue that binds individuals together to advance the education and welfare of all students” (p. 44). How can we achieve this concept of Bryk and Schneider’s ‘connective tissue’ to improve student-teacher relationships across all public schools in the United States? This is a critical question to examine and a lofty goal to achieve for TCKs to be successful socially and emotionally in U.S. classrooms and schools.

McBee and Westcott in Craig and Deretchin (2008) discussed “one critical feature of caring in schools to be teacher knowledge of students’ needs and interests” (p. 52). In their chapter, the authors cited Strahan and Layell’s 2006 study and their particular findings that students “attribute their achievements in part to caring relationships that they had with their teachers.” To this researcher, the connection between TCKs, acculturation, and classrooms as well as multicultural teacher education is a significant relationship.

Erickson (1987) suggested, “trust and personal relations are central for multicultural contexts” (p. 345). To understand multicultural contexts, multicultural teacher education challenges our thinking about these relationships as well as encourages us in taking risks to affect change from new understandings.
Multicultural Teacher Education

Multiculturalism has been defined broadly as a policy that responds to the demographics in society to ensure equal opportunity for all groups regardless of their diverse backgrounds. There is no single definition of multicultural education, but from a review of the literature, Banks (2001) and Nieto (1996) captured for this researcher the philosophical concept, the intent and purpose, and reform ideas. Banks defined multicultural education as a field of study that encompasses all of the demographics of a society and uses the disciplines of, for example, history, sociology, psychology, and philosophy, to address the issues of equality, access, and social justice, and action. Nieto defined multicultural education as a comprehensive school reform that challenges racism and other forms of oppression and accepts and affirms diversity.

One of the goals of multiculturalism and of this study is transformation, and so this qualitative study seems to be well situated within this foundation, as Nieto (1999) suggested at three distinct levels: personal, collective, and institutional. This study intended through personal reflection and case studies, to develop implications for multicultural teacher education and its candidates as collaborators and supporters for social change for all populations of learners, by looking at the TCK experience as a critical lens. Since multicultural education is embedded in context, this context provides a framework for inquiry. Teacher candidates need to know what context means in learning and how context shapes learning. Rather than viewing teaching as thinking about “what I as a teacher am going to teach,” a paradigm shift in teacher thinking is advocated by multicultural education. Multicultural education challenges teachers’
thinking about what students need and want to learn and what they bring with them to the learning process. Teachers need to know what context, culture, language, and lived experiences mean in learning and how context shapes learning.

Irvine (2003) stated that the goal of multicultural education is to help all students acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to participate in cross-cultural interactions and in personal, social, and civic action that will help the United States be more democratic and just. Not only is this true for students, but also for the teachers who are involved in the teaching/learning context in our schools. The knowledge, skills, and attitudes that should be acquitted, possessed, and demonstrated by today’s teacher candidates will need to be continually assessed by U.S. teacher education in order to prepare teachers to participate in the process of cross-cultural interactions with all of the diverse learners.

For TCKs, part of their multicultural experience is cognitive and hence we need to look at Banks’ (1995) “dimensions for curricular reform,” in particular equity pedagogy and empowering school climate. These two dimensions are used in this study as foundational in rethinking how we prepare teachers for the teaching/learning context in the 21st century, how we involve all constituents in multicultural teacher education to address current demographics in our schools’ populations, and how we challenge academic as well as effective practices in schools.

This present study borrows from Banks’ (2001) “essential principles for teaching and learning.” Three of his 12 principles support the theoretical framework of this qualitative study, the interplay of acculturation and student-teacher relationships:
1. Principle 1: Teacher learning, understanding the complexities of ethnicity and the influences, impact on student learning.

2. Principle 3: Student learning, that all students have equitable opportunities to learn and that the curriculum reflects social, political, economic contexts in which they live.

3. Principle 5: Intergroup relations, learning about cultural factors across all groups so to provide opportunities for all to interact and learn. (p. 3)

Additionally, Banks’ (2005) four principles “for educating citizens in a global age” are relevant to this study, particularly principle two on global interconnectedness, which proposes that all of us can co-exist through the multitude of changes emerging daily in our global world.

Freire (2005) described teachers as cultural workers and learners; this involves physical, emotional, and affective preparation. Freire further described the skills and attitudes of “rigor and curiosity, capacity to love, creativity, competence, fight for freedom, daringness, and critical thinking” (pp. 3-4) as essential for teachers to become cultural workers in classrooms.

Banks (1993) concluded that “multicultural education views the school as a social system that consists of highly interrelated parts and variables (self-school-community world)” (p. 25) where we must examine and reexamine our assumptions and biases, connect with other culturally responsive colleagues, seek diverse resources within our communities, network boundless opportunities for bridge building and intercultural
communication and sharing, and listen to the diversity of voices, experiences, and perspectives.

Banks et al. (2001) strongly urged teachers to be multicultural in their approach and to be able to relate to many cultures with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to better understand the growing student diversity in U.S. schools. By 2020 (and some researchers project by as soon as 2010), 40% of learners in U.S. schools will be children of color, whereas the teaching population will remain approximately 85% White and female (Applied Research Center, 2000). Therefore, teacher education programs in the United States need to address how to prepare preservice teachers (particularly Whites) for our multicultural classrooms across the United States in rural, suburban, and urban districts. Beyond knowledge and skills, are there specific dispositions needed? It appears so if we review Hill-Jackson, Sewell, and Waters’ (2007) study of teacher education candidates.

Using Gillette (1996) and Levine-Rasky’s (2001) work on resistance and advocacy as a framework, Hill-Jackson et al. (2007) engaged in a qualitative study of teacher education candidates and from their findings proposed “five dispositions that are needed in the multicultural classroom: cognitive complexity, worldview, intercultural sensitivity, ethics and self-efficacy” (p. 177). From the findings in their study, teacher candidates were either advocates or resistors of these five dispositions in their multicultural teaching. What do these five dispositions (attitudes) provide multicultural teacher education in terms of a framework for redefining and redesigning teacher preparation programs to meet the needs of today’s diverse learners and the teachers who
work with them? How do we in teacher education integrate these core dispositions into our teacher education programs in colleges/universities?

Merryfield, Jarchow, and Pickert (1997) emphasized that we must “ensure teacher preparation programs are undergirded with global education perspectives as an absolute priority,” because “it is an ongoing process to better prepare teachers for diversity and interconnectedness in communities and the world. A constantly changing world requires a continual reexamination of what we teach” (p. 57).

The contributions of this qualitative study to the field of multicultural teacher education as a whole and in particular to the TCK body of knowledge and research are many, especially in the current era of accountability, changing demographics in schools, global migration, and transformative school reform that seeks to fulfill the goals of multiculturalism, as stated by many of the noted scholars in the field (Banks, Sleeter, Gay, and Nieto, to name a few). Furthermore, based on a scholarly search for dissertations on or related to third culture children, 488 qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-method designed studies (abstracts) were found from 1978-2005. After a brief review of all of these abstract titles, however, only 11 abstracts related to or were actually about third culture children.

These 11 abstracts described research studies that examined (a) the influence of cross-cultural experiences on mood states; (b) exploration of perceptions of children of international school educators, military brats, and TCKs-phenomenological study effects of the military; (c) views of Japanese teachers and influences of foreign and returnee children; (d) re-acculturation of American missionary families; (e) identity characteristics
of 7th to 12th grade dependents in Cairo American College; (f) TCK experience and psycho-social adjustment of missionary families; (g) basic needs of missionary kids upon reentry to the United States and reentry programs; (h) needs assessment of TCKs and implications for orientation programs for missionaries; (i) schooling of TCKs in the American School of the Hague; and (j) experiences of TCKs attending a Department of Defense (DODEA) secondary school in the Philippines.

Based on the review of these abstracts, the researcher found that there are no dissertations specifically targeting the application of the TCK phenomenon and the interplay of acculturation and student-teacher relationships knowledge base to multicultural teacher education. In particular, there is no indication of research in these dissertations relating to the preparation of teachers for our 21st century U.S. classrooms.

Lucas (1997) quoted Arthur Wise, former president of the National Association for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), as saying “Today’s teachers need to be far better trained to help prepare learners to survive in tomorrow’s complex post-industrial society. We have been teaching today’s students to meet yesterday’s needs” (p. xii). So, as research question three tries to address, what is needed in at least an adequate multicultural teacher preparation program to address the needs of all diverse learners and in particular, third culture children? Lucas proposed three areas in which teacher education reform needs to happen: general liberal learning studies at the undergraduate and graduate levels, preservice practica, and field-based teacher preparation at the post-undergraduate level.
Tom (1997) would seem to support this rethinking of teacher education as Lucas and others are calling us to do, especially in reviewing our current preparation programs and redesigning what we teach and how we prepare teachers of 21st century learners for their classrooms in the United States. “To rethink teacher education, we must have a healthy disregard for past forms of programming and for established approaches to program involvement. Teacher educators have been far too willing to accept regulation from state education departments and NCATE” (p. 195). Tom further proposed five “barriers to change in teacher education.” Particularly relevant is Tom’s fourth proposal of “teacher (and student) involvement” which is evident in this qualitative study’s interviews of A-TCKs and their recommendations for multicultural teacher education in this age of continually increasing globalization.

All of these perspectives from the multicultural teacher education field are relevant to the interplay of the TCK experience and acculturation with relationships. One of the commonalities for all TCKs is frequent cross-cultural mobility.

Migration in the Context of Globalization

Castles and Davidson (2000) proposed that a central aspect of globalization has been the rapid increase in international population mobility. They further proposed that in addition to this mobility, embedded in globalization is cultural interchange. Globalization has been and will continue to redefine culture because it stretches the various boundaries of time, space, and relationships. The challenge in globalization is to integrate all of these boundary dimensions. The global context of citizenship is changing dramatically as is the way that we perceive this concept. “Globalization creates new
challenges for citizenship” (p. vii). For, as Castles and Davidson contended, international mobility questions the essence of belonging, loyalty, and allegiance to a nation-state. And who better to help us with these questions than TCKs.

Stalker (2000) advocated that globalization “shakes up communities and offers new horizons that stretch way beyond the borders of a city, state, or a nation” (p. 2). According to Stalker, most countries seem pleased to accept skilled (professional) workers, but seem concerned and maybe even worried about unskilled workers (p. 107). He proposed that globalization is impacting education in the following definitive ways:

1. In the organization of work and the work that is done (skills)
2. In funding for educational systems
3. In the quality of national educational systems
4. In information technology (distance education and higher quality inclusive education)
5. In transformation of world culture through globalized information networks and the organization of educational systems. (pp. 14-16)

According to Carnoy (1999), the essence of globalization is not in terms of trade and investments, but in a new way of thinking about economics, social space, and time; thus, reconceptualizing what we mean by the world.

Carnoy (1999) further proposed that “knowledge is the most highly valued commodity in the global economy; nations have little choice but to increase their investment in education” (p. 82). Not only has globalization become a central issue in
these times, but it will redefine the world our children inherit. According to Ross-Holst (2003),

Businesses have been undergoing profound change for more than 20 years to adapt to new technology and an interconnected global economy. Some universities and colleges are beginning to adopt similarly dramatic change. But most P-12 schools are operating on a model that assumes time stopped in the early Industrial Age. Globalization isn’t sitting still; neither can our schools. (p. ix)

Summary

This literature review chapter has served to (a) review the state of the art of research on third culture children and the TCK phenomenon; (b) highlight relevant literature on acculturation, student-teacher relationships, and multicultural teacher education; and (c) explore the impact of migration in the context of globalization, all in relationship to the acculturation framework in this qualitative study.

“Much of what we know is unspoken, inside us. One can profit from trying to catch the meaning of one’s own life when one strives to catch the meaning of the lives of others.”

(Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, & Steinmetz, 1991, p. 104)
CHAPTER III
DESIGN OF THE STUDY AND METHODOLOGY

“Life is a journey into the unknown where change is constant.”

Dr. Joan Borysenko (2007)

Introduction

This chapter provides the rationale for the design of this qualitative research study and the methodology that was used in not only gathering data but also in using the data for interpretation and analysis. The research questions established for the study, the selection of the research participants, and procedures are also described. Since data were collected through in-depth interviews with each participant, that particular strategy and process is outlined. And finally, sections on using the data and analysis, as well as the criteria for trustworthiness as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985), conclude the chapter.

As Geertz (1973) stated, “it is not necessary to know everything in order to understand something” (p. 7). Short (1991) proposed that “good interpretation shows the connection between experience and expression” (p. 191). This interplay of lived experience and expression is important for both the participants and the researcher. At the same time that A-TCKs construct and gain their own understanding of the TCK experience, this researcher has deepened her own understanding of the TCK phenomenon.

Another requirement of case study is that the researcher reports her own transformation. Therefore, at the end of Chapter 5 in this study, a narrative is presented
that describes the personal and professional transformative process of this researcher throughout this research study journey as a mother of a TCK, multicultural teacher educator, and researcher.

For this study, qualitative research seems to be the most appropriate method not only because of the nature of human inquiry, but also because of the opening of “spaces” for the research participants and researcher to make meaning and develop understanding that we co-construct from this exploratory, descriptive process of the TCK phenomenon. Marshall and Rossman (1989) believed “research is a process of trying to gain a better understanding of the complexities of human interactions” (p. 21). One of the important components of qualitative research is the representation of the voices, perceptions, and understandings of the individual participants. In the case of this study, we examine the reconstructions of the specific TCK lived experiences of four A-TCKs.

Qualitative research approaches are varied and need to be carefully considered. Based on careful consideration and review, this study was guided by a hermeneutic phenomenological foundation, applying inquiry and interpretation through collective case study as a research methodology. As Yin (1993) and Stake (1995) explained, “case studies are multi-perspectival analyses. They give voice to the powerless and voiceless” (Yin, p. 65).

Design Theory

Denzin and Lincoln (2003c) defined qualitative research design as “an act of interpretation from beginning to end” (p. 73). Thus, the meaning, interpretation, and query of the A-TCK interview data and its emerging categories and themes provide
evidence for using case study methodology in the qualitative research design of this present study. Case study methodology not only supports but also situates itself appropriately in an inquiry-based hermeneutic phenomenological framework as described and understood by this researcher.

**Hermeneutic Phenomenological Inquiry and Interpretation**

Hermeneutic phenomenology synthesizes description, understanding, and interpretation of a phenomenon and human experience, combining ontological and epistemological perspectives. These two philosophical traditions examine what it means to be a person and how we know what we know. These perspectives of interpretive inquiry are naturally situated in the field of cultural foundations, because they support inquiry in the context of the preparation of teachers, are interdisciplinary, support a study of education broadly and specifically and how education shapes identities and lives, help to understand connections at the macro level, and raise critical questions. Three key philosophers, Husserl, in the field of phenomenology, and Heidegger (1962) and Gadamer (1975) in hermeneutic phenomenology, have provided guidance in the development of the research design of the present study.

One of the challenges of hermeneutics is “how do we know what interpretation is best?” As Short (1991) emphasized, “hermeneutics is about creating meaning, not simply reporting on it” (p. 201). In the broadest sense, hermeneutics is described as the “art of interpretation,” including the study of understanding, interpretation of meaning, the study of how context shapes interpretation, and the study of the transfer and interpretation of knowledge. Hermeneutics studies relationships between humans and their world(s).
Since interpretation is considered critical in the process of co-understanding, hermeneutic phenomenology is guided by Heidegger’s (1962) concept of “being with others in the world” inviting participants to not only describe a common experience, but also together to make meaning of the lived experience. Since understanding requires interpretation, in this present study, interpretation takes place in the medium of language. Language is one of the middle spaces where understanding and agreement concerning a phenomenon can take place between two people. Hermeneutic phenomenology looks at individuals’ interpretation of their experiences and understands meaning of the experiences from the A-TCK participants’ perspectives. In this study, through multiple one-on-one interviews, interpretation is applied throughout the interview process with the selected A-TCKs, understanding that interpretation is “influenced by an individual’s background culturally and socially” (Laverty, 2003, p. 9). Hermeneutic phenomenology synthesizes description, understanding, and interpretation of a phenomenon.

Polkinghorne (1983), Van Manen (1997), and others identified that the focus needs to be on the person in the lived experience and the attempt to uncover meanings. Laverty (2003) stated that “conscious awareness was the starting point in building one’s knowledge of reality and meaning” (p. 3) and distinguished a fundamental difference between phenomenology and hermeneutics. Both are focused on the lived experience and creating meaning and understanding; but Laverty proposed that Heidegger took the phenomenon further than Husserl to a “situated meaning of a human in the world.” Meaning is then co-constructed by the world as well as by our own experiences.
Laverty (2003) continued to explain that “the study of the (TCK) phenomenon intends to return and reexamine the taken-for-granted experiences and perhaps uncover new and/or forgotten meanings” (p. 4). By examining the lived experiences, hermeneutic phenomenology seeks to focus on the details and aspects of the experiences, “creating meaning and achieving a sense of understanding” (p. 7). This meaning is found “as we are constructed by the world while at the same time we are constructing the world from our background and experiences” (p. 7) as participants and researcher before, during, and after the interviews.

The established set of research and interview questions for this study are reflective of Gadamer’s (1976) view that questioning is a critical component in the understanding of a phenomenon—an interpretive process. While phenomenology is descriptive and seeks to make the invisible, visible, hermeneutics is interpretive; and so, in the final writing of this study, personal assumptions and/or biases may be included and not viewed as problematic for the credibility of the study. Gadamer understood hermeneutics as a process of co-creation between the researcher and the research participants; and this co-created process is used in this study. According to Gadamer, “the interpretive process can be constrained by tradition, reflection, and intentionality. From tradition, we may preunderstand a phenomenon; during reflection, we may judge with our own assumptions or biases, making the intended purpose of the study limited in possibilities” (p. 117). However, Cornelius (1996) argued that the interpretation can provide a deep insight into practice. Both hermeneutics and phenomenology are dynamic and ever evolving according to Laverty (2003). The research design for the study
provides for the data being derived using a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, synthesizing phenomenology as the understanding of a human experience and phenomena. Case study methodology and hermeneutics lay the foundation for its interpretation.

**Case Study Methodology**

The present study purposely positions the voices of A-TCKs in the forefront as they describe, examine, interpret, and query their lived TCK experiences. Case study methodology not only supports but also situates itself well in an inquiry-based hermeneutic phenomenological framework, and it has been used in this qualitative study as the research methodology. A reality of case study methodology and the choice of using in-depth interviews for understanding and interpretation is that the conversations will be shared with the research participants, but can probably never be completed. Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtle (2006) proposed that in case study, we “discover meaning, explore process and gain insight into in-depth understanding of individuals” (p. 269; TCKs). Merriam (1998) distinguished case study by suggesting that it involves a ‘bounded system’ where “the participants who could be interviewed are limited as well as the finite amount of time” (pp. 27-28). As Short (1991) would argue, “hermeneutics is about creating meaning, not simply reporting on it” (p. 201). And, as Yin (1994) and Stake (1995), two widely experienced researchers on case study methodology concluded, “case studies are designed to bring out details from the viewpoint of the participants by using multiple sources of data” (Yin, p. 3).
Yin’s (1994) explanation of case study methodology as “a preferred strategy” includes posing how and why questions as well as focusing on a contemporary phenomenon. Also, imbedded in case study methodology are the practices of asking good questions, being a flexible listener, using multiple sources such as interviews (and possibly other documents), examining and categorizing the data, and making recommendations. In this case, planned outcomes examined the TCK phenomenon in relation to U.S. classroom teachers and made recommendations for multicultural teacher education. After careful consideration, case study is appropriate for this research design, especially because a holistic in-depth study and examination is needed. Yin proposed “four stages in case study methodology” (p. 92) designing the case study, conducting the case study, analyzing the case study data, and developing conclusions, recommendations, and implications.

Yin (1994) and Stake (1995) concluded that “case studies are designed to bring out details from the viewpoint of the participants” (p. 3) and “case studies are multi-perspective analyses. They give voice to the powerless and voiceless” (p. 65). Stake (1995) further reminded us that “good case study is patient, reflective, and willing to see another view” (p. 12). Yin (1994) described the functions of case studies as “exploratory, explanatory, or descriptive” or a combination of them; all of these have been used to let us understand more deeply the individual and collective (TCK) phenomenon and its implications for the field of multicultural teacher education.

This qualitative study presents four individual cases leading to a collective case study. Chapter 4 describes the collective case study that examines the themes or patterns
that emerge across cases, finding for both commonalities and distinctions. This collective case study of the TCK lived experience is supported by the foundation of phenomenology, which is the study of lived experience as witnessed by a person and inquires what this experience is like. Therefore, case study methodology is appropriate for capturing the TCK lived experience and what that experience was like for the selected research participants as they construct/reconstruct their lived experience through recalled stories.

In the end, as identified by Wolcott (1994), “qualitative researchers need to be storytellers but can never expect to tell the whole story” (p. 17). Therefore, the intention of this qualitative study is to present an in-depth view of a small group of Adult-TCKs’ retrospective stories from which they can draw tentative suggestions for reforms in U.S. classrooms and schools, particularly regarding how teachers can better develop trusting, cross-cultural relationships with TCKs. As with any case study, a brief discussion of adult memories of key life events must be taken into consideration.

**Discussion of Adult Memories of Key Life Events**

The literature in the fields of counseling, neuroscience, psychology, and nursing, to name a few, notes limitations and questions about validity and accuracy in the use of recall, remembering, and reconstruction of stories in research. This question of accuracy is relevant for this present qualitative study as we look at the interview data which was produced by A-TCKs’ reconstructed stories, the impact of “childhood amnesia,” and the researcher’s further co-interpretation of the data (Usher & Neisser, 1993).
Usher and Neisser (1993), in a study of more than 200 college students, discussed the beginnings of memory for four early life events including family move(s). In their study, they defined “childhood amnesia” as the “earliest age of recall or earliest age from which something can be remembered into adulthood” (p. 155). For family moves, the onset of childhood amnesia is three years of age or older. This age reference for recall of life events is important to consider during the interview process and in interpreting the data in this study. Usher and Neisser suggested that family stories, photographs, videos, oral tapes, or some other memory-preserving object or activity may help in the recall process at times; but at other times, it may hinder or even block memory.

In addition, using adult autobiographical memories of their experiences/recall in qualitative research design has its individual limitations on the accuracy of the data. Although adult memories of key life events was considered, all four participants were of the same age and this study did not intend to focus on accuracy of events but rather the meaning and interpretation of the lived experiences. These limitations and credibility factors have been briefly reviewed from the literature in the fields of neuroscience, cognitive psychology, nursing, and psychiatry, to name a few. But, as Pillemer (1998) suggested, “a narrative sense of self emerges as a result of conversations about the past” (p. 895). Rubin (1988) further described life memories as “time capsules, records of an unrepeatable past where one recounts the past to teach lessons for the future.”

Understanding of particular key life events does seem to play a significant role, and the recall depends on the nature of the event itself. The following questions were used as considerations during and after the interviews to address some of the most
obvious recall issues. How do A-TCKs remember, reconstruct, and specifically highlight from their TCK lived experience? What do they recall as most meaningful and challenging in their lived experiences? Do A-TCKs “romanticize” their multicultural TCK experiences? If so, why?

Since case study is used for the how and why questions with a focus on the phenomenon in real-life contexts, this researcher intended to answer three research questions.

**Research Questions**

The key research question (#1) guided the present qualitative study of meaning-making of the TCK phenomenon with two additional research questions for further exploration, understanding, interpretation, and query:

1. How do western or non-western multicultural childhood experiences impact the TCKs’ later (re)entry and (re)integration in U.S. (westernized) public school settings and impact their schooling experiences?

2. Do TCKs bring this “third culture” into their (re)entry and (re)integration into U.S. schooling; and if so, how?

3. How can A-TCKs inform multicultural teacher education? What recommendations do A-TCKs have regarding how we can better prepare teachers in the 21st century for working with this growing population of P-12 learners in the United States?
Selection of Research Participants

Laverty (2003) guided this researcher in the selection of the participants. She described the aim of the selection process within hermeneutical phenomenology as “those who lived experience that is the focus of the study, who are willing to talk about their experiences, and who are diverse enough to enhance possibilities of rich and unique stories of the particular experience” (p. 18).

For this present qualitative study, the researcher interviewed two male and two female Adult TCKs (A-TCKs). The rationale for the selection of these four participants is that all were voluntary and then chosen because of their interest in exploring their TCK lives and in learning more about the TCK phenomenon. All four participants are in their mid-20s and all attended Department of Defense schools in addition to other schooling environments. Even though all four participants lived in different cultures (and some the same), they have common thoughts about the TCK lived experience. Two of the participants are former teacher education candidates, BM and TW, in two different teacher education programs in a college and graduate school of education at a large midwestern state university. Both have now graduated from that university. Based on preliminary conversations during their teacher education programs with the former Director of Student Teaching at the university, these two participants showed a passionate interest and expressed a strong desire to be interviewed about their TCK lived experience. The former director is now the researcher for this qualitative study. These two particular teacher candidates, both A-TCKs, completed their student teaching in northeast Ohio public school districts. Currently, one is teaching in a public preschool
classroom in southeast Ohio; the other is teaching high school health and physical education in southwest Florida.

In addition, EE, a photo illustration graduate from the college of journalism and mass communication at the same university, and also an A-TCK, has agreed to assume the dual role of research participant as well as the key informant for the researcher. Until July 2010, he was an account manager for two advertising agencies in northeast Ohio; but in August 2010, he departed for the U.S. Navy Officer Candidate School (OCS) in Newport, Rhode Island. The fourth participant, AM, is an A-TCK who lived in the Philippines and Korea as a TCK and was best friends with this researcher’s son, EE. She now lives in northwest North Carolina, where she is a manager for a national retail skin care products company.

Intentionally, I have chosen to use the word “participant” rather than subject or any other research term, suggesting an active involvement in the interview process by the A-TCKs as a socially-developed relationship and the interview as a mode of inquiry. As explained in the descriptions above, currently, the A-TCK participants represent a diverse cross-section of professional fields of work, including teaching, since either graduating from a large midwestern state university or working directly out of high school in the United States. All four participants attended DODEA or DDESS Schools. (DODEA is the Department of Defense Educational Activity school system located on U.S. military bases overseas. DDESS is the Domestic Dependent Elementary & Secondary school system located on U.S. military bases in the United States, Puerto Rico, and Guam.)
Two of the factors that were considered in the data collection and data analysis were the type(s) of schooling that the participating A-TCKs experienced while living abroad as TCKs and whether their “homes” (places of residence) were in westernized or non-westernized cultures.

**Procedures**

The four A-TCK participants were contacted by the researcher, and all necessary consent forms were sent to them for signatures and returned to the researcher. Once forms were received, three sessions of interviews were scheduled and conducted by telephone and digitally recorded. Each interview involved no more than one hour and took into consideration the participants’ personal and professional schedules.

Interview notes were written by the researcher during and after the interviews to capture pauses, inquiries, personal questions about the research questions, and other thoughts from the research participants. These notes were helpful during the data analysis process and interpretation of the data to inform the researcher of defining or transforming moments in each of the A-TCKs’ lives.

Additionally, after the three interviews were conducted with each A-TCK, the notes documented by the researcher were sent to the participants for member checking of accuracy and feedback to establish trustworthiness of the study. Follow-up phone calls and e-mails were necessary for further discussion on and reflections of these categories and themes by the participants and researcher. Finally, the participants reviewed the writing from the interviews as documented by the researcher to confirm completeness of their thoughts, feelings, understanding, and interpretation of their TCK lived experience.
as well as acculturation with their student-teacher relationships in U.S. schools in order to establish credibility of the study. Then, the researcher coded and identified categories that led to themes or patterns across cases for commonalities and distinctions.

The coding schema was based on Miles and Huberman’s (1994) description that “coding is analysis. To review a set of notes transcribed or synthesized and to dissect them meaningfully, is the stuff of analysis” (p. 56), as well as Lodico et al.’s (2006) description that coding is “the process of identifying different segments of the data that describe related phenomena and labeling these parts using broad category names” (p. 305).

For this study, the researcher initially used the following codes derived from the three research questions. From research question one, the codes TCK I and A were used for TCK identity and acculturation. From research question two, codes C, S, and STR were used for class as well as school experiences and student-teacher relationships, respectively. From research question three, the code TE was used for the participants’ recommendations for multicultural teacher education.

Once the data were coded, the broad, created categories opened “windows” into emerging themes. This process of reading, rereading, and examining the data deliberately and iteratively led the researcher to continually refine the categories and emerging themes. Included in the rich, detailed descriptions of the four participants were their family backgrounds, lived cultural experiences, and perspectives on their TCK lives.
Data Collection

Ely et al. (1991) proposed three important considerations in using interviews as a method of data collection. “Every interview has a structure, the difference is in how that structure is negotiated” (p. 58). Ely et al. said, “a growing trust is the basis for richer interviews” (p. 61); and finally, Ely et al. advised that “there should be a balance between designed questions, ad libbing and not leading the respondent down the ‘expected’ paths to knowledge” (p. 66). The interview process involves open-mindedness, flexibility within the structure of the interview questions, and adaptability to each participant’s verbal style as well as possible silence.

Kahn and Cannell (1957) described in-depth interviewing as “a conversation with a purpose” (p. 149). Therefore, in these intentional conversations with the A-TCK participants, it was important to remember to explore the semi-structured general questions (See Appendix A) while respecting the participants’ responses in how they framed, responded to, and constructed their stories about their TCK lives in retrospect. It was also an intention in this study to provide a “space” for the participants so they could examine in-depth (for maybe the first time) their TCK lived experience. Reconstruction is based on memory and partially on what the participant selects as important in what the experience was like. Denzin and Lincoln (2003a) claimed that “interviews are conversations of asking questions and listening” (p. 48).

The research participants assisted the researcher with her observations, reflections, and interpretations from the multiple sessions of in-depth interviews by member checking. Member checking involved the research participants not only reviewing the description
and interpretation of the interviews, but also encouraging additional or alternative interpretation, thus, collaborating with the researcher. As Stake (1995) proposed, the interviews with the A-TCK participants provide “the main road to multiple realities” (p. 64).

For this qualitative study, three sessions of one-hour, in-depth (digitally taped) telephone interviews were conducted to explore an understanding of the TCK lived experience and the meaning that A-TCKs could make of the experience but may never understand perfectly. This researcher also wrote anecdotal notes when necessary during and after the digital taping of the telephone interviews. The overriding research question (#1) about the TCK lived experience and acculturation and the two specific questions related to classroom/schooling experiences, including student-teacher relationships and recommendations for multicultural teacher education, provided the fundamental, guiding questions for this entire qualitative study.

In contemplating the interview process for this present study, this researcher discovered and was guided by Seidman’s (1998) three-round interview system. This system not only seems logical but also aligns with the exploratory nature of this particular qualitative study. The three sessions of interviews include:

1. Context of A-TCK participant’s life experience. This first session of questions provided an opportunity for each participant to tell the researcher about his or her TCK experience up to this point of time, including birthplace, lived cultures, moves, and move to the United States for the first time or as a ‘returnee.’
2. Reconstruction of details of the TCK experience within the context. This second session sought to discover the responses by the A-TCKs to the questions about their familiarity with the TCK phenomenon, impact of the TCK experience, and their schooling experiences abroad.

3. Reflection on the meaning that the TCK experiences hold for the participants. This third session of questions explored recollections of the student-teacher relationships with their teachers in U.S. schools, teacher awareness of their TCK lived experience, and A-TCK recommendations for U.S. teacher education in preparing candidates to work with TCKs in their classrooms and schools in the United States.

At the end of the third session of telephone interviews, this researcher included an open space of time for A-TCKs to describe their feelings about their reflections and reconstruction of the details of their lived TCK experience(s) as well as any last impressions and thoughts about the TCK experience, their acculturation process, and student-teacher relationships in U.S. schools. The participants developed personal metaphors that represent their TCK life; these metaphors are shared at the conclusion of this study.

The most important skill in this interview process was active listening for what was being said, the inner voice of the research participants, and a sensitivity of time and other factors by the researcher. Additional follow-up telephone interviews to the three-session system were needed to “fill in the gaps,” to explore emerging themes, or to dig deeper into certain issues raised by A-TCKs. This researcher provided copies of the
digitally-taped interview notes to the A-TCK research participants for authenticity, further reflection, refinement, and other valuable personal feedback to the researcher.

All digital tapes of the telephone interviews and this researcher’s written interview notes were held in strictest confidence for the purpose of this study. Several follow-up e-mails were exchanged as necessary and as themes, categories, or patterns unfolded, co-leading this researcher and the participants to make meaning out of the experiences and to inform multicultural teacher education through recommendations on ways to better prepare culturally responsive teachers for today’s U.S. classroom and schools.

Through this study, this researcher discovered more in-depth knowledge about the TCK phenomenon from the A-TCKs’ perspectives as well as through her own discovery journey. One of the realities for the researcher in this study was to realize that data collecting is complex and time-consuming, and involves multiple ways of gathering data from the A-TCK participants. An important realization and awareness throughout the study (and from a review of literature on adult memory in qualitative research design) was that there are limitations in adult memories, reconstruction, and recall of lived experiences. Thelen (1989) stated that “all recall is reconstruction” (p. 1123).

**Using the Data and Data Analysis**

Marshall and Rossman (1989) described data analysis as “a process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass collection of data” (p. 205). They further reminded us as researchers that the analysis process is not only messy and time-consuming but also creative and fascinating.
Wolcott (1990) provided questions to guide the qualitative researcher in organizing the data. Some of these questions were helpful for this researcher to ponder and consider: What is going on here? Why is this important to know and understand? Wolcott continued to provide guidance by suggesting sorting the data by categories first, without theorizing or doing anything else. As he carefully advised, “the critical task in qualitative research is not to accumulate all the data you can, but to ‘can’ (get rid of) most of the data you accumulate” (p. 35). Additionally, Wolcott recommended “a zoom lens analogy, zooming in progressively closer and closer until descriptions are manageable, then zooming back out again to regain perspective(s)” (p. 69).

Stake (1995) described analysis as “a matter of giving meaning to first impressions as well as to final compilations; taking apart” (p. 71). In this search for meaning, “there is a search for patterns” (p. 78). Stake described qualitative case study as “highly personal research” where “the researcher includes her own personal perspectives in the interpretation” (p. 135).

From the collection of data, Yin (1994) suggested “putting data into different categories, developing a matrix of the categories, creating data displays for examining data and pattern matching” (pp. 94-95).

In this qualitative study, the researcher created a system for organizing, coding, and storing the collected data as well as for recognizing emerging themes, categories, or patterns. Through careful documentation of digitally recorded interviews and a review of the key/relevant moments of the individual A-TCK participants’ experience, the intention of the study was to reduce and reconstruct the data, writing up the notes and key
moments as well as developing categories, reporting findings, and making connections to the literature (Heath, 1979) from the responses to the formal set of three research questions.

The following questions were important to consider throughout the study, and particularly in the data sorting and analysis. Did the interviewer, as a multicultural researcher, reflect the A-TCKs’ perceptions and understandings about their TCK experiences accurately? Are their quoted stories authentic in the documentation, transcriptions, and notes?

Another consideration was to determine how to best display the research findings. Wolcott (1994) suggested displaying the findings in some kind of graphic representation. The graphic representations may be in the design of charts, graphs, and tables including possible other visual facts from the research participants. Wolcott also recommended a deliberate examination of the distinction between “gathering-getting data” and “using data” (p. 397). These graphic representations became clearly designed as the data emerged and the researcher and the informant determined the best way to display the case findings.

As this researcher organized key moments and categories, I needed structure so I created three facets to represent the layers of complexities of the TCK experience. The categories of birthplace, family structure, parents’ cultures of origin, and TCK lived cultures are found in facet one. The categories of locations of K-12 schooling, types of schooling, and number of moves abroad and to the United States are found in facet two. Facet three represents the participants’ reflections on the meaning of the TCK experience
leading to their recommendations for multicultural teacher education. Table 1 (in Chapter 4) presents the profile of the participants by category.

**Trustworthiness in the Study**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested four criteria: “credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability” (p. 300) for thinking about and evaluating the trustworthiness of a qualitative research study. Regarding credibility, accuracy and depth in thinking and writing about the participants’ perceptions of the (TCK) experience are critical. Is this researcher’s representation of the A-TCKs’ responses accurate, as reflected in her writing?

*Credibility* answers the questions about accurate representations of (a) participants’ thoughts, feelings, and various perspectives; (b) time spent and relationships with the participants; and (c) member checking for feedback of completeness and the study’s conclusions and recommendations. All of these factors within *credibility* were carefully considered and followed by asking the participants to review their notes from the interviews and give feedback to the researcher. This believability and richness of the data from the participants is considered member checking. In addition, three colleagues with many years of experience and expertise in the fields of educational psychology, special education, and early childhood gifted education agreed to be peer reviewers of selected chapters in the dissertation to increase credibility in this study.

*Dependability* relates to how the data is collected, analyzed, and interpreted; and according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), “there can be no credibility without dependability, a demonstration of the former is sufficient to establish the latter” (p. 316). Although
dependability is difficult in a qualitative study, the question remains, can the study be repeated? The peer reviewers were helpful in examining the process and findings of the research for consistency and affirmed that indeed the study can be repeated. Indeed, the data revealed recommendations that can be applied to individuals, teachers, classrooms and schools, colleges of education, and multicultural teacher education as a whole in the United States. In this study, Chapter 5 discusses the recommendations and implications at various levels of education.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that “the researcher cannot specify transferability of findings, but can provide sufficient information that the reader determines can apply to new contexts or other populations” (p. 297). Typically, transferability involves generalizability of the data to other groups, or deciding whether this context is similar to another context; this researcher prefers Eisner’s (1991) notion of “retrospective generalization, which allows us to understand our past experiences in a new way” (p. 205). In this study, it is more about the particulars of each case and the complexity of the TCK phenomenon.

Transferability involves looking at the richness of the descriptions as well as the volume of detail provided regarding the context and how applicable it might be to other contexts. Each case is described richly, and then the cases are analyzed and interpreted for commonalities within and across the four participants’ lives.

Lastly, confirmability relates to Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) concept of ‘action and collaboration.’ In other words, do the findings emerge from the data and not the researcher’s predispositions? Can the findings be confirmed by others? Has the
researcher been non-judgmental? Has this present study stimulated change in or by the
research participants and the researcher; and if so, how? As with any dissertation study,
further research is suggested in Chapter 5 based on the data collected and additional
questions this study raises.

Ely et al. (1991) reminded us as qualitative researchers to “weave our thinking”
throughout and even after the study with these four criteria in mind. A constant question
for researchers in qualitative research is, when is there enough data? Denzin and Lincoln
(2003a) suggested that “when data repeats, and is not extending, then you have enough
data and it is time to leave, as well as when you feel what you wanted to accomplish has
been done” (pp. 65-66).

Overall, Denzin and Lincoln (2003b) claimed that trustworthiness in qualitative
research “has to do with description and explanation and whether or not the explanation
fits the description. Qualitative research does not claim there is only one way of
interpreting, there is no one ‘correct’ interpretation” (p. 69). And as Eisner (1991)
suggested, is there “presence of voice?” Have we discovered meaning for the individual
adult participants who experienced the unique TCK life?

Summary

This chapter provided the rationale for designing this qualitative study using a
hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry and interpretation foundation. Case study
methodology was used for gathering the data and interpretation and analysis of the
findings. The three key research questions that guided the study were outlined as well as
the selection process of the research participants. The procedures for contacting and
conducting the interviews of the participants were also described. At the end of this chapter, the four criteria for trustworthiness in the study were discussed based on Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) seminal work on qualitative design study.
CHAPTER IV

USING THE DATA FROM THE CASE FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

“We understand ourselves and others only when we transfer our own lived experience into every kind of expression of our own and other people’s lives.”

Dithey (quoted in Stake, 1995, p. 36)

Overview on Using the Data and Data Analysis

As the data analysis unfolded in this study, it was interesting to see how the visual data displays appeared. Table 1 provides a profile of the study’s four research participants by category, giving a background overview of each using (a) participant’s birthplace, (b) family structure, (c) parents’ cultures of origin, (d) cultures in which the A-TCKs lived as TCKs, (e) number of moves they experienced as TCKs, (f) K-12 locations and types of schooling, (g) postsecondary schooling and location, and (h) current jobs in diverse career fields. A graphic representation of how the three research questions, facets, common themes, and defining moments relate to each other is displayed in Figure 1. Key moments from the interviews are described in each facet.

The findings of this study are presented in this chapter using text, organized by three layers (sections) which the researcher has entitled facets, and guided by the three primary research questions. The first facet presents the findings on the contexts of the participants’ TCK experiences, including their acculturation process across multiple cross-cultural moves. The second facet presents the findings describing in more detail the TCK experiences, specifically the most meaningful and challenging as well as the
Table 1

Profile of Participants by Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>EE</th>
<th>AM</th>
<th>BM</th>
<th>TW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birthplace</td>
<td>Okinawa, Japan</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Puerto Rico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Structure</td>
<td>Initially mother and father, then later abroad and in U.S. with single mother. Only child.</td>
<td>Initially mother and father, then abroad and in the U.S. with single mother. Only child.</td>
<td>Initially mother and father, later abroad with single father and single mother. Twin fraternal sister.</td>
<td>Mother and father, still married Two older sisters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ Cultures of Origin</td>
<td>Father-Venezuelan, Mother-U.S. American</td>
<td>Mother and Father-U.S. Americans</td>
<td>Mother and Father-U.S. Americans</td>
<td>Mother and Father-U.S. Americans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TCK Lived Cultures (non-Western and/or Filipino, Korean Western)</td>
<td>Okinawan Japanese, Filipino, Korean, Japanese, Turkish</td>
<td>Filipino, Korean, Japanese, Turkish</td>
<td>British and Japanese</td>
<td>Puerto Rican</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Moves Abroad and to the U.S.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locations of K-12 Schooling</td>
<td>Philippines, California, Korea, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Ohio</td>
<td>Philippines, Korea, Alabama, Turkey, North Carolina, Japan</td>
<td>Kansas, England, Japan, California, Ohio</td>
<td>Puerto Rico, Ohio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of Schooling</td>
<td>DODEA schools and U.S. public schools</td>
<td>DODEA schools and U.S. public schools</td>
<td>U.S. public schools, DODEA schools and Welch local national school</td>
<td>DDESS Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postsecondary Schooling</td>
<td>Midwestern public state university–UG degree</td>
<td>HS diploma and some community college courses</td>
<td>Midwestern public state university–UG degree</td>
<td>Midwestern public state university–UG degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Job, Career Field, and Geographic Location</td>
<td>Officer Candidate, U.S. Naval Officer Training, Rhode Island</td>
<td>Manager, National Retail Skin Care, North Carolina</td>
<td>Public Preschool Teacher, Ohio</td>
<td>High School PE/Health Teacher, Florida</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. DODEA is the Department of Defense Educational Activity school system located on U.S. military bases overseas. DDESS is the Domestic Dependent Elementary & Secondary school system located on U.S. military bases in the United States, Puerto Rico, and Guam.
How do western and non-western multicultural childhood experiences impact TCKs’ later (re) entry and (re) integration in U.S. (westernized) public school settings and their schooling experiences?

**Figure 1.** Relational representation of research questions (RQs), facets, themes, and defining moments
Do TCKs bring this 3rd culture into their (re) entry and (re) integration into U.S. schooling? How?

Facet 2
School Experiences of A-TCKs

Common Themes
- Early Independence
- Lack of knowledge of term TCK → Leading to new awareness
- Multiple perspectives on Student - Teacher Relationships
- Awareness of difference

RQ 2

Figure 1 (continued). Relational representation of research questions (RQs), facets, themes, and defining moments
RQ 3

How can A-TCKs inform multicultural teacher education? What recommendations do A-TCKs have regarding better preparation of teachers in the 21st century working with TCKs?

Facet 3
Reflections on Understanding and meaning of TCK Experiences

Common Themes

Importance of trust in Relationships

Defining Moments

Need Knowledge/Understanding of TCK Phenomenon

Cultural bridges/mediators in classrooms

Embracing TCKs cross-cultural Experience & mobility → leads to resources/assets in classroom

Awareness of cultures perspectives & worldviews

Figure 1 (continued). Relational representation of research questions (RQs), facets, themes and defining moments
A-TCKs’ schooling experiences overseas. The third facet presents the participants’ reflections on their understanding and meaning of the TCK experience.

**Facet One: Contexts of the TCK Experiences by Participant**

In facet one, the contexts of the TCK experiences are presented for each participant separately. Facet one describes the themes that emerged within the contexts of the A-TCK experiences, and then the commonalities across all four cases are outlined. The contexts of the cases demonstrate that the participants crossed not only geographical cultures but also personal, social, and professional cultures (i.e., family and friend relationships, schooling experiences, and workplace choices as young adults). It is clear that the participants frequently moved many times back and forth across cultures, confirming the two universal themes that Pollock and Van Reken (2001) described in their seminal book on the TCK phenomenon: high mobility and a cross-cultural childhood.

**AM—North Carolina to the Pacific and Turkey**

The first participant was born in the Tarheel State, North Carolina. AM lived with only her single mother. She never knew her father nor saw him until she returned to the United States as a young adult. When AM was 2½, her mother was selected by the Department of Defense Schools (DODEA) as a special education teacher for an overseas post to the Philippines. After three years, her mother transferred to another DODEA school in Seoul, Korea, and then, three years later, AM and her mother moved to Alabama, to join her new stepfather and stepbrother. After a break up of this marriage, AM and her mother returned to Korea; and within a few years, they were transferred to
Turkey, where AM attended another DODEA school. Due to personal issues in AM’s life, she returned to North Carolina for a year of high school and lived with a family friend. After that year, she rejoined her mother, who had now transferred to Japan, and there, she completed her last three high school years. Upon graduation, AM returned to her birth state of North Carolina, where she now works and resides. Her mother still teaches overseas in Okinawa. Although AM lives in North Carolina, she explained, “I’m thinking of moving again! Each culture made me realize how different my life was.”

From living in four countries and two U.S. states, AM experienced a life of high mobility and a diverse cross-cultural childhood. “Going back to the states was the hardest transition. Now I realize how much I valued the overseas life.” Being away from her maternal grandmother and uncles was quite difficult for AM, and she “hated that the most.” As a matter of fact, “all the moves were hard on me especially with social issues.” Familial relationships were key in AM’s back and forth life. “Now, my mom is my best friend. Early in life I resented her, but now I appreciate her and my TCK life.”

**BM—Kansas to Wales and Japan**

The second participant was born in the Show Me State, Missouri, where she and her fraternal twin sister lived in a dual-parent household. Her father was in the U.S. Navy, which transferred him to Virginia Beach, then to Wales, then back to Kansas, on to Virginia, and then to California. Then the family was sent to an overseas duty station in Japan and then back to the United States. BM explained that once back in Kansas, her parents divorced. Her father decided to stay in Wales, and her mother moved to Ohio, while BM and her sister stayed in Kansas—but not for long. As reported by BM, she and
her sister could not relate to the locals in Missouri, and since the twins were very independent, her sister moved to Ohio and BM moved to Washington DC. After a while, BM moved to Ohio.

BM described her diverse experiences as culturally very different. “I want to move back overseas! We were used to different religions and cultural backgrounds; moving back to the states was a HUGE shock!” Relationships also played a key role in BM’s life; her twin sister is her best friend. BM describes her as “the consistent person in my life, she experienced what I experienced and shared the same feelings.”

EE—Pacific to the United States

The third participant was born in Okinawa, Japan. EE lived in a bilingual, bicultural home with his mother and father. His mother, selected by DODEA as an ESL Specialist, was assigned to two elementary schools on this tiny (prefecture of Japan) island in the Pacific. After two years, EE and his parents moved to Washington DC; and then two years later, his mother was selected to teach ESL again, moving them to the Philippines to teach for the DODEA schools. While in the Philippines, EE’s parents divorced. From the Philippines, EE and his mother moved back to the United States to California; and then, after just one year in the United States, they were on the move again, moving back overseas to Korea, where they lived for three years. Three years later, EE and his mother moved back to the United States for a year in Massachusetts, then to New Hampshire, and then to Ohio. EE described all the moves as back and forth overseas and up and down the east coast of the United States. EE exclaimed, “job opportunities and family issues forced us to move quite a bit!”
When EE returned to his birthplace, Okinawa, at the end of his senior year of high school, he remarked, “I had this feeling as if I was home. Living in the States had its pros and cons. But living near my grandparents in the United States for a few years was the one constant in my life, a form of stability!” But all of the mobility and cross-cultural experiences have positively impacted EE to the point that he exclaimed, “I wouldn’t be who I am without these TCK experiences. My entire family, we are all travelers, it’s all about family. The TCK life helped me experience everything life has to offer.” EE claims his life can be summed up in a quote that he once read, “to travel the world is worth any cost of sacrifice. I am constant in my love for travel as I have not been constant in any other loves. My book is just beginning, I want to fill it with more experiences overseas.”

TW—Puerto Rico to New York

The fourth participant, TW, agreed with EE’s statement; the “TCK experience made me the person I am and what I have become.” Born on the island of Puerto Rico, TW was raised in a dual-parent home with both parents working as teachers for the DODEA schools called DDESS in the United States and Puerto Rico. He is the youngest of three children, with two older sisters. TW lived in Puerto Rico until he finished high school and was awarded a scholarship at a Midwestern state university in Ohio. He exclaimed, “that was a BIG shock!” Then, after college, TW moved to Florida, which he claims is quite similar to his home in Puerto Rico.

Although he grew up in Puerto Rico, every summer and Christmas vacation, TW and all of his family traveled from Puerto Rico to New York to be with their extended
family. TW did travel to the surrounding islands and to the Caribbean, although he always lived in Puerto Rico. TW explained, “The hardest for me was everyone didn’t live like we did. As a child, I thought everyone did this. As I got older, I thought this isn’t normal; but others thought I was fortunate.” This back and forth mobility lifestyle to New York caused TW to miss his friends in Puerto Rico, especially during summer vacation from school. “It was hectic trying to stay connected to friends in Puerto Rico and family in New York. Puerto Rico is culturally different.” But, as TW described further, “My home is Puerto Rico.” For now, the Sunshine State, Florida, “gives me the best of both worlds.” Relationships again have emerged as key to TW’s mobile and cross-cultural life. “My parents made big sacrifices back and forth, but it always comes back to family.”

Commonalities Across the Four Participants

From their stories of the contexts of their TCK experiences (of the four cases), the following common themes emerged:

1. The importance of relationships (especially immediate and extended families) in their lives. EE explained, “my entire family is close knit, we are all travelers.” While living in the U.S. and near his maternal grandparents, EE also declared, “theirs was my home away from home, one constant in my life, a form of stability. It’s all about family. It’s how you make it in life. My friends are family too.”

2. The perspectives of broad and unique worldviews (having lived in western and/or non-western cultures). BM reflected, “I view the world differently,
there are a million different ways. Americans think there is only one way, the world is bigger out there.”

3. The ability to bridge the sometimes subtle differences between and among cultures. TW described the differences in this way, “Puerto Rico and New York were culturally different in social aspects. In Puerto Rico, they are sociable and kiss when you meet. In New York they are not as familiar with greetings. People socially change based on the weather.” TW experienced this contrast when he moved to Ohio from Puerto Rico.

4. The experience of weathering the back-and-forth lifestyle of the United States to overseas and overseas to the United States. BM explained, “you never feel like you have a home, roots, but I wouldn’t change that.”

5. The overall expression of positive feelings and beliefs about the TCK life (maturity and a strong sense of independence at an early age, high mobility, and shaping of their identity). BM expressed, “we were very independent at young ages with taking local transportation. We had free rein by our parents. Our parents let us be independent. We would catch flights by ourselves (when we lived in Europe).”

6. The expanded insight of what determines home and a strong desire to go again or at times, return to the home they know and love and frequently miss so much. EE believes, “I’m home overseas, not a place in general, it’s a feeling. I want to go back overseas, it’s like a beacon.”
The TCK lifestyle builds a context of many transitions through high mobility and multiple cross-cultural experiences. But, as EE explained recently from a quote he read, “without change, there would be no butterflies.” All of the relationships, opportunities, and transitions “made me who I am and I wouldn’t change that,” EE remarked.

**Facet Two: Details of the TCK Experiences**

In facet two, the participants responded to questions in which they were asked to describe in more detail their TCK experiences, specifically what were the most meaningful and challenging experiences. Also the participants were asked to discuss their schooling experiences while overseas, with a particular focus on interactions with their teachers (reflections of memories of early cross-cultural experiences).

**AM’s TCK Life**

The first participant, AM, reflected on her TCK life: “I’m glad I’m not alone and others experienced the same; never thought about it like that. I’ve never heard the term TCK before, but it makes sense.” AM’s definition of a TCK is, “a child who grows up abroad and has a different outlook on life and a different childhood.”

The most meaningful experience for AM was in the Philippines because of the local nationals and the beauty of the islands, while her most challenging experience was in Korea. In Korea, she felt different physically; and because she was American, “I felt uncomfortable there.”

AM attended many different kinds of schools within the DODEA system. Of her time in the Philippines, Korea, Turkey, and Japan, AM liked Korea best because she felt the programs and schooling were most like the U.S. school system she knew. However,
her favorite teachers were during her high school years in Japan. Teachers “helped kids, tried to figure out where you were, and made you think and talk about controversial issues. The key to student-teacher relationships overseas was respect and trust and being open to friendly relationships.”

The impact of the TCK experience was expressed by AM. “Being a TCK makes me feel instant connections when I meet another TCK. Being an only child with only one parent made a big impact on my life, and I had a lot of independence.”

**BM’s TCK Life**

The second participant, BM, agreed with AM; she also had never heard the term TCK until she met the researcher of this study. Her definition of a TCK is

An American child who grew up overseas, attending American schools overseas; not really an American kid, not really part of the other culture, in your own little world. But, I related to things differently, educational experiences and background were different.

Being a TCK is “an opportunity of a lifetime!” Later on in life, reflecting on this lived experience, BM stated, “it is life-altering, seeing different ways of doing things, perceiving things differently. It completely defines you, separates you from those in the states. There are a million different ways to look at things.”

BM’s most meaningful experiences were getting to travel to many places, living in other cultures, independence, and speaking other languages. Her most challenging experience was “settling down (between moves) with people and connections, then being ripped up and starting all over again.” BM and her sister were not prepared for the U.S.
college experience, especially in the application process and expectations of U.S.
colleges. The other stress of moving so much according to BM was packing up, living
without your stuff, and seeing family in the United States only one month in the summer.
“You never feel like you have a home, long-term friends and roots, but I wouldn’t change
that. Starting school over and over was hard in new places.”

BM’s most memorable schooling experiences overseas were in the Welsh
schools, “strict discipline, sit up straight! and tapping you on the shoulder with a ruler,
but they were constructivists and believed in wholistic education. However, in high
school, I could not relate to British teachers and they yelled at us, even told us to shut
up.” She has fond memories of her DODEA teachers;

They were amazing because they got to know you as individuals. They knew we
were out of our element. The TCK experience impacted my life, my goals and my
ambition, I want to travel, learn, experience things, and interact with many
people.

EE’s TCK Life

With the third participant, as he reflected on his definition of a TCK, EE stated
that a TCK is

Someone born overseas, then comes back to his native country. TCK is your
childhood and growing up to an adult-TCK. Being both means the same to me,
but at different stages of life, different associations of something. Pretty much,
it’s any experience where you get to experience multiple cultures that most people
don’t get to experience. TCKs are connected to the world. It opened my eyes to
other cultures, broader perspectives, gives more insight to what the world can offer.

For EE, the most meaningful experience of being a TCK is taking away all the different cultures and experiencing them firsthand. “You mature quicker and are more independent; whereas the most challenging experience was coming to the United States and getting acquainted to schools, respect from teachers and being treated as a foreigner.”

“Overseas, teachers were pretty good because they were around TCKs a lot; so we were the norm there.” Although EE experienced much back and forth in schooling, it is hard for him to remember the interactions at an early age. “When you meet a TCK, it feels good. There tends to be more of an instant connection, connections that tend to last a lifetime.”

TW’s TCK Life

As for the fourth participant, TW was not familiar with the definition of a TCK either. However, he researched the term on his own and shared the information with his family. His definition is that a TCK is a child “who is born outside the United States but parents are from the United States.” Being a TCK “gave me the foundation of who I am today. My parents were good about connecting us (to our families) in the U.S.” Also, being a TCK “gave me a better understanding of cultures and growing up with different backgrounds and reactions to life. It broadened my horizons; not wrong, just different. I build relationships and adapt, pull on my strengths, and build more personal connections.”

The most meaningful experience for TW was
Growing up in a culture that is very accepting. I bought into Puerto Rican culture and was accepted as Puerto Rican, even though I was born in an American family. But at times, it was also challenging as not everyone accepted me even though I was born in Puerto Rico.

The school experience was also meaningful for TW. “I knew the teachers as I grew up with them because my parents were also teachers there. Teachers were used to mobility of students and related well to their students; they were used to building a common bridge for all students there. Teachers took an interest in your life.” As a TCK, “I am open-minded and understanding because of this experience, and my social and personal skills are successful because of it. My experience was easier because I had two older sisters and caring parents.”

**Commonalities Across the Four Participants**

From the details of the TCK experiences described by the four participants, the following common themes emerged:

1. Lack of knowledge of the term TCK and the TCK phenomenon. By probing into their lives through a series of questions, they were able to define similarities including a new awareness of who they are and what this cross-cultural, mobile life means. TW admitted, “I wasn’t too familiar with the term TCK until I researched it a bit. This describes our family to a T. Growing up I never thought of our lives as being a category. But the facts hold up true.”
2. Gaining multiple perspectives of how teachers relate to students especially TCKs. TW felt, “DDESS teachers are used to diverse students and mobility of their students. They built a common bridge for all of their students.”

3. The awareness of difference (different lifestyle, lives, experiences, views) that they gained by living abroad and moving frequently. EE explained, “It opened my eyes to other cultures. TCKs are connected to the world. You get to experience multiple cultures, sights, sounds, smells, the people, and experiences of living where you don’t know the language. You realize what the world can offer.”

All four participants agreed that the most meaningful part of the TCK experience was travel and getting to know people from diverse backgrounds and cultures; while the most challenging aspect of the TCK experience was high mobility (packing and unpacking, waiting, uprooting, back and forth life, settling down and starting over and over again), feeling different, and seeing immediate and extended families infrequently in the United States. The teachers that the four participants had overseas demonstrated respect and trust and openness to the relationships with these students. They built “common bridges” (as TW described) and accepted TCKs; teachers understood their TCK status and got to know them individually.

The overall impact of the TCK experience was expressed by the four participants as instant connections with other TCKs that they encounter, a sense of independence and maturity at an early age, knowing somehow this was an opportunity of a lifetime, and a shaping/foundation of who they are and have become. The cross-cultural experiences
define TCKs and separate them from others, especially their non-TCK peers. Their outlook on life and adaptability are evident in their descriptions of the various moves from and to the United States and how they handled these frequent changes and transitions in their lives. Their broadened views of the world affect their insights of their personal and professional adult lives.

Facet Three: Reflections on the Meaning of the TCK Experience

In facet three, the participants reflected on the meaning of the TCK experience. In particular, they reflected on their interactions with teachers in the United States. Based on their memories of these interactions with teachers, the participants made recommendations for teacher education in the U.S. and how we can prepare teachers to understand and work more effectively with third culture children.

AM’s Reflections

The first participant, AM, believed the teachers she had in U.S. schools were definitely interested and intrigued with her (TCK) childhood and

Asked a lot of questions. They thought that I was strange and didn’t know what to think about me. They reacted toward me like I was bragging about my life, but really I was just talking about my life. I had different views of life.

AM loved her drama teacher in U.S. high school because she felt accepted and “we had an instant bond; she had travelled overseas too!” AM feels that if teachers knew more about TCKs, things would have been different for her in schools in the United States. “I never really put it together. I didn’t realize how different I was compared to others in North Carolina.”
AM’s recommendations for teacher education were:

1. Be considerate and realize that it’s different for TCKs to fit into the U.S. school system (don’t make us stand up and talk in front of everybody).
2. Have an understanding of the TCK phenomenon, so you can appropriately place students in grade levels and classes.
3. Know more about TCKs, especially in geographic areas where kids would typically return to or where families move in and out most frequently.
4. Have a better system of transferring from one school to another so you can prepare students for scheduling, classes, and how U.S. schools run.

BM’s Reflections

BM, the second participant, confirmed what AM noted about her teachers; those who had good relationships and knew BM personally were the teachers she remembered and for whom she held fond memories. Personal relationships with teachers, according to BM, involve “taking time with students, spending time with students, welcoming them, teaching how things work, and giving outlets to express themselves about their lived experiences.”

BM also felt that developing a sense of trust and creating a safe, caring place to share are keys in developing respect and trust with students along with “taking extra time to build relationships with their family.”

BM’s recommendations for teacher education were:

1. Develop awareness in teachers across U.S. schools about the TCK phenomenon.
2. Live in other countries and see the distinctions.

3. Be non-judgmental of TCK students and get to know them individually.

4. Help TCK students learn how school (in the United States) works.

5. Develop a culture class that would help meet immediate and social needs when TCKs arrive in U.S. schools.

6. Learn to capitalize on students’ TCK experiences in the classroom and use them for real (global) world problem solving.

7. Develop patience and understanding for this population of students, and gain continuous knowledge about the TCK phenomenon.

EE’s Reflections

The third participant, EE, felt most teachers were nice, but they had a lot of disbelief in him.

In U.S. high school, however, I gained respect from teachers. They never used my experiences though as a tool or to my advantage. I guess (I was challenged) with how closed-minded teachers were and how they didn’t believe me. The best teachers were those that had travelled and lived abroad; they understood me and made me feel special. Cultural sensitivity is really lacking in this country. I think they can comprehend but truly never understand, unless they experience overseas or immerse themselves in another culture.

EE feels strongly that teachers need to “use TCKs to complement and teach lessons; there’s so much wealth in TCKs.” His other recommendations for teacher education were:
1. Experience overseas (living or teaching), especially those teachers in the fields of language and social studies.

2. Make connections with students and networks, blending into their surroundings.

3. Understand that TCKs think *home* is wherever they are.

All four participants mentioned that home is not a specific physical place but rather everywhere that they have lived and are living. EE quoted from Coupland’s (1994) *Life After God* book:

> Home to me, as I have said, is a shared electronic dream of cartoon memories, half-hour sitcoms and national tragedies. I realized my accent was simply the accent of nowhere, the accent of a person who has no fixed home in his mind. (p. 94)

**TW’s Reflections**

The fourth participant, TW, confirmed the qualities of positive interactions with teachers: talking with students, asking questions about their lives; treating TCKs as resources; and developing personal relationships. The teachers in the United States knew TW was born and raised in Puerto Rico, but they did not know he was a TCK.

TW’s recommendations for teacher education were:

1. Get to know students better, especially those born and raised in different cultures.

2. Remain non-judgmental about the way students look.
3. Embrace students and their unique lives, especially those with cross-cultural childhoods.

4. Use students and their cross-cultural experiences as a valuable resource in the classroom.

**Commonalities Across the Four Participants**

From the four cases, the participants clearly voiced several key concerns and presented several recommendations for multicultural teacher education in the United States particularly in the preparation of teacher candidates. The themes that emerged from their student-teacher interactions led the participants to make specific common recommendations:

1. Gain a general knowledge and understanding of the TCK phenomenon, particularly the cross-cultural nature of their childhood and mobility factors. AM explained, “U.S. teachers thought I was strange, they had small town mentality. Overseas teachers were intrigued with me and me with them so we connected better.”

2. Be aware of other cultures and multiple worldviews and perspectives. TW recommended, “this is a topic to bring up in education classes, dealing with different cultures, we had to readjust all the time. As a teacher, ask yourself, ‘Why is he (this student) having such a hard time?’”

3. Embrace TCKs in U.S. classrooms by valuing their cross-cultural experiences, their unique lives, and using them as teaching resources (or co-teachers) in classrooms. EE recommended using TCKs to complement and teach lessons.
“There’s so much wealth in us.” And AM affirmed, “TCKs are useful and needed but where and in which schools would be important to determine especially in areas where kids would typically return to or where families move in and out of more frequently.”

4. Perceive TCKs as cultural consultants/bridges and mediators in classrooms and schools as a whole. EE explained, “in my college Asian Culture class, my professor used my experiences from having lived in three countries in Asia, it complemented his teaching and gave credibility to what he was saying in class.”

5. Understand the significance of developing relationships with these students based on respect, trust, and connections. BM explained, “personal relationships with teachers are important. Respect each other. Learn from each other. Develop a sense of trust. Take extra time to build relationships with TCKs and their families.”

Reflecting on all three facets, the participants know their voices have been heard and valued, perhaps for the first time. They now understand the meaning of this lived TCK experience.

“We had the experience but missed the meaning. And approach to the meaning restores the experience in a different form.”

T.S. Eliot (as quoted in Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 71)
Emerging Themes Across the Collection of Cases

The following themes emerged as commonalities across the collection of the four cases in this study:

1. Relationships, for example, family (no matter the structure) and friendships were of primary significance to A-TCKs. BM explained, “my twin sister is my best friend, she experienced what I experienced, dealt with the same experiences and feelings.”

2. Multiple worldviews. AM expressed, “I was world travelled; I had different opinions about the world (than my peers in North Carolina).”

3. Positive feelings and beliefs about the TCK life. AM exclaimed, “I didn’t know I lived a different life but it was different. I realized this in my summers in North Carolina and spending time with American kids.”

4. Importance of relationships with teachers overseas and in the United States with key components: trust, respect, sensitivity and understanding. BM explained, “teachers overseas made you feel comfortable, took the time to build relationships with me and my family.” EE expressed, “I experienced this all throughout U.S. schools, cultural sensitivity is really lacking in the United States.”

5. Independence at an early age. EE remembered, “I’d walk by myself with my won to the local shop in my Korean neighborhood to get Korean cookies and treats. I was quite young in Korea.”
6. High mobility. AM explained, “not knowing what is going to happen that’s what happens when you move a lot.”

7. Need for teacher preparation in the United States (All teachers need to be informed and knowledgeable about the third culture kid phenomenon.). BM recommended, “get awareness out there to teachers who don’t know about the TCK phenomenon and understand what TCKs are dealing with (in adapting to U.S. schools).”

8. Expanded meaning of ‘home’. EE described home: “my home is everywhere but nowhere, the world is my home.”

9. Importance of embracing diversity of TCK students in classrooms as co-teachers and making connections to them. TW expressed, “TCKs are a great resource for teachers, could be very helpful in working with other students (in classrooms).”

10. Excellent observers and flexible adapters. As McCaig (1974) pointed out, the A-TCKs in this study seemed to be excellent observers and adapted quickly to the unfamiliar. Having limited time in places caused them to immerse themselves and establish relationships quickly and easily. In these relationships, they cut through initial layers of difference and used multiple frames of reference (from all of their experiences across cultures). EE explained, “TCK life helped me experience everything life has to offer, made life easier moving so much. First-hand living in the culture, you could not help growing up quicker.” Listening and intimate observations are their
strengths, because they had to pay attention to nuances in every culture in which they lived. BM observed from some of her experiences, “slower pace in England, personal relationships developed more, smallness of towns, businesses, and locally-owned shops. Coming back to the states, big, huge, more, better, faster.”

11. At times throughout the interviews with the four participants, finding the words to describe their TCK lives was difficult for them as well as for the researcher. BM described it as follows: “trying to put the TCK experience into meaningful thoughts is difficult and can be hard to be coherent. I want to be around other TCKs. When you come back to the states, it takes a while to acclimate to the United States, cultural differences, how Americans live, bigness of everything, commercialization. TCKs fit in with all groups . . . but know how to adapt to and relate to different cultures; yet somehow the TCK does not fit into any of them.”

EE, one of the A-TCK participants in this study, when he reviewed the findings, remarked that they seemed accurate and overall explained the unique and complex lives that TCKs experience. He exclaimed, “It is easy to see why they often want to go again! The instant connections and relationships are significant in A-TCKs’ lives.”

**Defining Moments**

Another strong theme that emerged across the cases was the existence of clearly defining moments when each A-TCK realized that he or she had lived a life different in
many aspects from their peers either during the time spent overseas or in returning (or entering for the first time) to the United States.

AM described several defining moments.

When I moved back to Korea in the middle of sixth grade, I lived overseas again and I knew I was different. I sensed “something” in the second and third grade too. Also, when I left Turkey rather quickly and returned to NC for a year in high school, I knew I was different.

BM described her defining moments. “As soon as I came back to the States, I realized I was different with my cousins and friends. My worldviews, values, and understanding of things was different.”

And, for TW,

I noticed probably in elementary school in Puerto Rico that I was different. The other kids didn’t look like me; they called me “gringo,” and I was the only one leaving to go to the United States every summer and Christmas.

However, for EE, he claimed that there was not a defining moment. He said, “In a way, I knew my life was much different always! It was really the U.S. teachers who pointed it out. It is beckoning for me to come back.”

The participants also described defining moments either in-between cultures or especially in their transitions from overseas to the United States.

AM described another defining moment that happened four years ago. “When I started to go to college in North Carolina, I started to ‘fit in’ and felt ‘normal.’ I am adjusted now but am rearing to go back.”
BM described her defining moment.

I now relate to and associate with people like I’ve always been here in the United States. But when I meet someone with a similar background, I remember how different my life was and the ease and naturalness of relating to that person, I have a sense of belonging with that person.

EE stated that when he moved from Korea to the United States in fourth grade, he was old enough to recognize his surroundings, adapting to a culture far different than what “I was accustomed to in Korea. I don’t think TCKs truly ever make a full transformation. Overseas living will always be stuck in the background.”

And TW would agree with EE.

I was a little familiar with life in the United States because of every summer and Christmas and being with family in New York. But there would have been a major social change from Puerto Rico to the United States without this back ’n’ forth life every year.

The defining moments for these participants certainly shaped who they are, and they shared these personal, transformative moments with this researcher. EE stated that high school and college teachers who shared their travels and similar experiences also connected him to them. In addition, discovering TCK research and connecting to online social networks has assisted these A-TCKs in their transitions.

BM agreed that her connections with college professors, especially British professors, helped her feel the familiarity of her previous lived experience in Wales.
Also, she has met people at church who have had similar experiences through business and missionary work, and via talking with this researcher about the TCK phenomenon.

TW expressed that talking with the researcher about the TCK phenomenon and reading about TCK research articles, then sharing this knowledge with his parents and sisters has helped him. AM said “something was missing” as an adult working in North Carolina. She has not met other TCKs or A-TCKs, but knows she had such a different life.

Several specific distinctions emerged as well across the four cases; however, these differences are beyond the scope of this study. They are merely mentioned as themes to possibly explore in future studies:

1. Diverse family structures
2. Lived cultures: non-western and/or western (or a combination)
3. Schooling experiences overseas and particularly in the United States
4. Defining and transformative moments (bridges) between cultures or transition from overseas to United States (from in-betweeness, liminality—Cook-Sather, 2006)
5. Relationships with teachers in classrooms

**Answering Research Questions**

As we look at these emerged themes, the three main research questions in the study can be answered to a point.

In response to research question one (How do western or non-western multicultural childhood experiences impact the TCKs’ later [re]entry and [re]integration
in U.S. (westernized) public school settings and their schooling experiences?), TCKs do bring some cultural aspects with them back to or in their transition to the United States. However, for these A-TCKs, the cultural nuances or subtleties were not in western or non-western culture differentiation. The four participants revealed specific cultural traits that remain etched in their multicultural minds. BM recalls an experience with her British professor at the U.S. university she attended; she knew she recognized a difference in his way of thinking and teaching and realized she had experienced this style of teaching in her schooling in Wales. Also, from living in Japan, BM appreciates the Japanese value of respect. EE also regards highly the Japanese value of respect from his experiences in Okinawa as a TCK and a later return to the Japanese prefecture island after his U.S. high school graduation.

From the Philippines, EE values what he called “the laid back nature of the people.” AM remembered her experiences in the Philippines with the particular value of friendliness of the local nationals as well as the positive relationships with teachers who really knew her and were familiar with TCKs. And lastly, TW recognized specific Puerto Rican values compared with the United States, from growing up in Puerto Rico. For example, he talked about the familiar social greeting in Puerto Rico of kissing each other cheek to cheek. When he would spend summers in New York, he would not experience such friendliness with greetings. From moving back and forth each summer, TW recognized the differences.

Mobility issues play a significant role in the lives of TCKs. The participants talked a lot about their back and forth moves. Pollock’s RAFT model did surface during
the interviews with numerous example of reconciliations, affirmations, constant farewells and multiple-perspective thinking by each of the A-TCKs.

Living in western and/or non-western cultures (or a combination) did not seem to impact these A-TCKs significantly, although they did remember specific cultural traits and values of the cultures in which they lived and attended school. The impact of the TCK experience was more about family and connections to them while abroad and in the United States, suggesting that the TCK phenomenon is more about relationships and not about places. Family acted as a constant, a stability in their everchanging lives with so many geographic, social, and cultural transitions.

The A-TCKs reported that their DODEA teachers knew them as TCKs. Local national teachers varied in their knowledge and value of TCKs in their classrooms. British teachers were strict with discipline in the classroom according to BM; whereas in Puerto Rico, the teachers were friendly. For A-TCKs, a lack of academic preparedness in some curriculum areas overseas made the transition to U.S. schools a little more challenging; in other areas, the students were ahead due to their preparation in overseas schools and classes. BM admitted that she was not prepared for the college application process in the United States.

Responding to research question two (Do TCKs bring this third culture into their [re]entry and [re]integration into U.S. schooling?), it seems that the A-TCKs do bring a multicultural background and perspective with them but not necessarily openly or knowingly (at a young age). They realize something is different, but they do not pinpoint what it is. The A-TCK participants do believe there is a lack of sensitivity and
understanding by U.S. teachers in their interactions and relationships with TCKs in the U.S. classrooms. The A-TCKs remarked that the teachers did not use them as resources in classrooms. EE remembered a situation in his U.S. high school experience with a history teacher in a class discussion about the Korean War. Since EE had lived in Korea, he wanted to share his knowledge and understanding of the country, the DMZ, and his experience of crossing over to North Korea at the 38th parallel. He was ignored and silenced. The A-TCKs felt that teachers often viewed them on a superficial level in front of their U.S. classmates, exclaiming, “Isn’t it nice, cool, _______ lived in ___________!”

There were mixed reviews about teachers (and perceptions of their relationships with TCKs) in the United States and at times, these relationships with teachers involved some conflicts and misunderstandings. The participants highly valued teachers who built close relationships with them. The A-TCKs in this study believe they could have been used as cultural consultants, bridges, or co-teachers quite often in their U.S. classrooms. EE strongly voiced his concern that he wished his U.S. teachers had used him in teaching lessons about the world and history; BM stated that she had conversational skills in some languages as did TW in Spanish.

And finally, responding to research question three (How can A-TCKs inform multicultural teacher education and what recommendations do they have regarding better preparation of teachers in the 21st century for working with this growing population of P-12 learners in the U.S.?), undeniably, all four A-TCKs do believe teachers need to know about TCKs and the TCK phenomenon. Furthermore, they believe that teachers
need to be aware of TCKs, accept them, and integrate them into their classrooms.

Overall, all teachers should be prepared to understand the TCK profile, especially the two universals of a cross-cultural childhood and high mobility.

**Interpretation: Integrating Facet Themes, Key Moments With the Literature**

After reviewing the emerged themes from the cases and reexamining the literature review, many of the themes derived from the interviews confirm the research and expand the knowledge base of the TCK profile (multicultural childhood and global migration), the interplay of the TCK life and acculturation with student-teacher relationships in schools, and provide implications for multicultural teacher education,

From the gathering of data from A-TCK interviews, as well as the interpretation and analysis processes, themes emerged that added to the content and methodology sections of the literature review chapter. The themes can be divided into two areas, commonalities and distinctions across the four cases. The commonalities include (a) connections to people (family, friends, relationships), (b) worldviews, (c) acculturation process (as a bridge to change, new experiences, and the concept of ‘home’), and (d) TCK identity. Distinctions across the cases include (a) family structures (including birth order and ages lived abroad), (b) mobility issues, and (c) diverse schooling experiences. The themes affirm the design of the qualitative study and the selected methodology while considering the limitations of adult memories in life events. At times, the A-TCKs remarked about their faded or limited memory of events or circumstances during their TCK years. But, overall, adult memory of events did not seem to be a concern for the
researcher or the participants; it was a subtle consideration in interpretation and analysis of the data.

TCK lived experiences are a fusion of multiple cultural homes and geographic transitions as described by Schaetti and Ramsey (1999). They involve many changes, relationships, broad worldview, and cultural identities (interplay of cross cultural life and mobility, a liminal space). As Van Reken (2009) expressed, “TCKs form a world of their own, a third culture. This lifestyle is shared by a cross-cultural lifestyle, interaction with multiple cultures, high mobility, system identity (i.e. DODEA schools), and expected repatriation” (p. 2). Van Reken explained, “in one airplane ride, my world was gone; no way to say good-bye to my home” (personal communication, August 2001). The TCK life affects social and emotional needs especially in terms of belonging and “fitting in.” And, as Castles and Davidson (2000) articulated, “international mobility questions the essence of belonging and redefines culture, stretching the boundaries” (pp. 9-10).

The importance of trust in student-teacher relationships especially in U.S. schools with teachers was expressed very clearly and deeply by the A-TCKs as well as how much they valued teachers who built close relationships with them. This relational trust is a “necessary component of student-teacher relationships” according to Wooten and McCroskey (1996). The issue of trust and what is necessary to effectively build trust between students and teachers is confirmed by Watson and Ecken’s (2003) nine keys, outlined in the literature review. This confidence in understanding, care, integrity, and honesty is essential in the student-teacher relationship. Since children gain self-awareness and identity through social interactions with others and their connections
with places, the interplay of the TCK lived experience and acculturation with relationships cannot be underplayed and should not be undervalued.

What may help TCKs and A-TCKs outside of schools to connect to others, especially other TCKs and A-TCKs, is that in the last 10 years, more and more support systems (many using online technology) have emerged, but they are still not widely known (and some are expensive). For example, Families in Global Transition hosts a bi-annual conference in Texas. TCKID is a relatively new on-line TCK community group for social networking, research projects, and discussions. Denezin is a new on-line magazine for TCKs, and Among Worlds is a journal about and for TCKs.

In schools, McCaig’s (1994) five Cs—(a) communication (sharing and acknowledging), (b) continuity (as few changes as possible in classrooms), (c) collaboration (cooperative groups involving TCKs in the curriculum preparation), (d) closure (help with transition and farewells), and (e) cultural confirmation (valuing but not exaggerating their experiences)—could prove to be very valuable to teachers and administrators in preparing their schools and classrooms for the arrival and integration of TCKs from all over the world.

Kidd and Lankenau (2003) reported that about 300,000 TCKs are living overseas with one-third returning to the United States annually to schools. This suggests that teachers and schools not only need to know about this diverse group of children, but they also need to build more cultural sensitivity toward TCKs and their needs especially in integrating or reintegrating into our U.S. schools.
Ezra (2003) described the acculturation process as a continuous wave, a notion supported by the participants who continually reported numerous back and forth moves, overseas culture-to-culture and to the United States, that they experienced early in life. TW explained that the TCK life gave him “the best of both worlds, comfort of the states (New York in the summer) and comfort of home in Puerto Rico.” EE’s description of his multiple moves paints a picture of Ezra’s continuous wave, “all the moves were back and forth overseas and up and down the east coast of the United States (and also California). Job opportunities and family issues forced us to move quite a bit.”

Popp, Stronge, and Hindman (2003) reported that “mobility is not a new issue confronting educators, but the faces of students have changed” (p. 11). With TCKs, it is not so much the “faces” but the experiences that are unique and complex to describe and understand. Moving six or more times during the K-12 years defines a student as highly mobile. The participants in this study represent this highly mobile life and the self-reported the “back ’n’ forth life” that they experienced between the United States and lived cultures overseas. TCKs rely on each other; their families are close. The participants all reported how important family is and was to their experience; it was the stability and constant in their transitional lives. In all of the diversity that they lived, they created community; this became a fusion of cultural homes.

TW explained that he grew up in a culture that was very accepting and he bought into the Puerto Rican culture at an early age. Although BM reported that she is proud to be an American, she loved being with other children in other cultures with other languages. Adjustment was affected by personality, age, attitude toward moves, prior
experiences in other cultures, family structure and issues, as well as lengths of stays in cultures; and this was different for each A-TCK.

The Useem established that “TCKs often report that they never really adjust, but rather adapt to the current environment” (p. 5). TCKs learn to “code switch” to “fit in” wherever they are. They fit in everywhere but nowhere in particular. They know when to speak about TCK life and when to remain silent to fit in and belong. AM stated, “in the middle of ninth grade, they reacted toward me like I was bragging about my life, but really I was just talking about my life.” But at times AM believed, “it’s hard enough to fit in, so don’t make us stand up and talk. I didn’t like to talk about it.”

It is clear that TCKs bring strengths as resources to their classrooms and schools; they bring challenges when they need supports to figure this life out and adjust. As BM exclaimed, “you’re in your own little world, not really American, not really part of other cultures.” And they all voiced, “I wouldn’t be who I am without this TCK experience. TCKs are connected to the world.” McCaig (1992, p. 1) and Cowley (1991, pp. 117-118) described global nomads/TCKs as being “rooted differently, by people and a state of mind, less by places.”

An unanswered question for this researcher is why these A-TCKs do not talk about their TCK lives to others. Have they adjusted or “code switched” yet again to just fit in? Have they forgotten about their TCK lives, or have they hidden their lives intentionally to belong in the United States, particularly as students in U.S. schools? Campano (2007) reported that the increasingly rich diversity of students in our U.S. classrooms is an opportunity that benefits all of us in education. From the voices of the
A-TCK participants come stories that are rich, unique, and complex; they provide endless possibilities for all educators to learn about this special multicultural childhood. As Wolcott (1994) cautioned, “qualitative research tells a story but never can tell the whole story” (p. 27). For this researcher, it has been an uncovering of these participants’ stories on paper for the first time. The remaining questions lead to the researching and writing of the next chapters of their stories.

**Conclusion**

This chapter described the findings of the study, the A-TCK participants’ perspectives and reflective stories. The findings demonstrate the participants’ insights into their understanding and personal meaning of the interplay of their lived TCK experiences and acculturation with their student-teacher relationships in U.S. classrooms and schools. Although this researcher theorized that the exposure to various cultures might be the major finding in this study, the findings actually found something new. The major finding in this study was the significance of relationships with family and teachers, substantiating McCaig’s (1994) and Cowley’s (1991) claims about reentry. The findings strongly substantiate the literature review of this study indicating the interplay of the TCK life with acculturation and student-teacher relationships particularly in the U.S. context.

T. S. Eliot’s (as quoted in Denzin & Lincoln, 2003b, p. 71) Little Giddings, last of the Four Quartets, seems appropriate, capturing the findings of this study and closing this chapter:
“We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.”
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

“The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.”

Marcel Proust (1922)

This qualitative study intended to understand, describe, interpret, and query about the questions of how the TCK life and acculturation played out in the context of student-teacher relationships in the U.S. school context.

From a hermeneutic phenomenological foundation, interpretation of meaning and study of understanding, a qualitative research study was designed using case study methodology and multiple sessions of interviews. The findings were interpreted and analyzed through facets of commonalities across the four cases as a collective case study.

The present study focused on three primary research questions regarding selected A-TCKs’ (TCK) lived experiences and their acculturation (immersion in cultures, non-western or western or both) processes as well as their student-teacher relationships in U.S. classrooms and schooling. The three-session interviews focused on probing deeper into these questions with an established set of semi-structured questions, always allowing for other spontaneous questions to be asked or uncovered, and in the third and final interview, providing an open space for participant reflection and response.

In this chapter, discussion and interpretation as well as implications of the findings, the relationship to the research questions, strengths as well as limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research are presented. At the end of this study,
the hope is that these four A-TCK stories will invite other A-TCKs to reveal and share their multi-facets of lived TCK experiences.

Borrowing from one of the verses in Robert Frost’s famous poem, *Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening*, this researcher has tried to capture the *three facets* of these A-TCKs’ lives, “GEMs,” as I now redefine them:

*But I have had multicultural moves without a doubt,*

*And many unique experiences and people to talk about,*

*And stories upon stories to tell about.*

**Discussion of the Collective Case Study**

From a review of the data from the collective case study, there were several challenges as well as successes. The challenges are described first, followed by the successes.

As Wolcott (1994) suggested, narrowing down the data to make it manageable is always a challenge in qualitative studies and particularly with interview data. In addition, organizing the data to reveal the multiple facets of the TCK life and phenomenon as vividly as possible also proved to be challenging. This researcher found it particularly important to write concisely and clearly about the findings and to suggest the importance of a broader public awareness and knowledge of this phenomenon.

Before the 1950s, more than 65% of TCKs came from missionary families and only about 15% came from business families. After World War II, the demographics changed dramatically, with missionary families accounting for about 15%, business about 15%, government about 25%, military about 30%, and families of educators, NGOs,
media, and athletics representing about 15%. These statistics reveal the diversity in the families that migrate abroad for work and presumably raise children in a cross-cultural environment. Certainly, the diversity within the A-TCKs in this study could be described by their family structures, cultures in which they lived, and the schools they attended abroad and in the United States.

The strengths in this study are the rich data, especially the voices (quotes) from the participants, the commonalities across the cases that are explained below, the relevance of the interplay of the TCK lived experience and acculturation, and the implications for multicultural teacher education.

Thomas and Znaniecki (1984) discussed the interplay of crossing cultures and the resulting impact on changes and experiences which lead to multiple perspectives about life and the world. The universal impact of mobility shared by TCKs was echoed by one of the participants when he described his TCK life as having helped him experience everything life has to offer and that first-hand living in all the cultures matured him a lot quicker. One of the other participants revealed how frequent mobility across cultures impacted her independence at an early age and how she felt she had “free rein” by her parents. Because of this early independence, this participant viewed the world differently.

Berry (2005) defined acculturation as a dual process of cultural and psychological change that occurs as a result of contact with other cultures and individuals. He further explained that acculturation is one of the most complex areas to understand and proposed that we understand both the cultures and the individuals as well as their interactions.
Ezra (2003) agreed with Berry’s explanation that the acculturation process is not easy or painless and is repeated as a continuous wave. One of the participant’s understanding of his acculturation process resembles Berry’s definition of this dual process when he described his TCK life as having given him a better understanding of cultures and broadened his views. And another participant’s understanding reflected Ezra’s continuous wave notion that TCKs are connected to the world and TCKs get to experience multiple cultures through all the moves and interactions. Although at times, these interactions can be difficult and misunderstandings can arise especially in student-teacher interactions.

Wooten and McCroskey (1996) proposed that trust is necessary in any student-teacher relationship. Davis (2003) proposed that interaction and relationships play important roles in children’s cognitive and social development and those with low levels of conflict, and high levels of closeness and support work best. Pianta and Stuhlman (2004) strongly supported that the quality of student-teacher relationships play a role in children’s success in school. One of the participants agreed wholeheartedly with this notion of support and quality of student-teacher relationships as she revealed that those teachers who were open and friendly had the best relationships with her. And another participant’s feelings about her overseas teachers revealed a level of comfort in the classroom because of a sense of trust that was co-created with her teachers. The significance of relationships went even further, however.

Castles and Davidson (2000) proposed that globalization and international population mobility will continue to redefine culture, stretching the boundaries of
relationships. The importance of these participants’ families and a broadening of what a family entails is a key finding in the study. One of the participants broadened his understanding of familial boundaries by reflecting on his entire family as being close knit and that they are all travelers. He echoed Castles and Davidson’s proposal of stretching the boundaries of relationships by proclaiming that his friends are his family too.

Another participant also described her feelings about family and being away from them and how she hated being away from her family in the states especially her (maternal) grandmother and uncles. In fact, she actually stated that she resented her mother in her younger years for taking her away from them overseas. But now after the international and domestic mobility in her life, she regards her mother as her best friend.

At the conclusion of the interviews, all four participants in the study made recommendations for teachers in terms of their preparation for working with diverse classroom populations, specifically TCKs, resembling what Kidd and Lankenau (2003) concluded. U.S. educators are not always aware of who TCKs are, what their needs might be, and what special gifts TCKs have to offer. Both the participants and Kidd and Lankenau recommended recognizing and drawing upon TCKs strengths that they bring with them, striving to help them feel part of the classroom, supporting academic and other transitions, and fostering their multicultural identities. In particular, two of the participants echoed Kidd and Lankenau regarding TCKs as great resources for teachers. Carnoy (1999) argued that globalization is having a profound effect on education at many levels and on new ways of thinking. Using TCKs to complement and teach lessons in the
classrooms in the United States as well as capitalizing on their TCK experiences represents how all of the participants’ beliefs about their experiences in U.S. classrooms. From the data, the integration of the participants’ birth cultures (the first culture) and new cultures that they experienced (second culture) helped them create a unique and complex third culture. Cowley (1991) described this third culture as a combination of all the cultures lived in not by location but a state of mind.

Pollock’s (2001) RAFT model which described the social, psychological, and cognitive concepts of reconciliation, affirmation, farewells, and thinking experienced by TCKs, was confirmed by the participants in their transitions from the United States to overseas or vice versa or back and forth between cultures. Of particular importance were the areas of affirming the relationships that they had overseas and with family in the United States and saying farewell to people, places, and possessions repeatedly across all of their moves. Reconciling conflict with others and thinking ahead by gathering information about the new host culture were not necessarily expressed by the participants in their interviews, leaving the researcher to ponder if the young age in which they lived the TCK experiences impacted their ability to reconcile conflict with others and think about the new cultures in which they would be living.

Conclusion

Wolcott (1990) recommended considering the following three questions when framing the conclusion of the qualitative study or what he called the “closing statement.” These questions ask us to ponder and reflect upon the study in three ways. What has been attempted? What has been learned? What new questions have been raised?
First, what has been attempted? Lived experiences lead us to a path of knowledge and understanding. Clifford Geertz (1973) said, “culture is located in the minds and hearts of people who are at the same time actors and creators of social interactions (mediators of culture)” (p. 7). The participants in this study created this third culture by a fusion of their birth culture with all of their lived cultures. From an understanding of the context of their TCK lives and the interplay with acculturation and student-teacher relationships, as well as detailed, authentic voices of the participants’ perceptions and reflections, recommendations have been presented to multicultural teacher education in preparing teachers to work with this unique, diverse population of students.

Second, what has been learned? This study has contributed to new knowledge about the TCK phenomenon and how it could influence practice in multicultural teacher education. By reviewing the defining moments, when A-TCKs realized they were different than their U.S. peers, and their acculturation process (transitions between cultures, the “in-between space”) that Cook-Sather (2006) discussed, we realize the impact that this cross-cultural life and mobility have on children no matter their age. When did the participants realize they were different? It appears that it happened when they moved to the United States. AM described hers, “I sensed something was different in the second or third grade. I knew I was different.” BM stated, “my worldviews, values, and understanding of things was different than my cousins and friends.”

At the end of the three-session interviews, this researcher believes the participants felt the transformations that had happened in their lives through all of the cultural and social transitions during the “in-between” spaces abroad as well as in their transition to
the U.S. context or as Ezra (2003) described it as a continuous wave. The process of transformation involves a journey that leads to courage and openness about ourselves.

Brice Royer, an A-TCK and founder of TCKID (2009) expressed his concern about transformation through a series of questions:

1. How does the TCK life change the meaning of belonging?
2. Where are you from? Where’s home? (He suggested that these are outdated questions).
3. Will multicultural identity promote a culture of inclusion?
4. Could TCKs become change agents in classrooms and schools?

The four participants in this study shared their honesty about their lives throughout the interview process and personal metaphors emerged as an outgrowth at the end of the formal questions in the third and final session. Zilber (2010) proposed “metaphors are the most effective way in which to paint the picture of a new phenomenon. It is a phenomenon which is not visible to the eye” (p. 17). These A-TCKs’ metaphors represent the many facets of the TCK life and express their feelings and reflections on their TCK lived experiences.

From reading these metaphors, we can gain a better understanding of the many facets of this complex multicultural life, experienced by the four participants in this study at an early age. This researcher intentionally did not analyze the participants’ metaphors so that their voices could be heard through the power and brilliance of their own words.
Closing Metaphors

EE
Like a beacon, draws me back. I feel like a global chameleon, I blend into my surroundings, adjust to cultures, don’t change my personality, but may have an external look.

BM
Like a teenager in an American high school cafeteria, filled with all its different groups. TCKs fit in with all groups, going from one to the next, knowing how to adapt and relate to differences (in schools) yet not fitting in to any.

AM
At first, like a tree, rooted and connected and family were the branches. But now, like a fly, having a desire for freedom.

TW
Like a home, home is where the heart is, no matter where I am or move to, PR is my home.

GE
This researcher has also developed her own personal metaphor of this research journey, her understanding of the TCK phenomenon, and her interactions with the four participants. As this researcher reflected on the experience and the A-TCK stories; her own metaphor unfolded.

Like a ship on the ocean, setting sail into uncharted waters, meeting calm and rough seas, finding hidden treasures along the voyage. At times, sailing along; at
other times, hit by storms and maybe even a tsunami. But through it all, ventured forth with faith, hope, and vision. This study became not only a professional journey, but a personal and spiritual quest as well. Hope became my constant anchor and perseverance my mast. I discovered four gems along this dynamic voyage.

These metaphors suggest a continual search for more to read, to learn, to discover to examine, to analyze, to question, and to go forth in this never-ending journey. Imbedded in the metaphors are these questions: Who are we? Where is home and where do we belong? Why are we here? How can we learn more about and from each other? This is what has been learned from A-TCKs as well as by A-TCKs and their understanding of the TCK phenomenon. Their metaphors highlight and raise new questions about identity. Royer (2009) proposed his notion of identity for TCKs by defining them as culturally mixed and as rootedness versus freedom, the constant dichotomy of TCKs. How do TCKs build a bridge between the dichotomies? Is this dichotomy the subtleness of the third culture and why is it quite difficult to describe?

And lastly, what new questions have been raised? This study was designed and implemented prior to and during a new administration in Washington DC, with a president who is an Adult-TCK, and whose three top staff aides are also Adult-TCKs. The question about the value and relevance of Adult-TCKs in the domestic and global workplace is more easily answered. Iyer (2008), in a chance meeting with Barack Obama in Hawaii, shared two key thoughts on this famous A-TCK. One, Obama “brings globalism to America—his name, his face, his issues,” and, two, “it is the questions he
draws from his experiences that are important not necessarily the answers he comes up with” (p. 116).

Bethel (2009) commented on Obama and the skills he brings to his position. “Barack’s been negotiating between cultural worlds since the day of his birth. No one has to teach him the skill. It’s second nature to him.” And, Newton-Small (2007) added, “living abroad does give you a wider view of the world” (p. 25).

How can A-TCKs best be heard and used most effectively in the 21st century globalization? The question can also be raised: When do A-TCKs realize they have lived a different life and the impact on them as well as others? When was there a defining moment in their lives when they came to this realization, and how was it transformative?

The new generations of Adult-TCKs must be encouraged to step up and stand out! They will need to recognize and explore important research opportunities. With the original researchers in the TCK field (the Useems, Pollock, and McCaig) now gone, there is an immediate need for new researchers and consultants in this fascinating field of research. As Van Reken stated, “TCKs have a shared EXPERIENCE that binds them together NOT necessarily ethnicity and/or nationality.” The impact of the TCK experience for the four participants in this study was more about relationships and the interplay with their multicultural childhoods than about places where they had lived, whether they were western or non-western.

It seems to me that all A-TCKs have a need for community; a place to share their stories and understand this complex multicultural childhood that they lived. They need to share these moments, not hidden, not silenced, but voicing their lived experiences as
TCKs. The participants agree that TCKs tend to have more in common with one another, regardless of where they lived abroad than they do with non-TCKs from their own country (the United States) in this study.

The contributions of this qualitative study are many to the field of multicultural teacher education as a whole and in particular to the TCK body of knowledge and research. Especially in the current climate of accountability, changing demographics in schools, global migration, and transformative school reform seek to fulfill the goals of multiculturalism as stated by many of the noted scholars in the field, Banks, Sleeter, Gay, Nieto, to name a few. As Pinnegar and Erickson reminded us in their chapter in Craig and Deretchin (2008), “knowing and knowledge position us to further inquire and prompt us to ask valuable questions. Knowing becomes the key to questioning leading to further knowledge, action, efficacy, rather than just providing answers” (p. 432).

Personally, this study fulfilled the researcher’s lifetime goal of understanding the TCK phenomenon more deeply from selected A-TCKs’ perspectives and the impact on A-TCKs’ lives from the TCK lived experiences. The genesis of this study that began in 1983 continues to impact this researcher’s personal and professional thinking on globalization, multicultural teacher education, and the impact of a multicultural childhood on one’s adult life.

The question of what is this TCK experience and phenomenon has not only intrigued me for more than 20 years, but it has also been at the core of my passion for this topic in the teaching/learning context throughout my career in multicultural education. Particularly in the last 10 years, I have had a strong desire to relate the TCK experience
and its impact on individuals who lived “it,” and its application to how we can at least adequately prepare multicultural teachers to work with all diverse learners in our 21st century classrooms in the United States. My passionate intrigue for this specific topic is supported by Stake (1995) who stated “there is no particular moment when data gathering begins. It begins before there is commitment to do the study – background, acquaintance with cases, first impressions” (p. 49). That moment happened for me in 1983!

One of the contributions of this study is to bring not only an awareness of this population of diverse learners in our U.S. classrooms to a heightened level, but also to help all educators acquire a deeper understanding of the third culture children who often go unnoticed and untapped (from personal communication with Van Reken and from personal experience). I have always believed that contextual factors (sociocultural in particular) played a major role in TCKs’ learning and lives, especially when they entered or returned “home” for schooling after being raised abroad in mobile, multicultural contexts.

Another contribution of this study and more broadly of qualitative research is the “requirement of passion—passion for people, passion for communication, and passion for understanding people” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003c, p. 71). The passion of the participants and the researcher are intended to be highlighted using quotes and “voices” recorded throughout the study.

The following poem, “The Emigrants” by Charlotte Turner Smith (1793), highlights the thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of not only the current research
participants but also presumably many A-TCKs and this multicultural teacher educator and researcher. It is an appropriate closing for this study.

The Emigrants

“If you came back, you wanted to leave again.
If you went away, you wanted to come back.

Wherever you were, you could hear the call of the homeland, like the note of a herdsman’s horn.

Far away in the hills,
You had one home out there and one over here,
And yet, you were an alien in both places.

Your true abiding place was the vision of something very far off
And your soul was like the waves, always restless, forever in motion,

Never at home.”

“Only those who risk going too far can possibly find out how far they can go.”

T.S. Eliot

Limitations of the Study

As with any study, there are limitations and constraints. First, there was the research participants’ availability for interviews and follow-up sessions as well as unforeseen changes in their lives over the course of the study. Second, the intense time involved in a qualitative study especially in conducting interviews and analyzing the volume of data and notes was not only a time-consuming but also an iterative, discursive, and deliberative process. The geographic (physical) distance from the participants was
underestimated and required unanticipated financial resources. And third, adult memory of life experiences in qualitative research design had to be considered. The participants’ ability to remember key moments in their TCK lives and to articulate these defining/transformative moments to the researcher and for themselves was difficult at times, but their voices were heard and recorded. There is a possibility that the number of participants in this qualitative study limited a broader scope of potential common themes. But the intention of the study was to provide richness of interpretation by the participants as well as the researcher.

**Implications and Recommendations for Multicultural Teacher Education**

This qualitative study and its findings are timely in adding to the body of knowledge in multicultural teacher education, nationally and globally, at a time when intense accountability and accreditation standards are driving and mandating not only how departments, schools, or colleges of education and their universities are addressing diversity in their faculty, candidates, courses and programs (a requirement of NCATE, one teacher education accrediting agency in the United States) but also how all teachers are being prepared to work with diverse learners in U.S. schools.

It is clear from the participants that they not only feel teachers need awareness of the TCK phenomenon, but also need more culturally responsive training and sensitivity toward diverse learners in their classrooms. Kidd and Lankenau (2003) expressed their concern about teachers not being aware of who TCKs are and the needs TCKs have and the gifts that they offer.
In addition, as Stultz (2002) argued, “colleges of education should not only be interested in this population, but also consider the implications in planning, examining, and recreating teacher preparation programs” (pp. 5-6). Overall, what do teacher candidates bring to the table in their understanding and teacher thinking about the teaching and learning process? What if the teacher candidates are A-TCKs? How do we as teacher educators adapt our courses and programs to better represent these candidates and their thinking, as well as the overall increasing population of third culture children in our classrooms? These are questions that arise in working with TCKs. This dissertation study did not explore these questions but rather the participants made recommendations to multicultural teacher education based on their schooling experiences.

Bennett’s (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) as a framework to explain six stages of developmental sensitivity to cultural difference and Hammer’s (1998) Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) instrument could perhaps be useful for a future research study. This possible study could involve interviewing teachers who have experienced third culture children in their classrooms. The intention could be to determine where teachers see themselves on this developmental cultural sensitivity scale and how they might move toward the three stages of ethnorelativism.

Popp et al. (2003) also noted this lack of awareness and sensitivity about TCKs and especially their social as well as emotional needs. Furthermore, Popp et al. provided valuable insights into the issue of mobility across many different groups in education and strongly argued that it is a “complex one” (p. 4). They challenged all of us in education
to remember that “mobility is not a new issue confronting educators, but the faces of students have changed” (p. 11).

Two retired P-12 educators, currently living in northeast Florida, whose lives have intersected with this researcher, expressed their intrigue and professional interest in reading this study because of their awareness and experience with third culture children in California public schools and overseas in the Saudi Aramco school system, respectively. After a review of this study, they both expressed that the knowledge gained about the TCK phenomenon as well as the interesting findings not only validate the importance of this field of study but also confirm how this research would have helped them in their former professional leadership roles in school populations with third culture children.

The retired principal from a southern California public school system expressed his heartfelt concern “this information needs to be an integral part of teacher education programs.” He continued, “Everyone needs to know this (TCK phenomenon) and all that has been cited and expressed here” (personal communication, March 2010). Upon further reflection on this study, he remarked that

Not only do teachers need to know about this, the whole nation needs to know and understand (about TCKs). All the things you say about trust are essential. It’s all about relationships. Florida needs to know this. They (TCKs) are in our schools. You need to be an administrator or teacher trainer. Now I understand (from reading this) our new President; he’s an A-TCK! Everyone needs to know about this (phenomenon). Since reading this study, I have met several different
A-TCKs and they are also fascinated in what I share with them that I have learned from you. (personal communication, June 2010)

And the retired superintendent from New York and the Saudi Aramco school system described the study’s strengths as the ability to personalize the A-TCK stories and the metaphors at the end of this chapter. He suggested that the researcher “beat the drums for others to take this information to teacher education.” He further stated, “my hope is that it will spur people on in education, creating awareness and putting things into action through conference speaking, workshops, articles or even a book” (personal communication, June 2010).

**Implications and Recommendations for U.S. Teachers, Classrooms, and Schools**

“My students are my best teachers.”

Rafe Esquith (2007)

The participants’ voices and the findings in this study echo Campano’s (2007) belief in “student stories as far more significant especially for (TCKs) who may not hear the echo of their own experiences in the traditional school curriculum and feel their voices have been silent or silenced in the classroom” (p. 251). TCK students could become co-investigators in what Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2001) called *inquiry stance*, where students and teachers probe questions such as what is culture? How does culture impact our lives? How does cultural context shape our world?

Our current President Obama (2004) proposed “a real education for children would start by giving a child an understanding of himself, his world, his cultures, his community. That’s the starting point of any educational process” (p. 258). The
participants in this study represent this idea of a real education by expressing their understanding of themselves, the cultures that they lived in, and the multiple perspectives that they have acquired about the world in general.

Orozco (2007) concluded about a subgroup of TCKs,

Immigrant children play a pivotal role in moving between the two worlds and cultures of home and school. They are key cultural players who understand the struggles and culture of their experiences. Preparation for the global economy involves functioning across a number of cultural and language divides. (p. 20)

Castles and Davidson (2000) discussed that globalization is redefining culture and stretching boundaries of time, space, and relationships. But, as Ezra (2003) suggested in her continuous wave concept, high mobility produces challenges and opportunities. The participants represented multiple worlds from their back and forth lives, overseas to the United States and the United States to overseas. One of the universals of the TCK life is high mobility. Although Ezra described high mobility as challenging and opportunistic, overall the participants in this study regarded their TCK lives as positive and life changing.

In sum, we can conclude that U.S schools need to improve, embrace, and integrate the complexities and promises of students’ identities beyond instructional strategies and so-called best practices. In Campano (2007) we find a reasonable recommendation that “allowing the diverse voices of a classroom community to surface and claim their truths entails a fundamental shift” (p. 251) for many teachers and schools in general. It is vital to the student-teacher relationships in classrooms, to honor students’
stories and experiences especially in “the second classroom, pedagogical spaces on the margins of the school day: before and after school, during lunch, at recess, in the halls, and other learning environment opportunities within the school day” (p. 251).

And as Bryk and Schneider (2003) and Wooten and McCroskey (1996) reminded us, trust is a necessary component in relationships. One element of trust is students knowing that their storied knowledge counts in school, is intellectual, and can serve as springboards for further inquiry for all involved in the learning process. All of the participants expressed how significant trust was in their relationships with teachers and how trust enhanced those interactions and relationships.

Seidman (1998) suggested that “stories and details of people’s lives are ways of knowing and understanding our world and our experiences” (p. 4). This study begins to scratch the surface of the stories that are important to be told not only so that others can know the TCK lived experience and its impact on individual and collective lives but also to understand our changing world and experiences. These TCK lived experiences can provide doorways into other multicultural lives that have often been silent, hidden and lacking voice in classrooms and schools in the United States.

The interview findings in this study lead to the conclusion that at least these students are not truly being embraced in U.S. classrooms. They do possess the skills necessary for the challenges and opportunities in the 21st century and for leadership in schools, communities, and the global world. These skills can be described as the ability to think for themselves, to take initiative, to get along with others, to solve problems, to possess strong communication skills, and to participate as a team. Are their teachers
promoting these skills in their classrooms and using these students’ skills effectively?

What do teachers need to know about the children in their classrooms, specifically TCKs? Why is it necessary for teachers to know and understand the TCK phenomenon?

Overall, the participants echoed the need for a unique preparation of teachers in U.S. schools for not only working with a diverse population of students, but also for preparing our students for the world they currently live in and for the future society of globalization.

Implications for Future Research

Mohanty (1997) argued that a “robust multiculturalism” is a requisite for “inquiry into human good” (p. 241). Classrooms are one of the public spaces where individuals come from a range of backgrounds to coexist with the ideal goal of acquisition of information and the production of knowledge and cultivation of wisdom. Campano (2007) reported that immigrant, migrant, and refugee students, and this researcher would propose adding TCKs, are “cosmopolitan intellectuals whose perspectives and experiences edify all members of the classroom.”

Suarez-Orozco (2001) recommended “a critical but understudied area of scholarship on globalization is the experiences of children” (p. 345). More studies about TCKs’ and A-TCKs’ experiences are highly recommended for future research. Perhaps included in these studies would be the inclusion of their parents and their stories about their children and their perceptions of this unique phenomenon.

This study raises further questions to explore and research about particular factors that may influence the TCK lived experiences such as nonwestern versus western
cultures, family structure, birthplace culture, high mobility, and adult memories of early schooling experiences (preschool through third grade). Additional qualitative studies regarding A-TCKs perspectives and understanding of TCK life and student-teacher relationships in particular are warranted and recommended. Since relationships seem to be a key factor in TCKs lives, connections to immediate and extended families, selection of future partners in life, and socialization (making and sustaining friendships) with other A-TCKs could also be an interesting study to pursue.

As migration continues and globalization impacts all of our lives, A-TCKs’ position in the workplace domestically and globally could also provoke a valuable study. How do and can A-TCKs change the culture of the current and future workplace? What do they bring to the workplace that other workers do not? Why are they valuable assets to our domestic as well as global workplace?

**Reflection of My Own Transformation as a Mother of an A-TCK,**

**Multicultural Teacher Educator, and Researcher**

This doctoral process has been the most extraordinary journey I have ever undertaken. My personal as well as professional transformation resonates far beyond what I had originally intended and dreamed it would be. I find myself pondering more and more questions about this extraordinary life as a mother of an A-TCK and throughout my career as a multicultural teacher educator and now, researcher. Often I find myself wishing I had been privileged to be a TCK experiencing this uniquely complex, multicultural childhood rather than just being a parent of a TCK.
Wolcott (1990) recommended “rather than striving for closure, see if you can leave both yourself and your readers pondering the essential issues you have addressed” (p. 56). This study has confirmed many thoughts for me about the TCK life; and at the same time, it has posed new areas of inquiry. The journey has been transformative for me personally and professionally.

Pillemer (1998) suggested, “a narrative sense of self emerges as a result of conversations about the past” (p. 895). And Rubin (1988) further described life memories as “time capsules, records of an unrepeatable past where one recounts the past to teach lessons for the future” (p. 19). Lawrence Durrell (1957) proposed that “journeys lead us not only outwards in space, but inwards as well” (p. 15). Personally, the journey has been actually quite spiritual. For the participants, these journeys are important as we think about TCKs entering or returning to the United States for schooling and the impacts that the TCK experience and acculturation have with student-teacher interactions and relationships.

It is evident from the participants’ candid responses that the reception of TCKs by teachers in U.S. classrooms plays a critical role in their adaptation to the U.S. schooling context. I realize now that TCKs can play a significant role in our U.S. classrooms as cultural translators, multicultural classroom resources, and sociocultural interpreters. Thus, this researcher has developed a new acronym for TCKs, GEMs (guides, educators, mediators, and supporters) in the U.S. school context.
The visual graphic presented in Figure 2, was conceived and hand drafted by EE during a conversation in December 2007 about the TCK phenomenon and this researcher’s newly developed concept of TCKs as “GEMs.” This visual representation

*Figure 2.* EE’s interpretation of TCKs’ lives and this researcher’s new concept, GEMs.
demonstrates EE’s interpretation of the TCK life, reflecting on and revisiting the multiple layers of his TCK experiences. During his reflection and analysis, there was a discovery of the brilliance and depth of his multicultural childhood and the extent of mobility across cultures and to the United States. These similar layers of multicultural experiences and frequent moves were voiced and recognized by the other three participants throughout their interviews in this study. The various layers represent the experiences of the A-TCKs in their various homes with all of their cultural changes, opportunities, and dynamics in multiple relationships.

In 2009, this researcher met Mike Mitchell, a local artist in northeast Florida, through her involvement in Rotary International. The graphic image in Figure 2 was designed by this artist after being described by the researcher and represents EE’s interpretation of his TCK life and this researcher’s new concept, GEMs. The graphic echoes Isabel Allende, a Chilean-American writer, born in Peru, who wrote, “You are the storyteller of your own life and you can create the legend or not.”

The four A-TCKs in this study, these radiant gems, have transformed my life by sharing the depth of their thinking, their honest perceptions of their lived experiences in other cultures, and the interplay with their schooling experiences. I have been honored to document their multicultural identities. Their sincere ability to reflect on their TCK lives and to articulate the meaning of those experiences, revealed a multi-faceted life that is quite complex to describe and interpret and often difficult to put into words. As several of them stated, “you just have to live it, to understand it.”
As I close this study, it has become even clearer to me now not only the significance of hearing the A-TCK stories, but also the importance of recording their voices about their multicultural lives. I am reminded of Ralph Waldo Emerson’s important advice and wisdom:

“Guard well your spare moments. They are like uncut diamonds.
Discard them and their value will never be known.
Improve them and they will become the brightest gems in a useful life.”
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Appendix A

Interview Questions

Session 1. (Context of A-TCK participant’s life experience—life history)

1. Tell me about your life to this point in time.
2. Where were you born? Where did you grow up?
3. When did you first go overseas?
4. With whom and what took your family to that place/those places?
5. Where did you live? Describe the culture.
6. Did you move much? How many moves did you encounter? Describe these cultures.
7. When did you move to the United States either for the first time or reenter?

Session 2. (Details of the TCK experience)

1. How familiar are you with the term, third culture children (TCK) and Adult-third culture children (A-TCK)? What is your understanding of this phenomenon?
2. How do you perceive the TCK experience?
3. How did the TCK experience impact your life?
4. What stands out as most meaningful? What was most challenging?
5. If you attended school(s) abroad, what kind of schools were they? What were your interactions with teachers like?
6. At what age and in what grade level did you return to the United States for schooling?
Session 3. Reflection on the meaning of the TCK experience

1. When you entered/returned to the United States and schooling, what were your relationships/interactions like with your teachers?

2. What stands out as most challenging - were there conflicts? What were the most meaningful encounters with teachers?

3. Were teachers aware of your TCK experience? Did they understand the phenomenon? How did they respond?

4. What recommendations do you have for U.S. teacher education in preparing candidates to work with the TCK population in our schools?

5. How do you feel now reflecting on and reconstructing the details of your TCK experience?

6. Do you have anything else that you want to say about your TCK experience as it relates to student-teacher relationships?
APPENDIX B

INDIVIDUAL CASES (STORIES):

KEY/RELEVANT MOMENTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS
Appendix B

Individual Cases (Stories): Key/Relevant Moments From the Interviews

“It is a student who proves to be my best teacher.”

(Rafe Esquith, 2007)

AM

Context of AM’s Life Experience

I was born in Durham, North Carolina, birth to age 2 ½ (don’t remember at all), then moved to the Philippines and spent preschool and kindergarten there, then moved to Seoul, Korea first through third grades, then moved to Athens, Alabama, fourth to the beginning of sixth grade to have a new stepfather and stepbrother, then 6th grade, my mom divorced again, so we moved back to Seoul, Korea for sixth to eighth grades, then ninth grade in Ircirlik, Turkey, mid ninth grade returned to the states for high school in NC (due to personal issues) in tiniest town and lived with my mom’s best friends, then 10-12th grades moved to Misawa, Japan, with my mom and graduated from high school there.

Overseas back and forth with single mom only; my dad was in Creedmore, North Carolina, 30-40 minutes from where I live now.

After (high school) graduation in Japan, moved to Louisburg, North Carolina and started community college and got a job—didn’t like it there and I moved to Raleigh, continued school at a technical school, but dropped out; not the best thing, just a few credits shy of associate degree, hate school though! Now, manager of body shop, a worldwide vegetable skin care product store, paying me to back to school in August,
cosmetology or yoga instructor license. I love makeup and my company would love me to go to do that. Raleigh doesn’t have that program though. Thinking about moving to the mountains with my boyfriend and getting a yoga job.

GE: What do you remember about the various cultures you lived in?

AM: PI, loved it! Beautiful country, family-oriented, of all the places I’ve lived, favorite place, back to visit when I was older and saw the poverty, laid back nature. I didn’t know I lived a different life but it was different, got a lot of attention and stares there.

Korea was different each time I lived there. More aggressive people, one of the largest cities in the world, moving there in first grade, big change, fun, and an adventure, exciting to move. As a child, it was amazing and I realized in the summers spent in North Carolina, second to third grades and spending time with American kids, how different my life was.

Alabama was the weirdest move! Perfect, suburban America, stepfather and brother, finally a normal life. Stood out in school, you’re the new girl from overseas, definitely a slap in the face. Went back to Korea, preteen years, sixth to eighth grades, I had a hard time fitting in overseas, all were Asian and I was still white American. Excited to move to Turkey. Beautiful, amazing, it was at the peak of international turmoil. I could see that coming about the Kurdish refugees, bomb checks under our car, see more going on militarily, why are we here? A bit scary!
In ninth grade, going back to the states was the biggest and hardest transition. Backward, hillbilly town in North Carolina, middle of school year, they (the other kids) had been there since kindergarten.

I was world traveled, different opinions than peers and teachers. I didn’t appreciate it then, but now I realize how much I valued the overseas life.

Tenth grade moved to northern Japan, small city (Misawa). I expected Tokyo, slow pace, Japanese were very friendly, “the grass is always greener.” Back of my head, wanted a normal childhood in the States.

GE: Which culture impacted you the most?

AM: Tough question! The Japanese. I’m very passive, I’m sorry, I’m sorry, lived in Korea longer.

GE: How was it being away from your family in North Carolina?

AM: I hated that the most, because my grandmother (mom’s mom) and uncles lived in North Carolina.

GE: How did all the moves affect you?

AM: Really hard, a lot of social issues, uncomfortable with meeting new people, put more stress on you, all you’re thinking is, I’m gonna do this again and again.

Now my mom is my best friend, resented her in younger years but now that I am older, it was the best for me. I appreciate her and it (the TCK experience) so much now.

Amazes me the life I’ve been traveling, haven’t done sh-- with my life in NC. My boyfriend of eight years is from North Carolina; he has been to Mexico, wants to travel,
we are different people though, he wants to buy a house, save money, where I am ready to get out of this country!

**Details of the TCK Experience (AM)**

I’m glad I’m not alone and others experienced the same, never thought about it like that.”

AM: 1. I’ve never heard it (TCK term) before but it makes sense.

GE: How would you define a TCK?

AM: A child who grew up abroad and has different outlook on life and different childhood.

2. As a child, I didn’t think I’d benefit from it, great experience wouldn’t trade it, seen so much, shaped who I am, more understanding of cultures. Being from the south, there’s so much racism, “proud to be a redneck,” and that would have been how it was had we stayed in North Carolina.

3. As of now, I see more of an impact now that I’m older, younger, wanted to settle down, now I want to go back at this time in my life. Affected me in so many ways, my personality and my outlook on life. Just how I perceive people and other cultures, to appreciate others, not set in my ways, not content with this life (in NC) forever, and live that way, want excitement and not know what is going to happen, that’s what happens when you move a lot, younger you want stability, now I don’t.

4. Most meaningful? Have to say the PI, such a beautiful country and people, other places were okay but would consider living in PI but wouldn’t live in Korea,
Turkey or Japan. It’s so tempting and I could almost drop everything and go, living in a 9-5 life and I hate it! I might as well love what I’m doing and live there.

Most challenging? You know what, being stared at in Korea, people touching my hair and wanting to cut off my hair, Anti-American riots, scheduled riots in Korea, lucky color because I was tall and strawberry blonde, blue-eyed female White American, felt uncomfortable there.

5. All kinds of different schools, in DODDs schools. Korea was closest to American schools in the States, large, a lot of extracurricular programs, liked this school the most, on a very large Army base, Seoul American Elementary School (SEAS). Turkey, so small, everybody knew everybody, 15 in each class, 30 in ninth grade, graduating class was 15. Nowhere near the programs, kind of boring, scarier to go off base at this high school in Incirlik.

GE: Why was it scarier in Turkey?

AM: Americans stayed on base there, not so much off base, didn’t feel comfortable, always cars checked at gate, checked passes. I got in trouble there and at gate, strict security problems with Kurdish refugees, unstable country.

In the PI, Peanuts preschool and kindergarten at Kalayaan Elementary School.

In Alabama, Owens ES.

In Misawa, Japan, Edgar HS. My favorite was Edgar HS in Misawa. Really good teachers, loved all of them except for one. Extensive studio art programs, good size, lots of programs, soccer too. Helped kids with tutoring, teachers tried to figure out where you
stand, made me think and talk about controversial issues, history teacher was fun, interesting, decorating, cheerleading coach, lots of art supplies and loved art classes.

GE: What was the key in your student-teacher relationships?

AM: I don’t know . . . had more respect for teachers, open to friendly relationships.

I remember all my elementary school teachers in Seoul, like first and second grade teachers, don’t remember much.

In sixth grade, oh my God! The worst! Not a good teacher (woman) Miss Smith, she was a bad teacher, wasn’t a happy person, very depressed, she didn’t like me, had a lot of medical issues. I had serious issues with her, and so did my mom, a teacher in the same school. Transferred mid-year to Alabama. I didn’t like my Spanish teacher, didn’t mesh with her, in 10-11th grades in Japan, first class of day, I am so not a morning person, she had a condescending tones, I didn’t like that!

Came back to Alabama for fourth to mid sixth grades. Came back freshmen year (November to June) to North Carolina, small high school in Louisburg, North Carolina and lived with my mom’s best friend and her family (my mom was overseas teaching).

GE: Why does being a TCK make you feel different?

AM: I do—Wow! I have instant connections to someone when I meet a TCK, never met anyone in North Carolina who had the kind of life that I’ve had. You would think that more people would want to do this and travel and explore more.

AM: One more thing . . . I am an only child, with only one parent (my mom); that made a big impact in my life and I had a lot of independence.
Reflections on the Meaning of the TCK Experience (AM)

1. Definitely interested and intrigued, they asked a lot of questions, had to give a presentation on Korea.

GE: How were the interactions with U.S. teachers?

AM: They thought that I was strange. They didn’t know what to think about me, middle town America, drastic change for me and them, (they had) small-town mentality.

GE: What was the main difference between overseas and U.S. teachers?

AM: Overseas, they enjoyed their jobs more, higher quality of teachers, more interesting. They had traveled a lot so I was intrigued by them and they were intrigued in me, so we connected better.

2. In the middle of ninth grade, I was a year ahead when I came back to the States, transferred, I had already passed geometry, biology, etc. Drama class is in tenth to eleventh grade in the United States but they let me in. I finished out my English class in a few months, block scheduling was different.

Most challenging? Middle of year, had to catch me up. Thought I was better than other students. They reacted toward me like I was bragging about my life, but really I was just talking about my life. More mature at so many levels, different view of life.

Most meaningful? I loved my drama teacher, being accepted, I had to go to audition, we had an instant bond, she had traveled some to Spain and Italy. Drama class was fun!

She’s the only teacher that stands out. Flew back for that graduation in North Carolina to see a few friends and her.
I remembered when I moved back to Alabama, last chance for “normal”
childhood, I don’t remember my teachers, none stand out. They paddled in Alabama, I
remembered, never been to a school that did that, my stepbrother got paddled outside my
fourth grade classroom. So strange! I couldn’t understand that!

3. Yes, it was such a small town, everybody knew or found out. I was “the girl
from Turkey.” A handful talked to me. In Alabama, I don’t remember much. The
teachers would ask me questions, typical conversation, curiosity, 10 years ago so I don’t
remember a lot.

A tough question, it’s already hard enough to fit in, so don’t make us stand up and
talk, don’t know if that’s just me or what? I didn’t like to talk about “it.”

Schools/teachers need to have an understanding, levels of classes and where you
place new students.

I don’t know the statistics, I was the only girl that lived like that, we are not that
prominent but maybe this is just in my area in North Carolina.

It is useful and needed, but where and which schools would be important,
especially in areas where kids would typically return to or where kids and families move
in and out more frequently rather than small-town America.

GE: If teachers had known more (about TCKs) would things have been different
for you in school in North Carolina?

AM: Oh yea! I never really put it together, it definitely makes me realize how
different I am, different goals in life, the kind of person I am compared to others in NC.
Overseas never saw some things, like homosexuality, so back in the States, you start to realize more.

It’s awesome to talk with you and be part of this study and how the TCK experience molded me. Haven’t really talked about it except with Audrey, my best friend, she wants to move to Hong Kong, met her in 2001, looked for apartments together, she went to Thailand, Hong Kong, I told her I would go on next trip with her to Barcelona and Morocco.

Really the difference is moving from overseas to military areas/larger schools/larger metro areas, don’t think it’s a nationwide program. I never meet people like me in North Carolina.

We need to have a better system for transferring from one school to another. There are so many differences, year round schooling, block scheduling, how schools run, etc.

GE: Do you have a metaphor/symbol for your TCK life?

AM: A fly—what? They have a two-day lifespan? Desire to see as much as you can while I’m still young with no children, freedom! I can tell you this though . . . when I was younger, probably a Tree, want to be rooted, connections, and branches as my family. Now, not so much, I have as an adult connected with my family so I don’t need that so much. I want freedom now!
BM

Context of BM’s Life Experience

Born in Kansas City, Missouri, both father and mother are from Kansas. Dad was a bricklayer and joined the U.S. Navy. He didn’t want to go to sea, so he would go away “TDA” (temporary duty assignment) and come back, didn’t know what he did really. Highest enlisted rank. He went to Virginia Beach for six months then on to Wales for 4 ½ years, went to Welch Village School, tiny little school, Welch accents.

I have a twin sister, Abby, moved to United States in first grade, high academically so moved to second grade instead, moved to Kansas then Virginia Beach then California. CA for four years, second to sixth grades then over to Yokusuka, Japan for 4 ½ years, sixth to ninth grades, DODDs school, military navy base, then to England, British school, awful experience for a half year. Ninth grade didn’t want to stay, tenth—senior year of high school went to a boarding school in London (where there were kids from all over the world, Spain, Africa, Europe). Moved back to the States for college; so we had family in Kansas so went there, couldn’t relate to anybody, senior in high school, parents decided to divorce, and mom wanted to stay overseas in England until we finished our senior year. After senior year, Dad stayed in England, Mom moved to Ohio, me and my sister went to Kansas. Didn’t like it in Kansas so I went to DC and University of Maryland, my sister went to Ohio, eventually I came to KSU.

#5 BIG question! England—gone back to visit. Your memory is not very accurate, slower pace in England, smaller towns where you might go, small businesses, local people-owned shops and restaurants, personal relationships developed more.
Coming back to the States, big, huge, more, better, faster, now, more electrical power than in British/Japanese homes. Cultures are very different.

Japan, haven’t thought about this in a while, as middle schoolers we caught subways and train from Yokusuka to Tokyo. Parents let us be independent. Mom thought it was safe, media portrayed it as safe there. You could go to the park and walk away, hours later your camera and backpack would still be there. Respect or what? Respect for family, different! Higher value on males than females, he had more privileges. Once you were with a company in Japan, you didn’t switch jobs a lot, like a family!

I don’t know if this is real or not. We lived off- base, friend went to Japanese school, picked up Japanese language in six months. We took Japanese language and culture classes in school, could interact with the local kids. Very independent at young ages with taking local transportation and had card, free rein by parents, our mom taught English to Japanese preschoolers and tutored.

Oh! I want to move back overseas!

(eating something, munching . . . “too much coffee today”)

Oh . . . I didn’t even think about the American kids we went to school with, they shaped me, African American, Japanese American, Filipino American, etc. We were the only Caucasians there, not the only but there were not a whole lot. We were used to different religions and cultural backgrounds, moving back to the States huge, huge, huge shock for kids who haven’t traveled or hadn’t talked to non-whites, couldn’t relate to us. I don’t want to sound judgmental!
My dad is mainly of German and Scotch descent, my mom mainly German/Dutch, Midwesterners, typical of Midwest America, Christian, celebrate all the holidays, lower socioeconomic background.

GE: Twin sister role? How did this play out?

BM: Huge! She is my best friend, one consistent person throughout my life, she has experienced what I experienced all of my life, dealing with same experiences, shared fears, sadness, excitement of moving. Best thing God could give me! She is married now, husband can’t relate to past experiences of hers like I can. We have all the same experiences, she is older by three minutes!! We are fraternal twins.

We flew all the time, when we lived in England, we could catch MAC flights with my parents or by ourselves during high school at least twice a year, even now a couple of times a year.

In England, my dad was stationed at Cornwall, small, small, small base, joint RAF navy base, lived in military housing in local British town, a few American people and RAF families, school was on RAF base.

In Japan, lived off base 2 ½ years and 1 ½ years on base, Japanese house, 800 sq. ft. very small with tatami floors, rice paper doors, very hot and cold, no heat, no AC, kerosene heater, huge spiders and cockroaches, could hear talking, showers, sucking snot, gross!

You could hear your neighbors right out the window! Really small appliances. They would give gifts, never-ending chain of gift giving. On Japanese swim team, couldn’t give a gift to coach, didn’t understand that. Japanese New Year’s dinner—
totally awesome! My sister and I shared a small room, twin mattress and box for our stuff. Tiny, tiny, tiny room!

**Details of the TCK Experience (BM)**

1. I never heard the term until I met you. Aware of moving back to the States that we were different, related to things differently, educational experiences and background was different.

   (BM’s definition of TCK) I’d say an American child who grew up overseas, attending American schools overseas. Somebody who grew up as a TCK overseas, not really American kid, not really part of the other culture, in your own little world.

2. The opportunity of a lifetime, difficult when you are going through it, want to be an American kid but later realize life-altering, blessed, experience, get to do things people in the states don’t get to do, see different ways of doing, perceiving things in different ways.

3. I would say . . . um . . . it completely defines you, separates you from those in the States, huge question, my brain . . . view the world differently, there are a million different ways of looking at . . . Americans think there is only one way, world is bigger out there . . . Example: football here, soccer is way bigger, the world is into soccer.

4. Most meaningful? Getting to travel, live in another country, hop all over Europe, have those experiences exchanging money, independence, understand in Europe, high schoolers travel around after graduation, British school, most kids speak three or more languages, not like in States, one language! Japan, travel around, cultural experiences, interacting with Japanese kids. Oh! Proud of being an American but loving
being with other kids, languages, example: DC trip, National Honor Society, interviewed us on race relations, keeping open-minded (senior high school, November 1999).

Most challenging? Huge question! Lots of things, settling down, people, connections, then ripped up and start all over again, trying not to resent your family for not being in the States, malls, Taco Bell, shallow teenager things. We were not prepared for college in the states, didn’t visit colleges, didn’t know how to do applications for college admission. Being stubborn, standing over toilet in Japan (didn’t want to do this at first).

Language barriers were not hard.

Stress of packing up, living without your stuff until it arrived, seeing family for one month in the summer. You never feel like you have a home, long-term friends, roots but I wouldn’t change that. Starting school over and over was hard in all new places. But now I finally feel like I have a home.

5. Wales-Welsh British school (age 4), village school, four classrooms, stayed for two years in each classroom, wore uniforms, chapel each week.

In the States, we skipped a grade in Virginia, second grade right away, second through sixth grades in California public school.

In Japan, DODDs school, ½ of sixth to ninth grades. England—British school, ½ year ninth grade (called tenth year), tenth through twelfth grades in DoDDs dorm school in London with my twin sister.

Funny . . . Welsh village school, we didn’t learn basic same nursery rhymes as in States, Tap you on the shoulder with a ruler, sit up straight! I remember second grade in
Virginia Beach, and watching a movie, slouched down and it was okay and I have never sat up straight again!

Talked to my mom, I tell you what in Welsh school, very constructivist, problem solving, wholistic, really really really good!

British school—ninth grade—could not relate to British teachers, used to going to DODDs schools in Japan, American way of things, could not pick up casual conversations with British kids. American idea of sleepovers, way they socialize is so different than British teenagers. British teachers yelled at kids, told them to shut up, DODDs teachers were amazing just like in any other school, relate math to real world, looked at racial barriers in the States.

I had a science teacher who tried emergent learning style, he came in, draw up own questions, no structure, didn’t work.

6. Came back at the age of first grade in Virginia Beach, second grade instead, beginning of sixth grade in California. Impacted every aspect of my life; I can’t find a guy to date at a deeper level, relate and understand me. I don’t see myself marrying and staying in Ohio.

Impacted my life, my goals and ambition, want to travel, help, learn, experience things, and interact with people. Traveling this summer to Kansas, then attend Joni and Friends Retreat, then go to Florida with friends.

Blessed with really good teachers overseas. DODDs teachers they knew we were American kids living abroad, “out of our element,” got to know you as individuals, one on one.
The way they teach is so different overseas, in the ninth grade British school I attended. Neat and organized notes is imperative, first didn’t do well there, I was used to notes being for me. Chem lab, didn’t tell you what to do, floating around, didn’t bring you back like constructivists. No textbooks, really different!

At KSU, had a British professor who taught physical motor development class. I thought this feels so familiar, wrap your brain around it, this makes sense just like in England.

**Reflection on the Meaning of the TCK Experience (BM)**

1. When we came back from Wales, second grade, our teacher loved us, good relationship with her, we had Welch accents which she loved, we were twins, went to her house, she took us to Chucky Cheese in Virginia Beach.

College came back, professors at University of Kansas, freshmen classes, hundreds and hundreds of kids in Psych 101 or teaching assistants in Spanish classes. I don’t know if that is what you want.

In California, second grade again, I don’t remember a whole lot about that, terranova testing, I do remember third grade, started in a new school through sixth grade, bad teacher—worksheets, got done fast, so I talked too much and got into trouble with her. No personal relationship with me, sister had a better teacher.

Teachers I had relationships with were overseas, made you feel comfortable.

Personal relationships with teachers is important. Teacher takes time, talks, spends time with you, welcomes you in school, how things work, things they do, outlets to express yourself. I like to write, encourage me and learn about me through my writing.
GE: What do you do as a teacher to build relationships with your students?

BM: I develop a sense of community, respect for each other, learn about each other, celebrate individual differences, opportunities for whole group interaction, but individual and small groups, morning meetings, classroom celebrations, show n’share, families sharing, developing sense of trust, feel safe to share.

I teach preschool in a public school system now. I realize preschoolers are capable of so much, deal with so much at home. Governor Strickland came up with a plan for the lowest 2% poverty rate in the state got funding to start public preschool programs. I am in the Appalachia region—lowest socioeconomic, lower than Cleveland and Youngstown. Not all but quite a few children come with hardly any oral language, little stimulation at home. We do home visits, we received a lot of flack, didn’t have heat or lights in many of the homes in January.

A TCK going out to their home? Won’t help you figure out and understand where they are coming from. Do some research on the cultures in which they lived, but with TCK kid, take extra time to build relationship with family.

2. Challenging? College professors, math from another country, in Kansas, language barrier made it difficult to understand him. In California, fourth to sixth grades, were okay, third grade teacher was awful, didn’t get to know us. I was smarter and finished and talked, she didn’t care that I had lived in Wales.

Meaningful? In California, fourth grade teacher, took time to get to know me, helped me with writing, when I left to go to fifth grade, teacher didn’t say anything. I had said she was my favorite teacher, she didn’t say that.
At KSU, education professors really tried to know us and how we would tie in our lives with our teaching, understood us and how to apply the new knowledge.

I think they all knew (Virginia and first grade in California), my parents let them know, fourth to sixth grades classmates knew, third grade teacher probably knew but . . . hard because I was so young weren’t aware, talked about it, encouraged to talk in class, but older (in college) didn’t want to be different so didn’t bring it up.

Class project in fourth grade, I got to bring in pictures of castles and bring in stuff for reports on countries. I don’t know how much the teachers knew about TCKs they knew my dad was in the military.

GE: Did the teacher actually use the word TCK?

BM: No, nothing about TCK, nothing in-depth or about my life experiences.

3. It’s hard at any age. Teenagers would have the hardest time. Be patient, they are going through so many changes.

BM: Can we stop? I’m not feeling good . . . my stomach. Can we do another time? Have a lot to say about this question.

GE: Sure, no problem.

Rescheduled time, continuation with BM . . .

4. Number one to do is to get awareness to teachers who don’t know about the phenomenon, do live in other countries, don’t realize the impact, social norms, need to look for and see the distinctions.

TCKs are dealing with things, need time, space, dealing with so much more than what you see, how does U.S. school day work, how are classrooms structured,
interactions are different, just like an ESL child, don’t know how school works. Don’t judge them right away!

With our British and Japanese schools, had culture class, the little adjustments are a lot for young kids, need to meet immediate needs and social needs, before academics.

GE: Do you think there is a need in teacher education to know about the TCK phenomenon?

BM: I absolutely agree! Teachers need to be aware of this phenomenon in teacher education. With the more global economy, on east and west coasts, on military bases in the United States, aware I think, but not filtered in-between. Teachers need to be there for every individual student, with differentiated instruction, that is a category of students to reach out to, need familiarity so you can be the best teacher you can be—that’s your goal as a teacher. Right now, this is lacking in teacher education, get to know the families, local communities. Get the awareness out there!

GE: Is there anyone in your current school who is a TCK or A-TCK?

BM: To my knowledge, no one in my school is like me, nor my students. Maybe in Portsmouth, not in New Boston, born and raised, tight-knit families, don’t go outside the community.

I’ll tell you what . . . oh oh . . . one little boy in my classroom was adopted from Korea. That’s our extent of diversity, he is American, he’s Korean. Growing up as a TCK, I have conversational skills in many languages (just enough to get around, Spanish). I was just telling someone last night that in my current preschool classroom, I use basic sign language, use other venues for communication. One of the other preschool
teachers said, “man, I need to do that in my classroom too.” Need to get awareness out there with our colleagues.

My colleagues know my background and my students greet them in Japanese and Spanish, this is the way I do it in my classroom, we have conversations together. Don’t have much knowledge of diversity, the other preschool teacher is from New Boston, born and raised.

GE: How about the culture of Appalachia?

BM: It took me awhile to get used to Appalachia because it is culturally unique. Very low socioeconomic level, government assistance, and involved in drugs and bad things. Have Midwestern values, children smell and are dirty but families do love their children. Not much education. Families welcomed me so much; especially when I had a car accident, they went above and beyond. Laws very laid back. Families want to know that you are going to love and support them. Children are generally happy and loved even though no lights and heat in January when we made our home visits.

A good teacher should be figuring these things out, encourage teachers to capitalize on TCK experiences, real world problem solving. I showed real photos that revealed my experiences and cultural knowledge.

5. Excited, like I miss it! I want to be around other TCKs, motivated, and thinking about my classroom now. There are probably huge gaps in what I remember, to try to put it into a meaningful thought is difficult and hard to be coherent.

When we came back to the States, took 1 ½ to 2 years to fully acclimate to the U.S., cultural differences, how American lived their lives, bigness of everything,
commercialized, Wal-Mart, bigger, better, more. College is a whole cultural entity in itself.

GE: College campus at KSU, I thought of doing something like Lewis and Clark does and a university in NY, A-TCK student organization? What do you think?

BM: That would have been great! There is this cultural ___________ that’s unique to TCKs, familiar experiences, you instantly have a connection. One month ago at a Bible study, a husband who grew up overseas, I instantly connected with him and his friends. We understood each other. The things that A-TCKs want to do with their lives, go to Facebook account and you will see that they go into political science, international relations, Peace Corps. I have a friend who is traveling as a model and involved in overseas stuff, more familiar with that life.

6. Just need to be patient, so much cultural change from _______ to the U.S. I need more knowledge too, been there and can’t even describe it all.

I’m leaving Sunday for Kansas for one week, and then to Joni and Friends for one week mission camp with special needs children, and then two weeks in Kent, and then to Florida for eight days with friends. You can always call me!

GE: Do you have a metaphor for your TCK life?

BM: Being a TCK is like being a teenager in the American high school cafeteria filled with all its different groups. The TCK is the teenager who fits in with all groups . . . going from one to the next . . . relating on some level to each of the unique identities. Speaking some Spanish, understanding something about the unique Asian pop culture, knowing about real “Italian” food . . . by the time the TCK is older he/she knows how to
adapt to and relate to different cultures or cliques in a school . . . yet somehow the TCK
does not really fit into any of them.

EE

Context of EE’s Life Experience

I was born in Okinawa, in a typhoon, lived there for a little bit, U.S. for a few
years, then back and forth to the PI and Korea, then up and down the east coast of the
U.S.

Right now I live in Cleveland Ohio, the longest I’ve lived anywhere, time for me
to move; in my heart, I know it is time to move on.

My mom was a teacher for DODDs, sent her across the globe, mom was, is and
will always be a teacher. With the military, traveled quite a bit.

Job opportunities arose and family issues forced us to move quite a bit, wanted all
four years in one place during high school with steady friends and then went to KSU
where my mom worked as director of student teaching, then I graduated and got a
professional job in Cleveland.

Okinawa . . . don’t remember much, went back my senior year of high school
though, feeling as if I was home, on Air Force base, said “I’m home, overseas, not a place
in general.” Japanese were hospitable and great experience, met a lot of great people.

Korea, I was around 8 give or take, I remember the city wasn’t very clean or
pretty. Korean culture is rich in history and vibrant colors and how much they celebrated
own culture and heritage, kept old buildings in tact, great looking in shape, still pretty
young when we lived there, do remember the kids were friendly and I walked alone down
to the markets.

In the PI, I was incredibly young, preschool but in the PI I remember time was
slow, not like this world, a NY minute! Fast pace, island time, everyone worked but still
time to enjoy life, I remember climbing mango trees each day, Negritos in the backyard,
paradise, what you would see in a movie.

Lived in the States, each state had pros and cons, New England was outdoorsy,
friendly, grandparents there, home away from home, the one constant in my life,
comforting in a way, a form of stability. My book is just beginning and I want to fill it
with more foreign experiences.

I think about 12-13 moves in my life. First move to the U.S. I can’t remember my
age, right from Okinawa, pictures I have had a bandage around my head, had a battle
with a door at Milvia’s, she took care of me in Virginia.

Quote that sums me up: “To travel the world is worth any cost of sacrifice. I am
constant in my love for travel, I have not been constant in my other loves.”

I wouldn’t be who I am today without these experiences. Been through a lot, but I
would do it all again, I wish everyone could experience a fraction of what I have—it’s in
my blood, it’s in my genetics!

For now, I need to find a new job, make my way through the ranks and do
whatever I can to get overseas.
Even though I haven’t lived in Florida, I still can consider Florida, Fredericksburg Maryland, and Herndon, Virginia, as homes as my father lived in Virginia most of my life and then moved to West Palm Beach where I visited every summer.

I have parents who still care about each other, no matter where I go, it’s always a good time with them, who knows maybe I’ll end up there one day . . . My entire family, my mom’s side and my dad’s side, are close knit, we are all travelers, we’re family, one thing shines out in my dad’s family, more than 10 brothers and sisters, it’s all about family, it’s how you make it in life, living and traveling overseas can be scary but I backpacked Europe close to a month a few years ago (after college), have friends who have same goals and interests, my friends are my family, my family is everywhere else. One of my best friends is in China and he is like a brother to me.

(He has now returned to the U.S., took eight months off, and has now moved to Oregon to go to post baccalaureate school in zoology.)

The TCK life helped me experience everything life has to offer and made life easier.

**Details of the TCK Experience (EE)**

1. Pretty familiar with term TCK. I am a TCK. TCK is your childhood and growing up to an adult, being both means the same, different stages of life, different associations of something.

   GE: Can you define TCK?

   EE: Someone that is born overseas, born on American soil then came back to native country, although I don’t consider my native country as the U.S.
2. TCK, pretty much, it’s . . . any other experience, you get to experience multiple cultures that most people don’t get to experience, kind of treated as foreigners, came to States, didn’t feel treated as American, a lot of the differences are here, most Americans are close-minded, TCKs are connected to the world.

3. Opened my eyes to other cultures, every aspect of my life, I’m broader. I understand people more, makes you less close-minded, makes you a better person, not elitist, but need more insight to what the world can offer.

4. Most meaningful? Taking away all the different cultures, sights, sounds, smells, people, experience of living somewhere where you might not know language. Experience first-hand living in each city, meaningful, you could not help but grow as a person, mature a lot quicker.

   Most challenging? Acquainting in school, felt alien, treated like a foreigner, everything I talked about they thought was made up. Teacher in U.S., made my mom come in and questioned my truth or not in writing stories, my mom said we aren’t lying!

5. Military schools on some form of military bases, teachers were pretty good because they were around TCKs a lot so we were the norm there. Flooding in Korea, tops with kids in between apartments and courtyards. Had good friends, I was young, hard to remember the interactions there.

   Bounced back and forth, Peanuts Preschool in the PI, kindergarten in San Diego, California, middle school in Massachusetts and then all four years of high school in Ohio.

   Everyone should go overseas at some point in your life, for ½ to one year, maybe make it a rule! You can learn a lot from each other.
As a TCK, I want to go back overseas, like a beacon, wants to draw us back.

When you meet a TCK, feels good, can be close friends, I can instantly talk to
them, always some kind of interaction with them.

**Reflection on the Meaning of the TCK Experience (EE)**

GE: Give me your own definition of TCK.

EE: A TCK is a citizen born overseas and then moves back eventually to his or
her native country.

1. Generally in younger grades, most teachers were nice, middle school tried to
keep me back and they said that I was young and not prepared for U.S. schools and they
thought that I was making up the experiences. A lot of disbelief in me. In high school, I
gained respect from teachers, but never used my experiences as a tool or to my
advantage.

2. Challenging? I guess how close-minded they were, born and raised in that state
(where they were teaching), a lot of my teachers didn’t believe me, if you paid attention
to them, scary they are preparing the next generation and globalized society!

3. Meaningful? Were my language teachers, they were those that had traveled
and lived abroad, understood me. If a teacher had a hint, made me feel special and
wealth of knowledge was something. Just like in my current job, had discussion with my
bosses, aren’t using my skills and strengths. For example, my trade is photography, why
are you not using me? Why are you outsourcing? All my international experiences, I
don’t know everything but I know something. We are doing an ad for the Chinese right
now for trucks. The ad says, Together we can start and stop and start a revolution. I
asked, why are you running this in China? This is not going to fly there, I said. Of course, the Chinese came back and said to my bosses this won’t work. I experienced this all through school, cultural sensitivity is really lacking in this country, yet people should get sensitive at same time.

4. In elementary and middle school, they were, high school most teachers treated me as another local Hudson student. I don’t think they did understand unless you are a TCK, I think they can comprehend but truly never understand unless they experience overseas, immerse selves in another culture. Don’t have to be born overseas, extensive traveler, could understand maybe about TCKs see and believe. They didn’t respond in any certain way that stood out, they knew I had this wealth of information but never used it. It really wasn’t used in classes, through art and writing only, and maybe in history—country of the month. In college, Asian culture class, got to use my knowledge then, we were a class of nine, got to know the students well. Korean experiences, professor used me in class because he had been there too, complemented his teaching and gave credibility to what he was saying in class. Nice to hear personal stories, first-hand truth is trusted over what books say, gives credibility to the person. I think teachers who have had these experiences are more credible. I’ve wanted to go to places because of how teachers described them, rather than reading about them so then I want to go there.

5. Honestly, kind of a stretch, but in a way, take a certain job have a background knowledge “out of the loop” for years, teachers should have traveled and can connect and understand. I wouldn’t take them seriously, any good teacher should do the research,
expand lessons, for teachers in general, use TCKs to complement and teach lessons. There’s so much wealth in TCKs, shame not to use their knowledge.

GE: Is it lacking in teachers or necessary for all teachers?

EE: I think so. Personally, I think mandatory that you go overseas, it would truly open people’s eyes and more open-mindedness, take in the experiences and grow, some fields more than others like history should really experience these places. Example: in college, in art history class, studying Egyptian art—professor had visited Egypt and had personal photos, wife was in picture next to the pyramids, how real, how massive, book doesn’t give the impact, he spent the money but when he taught he had his own photos, Greek isles pottery, detailed account of senses, made the class more interesting than just in the book.

6. Overseas I loved my TCK experience, I wouldn’t redo it, prepared me a lot earlier for teen and adult life. Recent interviews in New York City, living overseas and traveling make me more qualified because I have time management, budgeting, event planning, to be social, networking experiences. All of these things you never thought about, to survive, I still know those that don’t know how to cook, clean, I knew at age 8 or 9 years old, matures you, not that you grew up too fast, but you make decisions, makes you independent, makes you not so homesick, go on trips and others complain of being homesick, these are missed opportunities! Example: when I was in Mexico and the pyramids, solstice made a snake down the pyramid, so many on the trip missed out, because they missed their dog or pizza in the U.S.

GE: How do you feel reflecting on all of this?
EE: I just explained it I think.

I have a quote that goes along with this . . . I’ll pass that on to you. Given the number of TCKs out there, shame there isn’t an organization out there. I know there are small groups but Facebook, My Space, so many opportunities for having networks, like college alumni, oh you are a TCK, let me help you out. If there was a connection for overseas that would help. My dream and goals is that someday this would exist.

GE: There are small groups like TCK Academy, for example, just in the last two months that formed online. They interview Van Reken and others but just asking them questions as the “experts.”

EE: Not saying it’s not a great thing but it’s not helping me. Need research but lag in finding network organizations especially for career search. I did join travbuddy website, backpackers group, post your profile, travel schedules, look at their profiles and send emails for overseas and in the states.

GE: Is this more social, back and forth, then questions and answers?

EE: Yeah, yeah, Facebook and My Space, social network, more than that, meet locals in that country to show you around and be a network connection.

GE: Do you have a metaphor for your TCK life?

EE: In a way, I view myself as a global nomad, I hate that word though. I’d rather call myself global chameleon. Global nomad sounds primitive, living off the land, it’s more than that! All my life blended in my surroundings, adjusting to the cultures, I don’t change my personality, I blended in with Europeans for example when I was there, I have the look.
From *Life After God* by Douglas Copeland

I sing loudly and forced myself to listen to my voice, flat and hopefully generic, for I have always tried to speak with a voice that has no regional character, a voice from nowhere this is because I have never really felt like I was “from” anywhere, home to me, as I have said is a shared electronic dream of cartoon, memories, half-hour sitcoms and national tragedies.

I have always prided myself on my lack of accent, my lack of any discernable regional flavor. I used to think mine was a Pacific Northwest accent, from where I grew up, but then I realized my accent was simply the accent of nowhere, the accent of a person who has no fixed home in their mind.

**TW**

**Context of TW’s Life Experience**

Born in Guaynabo, Puerto Rico, and raised by two parents who are teachers of almost 30 years, teaching at Ft. Buchanan Army base on the island. Me (I am the baby of the family) and my two sisters born there, K-12 schooling on military base there, lived off base in the Puerto Rican community with other U.S. government civilians.

After graduating from high school, got academic scholarship and studied health and physical education for five years at KSU, and now just finished teaching my first year of physical education in high school in Southwest Florida.

Both parents born and raised in New York, dad on Long Island, mom in small town outside Albany, every summer and Christmas we all went back to NY and spent time with all of my family.
Dad and mom graduated college, dad’s brother was in Puerto Rico teaching, dad taught public school for two years, mom a year later, both teach health and physical education now. Older sister is an international financier for Wells Fargo in New York City and other sister (middle) lives in Cleveland and works as a marketing agent.

I am bilingual, Spanish and English, understand and speak proficiently, haven’t used Spanish though in five years.

Lived about five minutes from Ft. Buchanan, mostly Puerto Rican natives living around me. Even though a military base, all families that worked for U.S. federal government and mix of civilians, military and locals, 80% born and raised in Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rico is very laid back, friendly, once you understand it, very sociable, a lot of festivals, holidays, they enjoy life a lot, culture get dressed up for everything even to go to malls and movies. Take pride in their appearance and looks.

On and off, moved from one apartment to the house we grew up in.

Travelled to Aruba, islands around Puerto Rico and throughout the island of Puerto Rico.

Important for my parents that me and my sisters knew aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, who all lived in New York. Hardest thing for me was that everyone didn’t live like we did. As a baby going back and forth, I thought everyone does this, as I got older, I thought this is abnormal, most people realized how fortunate I was growing up this way. But I didn’t get vacations with friends in Puerto Rico (came back to New York in the summers) so I missed bits and pieces because of going back and forth. Hectic life, trying to stay connected to friends in Puerto Rico and family in New York.
Culturally different in social aspects, Puerto Rico, sociable, kiss on cheek when you meet. New York not very familiar, especially in greetings.

First permanent move to the U.S. when I came to KSU, BIG shock for me! I grew up as minority, walked into KSU classes, 400 look like me whereas in Puerto Rico I was minority, talked to my mom about this, mom I’m majority now, weird, I used to be the minority in Puerto Rico.

Socially, came to Ohio, had to get used to behaviors changing seasonally, told my mom October-April sun was gone, body language changed so much, wasn’t like that in Puerto Rico, stuck inside in Ohio and I am not winter sports-oriented. People socially change based on weather. Lifestyle outside all the time in Puerto Rico to 10 degrees and stuck indoors—BIG change for me!

View myself as Puerto Rican, hang Puerto Rican flag in my room even now, got to experience the culture, my parents celebrated and adapted us to PR culture, not to traditional American holidays and events. All my friends are Puerto Rican, everything related to kids who were Puerto Rican.

Puerto Rico is not a state, a lot of same rights, tax funding, vote in primaries, no taxes, under U.S. government but no right to vote for President, fly American flag as “unofficial 51st state.” I also relate Puerto Rico to Hawaii, keep their culture/traditions/heritage, Puerto Rico is an Americanized country but you know you are in a different country. Everything is passed on family to family in Puerto Rico, generational pride is passed on. Important aspect where you are from.

Three major things make up Puerto Rican culture/heritage:
1. Spaniards
2. African descendents to Puerto Rico
3. Taino (native Indians)

These make up Puerto Rican history and culture from early 1500s.

GE: Why have your parents not left Puerto Rico?

TW: They had three kids there, they thought about moving, hard to uproot us and where we felt was “home.” My home is Puerto Rico, still see it as my home. And, my parents love their jobs, my dad loves golfing, my mom loves to walk, and it is beautiful all year long.

GE: If you had been raised in the States, how might life been different?

TW: I’ve thought about this a lot, I’d be a different person, the way I am and so understanding because of how I grew up as a minority, I’ve been there. Growing up in Puerto Rican culture and then in New York, made me a well-rounded person and open minded and Spanish speaking. The person I am and what I have become.

One of the reasons I moved to Florida, reminds me of “home” the weather, more Hispanics, culture, has made a big impact, loved where I grew up. Florida gives me best of both worlds, comfort of the states and comfort of “home” (Puerto Rico).

My parents are retiring in maybe two years (dad) and four years (mom). Being close to family and two daughters and a son, they go back and forth on decision to move back to the states or stay in Puerto Rico.

My parents made big sacrifices for us, back and forth States to Puerto Rico, Puerto Rico to the States, it always comes back to family, most important is family.
99% positive experience growing up in Puerto Rico, proud to be Puerto Rican and part of the U.S. We say, American flag, my country, Puerto Rican flag, my pride/culture/heritage, will never forget. I couldn’t imagine growing up anywhere better.

**Details of the TCK Experience (TW)**

1. I wasn’t too familiar up to last year, I researched a little bit, looked at some articles and shared with parents and sisters, what kids fall into this category. Know a little bit, they never heard of it (TCK term) and e-mailed them.

   My understanding is that a TCK is a child who is born outside the U.S., parents are from the U.S., had children outside in a foreign country. I never heard A-TCK, I guess would be the evolution of someone like me as an adult from that experience.

2. My own personal experience, great one, enjoyed culture I grew up in, gave me foundation of who I am today. I can see times where being away from family, but my parents were good about connecting us, never lost that aspect.

3. Gave me a better understanding of cultures, growing up differently/different backgrounds, different reactions to life and different celebrations. These are two different ways of handling situations, not wrong just different, helped in college, broadened my horizons, different isn’t necessarily bad. Has helped me in my current teaching, over 33 languages spoken, kids from all over the world, I understand and adapt, build relationships, pull on my strengths, build more personal connections, socialable.

   I have a student right now who only speaks Spanish. Growing up in Puerto Rico helps me communicate and relate to this student.
4. Most meaningful? Wow! How well I was accepted as Puerto Rican, this is what I consider home, grew up in culture, very accepting, I bought into the Puerto Rican culture at an early age, and friendships in Puerto Rico, born of American family though.

Most challenging? Not everyone was as accepting of me, even though born in Puerto Rico, told you don’t look Puerto Rican, defend myself, bring out ID/passport, white kid, no way, they don’t understand, who a Puerto Rican is, did not believe me!

5. The schools I went to were DoDDs schools, military and federal government, majority of population was civilians and Puerto Ricans, my school was local feel, common language in hallways was Spanish, in classrooms English. All teachers I grew up with as my parents also taught in these schools, great relationships, they were used to diverse students, used to mobility of students, some teachers were from the U.S., some were born in Puerto Rico. A good mix in the schools, they related well to the students, local and stateside teachers, built a common bridge for all of the students there.

Very fortunate, I went to great school system, teachers came in early, got involved in things, watched basketball games, dances, teachers were active in the school, and bought into the school. Teachers took an interest in your life, summer plans, likes and dislikes, English teacher gave lessons—wide variety of sports to fashion, try to hit topics that everyone was interested in, in and outside classrooms to build relationships.

Did not attend any schools in the U.S. prior to KSU.

Some differences, I would be a majority here. I would imagine how it would be. I wouldn’t be as open-minded and understanding without TCK experience. I would be
successful but not as good in social and personal skills. Those difficult times made a big impact on me. As well my language, being able to speak and understand Spanish.

GE: The articles that you read about TCKs, what stands out in your mind?

TW: Rate of kids that go to college, the rate is higher for TCKs than “regular” kids. I found that to be surprising!

GE: Why might that be?

TW: TCKs because of parents’ jobs, both educated, school/degree is important so instilled in us. Most parents of TCKs need higher education to obtain that job.

GE: What was your parents’ response?

TW: Wow! This describes our family to a tee! Surprised! Growing up never thought of our lives as being in a category. But the facts hold up true, very funny, crazy how this article and information describes us, but in a good way.

My experience was easier because I had two older sisters, what if I had been an only child? I had caring parents. I imagine what it would have been like with only one parent?

I didn’t bring it (my TCK life) up this year in school. This was my first year of teaching in Florida, but has made me think of next school year and what I will do differently.

**Reflection on the Meaning of the TCK Experience (TW)**

1. Very good with teachers at the university, still on personal level today, evolved from student-teacher to professional relationships. Talk, ask questions, act as resources with my major, in other classes too big to develop any relationships.
2. Challenging? Being away from home, didn’t have family in the area, had sister there but didn’t want to depend on her. Didn’t have any challenges with teachers, majority were fair, brought up to not question, not to disrespect by my parents to teachers and as teachers, this is their class and you do not question authority.

Meaningful? Ones outside class, personal relationships, got to know as one on one, starts off with 45 majors then five or six who care about you, get jobs for you.

3. Knew I was born in Puerto Rico, didn’t know the classification of TCK, knew that I came from a different culture, took that into consideration, freshman year. Most students were born in Ohio or Pennsylvania, I talked about how I was brought up, differences in Puerto Rican and U.S. schools, how money is spent, never talked about personal experiences.

4. Get to know students, don’t judge by way they look, realize the difficulties of American parents born and raised in different cultures. Embrace them, understand why they are homesick.

Great resource for teachers, had so many great experiences, understand these experiences and could have helped them in working with students better. You are going to deal with diverse kids, use kids (TCKs) who have experiences that is a great resource.

It’s important, take all kids into consideration, it’s a big culture shock, we don’t do a good job of preparing our teachers in this way. A topic to bring into methods classes and general education classes, dealing with different cultures. Culture, readjust why is he/she having such a hard time? Especially since he/she is from the U.S. (incorporate this into the teacher education program).
This year, new kids every quarter in my school, I have 1,000 kids. When I do my surveys at the beginning of the year, I will add some TCK questions and go more in-depth one on one.

The more and more I look back, I see different things. I like looking back on my life, it’s always a good thing to look back. I had such positive experiences in Puerto Rico.

GE: So it impacted you personally and professionally? How?

TW: Yes, this summer I’m trying to figure out, applying to my profession, very interesting. Made me who I am today.

Leaving Sunday night for Puerto Rico and New York, back to Florida later. Call me if you need me!

GE: Do you have a metaphor/symbol for your TCK life?

TW: Will have to think about that . . . I thought about it and the best metaphor I think could apply to my TCK life is home is where the heart is! No matter where I am and move to, Puerto Rico is my home.
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REFERENCES


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