

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY  
SCHREYER HONORS COLLEGE

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND FAMILY STUDIES

UNDERSTANDING PERSPECTIVES OF IDENTITY AND BELONGING AS  
A U.S. COLLEGE STUDENT THIRD CULTURE KID

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SPRING 2012

A thesis  
submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements  
for a baccalaureate degree  
in Human Development and Family Studies  
with honors in Human Development and Family Studies

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## Abstract

This research explored the unique identity and belonging of third culture kids (TCKs) by collecting personal narratives of five college American TCKs and discerning shared features and characteristics that comprise their identity and belonging. Participants were five American citizens, currently seniors attending a college in the United States, who are TCKs. These individuals spent a significant portion of their developmental years outside of their parent's culture. Hour long interviews, two in person and three using video conference call on Skype, were conducted individually to understand their experiences of being a TCK. Questions encompassed their experience before being uprooted overseas, while abroad, since returning back to their original culture, the United States, and finally what their desires and plans are for the future. These interviews were transcribed and formulated into stories, from which themes based on identity, belonging, and factors that may have influenced them, were determined and organized into timelines for each participant. The timelines, depicting identity and belonging across time, were then compared to one another, isolating common themes and similarities in their experiences. The findings indicated that the upbringing that accompanies the lifestyle of a TCK, a constantly changing and mobile environment, encourages an identity that is amalgamated and fluid across time. TCKs become highly adaptable and malleable individuals and are chameleon like in nature. They also develop multiple identities alongside their numerous cultural exposures, one of which is a distinct TCK identity that includes the previously mentioned characteristics. TCKs experience feelings of belonging through relationships as opposed to geographic location or through national consciousness, which is more commonplace. Their definition of home is less concrete than others and home can encompass a number of different answers, as well as meanings. The participants did not feel like they were homeless due to their upbringing and experience, as past research has indicated; rather they felt they had a number of homes and were equipped to establish a home anywhere. The TCK population is evolving tremendously fast, accompanying the changes and developments that occur in our world. An implication is that TCKs have come to function as a distinct population, separate from other migratory groups, and possess an individual culture. This however, has yet to be recognized by society, nor among TCKs themselves. I advocate that a greater understanding of this population within the TCK community, as well as throughout other groups, will foster and nurture current and future TCKs. They will find solace in the establishment of TCKs as a recognized population and community, and their inclusion into the bureaucracy of societal groups will alleviate their struggle, specifically pertaining to identity and belonging. Frequent and further research on TCKs is needed in order to better understand the group and phenomenon, and how best to support it.

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## Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank Dr. Caldwell for being, not only my advisor on this project, but my cheerleader and therapist in this demanding, yet enriching, experience. When I wavered as to whether or not I wanted to study this topic due to its scarcity in research and difficulty of analysis, you encouraged me to study something I love and am passionate about and I am so glad I did. The ongoing support and guidance I received from you was integral in producing a thesis I am not only proud of, but I feel is very personal and meaningful to me. Thank you for believing in me when I was beginning to doubt myself. I am grateful for the unyielding encouragement, support, and patience I received from you.

I would like to thank Dr. Hynes for reviewing this paper and providing valuable feedback. Also, I would like to thank you for guiding me through my undergraduate career. The encouragement and the standard to which you held us to was helpful toward the completion of this thesis, but also influential in my experience and the preparation I received as an honors student. I thank you for being the advisor most students at a large institution such as Penn State never get to experience.

Additionally, I would like to thank the participants who were willing to be a part of this project. Their stories were not only highly enjoyable, but also extremely helpful in uncovering the intricacies that comprise who we are.

I appreciate and am grateful for my friends who not only endured my laments and rants throughout this process, but also pretended to listen to my animated excitement over thesis related findings. Your encouragements were the pillars to keeping me sane and steady. Thanks for making sure I had fun, but also understanding and supporting my long disappearing acts to computer labs.

To my family, thank you for the time and effort that was involved in my exposure to all the privileges I have been fortunate enough to experience so far, but mostly for paying my pricey membership as a TCK. I thank my mother for her inquisitive nature about people, which has sure enough transcended into my own character. I will always cherish and look forward to many more long conversations about our cross-cultural analyses and inquiries. Thank you for being confused with me. I thank my father for instilling within me the desire to be great and to strive to achieve as much as I can. Thank you also for encouraging the maintenance of my Japanese culture, but for never making me feel like I had to be something I wasn't. Marina, my sister, your point of view is unlike anybody else's and I consider your words and insights a gift. Thank you for your support and encouragement.

Lastly, to all my fellow TCKs, I hope this thesis brings you some solace, but most of all, I hope this encourages you to start seeking and uncovering answers to who you are and who we are as a population, for yourself, but mostly for all of us.

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

In 1988, approximately two million Americans lived overseas (Stultz, 2003). Merely twenty five years later, this number had grown exponentially, and today the US State Department has accounted for 6.6 million Americans living in a foreign country (*U.S. Department of State*, 2012). This statistic only includes the mobility of expatriates (American individuals who no longer live in their native land) and thus depicts simply a fraction of the people engaged in a phenomenon that is becoming increasingly commonplace all over the world (Toronto, 2006). The rate at which this phenomenon is expanding and maturing is remarkable. As a child of a Japanese father and American mother, having lived in Japan, China and America, I have seen that thriving expatriate population, communities and neighborhoods, organizations and services, and institutions, such as schools, are being established overseas in order to accommodate this growing population.

This burgeoning expatriate phenomenon has birthed a proliferating population called third culture kids (TCK), which are the children of these mobile adults, born into or uprooted and moved to foreign countries. Despite the fact that they have little to no control over their situation, these children are highly affected individuals of this phenomenon (Kebshull & Pozo-Humphries, 2009). As a TCK, I embarked on this study to better understand the phenomenon of which I was a part. I will share my story after this introduction. Although there is some research related to being a TCK, it is sparse. Thus, in this introduction and literature review, I will indicate statements that are either from my own lived experience, or from the literature.

As all infants, children and adolescents, TCKs are influenced by their environment (Kebshull & Pozo-Humphries, 2009). They are molded easily and their experiences and environment have a significant impact on their development and who they ultimately become. In the case of TCKs, their unique situation complicates the typical developmental processes because they are faced with juggling their own culture, in addition to the culture they are exposed to from their host country and these complexities influence their sense of home, identity, and belonging (Fail, Thompson, & Walker, 2004).

In the last few decades, several TCK research and contributions have slowly helped unveil and present this population and trend to the world; For instance, David Pollock's book on TCKs, which provides an overview of their experience and online communities introducing a number of large-scale TCK studies, and recorded seminars and podcasts of notable TCK researchers discussing problems and areas of interest specific to the TCK population, are some of the milestones that have emerged. The body of this research, however, is still in its infancy. Unfortunately, the concept of TCKs has yet to reach the broader popular culture, and as such is a relatively invisible group. From my personal observations, it appears that the TCK population could benefit from greater visibility and understanding of their unique issues regarding identity and belonging, as well as their unique contributions to be made given their cultural experiences and struggles.

Given the need to better understand TCKs and their unique situations, and my own personal background, I conducted a qualitative study that sought to better understand of American TCK college seniors. Specially, I sought to understand their identity development and feelings of belonging, and factors that may have contributed to those processes.

## Who are Third Culture Kids?

As defined by a prominent TCK website, and one the largest virtual communities for TCKs, a TCK is a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside of their parent's culture (*What is a TCK?*, n.d.). The duration overseas is understood to be impermanent, and eventual repatriation (the act of returning to one's birth country) is acknowledged by the family and child. For American TCKs, this repatriation is typically instigated by entrance into a college in the US, however, repatriation can happen at any age, and may occur more than once in a lifetime (Zilber, 2004). TCKs can be uprooted at any age, to anywhere in the world, and the number of years abroad vary. Parent's work is the main reason behind relocation, and these occupations include: military/army, non-military government, religious/missionary, business, and other, which has included intergovernmental agencies, educations, international non-governmental, and media related jobs in the past (*What is a TCK?*, n.d.).

The term TCK reflects the idea of occupying a third culture created from the mixture of two separate cultures. TCKs incorporate aspects of their birth culture (first culture), and aspects of their new culture (second culture), into who they are, a unique culture formulated from the other two (*What is a TCK?*, n.d.). Their second culture, their host culture(s), will most likely be made up many. The average TCK experiences six moves before they reach adulthood (Stultz, 2003). Thus TCKs become concoctions, formulated from bits and pieces he/she has taken from the various cultures they have been exposed to. "TCKs are raised in a neither/nor world. It is neither fully the world of their parents' culture (or cultures) nor fully the world of the other culture (or cultures) in which they were raised. The blending of all their cultural experiences, one on top of another and then blended together, makes them who they are" (Thurston-Gonzalez, 2009).

## Identity and Belonging

Research studies on TCKs have established the notion that TCKs struggle formulating their identity and experiencing a sense of belonging, which in turn also impacts their relationship with others and their view of the world (Kebshull & Pozo-Humphries, 2009). The root of these problems may come from the inability to identify fully with one particular country and its culture, probably an unavoidable consequence of the individual's repeated exposure to mobility and change. In reaction to their changing environment, TCKs "repetitively cross borders of personal, national, and cultural identity" (Grimshaw & Sears, 2009). "Challenged by new, changing environments", the continual reformulation of their identity interrupts their identity formation (Fail, Thompson, & Walker, 2004).

There is a saying, "When a tree is transplanted too often, its roots can never grow deep" (Stultz, 2003). Based on my own experiences and observations, this statement may reflect the experience of TCKs' feelings of being uprooted and their ability to feel like they belong completely in any location. For example, Pollock stated, "Elements from each culture are incorporated into the full experience" and they [TCKs] develop a "sense of relationship to all of the cultures while not having full ownership in any" (Fail, Thompson, & Walker, 2004).

## History and Proliferation

In the early 1940's, a number of reasons combined to make for major changes in the movement of human beings around the world and the purposes for which they were entering other societies (Useem, 1993). One major influence was the dramatic increase in science and technology. The mobility and communication between countries improved, and people began to share and interact with the people, businesses and institutions of other countries. The entry of expatriates became widespread, setting the stage for a future outbreak of transnational migrations.

The term, “third culture” was identified by Dr. Ruth Hill Useem in 1958 while living in India with her husband and three sons. Eventually the term “third culture kid” was coined as an extrapolation of the third culture phenomenon (Sellers, 2011). Stationed in India for a year’s field study with her husband, Useem was conducting research on Americans living and working there. She began to look at the schools which were being established for the children accompanying their parents abroad (Sellers, 2011). The Useems soon learned what was happening in India was an occurrence shared by the rest of the world. This was the catalyst to Useem’s, as well as other researcher’s, research on the population of TCKs.

Changes began to erupt in the expatriate communities all over the world with increasing frequency. As the number of individuals overseas continued to grow, make shift schools were replaced by established schools for foreigners, and foreign communities abroad were also being built among the expanding expatriate population Companies no longer limited by national boundaries, exercised the ability to send larger numbers of people overseas (Kidd & Lankenau, n.d.). Cross-cultural business transactions increased, foreign offices were built, and multinational corporations formed. These new accommodations for foreigners, in turn, further fueled a surge of people willing to move overseas, and relocate their families, encouraging further establishment and improvement of the community. Missionaries and military families are no longer the primary group of expatriates, and today, business and government related relocations have become increasingly common (Van Reken & Bethel, 2007).

Today, it is possible to live in a “bubble,” a community encompassing expatriates, separate from the host culture. Influences from the host culture fail to penetrate through its surfaces and elements of their original culture can be brought in and nurtured within it. Expatriates can continue to enrich themselves with the culture and news from their original country through improvements in technology and increased availability to media (Van Reken & Bethel, 2007). These developments will impact the way in which TCKs choose to interact with their host culture and maintain their original culture, therefore having the potential to vastly change the TCK and their experience since its primitive origins.

### The Current Study and Research Questions

Identity and belonging have a relationship that is linked and contingent upon each other. Our “sense of belonging affects our sense of who we are,” and it is during our formative years, which TCKs spend a portion, if not all of it, overseas, when these two concepts develop and are formed (Moore, 2011). The increasing ability for expatriates to function as a bona fide society and population within a host country has produced a new culture tailored to the phenomenon, with its own specific values, characteristics and way of life, to within which current TCKs grow up. This will inevitably impact how TCKs experience and form their identity and belonging. As discovered by Fail, these two facets are “issues that most TCKs will face at one time or another” (Moore, 2011). Therefore, as stated, the purpose of my study is to examine and understand the experience of how American, college aged TCKs experience identity formation and belonging today.

I identified five research questions to guide this study.

Research Question 1: How does identity development evolve and change for a TCK?

Research Question 2: What are TCK’s experiences of feeling that they belong in the different cultures or places they live or with which they associate?

“Where am I from?” and “Where do I belong?” are basic questions of human identity (Grimshaw & Sears, 2009). They are questions that all humans should be able to answer. In answering these first two research questions, I am looking for a description of the way in which identity and belonging are experienced by the TCK.

Research Question 3: What are possible influences on TCK's identity development over time?

Research Question 4: What are possible influences on TCK's experiences of belonging?

The genesis of research questions 3 and 4 came from my main intention of wanting to uncover what experiences and environmental factors may contribute to TCK's sense of identity and belonging. I wanted to ascertain what elements played key roles in the experience of identity and belonging for newest model of a TCK, a product of our modern world.

Research Question 5: How has being a TCK influenced their desire for future mobility?

In order to understand the complete identity of the TCK individual, I was curious as to whether they would continue to live overseas or stay in the US. I want to ascertain how this factor played into their upbringing and experience repatriating. As dependents, they were enrolled in this lifestyle as a child, and their TCK experience was involuntary. Now as young adults, they can take the reins and decide if they would choose to continue the lifestyle characteristic of a TCK. As a TCK myself, I was curious to see what the majority would choose to do.

### My Own Motivations

I decided to conduct research on TCKs because of my own background. I am a TCK and a daughter of a TCK. I am fervently interested in this area of study because it directly relates to my own experiences and I was motivated to study TCKs out of personal curiosity. As a human development major, I study people, groups, and society as a whole; throughout my four years of study, I came to realize I entered this major not only because I want to know more about these areas, but I was actually seeking to know more about myself and how I fit into society. Though I have tried to stay as objective as possible throughout this study, my conclusions and results may come attached with my bias. In order to understand my analysis presented in this thesis, I felt it was appropriate that, along with the participant's stories, I reveal my own personal TCK story as well.

My story begins with the laments of a biracial child. I am White; I am Asian. I am a foreigner; I am a native. I have bounced back and forth between these declarations like a Ping-Pong ball all throughout my life. I was born in Japan. My mother is American and my father is Japanese. At a very young age, I realized I was a part of two worlds. At home I spoke English and Japanese, used chopsticks or a fork and knife interchangeably, sang around a menorah or prayed at a temple, and so on. I accepted and liked the duality of my identity – or so I thought.

The tug-of-war between my two identities began when I entered school. I attended an international school in Japan comprised mostly of Japanese, some foreigners, and a smattering of Japanese mutts. My international school in Japan attempted to provide its students with exposures and opportunities to learn about other countries and people; however it followed the strict path of a Western curriculum, in a predominantly Japanese setting, with frequent Japanese influences and experiences intertwined in our education. Coming from a culture where purity, across all facets of life, is preferred, as a biracial person in Japan, I've learned when people can't pigeonhole you they experience uneasiness. In Japan, as a child from two worlds, I felt like an outsider and a nomad in my own country of citizenship. This discomfort I detected from others, along with my own insecurities of being uncategorized, launched a continual vacillation between the Japanese and Western groups. As my group of friends fluctuated, so did my identity. I forced myself to metamorphose each time to fit the group's stereotype. My yearning to fit in was great, but was never satisfied. I could not assume the two "viable" options that were offered to me, native or foreigner, because I fell between the two.

My ethnicity, birth, residency, and citizenship fell under Japan. I had not lived anywhere else before and I had not “come from” anywhere else. Yet, many Western influences resided in my home through my mother and school curriculum. As I reflect upon this, I realize my school and home environment had a larger influence on my character and identity than the country which I lived in did, perhaps furthered by the rejection I detected. Then there was the inability to label myself an American, which was disheartening, but logical. One factor was not ever having lived in America before I came to Penn State University (USA). Another was what my mother brought to the table. My mother is American by citizenship. However, a TCK herself, she grew up in Italy and the UK, only returning to the US for college. As an adult, she continues to live overseas, in Japan and now China. My mother has lived overseas longer than she has in America. She grew up battling the same questions as I did, and remains inconclusive about her own identity and belonging. This ingredient, as you can imagine only adds to my own confusion. I’m half Japanese, and half of something that has yet to receive a label.

It is normal for young adolescents to ponder about their identity as they begin to attempt to answer the question, “Who am I?” But, I was dealing with something much more complex. I was having an identity crisis at the age of thirteen.

On a whim, or so it seemed to me at the time, my father decided to start his own textile company in China, and as I concluded my year in the seventh grade, we moved to Shanghai that fall. One would assume throwing an additional culture, a curveball, into the life of a failing juggler would only lead to collapse and further angst. On the contrary, this transition, my abrupt induction as a TCK, would come to serve as solace in the midst of my plethora of unanswerable questions.

My American school in Shanghai, the vessel which encompassed individuals who I would come to call my fellow compatriots, was my main source of alleviation. My schooling went beyond subjects such as Math, Science, and English. We learned from one another about unfamiliar traditions, norms, and cultures. This environment fostered who I was as a bicultural individual instead of stifling it, and as my identity was developed, the environment helped me take it a step further to have, what I would like to think I possess today, a multicultural identity. It became clear as early as our introductions to each other that the other students who attended this school were just as “messed up” as I was. Being in a state of confusion and the inability to categorize oneself was a characteristic shared by the majority. I was in the majority for the first time in my life. I was surrounded by hundreds of other kids like myself and I reveled in the fact that I fit this group naturally. The incessant chant of questioning ceased as the need to ponder who I was, where I fit in, also dissipated.

It wasn’t until I began college in America that I was jolted out of my ignorant bliss. I migrated to Pennsylvania, naïve about the situation I was about to enter. Though I had never lived in America prior to college, I had always felt I had grown up very “American” while overseas. I speak English flawlessly, as I have always considered it my primary language. I am an American pop culture connoisseur and it was the backbone of my childhood. I too, can laugh and reminisce about having wanted to be Scary Spice and belting “when two become one,” only to realize today how inappropriate that was. I am also one of many girls who hide, but shamefully let slip out from time to time, our shrine of boy band posters and a past desire to marry a member of a boy band who turned out to be gay. Upon hearing the stylistic crooning of Boyz II Men and K-Ci & JoJo, I am taken back to a younger, nervous, version of myself at highly anticipated school dances. Aware that America is a land of immigrants, I did not feel my foreign features would stop me from fitting in either. I was wrong. My first obstacle was met when I realized introductions in college consisted of four main criteria. I could easily answer three, my name, my year, and my major. My inability to answer the fourth, where are you from, is why am I writing this paper for my honors thesis.

“Do I say Japan because of my father, birth, upbringing, and citizenship? That seems the most reasonable, despite my actual disconnection with it. But then they ask me why my English is so good. So, should I just say America? But I never even lived here. Maybe I should tell them my mom is American. What if they ask me if I go back to Japan often or if I see my parents in Japan often? My parents are in China and I haven’t been back to Japan in over five years. Should I just say China? But then I have to explain that I’m not Chinese...”

At the end of this thought process, I am uncomfortably staring and squirming in front of my inquirer and I would end up expelling an answer that was just as confusing and incoherent as the preparation that went on in my mind silently. I despised the confusion and anxiety that would cross the face of the individual who would pretend to understand what I had just said out of politeness or uneasiness. I think this was the result of them not knowing what to say, but even more so, not knowing how to place me. I wasn’t like the other international kids. If they hadn’t asked me where I was from, they would have continued to assume I was from the US. But the fact of the matter is, I’m not. So now what? I did not expect people to not be able to grasp or even begin to comprehend the type of lifestyle and background I was from. But then again, why would they? Do I have the right to feel offended if they assume I don’t know something that’s typically “American,” when I have spent my entire life outside of its physical confines? Conversely, should I be annoyed when I am expected to think or act an American way because of my typically American character? I have to admit, as much as I do believe my analysis to be true, my own views and distress may have influenced my perception of these encounters. I started to tell people I was from the US which would uncontrollably snowball into a false fable. The stress and the lies made me feel like a culturally confused Pinocchio and I had to stop.

I was introduced to an American TCK before I went to college through a mutual TCK who had attended both our international schools. I think we served as each other’s outlets early on, to unleash and bounce off our frustrations and of not being understood or to feel congruent with our peers at times. Both having come to America straight from our high schools overseas, we would reminisce over our most recent “nest”, and despite these two places being completely different, you would have thought we had come from the same town. I related to her more than my Japanese or American counterparts, and this triggered my curiosity. I researched and discovered a name, a phenomenon, and numerous websites with characteristics, facts, and descriptions that matched everything I was feeling and experiencing. There were answers and explanations to a lifetime of questioning and my feelings of marginality were thwarted by the idea that I was one of one of many who were undergoing similar experiences of feeling displaced. As I mentioned earlier, my mother is also a TCK and she and I often would engage in hours upon hours of discussions on our identity. The more I learned through my own research, which soon became an odd hobby of mine, I began to see my mother and I, sure enough were the same “object,” but we’re different “models.” My mother is a home phone with twisty buttons and a chord; I am a cellphone. Nonetheless, we’re both phones. Her upbringing overseas during the 60’s and 70’s had shaped my mother to be a slightly different TCK product than what I was, a modern design from the 90’s and 00’s. As my senior honors thesis topic approached, I felt this would be the perfect topic to embark on a yearlong exploration.

## Chapter 2

### Methods

The pace at which TCKs are growing and developing is extremely rapid, but it seems that research in this area has not grown at the same pace. And in fact, it appears that there is a great lack of research in this area. The purpose of my study is to understand and describe a small sample of TCKs through direct narratives of today's American TCK college seniors.

The following are my research questions.

RQ1: How does identity development evolve and change for a TCK?

RQ2: What are TCK's experiences of feeling that they belong in the different cultures or places they live or with which they associate?

RQ3: What are possible influences on TCK's identity development over time?

RQ4: What are possible influences on TCK's experiences of belonging?

RQ5: How has being a TCK influenced their desire for future mobility?

In this chapter, I will discuss the reasons behind the method selected to collect my results, the procurement and selection of my sample, and finally the procedure of the study.

#### Method

I conducted a qualitative empirical research study in order to obtain the answers to my research questions. I decided to use the method of interviews for my research for a number of reasons. While researching TCKs prior to conducting my own research, I realized the scarcity in the number of previous studies that present the phenomenon through the eyes of the main character, the TCK. Their voice is infrequently heard and their opinions and personal stories are lost. Cultures are best understood through those who are a part of them (Kroeber & Parsons, 1958). As TCKs have become their own population and have birthed their own culture, their stories should serve as the backbone of TCK research and findings. Who better to explain a phenomenon, and the concepts and experience that emerge from it, than those who are directly experiencing it? Who better than the protagonist to tell their own story?

I have decided to take this approach, different from most studies from the past, of looking for data directly from the affected individual's thoughts and reflections, in order to tackle and hopefully ascertain answers to further understand who TCKs are. I hoped I would understand more, and be provided with the ability to dig deeper, in order to access the intricacies of their upbringing. My method for data collection was to uncover the common themes from the collection of stories. I deliberately refrained from dominating the interview or probing the participant, as I wanted the participant to select, ignore and craft details within their narrative, in order to collect information that the TCK, the protagonist of this trend, felt was important. They had the ability to control what and how to present, as TCKs, who they were, who they are, and who they want to become. Through their personal narratives, I felt I could produce findings that were firmly grounded in my sample's experiences. I also hope these narratives will also serve as a way for other TCKs to compare their experiences with others like themselves, as this is something they are not given the opportunity to do.

## Sample

My sample was collected using purposeful sampling. To discover a description that would explain TCKs as a whole, as a population, I felt deliberately picking participants of various TCK backgrounds was important.

There were three criteria necessary for individuals to participate in my study. The participants of this study had to be TCKs. The number of years, the location, and when, as well as the number of times repatriation was experienced did not matter. The participant must also be an American citizen. By limiting my participants to only American TCKs, I hoped to create a commonality in their origins, values and behaviors instilled through exposure from their original culture, both before moving overseas and the maintenance of it while abroad. There also is a common destination for repatriation. The last piece of criteria for participants required that they be current seniors at a college in the United States. This provides a standard for the number of years since repatriation of at least three years. Attending a college in the US meant they were immersed in American culture, thus their cultural exposure since returning is also similar. The participants are also at a similar point in their lives, and this specific crossroad was selected for a reason. As college seniors approaching graduation, they must face a series of questions. What will they do next? These next steps will serve as a foundation for their future; which then poses the question, what are their ultimate goals and desires? While looking forward, it is necessary to question who they have become, and retrospection also becomes inevitable. To understand what the individual wants and where the individual wants to go, who am I, and where do I belong, become integral, unavoidable, questions for a college senior. Therefore, a study on identity and belonging, comprised of reflection of their past and prospective on their future, seemed appropriate to conduct on senior college students.

I contacted TCKs from my past, as well as current TCKs I am currently in touch with, that fit the criteria for my study, using the social media website Facebook. I briefly informed them that I was conducting a study on TCKs and asked if they would be willing to share their stories and opinions on the topic. I asked if they could put me in touch with other TCKs that fit my study's criteria. From the participants that were willing to participate, I selected five individuals to interview.

## Procedures

I divided the interview into four different sections. The first section included basic questions about the individual TCK profile such as, citizenship, parents' nationality, place of birth, countries lived in, the number of years in each country, age of repatriation, location of college in the US. The second section sought to focus on the experience and lifestyle abroad, with some attention to how their induction to being a TCK began and their experience and environment in the US prior to moving overseas. Repatriation to the US and their time since repatriating comprised the third section of the interview and future identity, specifically looking at their desire for future mobility, was explored in the fourth.

I interviewed three of my participants over Skype, using a video conference call, and I was able to interview the other two in person. The duration of the interviews was about an hour. With their permission, I recorded the interviews and transcribed them after the actual interview. From the transcribed interviews, I transformed each one into a narrative, a story, as a way to present the participants of the study, as well as the data. I felt this was appropriate as the interview had been conducted in the form of the participant disclosing their personal story of being a TCK. The participant's names, as well as names of any companies they mention, have been changed in order to keep their confidentiality. From the stories, for each participant, I extracted the elements that were related to the themes identity and belonging, presenting them in an identity timeline. This method helped organize and display each individual's changes in their identity and sense of belonging, in relation to their exposures, experiences, and environment, over time. These timelines also included the participant's current situation,

perspectives, and future desires. Finally, from these five separate timelines, I was able to uncover common themes and similarities, as well as dissimilarities, across my sample, which serves as my findings.

## Chapter 3

### Introduction to the Participants

#### Stories

##### *TCK 1*

Lisa was born in Elmira, New York. Her parents are American. Both her parents lived in the same house their entire childhood and this sparked her father's desire to travel and experience different things, the catalyst to Lisa's nomadic childhood.

"When I was two we moved houses in upstate New York... about an hour and a half away from Elmira. Then, when I was three, we moved to California. I lived there for about three years. When I was half way through kindergarten, we moved back to upstate New York. We moved to Frankfurt, Germany when I was 12. Then when I was 14 we moved to Tokyo, Japan. I moved back to the US for college. I was in Germany for 2 ½ years. I was in Tokyo for five. My dad was a sales manager so the company transferred him to different offices in the States first. Then he got transferred to an international office in Germany to lead the international division of sales. He became the head of Corning International, the head of all international offices, when we moved to Japan."

As Lisa recites her laundry list of places she's lived, the complexity of her background is already evident. That was her answer to a simple question, "Where did you grow up?"

I asked her to tell me more about her experience abroad. She started at the very beginning as she recounts her father casually proposing a question that would change her life permanently: "So how would you guys feel about moving to Germany?"

"I just got up and stormed out and went to go play Nintendo. I was really upset. I didn't really know what to say to him. My parents had talked about moving overseas before, but I never took them seriously. My dad had been offered international positions but I think he thought we were too young. And then I think we eventually had a conversation about it [moving] and sort of had to get accustomed to the idea pretty quickly. We had four weeks before we had to move. It was already summer vacation so I didn't get to say goodbye to my friends."

The lack of time allotted for Lisa and her siblings to get used to the idea of moving and prepare for it was coupled with the fact that Lisa knew close to nothing about the place she would be living in very shortly.

"It really scared me at the time. I didn't even know where Germany was! I just knew it wasn't the States and it was going to be completely different."

She also comments on her age having an impact on her reaction to moving as well. Lisa had moved in the past prior to her move to Germany but doesn't remember it affecting her as much. "I didn't really think much of it," she comments.

"In Germany, we lived in a German town. No Americans. Probably about 2000 people in the town. But we lived 20 minutes away from the American base. Before 9/11 we could freely go on the base. We would get foreign food from the supermarkets there all the time. They had a Popeye's. They had a Subway. They had a shopping mart and a movie theater. So we would hang out a lot there."

I asked her to comment on the school she attended in Germany.

“I went to two different schools in Germany. The first school was a really small international school because the American one we were planning on going to had an earlier start date. There were 15 kids in my grade. Most were either half-German or fully German, and then there were two Americans, including me, and one Canadian, and a Japanese girl. I was only there for a year but I was really forced to be immersed in the culture that year. I naturally became close with the other American girl. We would talk about American tv shows. A lot of classes were in German. I freaked out when I first got there. My siblings and I didn’t understand a word they were saying. By the time I left Germany, I was placed in advanced German. The second school was an American school. I hung out with a lot of Americans. There were more of them there. I could relate to them. I didn’t speak very much German there.”

Lisa and her family stayed in Germany for two and a half years. She had created a life she highly enjoyed in Germany, when she was faced with news of having to move again.

“We didn’t take the news too well. It was up in the air, when I was going. We might have stayed the whole year. We might have left in a few weeks. I think that really affected me too... not knowing what to expect.”

“I remember we walked into our apartment in Tokyo and I started bawling. I had really good friends in Germany so when I moved to Japan, I remember having a rough time. I never lived in an apartment before, we only had one floor, no staircase, no yard. We walked around when we first got there and I just didn’t know what to make of the city. I had always lived in the woods. It took me like six months to really get used to Tokyo.”

Lisa’s distress soon was eased, as she quickly rebuilt a new life in Tokyo, became accustomed to the hustle and bustle of the city, and found her place in this foreign country as she comfortably resumed her role as a foreigner.

“I went to an American school there. They had an American curriculum. The student body was predominantly American and Japanese/American, with some kids from Europe here and there. A lot of people in Tokyo speak English so it was easy to get around if you knew basic words in Japanese. I knew enough to direct a cab which I thought was very important. I could order in a restaurant, I could introduce myself. I didn’t know enough to really have a conversation though, but I didn’t need it. I lived in a very American community. A lot of Americans live in the same area. My friends and I spoke English. My classes were in English. My school was pretty American. When I was in Japan, the school was a lot more American than the German school I had attended. My friends were more American. And I think I got a lot of my American identity back in Japan. I ate a lot of American food. My parents didn’t really try and immerse themselves in the culture, so I didn’t while we were there either. We never went to Japanese restaurants. The movie theaters were in English.”

“In Japan, because I look so different from them, they would immediately come up to me and speak English. I didn’t even try to really communicate with them. They were friendly but I just didn’t really ever need to. I lived in a big expat community. So I wouldn’t feel like a foreigner. In that community, I would see more Americans than I would Japanese people. I would almost forget I was in Tokyo. It was I guess a home away from home. Yea, if I was in Japanese areas, you look around, no body looks like you, I felt like a foreigner. But a lot of times, because I was around foreigners a lot too, it’s like being in New York City. I think I really liked Japan because of the international feel and the American community. Being in Tokyo, the expat community is your only support network, and so we all become really close and establish great relationships. We live a similar lifestyle, and we get to know a lot of other families with a similar background as us.”

“People get very close in expat communities. I would want that if I were to move overseas. I would want to experience more about the country I’m living in, more than I did when I was in Japan, but yes, I would

want to live in an expat community. I don't think I would live like a local. My kids can grow up with kids that were similar to them."

"I don't consider myself foreigner at all in an expatriate community. I'm able to adapt really well to whatever situation I am immersed into. But right now, I'm more comfortable in America than an expatriate community because it's been a while."

Japan was becoming Lisa's home as she found comfort in her community and school. Meanwhile, a number of years had gone by since she had lived in the United States, and though she continuously visited once a year, it no longer served as her home at the time.

"I didn't really have friends back in the US anymore except I guess my neighbors. I was so young and I lost contact with my friends. But every year, I would get less close to my neighbors. I didn't have as many people to hang out there. When I got back to the US, people couldn't relate to us, what we experienced overseas. They didn't understand. They would ask questions that I couldn't even begin to explain. They really couldn't comprehend that there were international schools and communities over there. Some of them called us chinks. I'm not even kidding. They would use pretty mean words. I didn't care too much, I mean, they just didn't understand. My siblings and I would get lonely and bored."

"Germany was home. I loved my school. The second school I went to had 500 kids in my grade and they were from all over the world. My group of friends were pretty much all from the States but we did stuff that was a part of the German culture. We would go to German movies with American subtitles and go to German restaurants. I had a lot of freedom in Germany. It was really safe and they had great public transportation. We would go into town and just people watch. Watch people skateboard. The freedom I experienced really made me independent."

She moved to Germany as an American and left, after a mere two and a half years, feeling like Germany had become her home. Till this day, she has fond memories and affection towards Germany, yet no longer does it hold a title even remotely close to home. Japan would come to replace Germany as her home.

"Each year, America was less and less my home. After a few years, Tokyo became my home base because it was where my family was. My dad would stay mostly in Tokyo and I guess that made it seem like we were all together in Tokyo. My family was really close when we were together in Japan. When I was in the US, my dad was never there. Also my friendship, I had a lot of friends in Japan and I was there for kind of a long time."

Where is home today? I curiously ask Lisa as her answer to home seems to change rapidly.

"Now New York is home I guess. My family lives there. Penn State sometimes I say is my home too. My life is here, my friends are here."

She seems confused as to whether or not she can call New York or Penn State home and as she tentatively answers my question. At previous stages in her life, her selection of where home was seemed sure and matter of fact, yet now she seems unsure as to how to answer my question of where home is. Do you consider yourself American? I ask her.

"I don't know I feel like I don't act like a whole American. Maybe it's just the fact that... I really don't know. I have to think about that. I just feel like I'm not fully American. I feel like, for a paper for instance, I always talk about my international experience because it's such a large part of who I am. Or, with food, my food preferences have changed often because I moved around, I just never know what I like... actually not just with food."

“I just feel like I have to classify myself as American because I haven’t done anything international in a while. My lifestyle here is very American. My friends are all American. I don’t know what I am. I’m not fully American. I can’t classify myself as that because I’ve had a different experience than other Americans. I’m not German. I’m not Japanese. I’m not fully international. I went to an international school. At the same time, I feel like I have the same....ambitions... values as Americans. What am I? I don’t know what to classify myself.”

For the lack of a better word, Lisa answers American to the question “what am I?”

“I say I am an American. If I went to a more diverse school, I would talk about my international experiences. I would classify myself as international, more than I do here. Because I want to fit in here. When I first got here, I guess I did feel a little foreign, but now having been here for a while, I feel like a part of them. I feel like I incorporated this American, PA, lifestyle. But if I had gone to let’s say, NYU, I would have kept more of my TCK identity. Coming here [State College], I’ve lost a lot of it. It’s still within me, if I was in a city where I’m given the opportunity, I would go back to it. But here in State College, I can’t really do that.”

I asked Lisa to talk more about what it was like when she first moved back to the US for college from Japan.

“I had always just assumed I was going to college in the US. My curriculum was American and it was just never really thought about it. I didn’t even really think about what school I was going to go to actually. Just picked a school and figured I’ll figure it out when I get there. I kinda just winged it. I really didn’t think about college. Leaving wasn’t too difficult this time. I think I must have gotten used to saying good bye to people pretty much every year. I’d grown accustomed to it. Also I left after graduation, so everybody was leaving for college.”

“When I first got here, we had to introduce ourselves to everybody on our floor, I said I was from upstate New York, but that I had just moved here from Tokyo. And I really felt like everyone thought, “oh my god, she’s weird” because I was so different.”

“I never had a problem answering “Where are you from?” before college. In Germany, I was from America. In Tokyo, I could say “I lived in Germany before this, and before that I was born and raised in NY,” and people would understand what I meant. I could easily talk about my past and there were people I realized that I could relate to. At Penn State I can’t answer the question like that so I’ve learned to say, New York. I guess it depends who I’m talking to. Sometimes I won’t mention that I lived overseas. Like to people here. Sometimes I will say I lived overseas for a little bit but not go into too much detail. And sometimes I will talk about my experiences abroad immediately.”

Lisa’s inability to say she is from here or there transcends into her ability to choose if she would rather hang out with Americans or Internationals.

“Being at Penn State, there aren’t a lot of international kids, but I realized when I do meet kids who are international, or who have had international experiences I get really close to them. It’s different. I can relate to them. A lot of people who I’ve talked to at Penn State have never even left the US, or the east coast for that matter. And it’s hard to talk to them sometimes. But then again, I can’t really relate to fully international people you know? It’s the opposite. They don’t understand me in the American sense. So it’s almost difficult to communicate with them, as it is to communicate with Americans.”

“It sucks, when you move here, well in my case, it’s almost like you’re covering up your past. And like, you can never open about it. The main reason is because people can’t relate. That’s a common theme for me. It’s just, I feel self-conscious, or I don’t know, my experiences don’t really have any effect, or

impact, on anybody else so why should I talk about them. They can't relate because they won't know what I'm talking about. They don't know what it's like to go to an international school. But over the past few years, it has gotten tremendously easy to talk to Americans. I really feel different than I did when I first got here."

I ask her to talk more about her friendships and how her background has impacted this area in her life.

"I like keeping friendships but I'm not very good at keeping in touch. Just because I've had so many friends from all over the world, at one point, it just becomes so difficult to keep in touch with all of them. To skype them, e-mail them regularly, it's really difficult, as much as I want to. But, also, when I do see them after years have gone by, it's like time has never passed at all. It's really a special connection, a bond, you make with your friends from overseas. Maybe it's because I never get a chance to talk about my experiences overseas. To get the chance to talk about it a lot with these friends is great. My friends here, don't understand. I feel like they think oh that's cool but they really don't know what it's like let alone really understand what I really went through. I try and explain it but I can't. So I don't really talk to people about those experiences."

Despite her turmoil, Lisa has assimilated into the culture at Penn State and has, for the most part, gone back to her American ways, perhaps out of necessity. As graduation approaches, Lisa can decide what her next habitat will be like. Graduating with a degree in accounting, she will be working for PwC, a renowned accounting firm, in their New York City office with the hopes of returning to graduate school eventually, to pursue a profession she really wants to do which remains currently unknown. However, she strives to have her own business one day.

"I wanted to work at PwC because they give you the opportunity to go overseas. If I didn't work for PwC, I would still want a company that offered that, and to work with people from all over the world. I wanted to travel for a little bit with PwC. Do a term overseas."

"I know I'm going to want something different. I know I'll get bored of New York after a few years. I'm like my dad. He likes change, he likes moving a lot. So, I see myself moving too. I'm used to saying goodbye to people and then making new friends. I don't think it would be a problem doing that my whole life. I like meeting people from all over. I feel like I learn a lot from that."

One component in her future plan that was definite and nonnegotiable was the idea that she will continue to come back to the US throughout her travels. The US, she hoped, would remain her only constant and would be her home base.

"I do want to live overseas again at some point but come back fairly often to the US to live because I want to keep... myself. I want bits of my background prevalent in my life. I want to keep my American background"

This idea of "keeping her American self" transcended into her hopes for her children.

"I don't want them to be a constant TCK. I don't want them to be a constant American. I want them have both. When I came to college, I felt lost. I didn't know if I should have out with international kids or American kids. I want them to be able to decide. I want them to know. I didn't really know how to act around full Americans because I was overseas for so long and I had few American friends left in US."

"I think I want my kids to experience what I did when they're older, like I did, at that stage of high school. But also, at the same time, I do want to take my kids overseas at a really young age so that they'll learn another language. It's so prevalent now in society. You need to know other languages to get by. So maybe take them over when they're really young, and then go back again when they're older. I wouldn't be opposed to living anywhere. I wouldn't say no to any country. I would want my kids to go to an

international school. Even in the states. Regardless of where they are. Or a school that has a lot of diversity. Living overseas ACTUALLY paid off. I'm going to sound very corporate right now but growing up with different types of people has made me better at working in groups and it's made me bring a lot to the table. It makes me a better person. I have a bigger perspective, I understand more about the world. I guess I don't know if I want my kid to move around overseas a lot but I want them to at least be at an international school where they can get to know different people at a young age, rather than coming to college and being really ignorant about it. It was difficult for me saying bye to people at a young age. But then again, it makes saying good bye to people now, and being open to change, a lot easier. But also, for some reason, I don't like change because in my life it also has negative connotations. That's something I still need to work on."

This idea of change seems to haunt Lisa. Change is her drug. She needs it yet she cannot help but hate it.

"If I don't have change in my life, I get really bored because I've gotten used to my surroundings but I also hate change at the same time. I hate change but I feel like I need it. Things change in my life. It's not something I like but I've grown accustomed to it. I kind of had to force myself to be okay with change and because it's been so constant in my life, I feel like it needs to remain constant, in order to be myself."

I ask her if anything positive has come out of change.

"Meeting a lot of people. Different kinds of people. We're open to new things, we'll try a lot of different things. We join groups, we apply to positions all over the world. Whenever I travel to a country I've never been to before, I feel like I can navigate that country easier than most people."

This led me to inquire about her relationship with her parents and if her mobile childhood has impacted her relationship with them.

"Yea, it has. When we first moved, I remember being so mad at them. I really didn't think they knew what they were putting us through. But since coming back to the US, I really appreciate what they did for us. For the opportunity and everything. Also, I think the fights might have even brought us closer. But my relationship with my brother, he's only a year younger, has been strengthened for sure. We were going through the same thing pretty much all the time so it was nice to have him to talk to and stuff."

Who will Lisa choose to be with the rest of her life? Who does she want by her side as she struggles to understand more about herself?

"I think somebody who has had international experiences, that international element, is important, I would want that. Even just having travelled. Somebody who is open to the idea of moving if the opportunity presents itself, but I guess it's more important to me for them to share with me my American experience. I want somebody who has lived in the US before."

Lisa grew up an expatriate for the majority of her life. She is through and through an expatriate, more specifically, an American expatriate. She desires to be an expatriate again, but hopes to maintain her sense of being an American, which she has once again retrieved, after a periodic absence.

## *TCK 2*

The son of American parents, Dan has moved around a few times within the United States and spent the majority of his childhood in the US. His high school years however, were spent in Germany, and those four years have made a huge imprint on who he is, who he's become, and what he hopes to be.

"I was born in Wilmington, Delaware. I lived in Delaware for about a year and then I moved to West Virginia. I lived there for roughly five years. Then I moved to Pennsylvania when I was six and I was

there till I was 13. I moved to Germany after that and was there for all of high school. Then I came back here about a week before I started school at Penn State. My parents actually moved back to the same town we used to live in Pennsylvania. My dad works for Dupont so they send them all over the place.”

Most stories about going overseas for the first time tend to be stories of drama, stress, and fear. Dan’s story however, was different. In a calm, nonchalant manner, he tells me, “I was just like, “yeah let’s go,” and then we went.” Astonished at how simple it was for him, I asked him to elaborate.

“This move wasn’t really any different from my other moves within the US. I don’t even really remember how I felt when we moved in the US. I guess this move was a little different because I was older and I remember it but it wasn’t that different. I’m pretty easy going. Also, I guess we were moving every few years at that point so I was kinda used to it. It wasn’t too hard.”

Dan’s transition into German culture, his time in Germany, and his repatriation back to the US would prove to be just as smooth and easy, as his reaction to having to be uprooted to Germany.

“We didn’t know any Germany and just speaking English was a little hard. I lived in the suburb of Dusseldorf, in a small neighborhood. Most of the neighborhood was German. Local people. My friend and my friend’s family were the only expats in the neighborhood. You could basically get anywhere and get everything you needed by biking. I also lived right by the tram station. I took a lot of public transportation. High school was great. We could go to a bar and sit down and drink because the drinking age is 16. I had a lot of freedom. I think that’s affected who I am today.”

Though Dan was aware of the fact that he was an American, from America, living in Germany, he became very quickly and highly integrated into the German culture, and never felt particularly foreign or misplaced. This was due to a number of reasons. His home life and parental influence was one of them.

“I wasn’t really involved in the expat life but my mom got pretty involved in the American women’s club in Dusseldorf. We celebrated American holidays but they were really small celebrations. My parents kinda just went with the flow. They didn’t try and push American things on me. We didn’t have an American supermarket. All the supermarkets had a small international aisle and there were a lot of Asian food markets. So we didn’t really eat “American food” at home. We had a lot of German food. My mom was always out, immersing herself in the culture through her expat group, and she would always come home, showing us new things. My parents both really loved living in Germany too. My family travelled all the time in Europe. I also got to travel through school trips. Germany’s location makes it easy to travel to other European countries. We could just take the train and in 45min we would be in Holland.”

I ask how being a TCK has affected his relationship with his parents and it seems to not have done so at all.

“I don’t think it has at all really. We’ve always had a good relationship. I guess it’s nice that I can talk to them about when we lived in Germany when I don’t really get to talk about it here at school.”

Instead of an American school, Dan attended an international school which tends to strive to maintain the host culture. As name indicates, it does not aim to recreate American standards and solely cater to American families, but it attempts to help international students still receive an international education, but also help them understand and integrate themselves into their host culture. Similarly, on the other hand, a large number of students are locals who desire an international environment and education as well.

“The majority of my friends were American and German. The three people I hung out with most... one was Danish, one was half German half Dutch, and the other was South African. I spoke a mix of German and English with my friends. My parents got me a tutor for Germany for a while. At the time, when I

lived there, I could speak to the locals in German easily. If I went back I would pick it up really fast. I help some of my friends with their German homework now sometimes and I definitely feel like I lost a bit of it but it comes back pretty quickly.”

“I never really felt like an expat. I guess I did a little at the beginning because I didn’t speak any German. Once I started picking up on German and I knew people we would just go out and do things all the time. I just... never really thought about it. I mean I knew I was American and a lot of German people can just tell when you’re not German. They can just tell. So sometimes you would get that feeling, but a lot of times people would come up to me and they would just speak to me in German. I do remember feeling not German, but not specifically American. I did feel a little foreign sometimes. By my last year in Germany though, I would find myself thinking in German. I didn’t even realize I was doing it. I remember one situation when I was back in America for the summer and I was walking with my mom and we were looking at this house. I was looking at the balcony on the second floor and I could think of the word in German but I couldn’t think of the word in English. I completely forgot the word in English! Yea, I felt Germany was a huge part of me when I left.”

Dan visited family and family friends during extended vacations, as most people do, and this meant he would return back to the US once a year, every summer for one to two months. He no longer had a house in the US and would stay at either hotels or homes of relatives and friends. I asked him if he felt the US remained his home base.

“When I was in Germany, the US wasn’t my home base. I definitely felt like Germany was my home pretty quickly. I guess because my family was there, my friends were there, and it was high school and that’s when you do a lot of your development.”

His easy going nature, as well as the influence of his friends, family, and environment, had transformed his monocultural world by the end of his four year stay in Germany. This metamorphosis became clear when he moved back to the US a week before he began college. When asked about how he felt coming back to the US he responded:

“Uh... it was weird. I had never heard of Penn State. My guidance counselor told me about it. I looked at a few schools in the US and a few in the UK. I could definitely tell that after living in Germany for so long, I kinda picked up on some stereotypes of Americans and then travelling back here, things would stand out to me more and I would be like, “I guess that really is American.” I guess some things stood out to me. Being back wasn’t too different, but I could see the difference. I don’t really feel like a foreigner at all. And I mean, when I told people I lived in Germany, they don’t really treat me any different. And I speak English fluently. So it was fine. Coming back here I definitely found out a lot more about American pop culture. In Germany we had one movie theater with really popular American movies. I listened to a lot of British music and a few really popular American songs. So I guess sometimes I do feel out of place. I mean still if my friends are talking about some American classic movie that I’ve never seen they would be like “how have you never seen this?” I guess that happens for a few things. But it doesn’t faze me too much. I just figure I’ll eventually see it or something.”

Dan easily made friends. His friends still are an eclectic mixture of cultures and he acknowledges being drawn to people of international backgrounds, without necessarily seeking them.

“I kinda just made friends with the people around me. I made friends with people in my fraternity and because my major is really small I know all of them too. I hang out a lot with kids from my Japanese class. When I meet people who are international though, I definitely find it more interesting than talking to somebody who has grown up in PA their entire life. I guess we have more in common, that’s why. We have a lot of the same experiences and stuff like that. I’m drawn to international kids more I think. I don’t

realize that till after though. Everyone I've dated comes from an international background too. But I never really thought about that either."

His college, not diverse, and the town in which it is located in, is small and does not provide many outlets for international elements to be incorporated in one's life. However, Dan's life incorporates several international aspects.

"I took German 3 and then 210 when I got to school but it was really easy so I stopped taking German classes. I moved on and was deciding between Japanese and Arabic, took Japanese, and I want to take other languages too. I just kinda want to keep moving from language to language. I think Russian or Mandarin is my next language. Some of my friends are Chinese and I see their characters and I think, "Oh that's the same as Japanese" and they tell me it means the same thing so I figured Mandarin could be my next language. I'm also taking Korean martial arts. I've learned some Korean from this too. I definitely want to continue this as long as I can. I didn't get involved in any German clubs which I regret. But I do have some friends that are international and its great talking to them about living overseas. It just makes me want to go back more. I definitely wish I joined something though. I don't have any German friends here at Penn State. I think I had more of Germany in me when I first got here, than it is now because I think I've adapted to being back here. But I definitely did take some of Germany with me."

How did he take Germany with him? I ask. Dan answers my question and gives me insight into how being a TCK has affected him.

"I guess I see this in the way I look at things. I think I'm more open at looking at uh... I don't know, just to try new things. And also like, looking at viewpoints in discussions and stuff like that. I love trying anything new, food, activities, anything. That really affected me. Being there with all the different cultures and my international school, if you're closed minded, you're not going to go anywhere. My school had 43 different countries represented so if you're closed minded, you're pretty stuck."

More than half way through the interview and I have yet to hear of any strife or difficulty Dan experienced as a result of being a TCK. Some confusion, but he did not show any sense of turmoil. I ask him "would you say being a TCK has been beneficial or an obstacle?" already knowing what he would say.

"Beneficial. I don't really see anything negative about being a TCK, for me personally at least. I could see how there could be negative repercussions but I didn't experience anything negative. Stability, Identity, if you grow up in a different place from your heritage, if heritage is something that defines you as a person, then that could have possible negative repercussions on them. This wasn't the case for me because I guess I've always been really easy going. Also being an American, I acknowledge that I am American, but I don't embrace it to its core."

Hearing him rave about Germany, as well as hearing about his authentic German experience, I was reminded that Dave still considered himself an American.

"I do identify myself as an American. Germany is definitely a part of me. It's definitely changed who I am. It's changed my thinking. There are definitely things in college that I've done and my friends are like, "what are you doing?" I open door handles up. When I count with my fingers I count in a different way. Things like that. There are some things I've seen my friends here do and I'm like, "why are you doing that?" I don't feel like a foreigner but It's definitely different. When I'm with a group of friends I'm either doing something differently than everybody else or wondering why people are doing what they're doing so I guess I do have some sort of foreign aspect but I don't feel like an outsider because of it."

I can't help but wonder where home is for this bicultural individual. How would he tackle a TCK's dreaded question, "Where are you from?"

"I used to say I'm an American but I lived in Germany because I came back to the US a week before school started. But now because my parents live here, I just say I'm from America. I usually just kinda go with where my parents live. I think when I lived in Germany, it was definitely home. Now, I call where my parents live home, so PA. I think if I went back to Germany, I would feel pretty comfortable, knowing the language and like the culture, so I think I would feel comfortable pretty quickly if I went back. I definitely miss living in Germany. But when I was in Germany I didn't miss living here."

So what's next for Dan? How has being back in the United States for four years impacted his choice of where to go and what next?

"I definitely want to be back in Germany. It's one of the first things I want to do after I graduate. I would say that draws me back more than any other place I've lived in. I still keep in touch with some friends who still live in Germany. Facebook definitely helps. I'm an IST major. I'm going to be working for Ernst and Young when I graduate down in Virginia and I want to go back overseas. Anywhere! I've heard of people going overseas for a few years, through them, so I'm going to talk to them about that."

Fairly stoic throughout the whole interview, Dan's excitement to move back overseas is apparent. I ask where this fervor to immediately go back overseas comes from.

"I really liked it. It was awesome. I could see myself indefinitely living there. I don't know where but uh... I mean I could see myself living in Germany, definitely. I think it would be cool to move around overseas though. Moving every couple of years wouldn't be bad. I guess eventually I would want to settle down but yea, I don't think moving would be too bad. I really really liked the public transportation but I would have to say the number one reason I would want to move overseas again would be cultural variety. It's pretty amazing. You get a little bit of variety here in America but nothing like living in a town with hundreds of different people from 40 some countries. You know, you get so many different experiences... the wide range is incredible. Maybe you could find this in New York or something but it's different. I would still choose to live overseas... I really don't know why."

Based on the type of people he is drawn to and his preference in friends, Dan's response to who he would like to eventually settle down with is not surprising.

"It would be nice to be with somebody with an international background. But what's most important to me is to be with somebody who would want to go out and see things."

If you had to choose, would you pick somebody who is very international but didn't understand your American background, or somebody very American but did not really have an interest in international things?

"International person. I wouldn't say that I would want them to understand my American heritage. But as for them not really knowing the background of being an American wouldn't bother me at all."

While we do not get a choice in whether or not we will become TCKs, we do have a choice in what our children will be.

"I would want my kids to live overseas. The experiences they would get, the way that they would grow up, would open up so many different possibilities and opportunities for them, that you wouldn't just get while living in America. Also they would learn more languages. That's a great plus. I would definitely want my kids to have what I experienced."

### *TCK 3*

Prior to college, besides vacations to visit family, Alice had spent a mere few weeks in the US, her place of birth. Her father is an American; her mother is Canadian. Immediately after her birth in California, she was carted off to Australia. She is an American and Australian passport holder and also has a Canadian citizenship card.

“I was born in California and soon after that we moved to Australia. I moved to Argentina when I was ten or eleven because my dad got offered a job at a pharmaceutical company. I moved to Mexico City when I was fifteen and I graduated from high school from there. And then I moved to the states for college.”

I asked her to talk about her experiences in Australia, Argentina, and Mexico. All three places affected her differently and the degree to which she was integrated in the host culture differed according to the duration of her stay in each country, her expectations of how long she would be staying there, and the role she assumed in the country.

“I grew up in Australia. I wasn’t there that long but I guess moving overseas, the whole experience, we were always going home there, I feel like that’s been more of a home to me than anywhere. When we lived there we were just there, like anybody else living there. I never felt foreign there because that’s all I knew. I didn’t know any better, I didn’t know anything else. I had an Australian accent. My mom hung out with a lot of other expats, she had culture shock, and so I spent time with their kids too but that was really common. In Australia, everybody was from somewhere else. We never had any American or Canadian influence in our home. We never did Thanksgiving, we never did anything really American... I guess we were pretty integrated. I went to a local school there. I thought we were going to live there forever.”

Alice was rarely reminded of the fact that she was not ethnically Australian. In every other sense, she was completely Australian, even in terms of citizenship. From the start, Alice did not feel she was American and as she incorporated Latino culture into her life, it was her Australian heritage that she struggled to maintain. Her American background would be buried, untouched, until she moved back to the US for college.

“And then this whole thing came about and my dad made us move and I think that was probably the hardest because moving from somewhere completely English and everything was so easy to somewhere so chaotic, a third world country where I don’t speak the language, and I’m eleven years old and I didn’t know anyone and that was really hard. I didn’t even know where Argentina was. In Argentina I went to a local school and I really felt like I was different. Everyone I knew was from there, grew up there, and everybody had friends from when they were really young and I was just this random foreigner who came in. I guess there I started to notice a more like, expat lifestyle because we had a guard, we had this huge house with a pool, and we would have never been able to afford that in Australia. And then in Mexico it was even more extreme because my dad got a promotion and we had a driver, a maid, and there I felt a real difference between me and other people because I was white and they’re Latino. Whereas in Argentina, yea they’re Latino, but they’re still... white. It sounds weird but they still are white. So I fit in physically there versus in Mexico I didn’t. In Argentina, the first couple of years... were really bad. They were bad. I just really wanted to be home.”

It is evident that Australia was home initially, remained home throughout her time in Argentina and Mexico, and till this day, is still her home.

She eventually became very comfortable living in Argentina, and by her fifth year there, she would consider herself very Argentine.

“After a year or two I made a bunch of friends and I could speak Spanish, so by my third year I pretty much felt normal about being there. I went to a local school. And when I first got there I didn’t speak any Spanish so it was absolutely horrible. By the end of the year I spoke Spanish but I remember when we got there my mom and I would bring those electronic dictionaries everywhere and it was so difficult. My dad spoke a good amount of Spanish though because he had lived in Mexico before for I think five years. But when he wasn’t around, which was most of the time, it was difficult. Kids used to say stuff about me and I didn’t know what they were saying. But like I said, by the end of the year, it was okay because I took intensive Spanish. So the first part of the day was English, the second part was Spanish. All of my friends were Argentine. Except one British girl. I didn’t really have a choice. Everybody there was Argentine! Which like I said was tough at first but in the end, it was actually good.”

Though Alice’s family continued to celebrate their Australian background, the powerful Argentine culture also unavoidably entered her home.

“We went to the Australian embassy a lot for holidays and events. We celebrated Australia day. Yea, I still felt very Australian. But, we did so many Argentine things. It was impossible not it. Argentina is not very Western. By any means. It’s just very very Argentine. And my friends were all Argentine. So it was inevitable that I was slowly becoming Argentine as well, and it was apparent in my house too.”

Meanwhile, Alice was visiting the US, continuously, once a year, every year. However this repatriation was not regarded as returning, but instead visiting.

“We went to the US every winter break, which was July and August, and that’s something we’ve been doing since I was very little in Australia. I guess I never thought of it as coming BACK. I think I never really considered myself as an American or felt like an American growing up. It just felt like I was visiting family. I went back to the US maybe once a year. I don’t think it felt awkward coming to the US for vacations. It’s never bothered me. It was just vacation.”

Alice’s transition to Mexico was significantly easier than her move to Argentina. In Mexico, she comfortably assumed a position as an expat, attending an international school, living in an expatriate community. She did not have to struggle to become accepted as one of the locals of her host country, as her new host country had an established expatriate society.

“I went to the international British school. In Mexico the transition was so much easier because I went to an international school. The minute I got there, everybody wanted to talk to me, and making friends was so much easier. Most of my friends were from all over. Canadian, French, but also a lot of Mexican people. There, we had a very very expat kind of life. There I really was aware of the difference between us and the people there. In Argentina we were living in a local suburb and in Mexico we lived in an expat neighborhood. You could just tell, you walk down to the city center and it’s just different. But in Mexico they were very welcoming of foreigners. So in Mexico I was very much an expat. But in Argentina, by the end, I thought I was going to be there the whole time and graduate from high school there, so I felt... local. Also, Argentines are not friendly to foreigners so I almost feel like we had no choice.”

Though when asked if she liked being in an expatriate community Alice responded, “Some expat people... are so I don’t know mom’s gossiping and stuff. I like some expat people, but just the same there were expat people I really didn’t like.” She is comfortable being an expat but she prefers being a local in a country, rather than an expatriate.

Alice moved to the US for college and she had to come to terms with her America heritage, something that not had been fostered throughout her childhood.

“You know, a lot of people don’t even know what it is [TCKs]. People who grow up in the US, I guess I’ve gotten a fairly positive reaction. But I do find that sometimes I choose not to talk about my background. I just don’t want to tell people the whole story of where I come from. It’s just so elaborate and so hard to explain to someone. I think sometimes I wish it were easier to just be like, oh yeah I’m from wherever. There aren’t that many people who are international... like me. I don’t know many people who have moved around like I have. So it was hard to get along with American people. There were very very few Americans in my school in Mexico, and none in Argentina. “

“I didn’t want to go to the states for college. I never wanted to. I was first planning on going home for college. In Australia. But that fell through because my parents weren’t moving there and I would have to go all by myself and live by myself without them and for me... that was a whole new type of far. I had moved before obviously but this time I was doing it without my parents. I guess they had been constant throughout all my moves but just not doing it with them was... yeah a whole new type of far. But in the end, I ended up going to Boston because a lot of kids from my school were going there.”

“It was definitely a culture shock. I couldn’t drink and go to bars like I had been doing for years at that point. It was so different. It was so western. Everything closes at five... and yeah it was such a big culture shock for me. Everything is so tame, especially coming from Argentina and Mexico. So at that point I realized how much a small role being an American plays in my life. The way I grew up was never really American. I always had more of a British influence. I grew up in Australia which was a British colony. I did IB. I didn’t really have an American influence growing up, or a Canadian influence for that matter. So it was definitely an adjustment.”

“I still hang out with a bunch of people who are international or with international backgrounds here. I have some Latino friends. I work with a lot of Latino people too. And even American people that I surround myself with are people who are really interested in learning about other cultures. I still take Spanish now. I’m minoring in it because... I think I just want something familiar. Also, it’s just important to me. I eat a lot of food from Australia. I love vegemite. I have tons and tons of it.”

So after four years in the United States, with three other countries of residence under her belt, where is home to Alice? Has America slowly become her home?

“Yes, over the years it has but I still wouldn’t consider it my home. Yes, my life is here, my friends are here, I’ve been working here, my school is here. It’s where my life is. And when I’m away from here, I talk about going home, here, but this isn’t my home home. Home right now would be Australia because my parents just moved back there from Mexico. Where do I belong most? I lived in Australia the longest, we have a house there, my family is there, and some extended family is there.”

Alice comments on how the American lifestyle may be the only thing she’s picked up during her time in the US and also realizes throughout our discussion about identity and home, though Australia remains home, she in fact identifies with being Latino than Western. Was Alice a Latina trapped in a Westerner’s body? I asked her if she believed somebody could have multiple identities and whether or not this was the case for her.

“Yes. When I’m in the US, I’m more American, college-y. When I go home, to Australia, we do a lot of underground music stuff, a lot more art and culture. And then there’s that Mexican, Latina thing that comes into play sometimes. I don’t like one more than the other. They’re just different ways of living.”

While Alice is partially Western, partially Latina, she is fully a third culture kid. Could someone classify being a TCK as an identity?

“I don’t think I ever thought about it that way! But, yea, I guess it is. It definitely is. I’ve never heard of the term Third Culture Kids before until I moved in with a girl two years ago that mentioned the term. I think moving around so much, made me who I am. I don’t lack identity. It made me who I am now. The lack of home really does suck, but it’s just kind of gotten to that point where it’s wherever my parents are.”

I ask her an often debated topic among TCK groups and researchers: Do TCKs have a home nowhere or everywhere? Without hesitation, Alice answers “Everywhere.” This is noticeable in the manner in which she tackles the question, where are you from?

“When I moved to Mexico, I think I said Argentina for the first few weeks. Because it’s just easier than me getting into everything. It was where I had just come from and also at that point I was talking the way I do now, without an Australian accent, so if I had said I was from Australia, people don’t believe me or they always ask me why I don’t have an accent. It’s just... redundant. But it depends on how much I know the person. If I wanted to elaborate a little more, I would say here I just came from but originally from Australia. Then when I moved to the US for college I would say Mexico. Because that was where I last was and before last year, my parents lived there still. So it would be like, “Where are you going? Home, Mexico” and it just made sense.”

Though she had said TCKs have a home everywhere, an answer I had come to understand as a positive one, I heard a sense of irritation in Alice’s voice as she talks about her multiple answers to where she considers herself from. Is having a home everywhere in fact an annoyance? Has being a TCK been beneficial or an obstacle?

“Obstacle. I think it’s really annoying to have to explain where I’m from every time I meet them. It’s obnoxious. It just annoys me. It’s hard to connect to certain people because of it. They just can’t relate. But at the same time, I’m glad I did all that. It’s fun, I don’t regret it at all. I just don’t think I would ever make my kids do it.”

I asked Alice if anything positive has come from being a TCK. She did list a few positive traits she developed as a result of it, but effortlessly, her list shifted to include some points that have been detrimental.

“It’s made me a lot more open minded. It’s made me friendly and outgoing because I kinda had to be. Definitely more accepting. It’s made me passionate about various things. If that makes sense. I would be like, oh my god I love Mexico and then the next time I would be like oh my god I love Boston. It’s conflicting. Which brings me to my next point, it’s made me very indecisive. I’ve become flaky. I feel like I say let’s do this, let’s do that, and I don’t think about what I want. This is also true with the friendship thing, not maintaining friendships.”

“This is going to sound so bad. I think now people have become like, yeah I like a lot of people and I get along with a lot of people, but at this point people have become trivial. I don’t know. I think that, no matter where I go, I am going to find more people and befriend more people, and that affects the existing relationships that I have. I lose touch with people really easily. It’s easy to meet new people so it’s harder to maintain older friendships for me.”

I asked if her background has impacted her relationship with her parents.

“Each move was different. I think when I moved from Argentina to Mexico, my mother and I had big issues. But I think those issues were really short lived. It came with the stress of moving. But in the long run, today, I think our relationship was really strengthened.”

Will Alice choose to perpetuate the mobile lifestyle she experienced as a child? If not, where will she choose to settle down?

“I’m going to move home [Australia]. At this point in my life, I just want to move home, live at home, and be there for a while. I don’t want to move around anymore. I’m sick of it. It’s tiring. Having to start fresh every time, versus going home and being with my parents and having a few friends that I know. It’s easier to get started with my life. It will be a little foreign when I go back, but I think over time I’ll feel fine.”

She is adamant about her answer and at first I feel she is confident in her decision. As she further discussed her answer, some flip flopping began to emerge.

“I mean thinking about staying anywhere for more than an X amount of years freaks me out. I think anywhere, just having the same lifestyle for a while, I just get freaked out. I’m like, oh my god get me out of here. But I hope I do end up staying there for a while and be a local.”

I had to double check, and asked if staying in place, let’s say for ten years, would be plausible to her.

“Oh my gosh. Um, yes, maybe. I want to go home, get a job, I want stability. But baby steps. Doesn’t staying in one place for that long freak you out! I hope I would want to stay. I hope I just stay put. I don’t want to keep moving. We’ll see...”

Alice fights hard against all she knows, constant change, and it is evident it will be a struggle for her to break free of her habits. As she decides to build a static life, to regain a stable home she once had in Australia, this will impact other cornerstones in her future life. Who will she choose to spend her life with? How will she choose to spend her life? How does she want her kids to grow up?

“I want somebody who’s international. But more than international, I think I would pick somebody who is Australian. I want to do something creative. Work in a magazine maybe. I would like to travel with my job, but not move with the job. I want to be surrounded by international people. I didn’t really think about my future growing up. I still don’t! I don’t want my kids to be TCKs. I personally don’t want to move around anymore. I don’t want to put my child through that. I don’t want them to have to move to a different culture so much. It’s difficult. The feeling I felt when my parents said we were moving... I don’t want them to experience that.”

#### *TCK 4*

Mike was born in Michigan, the same state as his American parents were born and raised in. However, he would not remain in the state as his parents did as children. Mike got to experience two diverse cultures, poles apart from one another and his native culture.

“I was five when I first moved to Florida and then I was nine when we moved over to Dubai for three years. We moved because my dad works for General Motors and his promotion took us overseas. And then we moved back to Michigan for about a year and a half and then in 8<sup>th</sup> grade we moved to Shanghai for three years because of my dad’s job again. Then we moved back to the US. I was overseas for 8 years.”

Mike recounts his experience of moving to Dubai at the age of nine. He does so in an almost rehearsed manner. It is evident that he has retold this story many times before.

“When I moved to Dubai at first I was really skeptical and nervous to be moving overseas where I didn’t know the culture of the language. I didn’t know anything. I went to an American school in Dubai so I met some other kids from American right away and I didn’t really have any problems making friends with

kids from other countries either. Kids from like England. Just a lot of European friends in general. I really don't remember much about my reaction to us having to move to Dubai. I was seven so at that point I was doing pretty much whatever I was told. My lifestyle in Dubai was pretty sheltered. We lived in a villa that had walls all the way around it. All my friends pretty much lived in all these villas too. Especially right around the school, it was this little neighborhood with all expats. And then right across the street there were Muslims."

Mike's retelling of his experience in Dubai, like Dan's, seemed uncomplicated and his integration into his new life in Dubai seemed effortless. Perhaps this was due to the fact that he was placed in an extremely sheltered world. This led me to wonder how this would impact his sense of how he fit into Dubai's culture.

"I felt like I belonged at the school. I felt like I belonged in that community of expats but whenever I would walk around the streets I would feel out of place. Dubai really wasn't a part of me. I definitely feel like I brought some of the Chinese culture because I was older and stuff but not for Dubai. I don't know I was kind of scared of Dubai. We had a huge gate and it was easy to get harassed when we left that gated community so I don't know, kinda scary."

What kind of culture was created behind these protecting gates? If Mike wasn't experience Dubai's culture, what kind of culture was he experiencing?

"I would say it was fairly American. We ate a lot of American food. But I feel like I lived more of an international lifestyle. Even when I watched sports on TV it wasn't football and stuff. I watched rugby and cricket. But I was definitely just an American living in Dubai."

Mike's time overseas seemed to have been a onetime occurrence, as his parents told him and his siblings he would be returning home. I expected his transition back into the US would be easy, for he had not been significantly exposed to Dubai's culture. Yet, Mike remembers having to readjust when he returned back to Michigan at the age of twelve.

"It was kind of difficult actually. I came back to some of the same friends and they were so different from my friends overseas. People overseas are a lot friendlier and are more open to people moving in because they're always dealing with people moving but in Michigan, they live in the same house their whole childhood, same friends and everything, so they weren't too welcoming. Trends were different too. So I came back and I don't know, it was hard to break into a group of friends. It just felt weird. After five years in Dubai, I thought Michigan was home. We would go back every summer to our lake house and hang out with some friends but mostly family. And then being back and it wasn't my home and I felt out of place, I didn't have any friends, I don't know, it just felt really weird being back. After a year and a half, right before I moved to Shanghai, I really felt like I had integrated back in. I was on sports teams, I had a bunch of friends, and I thought we were done moving. I was getting used to the fact that this was where I was going to spend the rest of my life. It felt right. And then my parents tell us we're moving back overseas...."

Mike got adjusted to being back "home," only to find out after a mere year and a half since returning back to the US, that he would be moving across the world to China. His anger and remorse over the situation was visible in his extreme reaction.

"I was thirteen or something and I was finally getting accustomed to being back in the states and I was starting to make good friends and my parents told me we were moving back overseas. I was pissed. I grabbed a chair and I was threatening to throw it through a window. I was so pissed at my parents. I wasn't going to actually do it."

Mike's experience in Shanghai followed suit, and comprised of the same ingredients that resulted in his sheltered lifestyle in Dubai. However, this time Mike would find a home in Shanghai, to a certain extent, and his experience would shape him greatly.

“Shanghai was scary again. Moving to a new school, brand new culture, I was pretty sheltered again though. I feel like expat communities are replicated across countries. In Shanghai too I lived in the expatriate community. It was a really American community. It was like living in the suburbs of the city. I didn't really know much about the city life and it was intimidating when we first got there. I went to an American school there. There were a lot of American kids there but I would say it was more international than American. A lot of Asian kids: Chinese, Korean, Indian. Some Europeans. Some kids didn't even speak English but those kids stuck to themselves. Actually, I went to one campus first by the American expat communities. I switched schools after a year and this American school as surrounded by a really local neighborhood and that's when I really started to be exposed to Chinese culture. Went out to the local neighborhood for lunch and ate lots of local Chinese food. My home life started off American but by the end, our house was super Chinese. My mom was obsessed with the jewelry and the furniture and the ornaments. Even today if you went to our house in Michigan you would think a family that wasn't American lived there. It's a very expat home. We celebrated American holidays in Shanghai but a lot of Chinese holidays too. Our ayi would cook for us a lot for dinner so we had a ton of Chinese food all the time. But I went out into the city more as I got older to go out and stuff. We would hang out in the city. And I took Chinese while I lived there so I could get around in the city fairly well. I got accustomed to talking to local people and have basic conversations, read basic billboards, so I guess I felt like I was getting into the culture.”

So where was home to Mike? Mike moved back to Michigan for the second time in 10<sup>th</sup> grade. He has been back in the US for about six years now. Where does Matt feel he comes from and how would he tackle the question, “Where are you from?”

“It depends if I want to give them the short version or the long version. If I want the short version I just say I'm from Michigan. But I mean I'm from Michigan but grew up all over the place. I guess Michigan is my home because I keep coming back here but I'm from pretty much... all over. The US is my home because I don't go back to Shanghai or Dubai since I've moved away. I left Shanghai in 10<sup>th</sup> grade and I was old enough to have feelings. I had friends. I had a girlfriend. It felt like home. But America was still my home to go back to. It was my home in that it was where I was from. That's where I was born. We went back every summer for summer break but it didn't really feel like vacation I guess. It felt like I was going back... home. I've been going there since I was a little tot. When I go up there I just do the same things I've been doing since I was young. All our family lived in the US. I really kept track of American sports. Shanghai was home in the sense that I knew the city so well. The ins and outs. But yea, today, Michigan is my home. That's where I'm from but Shanghai is where I did a lot of growing up.”

Mike comments on how he feels like he does belong in the US. He doesn't feel like he sticks out, though he feels he has felt a sense of belonging in all the countries he has lived in and believes he would be able to feel a sense of belonging wherever he is. Though confident about his statement, he is unable to really explain why this would be the case. I asked what it was like coming back to the US from China for Mike, and if this sense of belonging in the US was obtained immediately upon arrival or not.

“I guess I was kind of like bored because it wasn't the big city. I got used to the city. Everyone I talked to wanted me to speak to them in Chinese or write characters. I guess when we moved back that might have been the toughest move for me. Maybe because that was when I was older. Also I definitely knew I was coming back to the US for college, but I didn't know we would be moving away from China after three years. It was tough to leave my friends and my girlfriend. My parents thought I was depressed when I got back. I just stayed in my room all day, because it was summer time, and did nothing, kept to myself till

school started. It was so different coming back to suburban Michigan and I was used to being around so many cultures.”

“I felt American but it was just weird. People would be like, “You come from China. What does wingwang wingwang mean?” They knew what China was like but they didn’t get what it meant to be like me. To live overseas but not be Chinese. They were single minded and didn’t understand how the rest of the world worked. They knew there were other countries but they just... didn’t get it. They didn’t understand my background so I just kinda stopped talking about it or mentioning it. I’ve heard of the term Third Culture Kids before from when I lived overseas. I know what it is and I consider myself one. But if you’ve never lived overseas, I guess you just don’t understand what we are. Now, I talk about living overseas when I’m applying to jobs and stuff. Just because it’s a good talking point and companies seem to be interested that I’ve experienced different cultures and I understand different perspectives from different parts of the world.”

When asked if he considers himself American, this was his response:

“I feel like I act very American. Even when I was abroad I did have a lot of pride about being an American. I think being overseas impacted me in terms of feeling even more pride towards my country. But I also respect other cultures and stuff. I hate when people are making fun of other cultures.”

Mike’s stories of his travels, incorporated with both ups and downs, are reflected upon in a nostalgic, positive manner. I ask if he thinks being a TCK has been beneficial or an obstacle and he responds confidently that it has been beneficial. His first reason being that it’s something hardly anybody else gets to experience. The benefit of being a TCK has also appeared in his relationship with his parents.

“We have a pretty good relationship. The move definitely in the long run strengthened our relationship. I depended on them when I didn’t know the culture, didn’t have friends, or a home, and when we would travel we would spend lots of time alone together. But when we would move I would be really mad at them.”

The benefit has also presented itself when making new friends.

“I’m more sensitive about new kids. There’s a new kid studying abroad here from England and he was by himself and I invited him to our party because I know what it’s like to be new and not have any friends.”

However, in terms of maintaining relationships with his peers, it has been a difficulty.

“I don’t think I do a very good job. I should be good at it, theoretically. But I’m just not. I don’t know why. I’m not good at keeping in touch with people.”

Where does Mike see himself in the future?

“I see myself moving back overseas again. Not any time soon, but in the long term I would want to spend a few years other there. I mean I feel like I’ve been overseas so much I just want to go back again. Experience more. I feel like there’s so much more than just boring America.”

“I would want my kids to be TCKS. I mean I had a lot of fun being overseas. It made me the person I am and it’s definitely a great experience. There’s so much more to life than just living in the US. If I had the opportunity to back, if I had the chance, I would go back for sure.”

At the conclusion of his story, as I pictured Mike’s future overseas, I was convinced he was enthralled with the lifestyle of an expatriate, just as Dan (TCK 2) was, but it’s pertinent to note, their environment would be different regardless of their shared positions under this umbrella of “expat.” Mike’s idea of

expatriate living, to me, sounded like he enjoyed the clear distinction that formed between him and the locals. He embraced the grand expatriate house behind gates and the tight-knit community of foreigners with a keen interest for international exposure when desired. They can control how much exposure they want from their host culture. Whereas Dan, I could see in a host country living in a local neighborhood, with local friends, developing a fervor for the culture. Mike would be developing the identity of an expatriate. Dan would be in the midst of concocting a reformulated identity which would incorporate his host culture.

### *TCK 5*

Jon is the only biracial participant in this study. With his Asian features and very fair complexion, it's difficult to place Jon. This would be even truer upon hearing about his mobile childhood.

“My dad is American. My mom is Korean but also has American citizenship. My dad grew up in Michigan and my mom grew up in Korea for fifteen years and then she moved to Seattle. I was born in Hawaii. Lived there two and a half years and then moved to Los Angeles. Lived there for four and a half years and then moved to Guam for six months. Moved to Korea for a year. Guam for four years. Shanghai for six years. And then I moved back to the US for college. My dad is a hotel manager so we moved because of that. I lived overseas for seven years.”

I had to clarify to see if I had heard him right. Jon is only 21 and he has moved around more than a large number of people have their entire life, and as the interview went on I had sneaking suspicion this number would only continue to grow.

His story began with a brief start in Hawaii, an extended stay in LA, a pit stop in Guam and his preview of living overseas in Korea.

“I don't remember living in Hawaii because I was so young. I lived in LA for a while, Guam for a bit, and then Korea. I guess LA was home to me at the time. I had only lived in Guam for six months. I had been to Korea before a bunch of times because my mom is Korean so it wasn't too weird moving there. And my mom, to a certain extent, instilled some of its culture in me before we went. It's half of me... but I definitely felt foreign when I moved there. I feel more Asian now after having lived in Shanghai, then I ever did before Shanghai. I grew up feeling pretty much very American before China. Today, when I am in the US, I feel very Asian. When I am in Korea or China, I feel very white.”

His story includes an element the other stories have not had. Jon would move to a country that he is expected to be a part of before even arriving there. However, fitting in would not be a problem for him in Korea, because he would be living in Little America.

“It was weird because we lived in a hotel. I was a seven year old kid. Most of my time was spent at school or the hotel. I was an expat when I lived there definitely even though my mom was Korean. I went to a school on the Army base. Everything on the base is American. It makes everybody who lives there feel like they're back in the US. In Korea, I don't really know how I felt because I was so young, I didn't really think about it. But every time I went to school it felt like I was back in LA going to public school.”

Jon returned to Guam and would remain there for a solid four years. Little did he know his travels around the world were not over and his four years in Guam would be surpassed by his six years in his next destination.

“And then we moved back to Guam... which felt nice because at least I was going back to somewhere I knew. Back to the same school with the same people. LA was probably still my home then. It was the longest place I had lived in at that point. It was all I knew. But after four years in Guam, when I was leaving for Shanghai... Guam was my home. Even after two years in Guam, it felt like home. I wasn't

okay with leaving. We were told on the second day of school and we moved the second week of school. So we didn't really get a lot of time to process it. But I got over it, and I think I was okay with moving by the time the day we had to leave rolled around."

I had to ask him at this point, how he felt about the numerous transitions he had to undergo. I wondered why none of the transitions seemed adverse to Jon.

"I mean from a really young age, I knew that we would be moving around a lot to other places, all over the world because of my dad's job. And I was okay with it. None of the moves I made, made me depressed or was I really dreading moving. Every move was relatively simple. The move from Guam to Shanghai, I guess would be the hardest. I was twelve and I was starting to grow up and who you are really starts to come out you know. If I had stayed in Guam and not had moved to Shanghai, I would be completely different than I am today. If I had to pick one that was the hardest it would be that, but it wasn't difficult by any means."

He then talked about his experience in China.

"My lifestyle in China was really similar to my lifestyle in Korea mainly because in both places I lived in a hotel. I was surrounded by a lot of Chinese people in the hotel. I learned about China through interacting with the Chinese people in my dad's hotel, getting around town by myself and speaking to local people like taxi drivers, and talking to kids who had lived in the country I was in longer than I had been there. But having said that, we did maintain a fairly American lifestyle while we were there for the most part. Being in China... I learned that as an expat you could get away with so much. Especially living in a hotel, that really exacerbated the fact that there were privileges that came with being a foreigner. BUT, we never had a maid like everybody else, and my mom made me clean my own room."

I asked if he felt like a foreigner living in China.

"I wouldn't say that either. I never felt like a local Chinese person. But by the end of my time there, I knew Shanghai like the back of my hand. I felt very safe there. And by the end of Freshman year I knew that I wasn't going to be moving anywhere else till graduation because my parents didn't want me to have to move during high school. So that's when it really started to feel like home. In China I went to an American school. And it set everybody that lived there aside from the culture in a way. Physically when you look at the school, any Chinese person that looked at it from the outside, through the gates would think "Obviously things inside of those huge gates are very different." Kids were driven to schools in Mercedes and stuff like that. I think the school definitely tried to make sure the students weren't too separated from the culture, through community service and stuff, but at the same time that only went so far. I've learned the two most important things when you live overseas were the language and culture. But even if you don't speak the language, if you understand that country's culture and you're being respectful then you'll feel more comfortable there."

Throughout his travels, Jon was still returning to the US regularly. His return to the US was natural uncomplicated to him.

**Where did you go for vacations?** In the summer, I had three home bases. I'd go to Michigan, Seattle, and Los Angeles. **Did these places feel like home?** Nah, I was just visiting. **Did you feel like you needed to readjust when you came to the US?** No, it's something we've been doing every summer since before I lived overseas so it wasn't something that was different or had changed.

Jon did in fact feel like he was an American. But it was more intricate than that, and how could it not be with his background?

“Living in a foreign country, when anybody asks you where you’re from... you say you’re country. I feel like it’s how I have to answer it. And it’s grown on me. It’s just the way I’ve become accustomed to answering that question. I answer that I’m from the US because of my passport.”

I then asked if he felt like he belonged in the US.

“It’s not that I don’t belong... but... if I had a choice I would choose to live outside of the US. Phoenix is getting there. But if I had to choose... basically you’re saying if somebody asked me where I would want to go anywhere in the world and stay there forever where would it be? Shanghai. If the people that I hang out with now here in Arizona saw how I acted in China I would say there would be a difference in my identity. There are times when I forget where I am. I almost spat on the sidewalk in Arizona because that’s what I do in China. I would act differently in Korea too because I’m half Korean. And I feel like I would act differently in a place I’ve never been before too. But I have two prominent ones and I would say that’s my identity here in the US and my identity in China. In China, I’m an expat. Here, I’m pretty much like everybody else but with the international experience I guess. I think TCKs are their own culture. It’s like a nationality. I would consider myself a native of that culture. I consider TCK as an identity.”

Where is home now, Jon?

“I would have to say Phoenix, Arizona. It’s hard. When people ask where my home is, I have a few answers. It varies. One home I would consider is our house in Michigan. I can always go there and all my stuff is there. But at the same time, if I say, I’m going home to see my parents over Christmas break, that’s Malaysia. But I don’t consider that “home home”. It’s home because my parents are there. But I also answer Phoenix because that’s where I live now. Shanghai is also my home because, that’s where I said I came from when I first got here for college. It’s where I had just come from and it’s where I planned on going back to for breaks before my parents moved to Malaysia. I still say it’s home now sometimes because when people ask me where did you go to school or where did you go to high school I say Shanghai. I consider it the place I grew up. The streets of Shanghai are where I thrive. Also, I would have to say I like Shanghai the most out of all the places I’ve lived.”

“When they ask me where are you from, I say what do you mean? Because when some people ask you where you’re from, some people are asking where were you born? Or where have you lived all your life? Just because I was born in Hawaii doesn’t make me from there because I don’t remember it.”

This urged me to ask whether Jon felt home was nowhere or everywhere.

“Home is everywhere. Home is the world. Regardless of which one it is though, if I said to somebody home is nowhere, if twenty other people said home is nowhere, we’re all alone together, and that sort of becomes a home? To us that becomes our home right there because there are twenty other people there just like you. It creates a connection between those people. But with home is the world, I would like to think that’s more applicable because, it doesn’t matter where those twenty people are in the world, because we’re all still connected, wherever we are in the world.”

Has being a TCK affected his relationships in any way?

“Moving around, more than anything, has helped my ability to make friends. It’s helped me make friends, but not necessarily keep friends. It’s easy to make friends because as soon as you move somewhere making friends quickly becomes kinda vital. I actually came to my college because I didn’t know anybody. It’s something I don’t mind. I know a lot of people would. As for maintaining friends, I feel like I have the tendency to change my friends. It’s not that I want to change my friends or drop them, it’s just sometimes if I do get sick of somebody or realize they’re not who I thought they were, it’s easy for me to

stop being their friend. Also, I just really suck at keeping in touch. But, my really good friends that I've made in Michigan, Guam, Shanghai, or wherever, those friendships I really cherish. I could call them today and they would help me with whatever I needed. My relationship with my parent's is good. It's difficult now because of the time difference and stuff. It has definitely strengthened because of my experience. When we first move to a place, if it's some place completely unfamiliar, all we have is family. But I think that was even more so the case between me and my sister. She was the person I could talk to about missing Guam and wanting to go back and stuff. Also being in Shanghai, everything was so lenient, she was the one person I could tell about everything I did. Moving around definitely strengthened my relationship with my entire family."

Jon was 99% sure that he was moving to the US for college. I asked him to elaborate on his expectations and experience of repatriation.

"I was pretty set on going to school in the college, but I wasn't saying no to going to school in the UK or Australia. I knew, just like every time I went to soccer or basketball camp, I knew that as soon as I told people where I was from, the really stupid, ignorant questions would come out. But having done that all my life, I guess it doesn't even faze me as much anymore. I knew coming to college wasn't going to be a difficult thing at all. It was like going to camp every summer. I knew what to expect. I think that's the reason I thought coming back to the US, going to college, wouldn't very difficult at all. I readjusted really quickly. It was fine. I think it's just because I'm so used to moving around. When I moved to Shanghai, I flew in on a Tuesday, went to orientation on Wednesday, and went to school on Thursday. I never had the time to get used to it. We just had to jump into it and just wing it. But, I chose the wrong school. I knew there would be dumb people asking me why I spoke English without an accent and all that crap but going to a really small school in Michigan, with only people in the area that go to school there, that was a really bad decision.

I asked if that impacted his sense of belonging in the US.

"I mean, I felt like I belonged pretty quickly when I got to the US. I know that I belong. But at the same time, I want to live abroad. When it comes to stuff outside of the US, the majority of the US doesn't care. It gets on my nerves. When you're living in the US, yea you meet people from other countries but you don't see as much. In China, you go to one bar, or restaurant or anywhere, and you can meet people from all over Europe in one place, one night."

"If I had a choice to have another nationality? I would have done it. I know I'm an American. If I didn't have my American passport... it's the main reason I feel American. I don't know. I've been confused my whole life. Even if I got another passport, I would still consider myself American because even though I wasn't brought up in the US my whole life, it was the culture and lifestyle I guess in which my parents wanted me to grow up in."

As he seemed to coming to the end of retelling the progression of his life so far, I wanted to know his reflections on his experience. Was being a TCK a benefit or an obstacle for Jon?

"Definitely beneficial. When you're a TCK, you have all other kids who are on the same boat. You had third culture kids from all over the world and that helps you understand the world more. I feel like it's hard to say if being a TCK is good or bad. It's not bad because I grew up around the world and got to see things people only see in movies. But I don't know if I would say good because I don't have one specific home. But then again, I have many homes and I don't really mind that I don't have a specific home. As long as I have a place to keep all my stuff, it's all good."

"The hardest part of being a TCK is the stupid people that ask why you don't have an accent when you speak English. The people who don't understand my background. The people who when they ask where

are you from and when you say somewhere else besides the US and they look at you like oh but you speak such good English. Yea. The ignorant people. But the best part, the knowledge you get from meeting other TCKs, is great. It's worth it."

"I think Americans would view us as lost children. A little negatively. Most Americans who grow up in one place their whole life have that sense of identity, that one home and place they call their home. As opposed to asking a TCK, if we're asked where you're from, we pause or just answer the question with another question. I would say they would see it as a negative lifestyle because you don't have a home. But I would not agree with that at all."

Now what will Jon do? What's next for him? While I had no doubt he would tell me he would be going back overseas, I was intrigued by his desire to immerse himself back in the international school system.

"After college, I want to be on a plane to somewhere in Asia, to be a PE teacher at an international school. I've been a student at an international school and an athlete. I feel like I can help kids that are going to have to go through the same thing in the future. And I don't know, international schools, I feel like that's my home in a way too. Because everybody has the same experience there. Similar background, same experiences. That's how I feel about everybody at international schools. But ten years from now? I would want to be on a coaching staff of some major soccer team. Not in the US. Hopefully, Europe. I definitely don't see myself living in one place the rest of my life, and I don't know if I would say every few years. Kind of like the teachers at my school, the duration would vary according to my contract I guess. Some give out longer contracts, and some shorter. I would want to be on the move but maybe a few years here, a long period there, then a few years somewhere else. I never really thought about my future too much till just recently. What I wanted, where I wanted to live, what I wanted to do, always changed. So I didn't really. I wouldn't want my children to grow up any other way than as a TCK. If I grew up in the US my whole life, I wouldn't be as knowledgeable about the world."

### Timelines

The following are timelines created for each participant, depicting references to identity and belonging that were made in their stories. The timeliness will hopefully present the similarities and differences in the experiences of the participants, and will also display each individual's experience and development of their identity and belonging over time. Organizing the data in this way helped me begin to code and categorize the participants' responses.

# TCK 1

Born in New York, USA

Three years old: moved to California

Predominantly white, Catholic school, all came from very similar homes

Attended a small international school. There were only fifteen students in her grade and most of them were either half or fully German. Many of the classes were in German. She was friends with the only other American friend in her grade because they had many similarities but she still learned lots from her surroundings at school and her peers and was forced to be immersed in the culture.

She remembers having a rough time when she first moved to Tokyo. "We walked into our apartment and I started bawling. It smelled weird, I never lived in an apartment before, and we only have one floor, no staircase, no yard... I just didn't know what to make of the city. I had always lived in the woods."

They lived in a German town with 2000 people and no Americans. Yet they were able to keep a fairly American lifestyle at home because they lived only twenty minutes away from the American base which they could freely go out before 9/11. "We would get foreign food; they had a shopping mart, a theater. We would hang out a lot there."

After a year she switched to the American school where there were many other American students. She made a lot of American friends and spoke very little German while attending this school.

She attended the American school in Japan. They had an American curriculum. Though her friends were from all over the world, they were all very Americanized. She spoke English with her friends. Her classes were in English. She says her school and friends were more American than in Germany and says she got a lot of her American identity back in Tokyo.

Two years old: move to a house an hour and a half away

Eleven years old: moved to Frankfurt, Germany.

Fourteen years old: moved to Tokyo, Japan

Five years old: moved back to upstate New York

Her parents had talked about moving overseas before news broke about their imminent move to Germany but she had never taken them seriously. She was very upset when she heard they had to move overseas. She had to get accustomed to the idea very quickly because they only had four weeks before they have to move and she did not get to say goodbye to her friends because it was during summer vacation. She was scared because she didn't know what to expect and she didn't even know where the country was. "I just knew it wasn't the States and it was going to be completely different."

She was told by her parents she was moving to Japan. "We didn't take the news too well. It was up in the air, when I was going. We could have stayed the whole year; we could have left in a few weeks. I think that really affected me too, not knowing what to expect."

She only took Japanese for a year but says she did not need to learn how to speak it, besides basic words, enough to get around or direct a cab, because many people in Tokyo speak English. Because she looked so different from them, Japanese people would speak English to her. "I didn't even try to really communicate with them. They were friendly but I just didn't really ever need to." She also lived in a very American community. A lot of the Americans lived in the same area. While in her expat community she did not feel foreign. She would almost forget she was in Tokyo. "It was I guess a home away from home. Yea, if I was in Japanese area, you look around, no body looks like, I felt like a foreigner. But a lot of times because I was around foreigners a lot too, it's like being in New York City."

*"Being in Tokyo, the expat community is your only support network, and so we all become really close and establish great relationships. We live a similar lifestyle, and we get to know a lot of other families with a similar background as us."*

*"I could say "I lived in Germany before this, and before that I was born and raised in NY," and people would understand what I meant. I could easily talk about my past and there were people I realized I could relate to."*

*She would come back to the US every summer and the US felt less like home. "I didn't really have friends back in the US anymore except I guess my neighbors. I was so young and I lost contact with my friends. But every year, I would get less close to my neighbors. When I got back to the US, people couldn't relate to us, what we experienced overseas. They didn't understand. They would ask questions that I couldn't even begin to explain. They really couldn't comprehend that there were international schools and communities over there."*

*I never had a problem answering "Where are you from?" before college. In Germany, I was from America. In Tokyo, I could say "I lived in Germany before this, and before that I was born and raised in NY," and people would understand what I meant. I could easily talk about my past and there were people I realized that I could relate to. At Penn State I can't answer the question like that so I've learned to say, New York. I guess it depends who I'm talking to. Sometimes I won't mention that I lived overseas. Like to people here. Sometimes I will say I lived overseas for a little bit but not go into too much detail. And sometimes I will talk about my experiences abroad immediately"*

*It sucks, when you move here, well in my case, it's almost like you're covering up your past. And like, you can never open about it. The main reason is because people can't relate. That's a common theme for me. It's just, I feel self-conscious, or I don't know, my experiences don't really have any effect, or impact, on anybody else so why should I talk about them. They can't relate because they won't know what I'm talking about. They don't know what it's like to go to an international school. But over the past few years, it has gotten tremendously easy to talk to Americans. I really feel different than I did when I first got here."*

*Her parents did not really try and immerse themselves in the culture.*

*She had always just assumed she would be returning to the US for college because her schooling had always been American. "I kind of just picked a school and figured I'll figure it out when I get there. I kind of just winged it."*

*Attends Penn State in Pennsylvania, USA*

*I don't know I feel like I don't act like a whole American. Maybe it's just the fact that... I really don't know. I have to think about that. I just feel like I'm not fully American.*

*She wants to eventually go back overseas but would like to intermittently return to the US. She doesn't want her children to be "constant TCKs," but would like them to be more in touch with their American side by coming back to the US to live a few years between stints overseas.*

*"I visited Germany when I living in Japan and a lot of German came back to me. I immediately felt like I'd never left. It's like riding a bike."*

*Each year, America was less and less my home. After a few years, Tokyo became my home base because it was where my family was. My dad would stay mostly in Tokyo and I guess that made it seem like we were all together in Tokyo. My family was really close when we were together in Japan.*

*"I just feel like I have to classify myself as American because I haven't done anything international in a while. My lifestyle here is very American. My friends are all American. I don't know what I am. I'm not fully American. I can't classify myself as that because I've had a different experience than other Americans. I'm not German. I'm not Japanese. I'm not fully international. I feel like I have the same....ambitions... values as Americans. What am I? I don't know what to classify myself."*

## TCK 2

Born in Delaware, USA

One year old: moved to West Virginia

As his German improved he would go out and do things around Germany with his friends and explore the area. Also, because his looks make it easy for him to blend in with the German locals, many locals would come up to him speaking German. He experienced immense freedom while overseas and it is a huge appeal to live overseas again. This freedom he says has affected who he is today.

When he first moved to Germany it was difficult at first because his family could not speak the language. "Just speaking English was a little hard." This was the only time he remembers feeling like an expat.

He visited the US every year, once a year over the summer break. They did not have a house. They would go back to visit relatives and family friends. "The US wasn't my home base. I definitely felt like Germany was my home pretty quickly. I guess because my family was there, my friends were there, and it was high school and that's when you do a lot of your development."

He identifies himself as an American. "Germany is definitely a part of me. It's definitely changed who I am. It's changed my thinking." It has changed the way he looks at things. He's more open to things, willing to try new things. He began to notice stereotypes of Americans upon repatriation that he didn't notice before. "Things would stand out to me more and I would be like, "I guess that really is American." Being back wasn't too different but I could see the difference." He also felt out of place at times. There were times when people questioned him for doing things and vice versa. But if he didn't know something it didn't faze him too much. "I don't feel like a foreigner but it's definitely different. I guess I do have some sort of foreign aspect but I don't feel like an outsider because of it."

Six years old: moved to Pennsylvania

Thirteen years old: moved to Dusseldorf, Germany. Was not perturbed about the idea of moving overseas. "I was just like, "yeah let's go," and then we went." Besides the fact that he was older and remembered more about the move, this was no different for him than moving around in the US which he was accustomed to. He also attributes this to his easy going nature.

Became highly and quickly integrated into the German culture for a number of reasons: most of neighborhood was German (only two American families, including his own, in town), parents went with the flow did not try to "push American things" on him, his parents orchestrated frequent trips around Europe and were always immersing themselves in the culture. He attended an international school where its' main goal is to maintain the host culture. His friends were not American and he spoke a mix of German and English to them. He had a tutor for a while and was able to speak easily to the locals in German. By the end of his four year stay, he would find himself thinking in German and sometimes would know a word in German but not in English. "Germany was a huge part of me when I left." Never felt particularly foreign or misplaced.

Looked at a few colleges in the US and a few in the UK.

Started at Pennsylvania State University

He took German classes in college. He took Japanese and hopes to take other languages as well. He also took up Korean martial arts. He has a handful of international friends from these international activities. He acknowledges being drawn to people of international backgrounds. "When I meet people who are international, I definitely find it more interesting than talking to somebody who has grown up in PA their entire life. I guess we have more in common. We have a lot of the same experiences."

*His parents move back to PA his sophomore year. "I think when I lived in Germany it was definitely home. But now because my parents live here, I just say I'm from PA. I usually kind of just go with where my parents live."*

*"I definitely want to be back in Germany. It's one of the first things I want to do after I graduate."*

*"I acknowledge that I am an American but I don't embrace it to its core"*

*"I think I had more of Germany in me when I first got here, than I do now because I think I've adapted to being back here. But I definitely did take some of Germany with me."*

*His main reason for moving overseas again would be the cultural variety available overseas in comparison to the US. "Maybe you could find this in New York or something but it's different. I would still choose to live overseas... I really don't know why."*

*"I definitely miss living in Germany. But when I was in Germany, I didn't miss living here."*

*I could see myself living in Germany definitely, but I think it would be cool to move around overseas. Moving every couple of years wouldn't be bad. I guess eventually I would want to settle down. But I could see myself living overseas indefinitely.*

*He does want his kids to be TCKs. "The experience they would get, the way that they would grow up would open up so many different possibilities and opportunities for them that you wouldn't just get while living in America. I would definitely want my kids to have what I experienced."*

# TCK 3

Born in California, USA

One year old: moved to West Virginia

*She felt both Australian and Argentine. She lived in a slightly nicer area than locals, thought it was still a local suburb. She went to events at the Australian embassy and celebrated Australian holidays but she also did many Argentine things and she didn't look too different from them either. It was impossible not to feel Argentine she states. "Argentina is not very Western by any means. My friends were all Argentine. It was inevitable that I was slowly becoming Argentine as well, and it was apparent in my house too." "I thought I was going to be there the whole time and graduate from high school there, so I felt local. Also Argentines are not friendly towards foreigners so I almost feel like we had no*

*When asked where are you from, she would reply with the last place she lived. Though she still considered Australia home, this seemed easier to her than getting into everything and also she has lost her Australian accent over time, requiring having to answer further questions. If she chooses to elaborate, she will tell her inquirer she is originally from Australia.*

*Eventually after a year, she made a bunch of friends and she learned to speak Spanish through intensive Spanish classes. Her friends were all Argentine because she attended a local school. "By my third year, I pretty much felt normal about being there."*

*I didn't want to go to the states for college. I never wanted to. I was first planning on going home for college, in Australia. I ended up going to Boston because a lot of kids from my school were going there."*

Moved to Australia immediately after birth

*She grew up as a local in Australia. She was like everybody else, especially because in Australia, "everybody was from somewhere else." She never felt foreign because Australia was all she ever knew. She didn't know anything else. She had an Australian accent and attended a local school. She did not experience an American or Canadian influence in her home and she felt very integrated into the Australian culture. She thought she was going to live in Australia forever.*

*Eleven years old: Moved to Argentina. Attended a local school and felt very different from everybody else. All the other students were born and raised there and they had all the same friends since they were young. "I was just this random foreigner who came in." Reflecting on this move, she feels this was the hardest move because "moving from somewhere completely English and everything was so easy to somewhere so chaotic, a third world country where I don't speak the language, and I'm eleven years old and I didn't know anyone. That was really hard. I didn't even know where Argentina was." The first few years in Argentina were horrible for her and all she wanted was to go to home to Australia.*

Fifteen years old: moved to Mexico City

*Her easy transition in Mexico she feels is attributed to the fact that she attended an international British school. "The minute I got there, everybody wanted to talk to me, and making friends was so much easier. My friends were from all over." She lived a very expat life in Mexico and she was aware of the differences between her family and the local people there. She lived in an expat neighborhood and Mexico was very welcoming of foreigners.*

She moved to Boston to attend Boston University.

Coming to the US, she definitely experienced culture shock. "It was so different. It was so Western. Everything was so tame, especially coming from Argentina and Mexico." The way she grew up was not American by any means, thus was an adjustment. She has many international friends, friends with international backgrounds, and Americans who are interested in international aspects. "It was hard to get along with American people at first. There were very few Americans in my school in Mexico and none in Argentina."

She comments on a lot of people in the US not knowing what a TCK is. "There aren't many people who are international like me. I don't know many people who have moved around like I have."

The US has yet to become her home. It's where her life is and she has adopted the American lifestyle but that's the extent to which she feels American. She does identify with Latinos a lot. "More than being Western."

Though she has never thought about it, she does consider TCK an identity. "It definitely is. I think moving around so much made me who I am now."

She has multiple identities. She has a specific identity in the US, Australia, and a Latina identity. "I don't like one more than the other. They're just different ways of living."

"Where do I belong the most? Australia. I lived in Australia the longest, we have a house there, and my family is there. We were always going home there and I feel like that's been more of a home to me than anywhere. I don't think I'll really be Australian till I live there again for some but I think it would be a quick transition."

She does not want her children to be TCKs. "I personally don't want to move around anymore. I don't want to put my child through that. It's difficult. The feeling I felt when my parents said we were moving... I don't want them to experience that."

Though she's gotten a fairly positive reaction when telling people about her background, she finds that she does in fact choose not to talk about it. "I just don't want to tell people the whole story of where I come from. It's just so elaborate and so hard to explain to someone. I think sometimes I wish I could just be like, "oh yeah I'm from wherever.""

"I think it's really annoying to have to explain where I'm from every time I meet someone. It's obnoxious. It just annoys me. It's hard to connect to certain people because of it. They just can't relate to me."

"The lack of home really does suck, but it's kind of gotten to the point where it's wherever my parents are." Her parents have moved back to Australia and this is one of the reasons why she considers Australia home.

She wants to move home back to Australia and stay there. "At this point in my life, I just want to move home, live at home, and be there for a while. I don't want to move around anymore. I'm sick of it. It's tiring. Having to start fresh every time... versus going home and being with my parents and having a few friends that I know. It will be easier to get started with my life. It will be a little foreign when I go back, but I think over time I'll feel fine."

The idea of staying put is something desirable yet she does not if she will be able to do it. "I mean thinking about staying anywhere for more than an X amount of years freaks me out. I think just having the same lifestyle for a while, I just get freaked out. I'm like, oh my god get me out of here. I want stability. But baby steps. I hope I just stay put. I don't want to keep moving."

## TCK 4

*Attended the American school in Dubai. Most of his friends were American, as well as other expatriates from Europe. His lifestyle was very sheltered. Lived in a guarded, expat neighborhood. Never felt like Dubai was a part of him. It was easy to get harassed outside of the gated community so stayed inside of it out of fear.*

*Attended an American school. The first school was in the expatriate community, the second American school, which he started going to a year later, was surrounded by local neighborhood. There, he began to be exposed to Chinese culture. Would go into local neighborhood for lunch, his maid would cook Chinese dinners, celebrated Chinese holidays at home, his house was decorated with Chinese furniture/ornaments, began to explore the city more as he got older, ventured out into the local community often, took Chinese classes and was able to communicate enough to get around.*

*Nine years old: moved to Dubai. Skeptical and nervous to be moving overseas where he didn't know the culture or the language. He didn't know anything.*

*Year and a half later: accustomed to being back in the US, had integrated back in, he thought they were done moving and had gotten used to the fact that Michigan was where he was going to spend the rest of his life. "It felt right."*

*Finds out he's moving to Shanghai and is upset.*

*Going back to Michigan yearly for summers. "It felt like I was going home."*

*Born in Michigan, USA*

*Five years old: moved to Florida, USA*

*Moved back to Michigan. Difficult at first. The people were very different from the people he was used to from overseas. Less friendly and not as open to new comers. "It was hard to break into a group of friends." While in Dubai he had felt Michigan was home, and then returns only to feel "weird" being back and to feel out of place.*

*"I felt like I belonged at the school. I belonged in that community of expats. I was definitely just an American living in Dubai."*

*Thirteen years old: Moved to Shanghai, China. He felt scared again being immersed into a brand new culture. He lived in an expatriate community. "I feel like expat communities are replicated across countries." "I didn't really know too much about the city life and it was intimidating when I first got there."*

*"I felt like I was getting into the culture." Shanghai felt like home at the time. However, Michigan would remain his true home because it was his home "to go back to," it was where he was from, where he was born, he returned there every year, his relatives lived there, and he kept track of US sports, culture, events etc.*

*He feels like belongs in the US. He doesn't think he sticks out like a "sore thumb." But at the same time, he also feels like he has learned to belong wherever he is.*

*First learned of the term TCK while overseas and considers himself a TCK.*

*His home in Michigan is decorated like an expat home. It has a very international feel with decorations and furniture from all over the country.*

*Has found that he talks about living overseas a lot now when in situations outside of college such as at the work place, applying for new jobs.*

*Always knew he would be returning to the US for college.*

*Attends University of Michigan*

*Sixteen years old: moved back to Michigan. This was the toughest move for him. He was leaving many friends, a girlfriend, a lifestyle behind. "It was so different coming back to suburban Michigan and I was used to being around so many cultures." He felt American but it "weird" because people failed to understand his background. "They didn't get what it meant to be like me, to live overseas but not be Chinese." He stopped talking about living overseas or tried not to mention it.*

*Feels like he acts very American today but has developed a deep respect and curiosity for other cultures. He also feels he is very sensitive towards people being ignorant and disrespectful of other cultures and their people. Something he has taken from being at international schools is being eager to welcome to new students. He is a Chinese minor.*

*He wants to move overseas again. Not immediately but eventually he hopes to spend a few years overseas. "I feel like I've been overseas so much, I just want to go back again, experience more. I feel like there's so much more than just boring America." He wants his children to grow up a TCK. "There's so much to life than just living in the US. If I had the opportunity to go back, if I had the chance, I would go back for sure."*

## TCK 5

Born in Hawaii, USA

Seven years old: moved to  
Guam, USA

Six months later: moved to Korea. To a certain extent, some Korean culture was instilled in him prior to his move there through his mom but he claims he has always felt foreign there.

Most of his time in Korea was spent at his school or the hotel where he lived and his father was the GM. He was definitely still an expat in Korea even though his mother is Korean. He went to a school on the army base. Everything on the base was American. "It makes everybody who lives there feel like they're back in the US." To him, there was no difference going to school in Korea and going to public school in LA.

Twelve years old:  
Moved to  
Shanghai, China

He lived in a hotel just like in Korea but this time was surrounded by many Chinese people in the hotel. He also got around town a lot by himself and spoke to many local people. He didn't feel like a foreigner in Shanghai but not like a local Chinese person either. He knew Shanghai like the back of his hand and felt very safe there. By his third year in Shanghai, he was aware that he was staying in Shanghai till graduation. This exacerbated the feeling that Shanghai was home. He attended an American school which was a big part in setting everybody that went to school there aside from the culture. The school was gated, gargantuan, and clearly for expatriates.

Two and a half years old: moved to California, USA. He remained there for four years.

LA remained his home while in Korea. It was the longest place he had lived at this point and it was all he really knew.

After a year in Korea, he moved back to Guam, "which felt nice because at least I was going to somewhere I knew," he comments. He went back to the same school and resumed the same friends. Guam became his home quickly.

Every summer, he would go back to the US. This did not feel like he was returning home but instead like he was visiting. However, it did not require him to readjust because it was something he had been doing since before had moved overseas.

After four years in Guam, he finds out he is moving to Shanghai, China. "From a really young age, I knew that we would be moving around a lot to other places, all over the world because of my dad's job." This was something he had come to terms with but he was still upset about having to leave Guam. He claims this may have been the hardest move. "I was 12 and I was starting to grow up and who you are really starts to come out you know. If I had stayed in Guam and not had moved to Shanghai, I would be completely different than I am today." However, he was told the second day of school and moved the second week of school, thus had very little time to process everything had had to "get over it."

He was fairly certain he would return to the US for college though he did not rule out the possibility of moving to the UK or Australia for college.

"Going to a really small school in Michigan, where the only people who go there are from that area... that was a really bad decision."

Right after college graduation, he hopes to be on a plane to somewhere in Asia to be a PE teacher at an international school. He feels that international schools serve as a home to him due to the fact that everybody has similar experiences and backgrounds there. Though he does like Shanghai a lot and wouldn't mind going back, he would be happy to move anywhere overseas. He wants to "surround [himself] in the culture and let it be a part of [him]." Eventually, he hopes to maybe someday be on a coaching staff for some major soccer team, preferably not in the US. He wants his children to be TCKs as well. "I wouldn't have it any other way."

His expectations of repatriating back for college: "It was like going to camp every summer I knew what to expect. I knew that as soon as I told people where I was from, the really stupid, ignorant questions would come out. I knew there would be dumb people asking me why I spoke English without an accent."

He transferred to Grand Canyon University in Arizona.

He identifies with being an American because he feels he has to. It's what he's grown accustomed to saying due to the fact that he lived overseas. His passport and the American culture and lifestyle that was instilled throughout his life is what makes him feel American. But he claims if he had a choice to have another nationality he would have changed his nationality by now. "I've been confused my whole life." He has multiple identities according to where he is.

He does not want to stay in one place the rest of his life but he wouldn't want to be on the move every few years either. It would depend on his teaching contract but he would want to be on the move "maybe a few years here, a longer period there, and then a few years somewhere else."

Attended Albion College in Michigan.

He felt like he belonged quickly upon repatriation. "I readjusted really quickly. It was fine. I think it's just because I'm so used to moving around. I never really was given the time to slowly get used to the idea of moving; we just had to jump into it and just wing it."

"I think of TCKs as their own culture. It's like their own nationality. I would consider myself a native of that culture. I consider TCK as an identity."

"I have many homes and I don't really mind that I don't have a specific home." Home right now is Arizona. But he has many places he calls home for many different reasons. "When someone asks me where are you from, I say, what do you mean?" So is home everywhere or nowhere? "Home is everywhere. Home is the world. If I said to somebody home is nowhere, if twenty other people said home is nowhere, we're all alone together, and that sort of becomes a home. To us that becomes our home right there because there are twenty other people there just like you. It creates a connection between those people. But with home is the world, I would like to think that's more applicable because it doesn't matter where those twenty people are in the world, because we're all still connected, wherever we are in the world."

"I know that I belong in the US, but at the same time, I want to live abroad." "If I had a choice I would choose to live outside of the US... if I had to pick a place in the world to stay forever it would be Shanghai."

## Chapter 4

### Results & Discussion

The main purpose of this study was to explore identity and belonging among American college senior TCKs. The following were my research questions:

RQ1: How does identity development evolve and change for a TCK?

RQ2: What are TCK's experiences of feeling that they belong in the different cultures or places they live or with which they associate?

RQ3: What are possible influences on TCK's identity development over time?

RQ4: What are possible influences on TCK's experiences of belonging?

RQ5: How has being a TCK influenced their desire for future mobility?

In this section of my paper, I will describe the findings from the analysis of the interviews. A number of major themes emerged, which were: identity as a dialectic and pastiche, belonging, issues of place and moving, and future identity and mobility.

#### Identity as a Dialectic and Pastiche

As a TCK myself, I know that the identity of a TCK is intricate and distinct. Thus, my first research question focused on learning more about how other TCK's identities have evolved and changed over the course of their lives. An analysis of the five TCKs interviews revealed a description of the identity these individuals develop over time in response to their experiences. Under the main theme of identity as a dialectic and pastiche, four sub-themes emerged, which included: amalgamated identity, multiple identities, fluid identity, and TCK identity.

#### *Amalgamated Identity*

It became immediately clear that all five participants were possessors of an amalgamated identity simply through their description of who they are today. They presented identities that were formed by bits and pieces of different cultures. Their interviews suggested that TCKs are an amalgamation of many different cultures.

An example of an amalgamated identity from the TCKs I interviewed are provided by TCK 2, who lived in Germany for four years, considers to have "taken Germany with him" as he finds himself thinking in German from time to time, but also has taken Japanese classes in college, perhaps because the area from which he resided in was populated by a considerable number of Japanese people, listens and dresses like a European, yet still recognizes and is aware of his American identity. Another example is by TCK 3, who has a large supply of Australian food, and relates most to other Latino people, and has developed an affinity to the American lifestyle. Made up of a cultural medley, these individuals are unable to easily explain who they are, what they are, and where they come from as they are concoctions of multiple ingredients.

Past research has described this type of amalgamated identity the participants in this study had described and it has been found to be characteristic of TCKs in past research. "TCKs take parts of different host cultures and combine them into his or her own unique value system and lifestyle" (Stultz, 2003). This idea of naturally shifting further from their monocultural ways, picking up bits and pieces of cultures they are exposed to along the way, ultimately forming this hodgepodge of an identity is discussed in Stultz's

study on TCKs; “Ungluing themselves from the cultural identity of their monocultural parents, these individuals are incorporating portions of various cultures to create who they are” (Stultz, 2003).

### *Multiple Identities*

Not only do TCKs possess an amalgamated identity, there is some evidence that they also have multiple identities. The participants in this study provided support for that claim. All participants made statements that suggested that they possessed multiple identities. TCK 3 and 5 illustrated their different identities in depth, respectively.

“When I’m in the US, I’m more American, college-y. When I go home, to Australia, we do a lot of underground music stuff, a lot more art and culture. And then there’s that Mexican, Latina thing that comes into play sometimes. And I guess being a TCK is an identity. But I don’t like one more than the other. They’re just different ways of living.”

“If the people that I hang out with now, here in Arizona, saw how I acted in China I would say there would be a difference in my identity. I would act differently in Korea too because I’m half Korean. And I feel like I would act differently in a place I’ve never been before too. That’s why I have to disagree when people think ethnicity is your identity. Because it’s not.”

Among their multiple identities, TCK 1 and 4 however, did not feel they had identities resembling their host countries. Instead, they, as well as all of the other participants, both directly and indirectly, described a separate identity formed in response to living overseas, which still remains within them today. This TCK identity is explored in depth later in the text.

Stultz found in her study on international school students, “with each identity an attached set of values and behaviors come with it. Feeling as though they are different people in different cultures is called a split sense of identity” (Stultz, 2003). Research on whether one identity is more dominant than the other, or if numerous satellite identities emerge out of a main identity, has yet to be conducted (Grimshaw and Sears, 2009). However, numerous identities can exist at once, and the maintenance and negotiation between them is in fact an obstacle for possessors (Grimshaw and Sears, 2009). With every new culture or environment they are exposed to, an individual develops a different sense of self, according to what fits best with their surroundings. This can be applied to monocultural individuals in various contexts as well. A person may act differently among their friends or at school with their teachers, than the way they behave at home with their family. Moving in and out of cultures, a shift that requires larger modifications will undoubtedly have a similar effect. A TCK living in Japan may develop a new identity compatible with Japanese culture, than showcasing the identity they exhibit in a Latino culture.

### *Fluid Identity*

In order to successfully accommodate the constant changes these individuals are exposed to, TCKs learn to form a fluid identity. The fluidity used to describe their identity comes from their continuous fluctuating and reformulating of their identity, as a reaction to their changing environment. They eventually become permanently accommodating and highly adaptable creatures out of necessity and are able to enter and exit their various environments with ease.

TCKs experience various levels of adversity when they enter a new host country, however, in general, their struggle seems to be brief, and it is evident that over time, they learn to transition effortlessly, customizing themselves to adapt to novelties that accompany the new culture. TCK 2, 4, and 5, coincidentally all males, described easier transitions while relocating from one country to the next, than TCK 1 and 3 did. Yet, despite their varying time lapsed to reach a state of normality, each participant, during each transition, eventually found a way to adapt and live within their new environment.

All participants, except TCK 1, mentioned or described the ease to which they were able to move in and out of their host culture and their home culture during vacations. They did not appear to view their annual trips between the US and their host country as an activity of discomfort. This ability to move in and out of cultures is also seen when returning to a once familiar but long forgotten culture. TCK 1 returned to Germany after she had moved to Japan. She recalls immediately feeling as if she had never left. “A lot of German came back to me. It’s like riding a bike.” TCK 5 also experienced an easy return to Guam when he was moved back there for a second time as a child. This concept also remained true for all participants when they entered, varying, yet overall fairly smooth, repatriations as young adults.

The fluidity of their identity is not only described by their adaptability but also by their identity across time which is in constant metamorphosis. Their identity timelines show how their levels of identifying themselves to a culture or an identity, changes across time according to what their exposure.

This type of fluid identity has been found to be a characteristic of a concept founded by Adler, called the “multicultural man,” which is used to describe an international identity formed due to its non-static surroundings (Fail, Thompson, & Walker, 2004). This is a fitting description of TCKs. A multicultural man is described as someone who’s “identity is fluid, mobile and open to change and variation... his identity is not fixed or permanent but is temporary and open to change” (Fail, Thompson, & Walker, 2004). Just like the TCKs in my study, over time, their self-concept is challenged, and a reevaluation becomes necessary as they realize their previously learned behaviors are not applicable to their new culture. The constant readjustment results in a “chameleon-like quality which may affect his or her long-term identity well into adulthood” (Fail, Thompson, & Walker, 2004). This description of the fluidity of a multicultural man’s identity is analogous to the flexible identity of a TCK, both constantly subjugated to change.

### *TCK Identity*

While these participants are overseas, their identity is undeniably being transformed, as they develop these various features within their identity. These unique characteristic, generated from their upbringing, are what form this concept of a TCK identity.

### *A Shared TCK Lifestyle*

The TCK identity develops from elements distinctive to their shared lifestyle. The following were shared characteristics of lifestyle discerned from the TCK narratives.

All participants were immersed in a cross cultural world. They were all also a part of a mobile world to varying degrees, whether they were the ones moving or were in a community where others around them were constantly on the move. All participants had the intention to go “back” to their original country eventually and did not view their stay in their host country as permanent. TCK 1 and TCK 4 were certain they would be returning to the US for college. TCK 2 and TCK 5 were fairly sure they would be returning to the US for college, but also explored colleges in other English speaking countries. However if they had not returned to the US for college, it was implied that returning to the US in the future was expected. TCK 3 was the only participant who did not have any plans to return to the US; however she still proves this characteristic true, for she always had plans of returning to Australia for college which she regards as her “home.” This finding, interestingly, is analogous to how attached these participants seemed to be to their American culture and the degree to which they were able to maintain their American identity throughout their upbringing, TCK 1 and 4 being most attached to their American identity, and TCK 3 being the least. All participants lived privileged lifestyles, and/or were a part of the expat community through their international schools or neighborhoods, which created a distinction, of varying degrees, between them and the locals. Regardless of the foreign country one resides in, as noted by TCK 4 and ascertained from

personal experiences in numerous expatriate communities in various countries, most expatriate communities and schools are duplicated across countries. Fellow inhabitants, also of the TCK environment, for the most part, are consistent as well. The environment that analogous people of the expatriate niches enforce a common culture, thus a shared identity is formed. TCK identity results from these listed similarities in lifestyle.

### ***TCK Solidarity Fosters TCK Identity***

Not only is the TCK identity fostered by the parallels in TCK's lifestyle, the communities and solidarity formed around them, such as international school or expatriate establishments and neighborhoods, also help the emergence of this identity. Like other groups these individuals embrace and seclude themselves from others, forming their own society with distinct values, beliefs, and behaviors. This is common among minority groups, which is what TCKs are. Individuals receive support and mutual understanding from these communities in host countries. Outside of these walls, these two elements are hard to receive as an expatriate, thus resulting in attachment and even embodiment. Within the confines of their communities and schools, a particular culture is birthed, and in turn, creates a union among the inhabitants of this culture. This congruency among individuals, then, enforces and urges the development of an identity that is a product of this culture. TCKs that are surrounded by other families and individuals like themselves who they identify and relate to, experience an encouragement and approval of their shared identity. This is a large proponent behind the growth of what has emerged as a TCK identity.

The following comment by TCK 1 illustrates the affection held for these societies they were a part of, which provided them with their own culture and comrades.

“[In an expatriate community or international school] I could say “I lived in Germany before this, and before that I was born and raised in NY,” and people would understand what I meant. I could easily talk about my past and there were people I realized that I could relate to. At Penn State I can't answer the question like that so I've learned to say, New York ... Being in Tokyo, the expat community is your only support network, and so we all become really close and establish great relationships. We live a similar lifestyle, and we get to know a lot of other families with a similar background as us”

This idea of solidarity among TCKs fostering a customized identity is additionally explored under the subheading of contextual affordances in the issues of moving and place.

### ***Characteristics of a TCK Identity***

The participants exhibited shared characteristics and learned preferences, as a result of their experiences, which I have deemed as elements of a TCK identity. The following are common characteristics developed due to their upbringing discussed in the interviews collected.

All participants exhibited signs of confusion in terms of how best to describe and define who they are. Their ambiguity seemed to be a common reoccurrence as they walked me through their lives and possible future plans.

TCK 1 and 3 talked about being indecisive and flaky due to their ever changing environment and multiple exposures.

All participants commented on this ability to “wing” things, which ties into their ability to be adaptable, expressed further in the following comments.

TCK 2: “Being there with all the different cultures and my international school, if you're closed minded, you're not going to go anywhere. My school had 43 different countries represented so if

you're closed minded, you're pretty stuck...I guess I see this [TCK identity] in the way I look at things. I think I'm more open at looking at uh... I don't know, just to try new things. And also like, looking at viewpoints in discussions and stuff like that. I love trying anything new, food, activities, anything. That really affected me."

TCK 1: "Meeting a lot of people. Different kinds of people. We're open to new things, we'll try a lot of different things. We join groups, we apply for positions all over the world. Whenever I travel to a country I've never been to before, I feel like I can navigate that country easier than most people."

TCK 3: "The minute I got there [international school in Mexico], everybody wanted to talk to me, and making friends was so much easier. Most of my friends were from all over ... It's made me a lot more open minded. It's made me friendly and outgoing because I kinda had to be. Definitely more accepting."

This has impacted TCK3's friend preference, as she continues to seek and make friends from all over the world today. The quick and easy nature of making friends at an international school has translated into the way she makes friends today.

"Yeah I like a lot of people and I get along with a lot of people... I think that, no matter where I go, I am going to find more people and befriend more people, and that affects the existing relationships that I have. I lose touch with people really easily. It's easy to meet new people so it's harder to maintain older friendships for me."

This is characteristic of her mobile childhood, having to start over frequently, dropping old friends and making new ones.

The idea that the TCK environment influences the ease to which friendships are made, was consistent in the rest of the participant's results as well. Here is an example of TCK 5's account on his experience with friendships as a TCK.

"Moving around, more than anything, has helped my ability to make friends. It's helped me make friends, but not necessarily keep friends. It's easy to make friends because as soon as you move somewhere making friends quickly becomes kinda vital. I actually came to my college because I didn't know anybody. It's something I don't mind. I know a lot of people would."

When TCK 4 first repatriated, one of the first differences he noticed between his expatriate life and life back in the US was the discrepancies in his peers.

"I came back to some of the same friends and they were so different from my friends overseas. People overseas are a lot friendlier and are more open to people moving in because they're always dealing with people moving but in Michigan, they live in the same house their whole childhood, same friends and everything, so they weren't too welcoming."

In addition to depicting a high degree of acceptance and the ease to which friendships are formed for TCKs, this comment illustrates the difference between individuals who did not grow up in a TCK environment, versus those who have. Today he still holds on to his ability to make new friends easily, birthed out of his TCK experience, both overseas and since repatriating.

"I'm more sensitive about new kids. There's a new kid studying abroad here from England and he was by himself and I invited him to our party because I know what it's like to be new and not have any friends. I also respect other cultures and stuff. I hate when people are making fun of other cultures."

### *TCK as an Identity and Culture*

As we can see, TCKs form certain characteristics in reaction to their upbringing and they have become distinct individuals. The communities that they reside in, which work as validation of their TCK identity, are replicated among TCK populations across the world. This reproduction highlights the existence of a particular culture and lifestyle that accompanies the TCK. These findings further the idea that TCKs exhibit their own identity and culture.

Those who share a TCK identity, constructed from the same material, inevitably feel a connection with one another. A shared identity, similar to religion or citizenship, will serve as an overarching union, encompassing similar values, principles, morals, a way of life, constituting their culture and civilization. TCK 1 talks about her other TCK friends she made while overseas.

“When I do see them after years have gone by, it’s like time has never passed at all. It’s really a special connection, a bond, you make with your friends from overseas.”

While I believe these participants are describing a distinct identity, a TCK identity, do they also believe there is an apparent, distinguishable identity that has manifested and is unique to their background? All participants agreed with this either through direct statement or through indirect explanation of an experience.

TCK 1 explains her inability to fully relate to either international or American groups in college. This illuminates her unique, TCK identity.

“Being at Penn State, there aren’t a lot of international kids, but I realized when I do meet kids who are international, or who have had international experiences I get really close to them. It’s different. I can relate to them. A lot of people who I’ve talked to at Penn State have never even left the US, or the east coast for that matter. And it’s hard to talk to them sometimes. But then again, I can’t really relate to fully international people you know? It’s the opposite. They don’t understand me in the American sense. So it’s almost difficult to communicate with them, as it is to communicate with Americans.”

TCK 3 and 5 both agree upon the existence of a TCK identity, yet TCK 3 had not come to this conclusion on her own before and TCK 5 has had these revelations before. He was the only participant to do so in this study.

“I don’t think I ever thought about it that way! But, yea, I guess it is. It definitely is. I think moving around so much, made me who I am. I don’t lack identity. It made me who I am now.”

“TCK as their own identity? I think TCKs are their own culture. It’s like a nationality. I would consider myself a native of that culture. I consider TCK as an identity.”

Confirmed through their experience, TCKs are aware of their replicated lifestyle and distinction from their monocultural peers. Aware of the idea that they are from a third culture, which is theoretical, they have predetermined their inability to fit into a single label depicting their nationality and culture. What TCKs know today about their phenomenon is through experience. The ingrained belief that they do not identify with anybody or belong anywhere, prevents and denies them from conceptualizing what they are experiencing and feeling –a distinct culture, identity, and population. Additionally, their lack of existence in societal groups has convinced TCKs that a community, a culture, a population for them does in fact lack existence. The initial stages of a noticeably distinct TCK identity have been formed. This realization will provide them with answers to questions that are at the root of the TCK conflict, who am I and where do I belong, encouraging further development and establishment of this idea and concept.

## Summary and Discussion Regarding Various Aspects of Identity and TCKs

TCKs are cultural chameleons, as they innately emulate and incorporate their surroundings. The TCK environment imposes on their identity to manifest features unique to them: amalgamated identities, multiple identities, and fluid identities. Do they view these attributes of their identity as an obstacle or are they seen as beneficial? There are both positive and negative aspects to having this unique TCK identity. However, each individual interprets their personal experience differently.

For instance, TCK 5 perceives his experience as an outsider in a foreign country, in a constructive way.

“It’s not bad because I grew up around the world and got to see things people only see in movies. I have many homes and I don’t really mind that I don’t have a specific home. As long as I have a place to keep all my stuff, it’s all good.”

TCK 3, on the other hand, views her special background as an obstacle.

“I think it’s really annoying to have to explain where I’m from every time I meet them. It’s obnoxious. It just annoys me. It’s hard to connect to certain people because of it. They just can’t relate”

The way they view their background and special circumstance, has a large implication on their identity formation. This was highlighted specifically in their future identity, as each participant’s experience impacted their future decisions. TCK 3 was the only participant in my study who would choose not to perpetuate the mobile lifestyle of a TCK as an adult, or would she expose her children to it. TCK 5 was enthusiastic and eager to delve back into an expatriate lifestyle after graduation.

### Belonging

As products of nomadic lifestyles, my second research question asks, how do TCKs experience a sense of belonging? Where do they gain a sense of community if their identity tampers with their ability to possess national consciousness, society’s traditional source of belonging, and prevents them from retrieving one? I was able to discern common themes that emerged from the interviews of the five participants, and will paint a picture of how belonging is experienced and perceived among TCKs. Under the main theme of belonging, three subthemes emerged: home is nowhere versus everywhere, where is home and belonging without borders.

#### *Home is nowhere vs. everywhere*

There are two perspectives on the role home plays for a TCK individual. One view states TCKs are nomadic individuals who never establish their roots long enough to feel attached to a single location they can call home (Fail, Thompson, & Walker, 2004). They are homeless. The opposing view instead claims their nomadic lifestyle in fact provides multiple homes (Fail, Thompson, & Walker, 2004). They learn the skills needed to feel like they can belong anywhere and a sense of home can be easily created due to their chameleon like nature. Home is everywhere.

All individuals in this study, generally agreed with the statement, home is everywhere. May it be that they have built connections and attachments to specific countries through their travels or because they felt they could feel a sense of belonging easily, anywhere, they felt they had many homes. They seemed to not have any qualms about not being able to call one place, indefinitely, home.

TCK 5 exhibited several comments on belonging as a TCK.

“I don’t have one specific home. But then again, I have many homes and I don’t really mind that I don’t have a specific home. As long as I have a place to keep all my stuff, it’s all good.”

“I think they [Americans] would view us as lost children. A little negatively. Most Americans who grow up in one place their whole life have that sense of identity, that one home and place they call their home. As opposed to asking a TCK, if we’re asked where you’re from, we pause or just answer the question with another question. I would say they would see it as a negative lifestyle because you don’t have a home. But I would not agree with that at all.”

“Home is everywhere. Home is the world.”

TCK 4 also stated, while discussing his feelings of belonging in the US despite his number of years overseas, that he felt he could belong anywhere.

Despite having the most negative views, of all five participants, on her TCK upbringing and concluding she would no longer want to move around, TCK 3 commented that she too believes being a TCK means having a home everywhere.

While TCK 2 and 1 did not specifically state if they felt home was nowhere or everywhere, yet their answer to home has been amended a number of times throughout their lives, and their future desires to continue to move around, having no preference as to where in the world they end up, indicated that home is everywhere to these individuals as well.

#### *Where is home?*

Though the participants certainly struggled with the concept of home, the root of this frustration was being stricken by having multiple homes, not a lack of home, as I would have expected. Their frustration seems to not always come from feeling homeless, but from not being able to decide among all the possibilities that fit under the abstract definition of home. TCK 5 explains the different ways in which the word home can be used, and the question can be answered.

“When people ask, where’s your home, I have a few answers. It varies. One home I would consider is our house in Michigan. I can always go there and all my stuff is there. But at the same time, if I say, I’m going home to see my parents over Christmas break, that’s Malaysia. But I don’t consider that home home. It’s home because my parents are there. But I also answer Phoenix because that’s where I live now. Shanghai is also my home because, that’s where I said I came from when I first got here for college. It’s where I had just come from and it’s where I planned on going back to for breaks before my parents moved to Malaysia. I still say its home now sometimes because when people ask me where did you go to school or where did you go to high school I say Shanghai. I consider it the place I grew up. The streets of Shanghai are where I thrive. Also, I would have to say I like Shanghai the most out of all the places I’ve lived.”

“When they ask me, where are you from, I say what do you mean? Because when some people ask you where you’re from, some people are asking where were you born? Or where have you lived all your life? Just because I was born in Hawaii doesn’t make me from there because I don’t remember it.”

Today home was defined by all participants using the same definition: where their parents live. This could be attributed to the fact that they are college students and this is an intermittent time in their lives, bridging the gap between their last destination and their unknown future destination. Where they attend college was also a popular answer after their parents’ home, their explanation being, it’s where their life currently exists.

“Where my life is,” as a definition for home as both children and current young adults, was used commonly throughout the interviews for all participants.

An example of this is seen in TCK 1’s narrative over time. The idea that “home is where one’s life is,” is standard, yet her answer evolves over time in cohesion to her current location.

“Germany was home. I loved my school. The second school I went to had 500 kids in my grade and they were from all over the world.”

“Each year, America was less and less my home. After a few years, Tokyo became my home base because it was where my family was. My dad would stay mostly in Tokyo and I guess that made it seem like we were all together in Tokyo. My family was really close when we were together in Japan. When I was in the US, my dad was never there. Also my friendship, I had a lot of friends in Japan.”

“Now New York is home I guess. My family lives there. Penn State sometimes I say is my home too. My life is here, my friends are here.”

Upon analyzing my results, I wondered if the manner in which TCKs use the term home is too loose. Are they being frivolous with their usage of the word home?

“The need to establish a nest refers to the genetically programmed act that all living species have in common” (Zilber, 2004). Establishing a home is essential; Out of necessity, TCKs have unanimously constructed a definition that is functioning and applicable to their unique situation. Perhaps because of the instability attached to their lifestyle, from the lack of consistency in their identity and location, TCKs have established a static method to locate their nest, despite the dynamic nature of their home. This relates to the idea discussed in the previous section, home is everywhere, as TCKs are able to adapt and mold where they live to become their home. Additionally, this definition provides them with the ability to answer with a location, a viable, socially accepted answer, when, location, as we will see in the next section, plays a small role for the TCK when discerning feelings of belonging, who they are, and by association, home.

For monocultural individuals, most facets, events, and people in their life tend to be central to one country. Home is difficult to define, however it can be agreed upon, that it can be described in a number of ways. If each element comprising this definition is attached to a different location, home could in fact be considered to consist of a number of places. TCK 4 was the only participant, who has had an answer to home remain constant throughout his life. Michigan has remained his permanent home, his “home to go back to.” However, for TCK 4, Michigan serves as a location for many things: where he was born, where he used to lived, where he returned every summer, where he repatriated twice to, where he attends college currently, and where his parents and relatives are from and currently live. This may account for the difference between his single response and the responses of the other participants.

### *Belonging Without Borders*

For a TCK, belonging is experienced relationally not geographically (Fail, Thompson, & Walker, 2004). In descriptions as to why locations were once considered their home, have remained their home across time, and have become their home, existing relationships in those locations seemed to be the driving force behind their basis for listing it as home. May it be their friends, their parents, or other TCKs like themselves, these relationships provide a sense of belonging.

This is explicable considering, geographically, home has not remained stable throughout their lives. Relationally, however, they make similar friends, despite their changing locale, as international schools tend to foster TCK identity among their students. TCKs are also immersed in replicated expatriate

communities, thus being presented a consistent expatriate environment and culture. This creates a bond, replacing location as a source of belonging, found in membership, experience, and mutual understanding of being a TCK.

As it became clear that belonging is experienced relationally for these participants, one particular relationship was highlighted in the narratives. Amidst the transitions and transformations, the family naturally played a significant role as the participants' form of consistency and stability. Four participants agreed that their relationship with their family members, due to their upbringing, has been strengthened over time.

TCK 1: "Yea, it has. When we first moved, I remember being so mad at them. I really didn't think they knew what they were putting us through. But since coming back to the US, I really appreciate what they did for us. For the opportunity and everything. Also, I think the fights might have even brought us closer. But my relationship with my brother, he's only a year younger, has been strengthened for sure. We were going through the same thing pretty much all the time so it was nice to have him to talk to and stuff."

TCK 3: "Each move was different. I think when I moved from Argentina to Mexico, my mother and I had big issues. But I think those issues were really short lived. It came with the stress of moving. But in the long run, today, I think our relationship was really strengthened."

TCK 4: "We have a pretty good relationship. The move definitely in the long run strengthened our relationship. I depended on them when I didn't know the culture, didn't have friends, or a home, and when we would travel we would spend lots of time alone together. But when we would move I would be really mad at them [his parents]."

TCK 5: "It's [relationship with family] good. It's difficult now because of the time difference and stuff. It definitely strengthened. When we first move to a place, if it's some place completely unfamiliar, all we have is family. But I think that was even more so the case between me and my sister. She was the person I could talk to about missing Guam and wanting to go back and stuff. Also being in Shanghai, everything was so lenient, she was the one person I could tell about everything I did. Moving around definitely strengthened my relationship with my entire family."

TCK 2 conversely comments:

"I don't think it has at all really. We've always had a good relationship. I guess it's nice that I can talk to them about when we lived in Germany when I don't really get to talk about it here at school."

Though he disagrees with the fact that their relationship has improved, the ability to discuss about their time overseas together is in fact a perk of their relationship.

### **Summary and Discussion Regarding Belonging:**

Mobility, a key feature of a TCK's life, disrupts their ability to belong geographically. They are unable to easily answer the question, where are you from, or explain where home is to them. This inability to call a location home, or to identify with a specific national consciousness, is due to the idea that belonging for TCKs is established through social interaction.

"Regardless of which one it is though, if I said to somebody home is nowhere, if twenty other people said home is nowhere, we're all alone together, and that sort of becomes a home? To us that becomes our home right there because there are twenty other people there just like you. It creates a connection between those people. But with home is the world, I would like to think

that's more applicable because, it doesn't matter where those twenty people are in the world, because we're all still connected, wherever we are in the world."

TCK 5's comment is a testament to the idea that TCKs form a sense of belonging through the connection they feel with others they can relate to. Home is not any specific location. Home is the world, TCK 5 explains; location is irrelevant for these individuals, as relationships and connectedness through solidarity transcends it, fueling their sense of belonging.

### Issues of Place and Moving

Research question three and four sought to uncover the issues that emerged as a consequence of place and moving and were influential toward the construction of the ascertained descriptions from the interviews of identity and belonging experienced as a TCK. The following factors emerged as possible agents of influence on TCK's identity and belonging: timing of moving, expectations of moving and its impact on identity, contextual affordances, host culture's response on identity and belonging and repatriation.

#### *Timing of Moving*

The timing of when an individual goes overseas is a significant factor in the way in which identity is formed and belonging is experienced. The country in which the participant's high school years were spent appeared to have a larger impact on the individual's identity, than the country in which the longest duration spent during another period in their lives. This was evident in all participants, besides TCK 3.

TCK 2 was in Germany for his high school years, and holds Germany in higher regard than his place of citizenship, America. "I definitely miss living in Germany, but when I was in Germany, I didn't miss living here," he reflects.

TCK 5 lived in China from age 12-18. He feels like he belongs most in China and his fondness for China continues to trump his feelings for the US, though his overall time in the US is longer.

During this age period, these individuals were granted more freedom and were able to explore more of the host culture than if they had been younger. Additionally, the older they were, the more they remembered about their experience and were able to comprehend and feel more than when they were younger. They also comment on having built a life of their own during this time, through friend groups (they are at an age where they build more meaningful and intense relationships than at a younger age), school, activities and significant others. TCK 2 and 5 acknowledges how this time period is when a lot of development occurs, and recognizes they would be completely different people if they had lived in a different country than the one they actually grew up in during this time.

TCK 3 is an outlier of this theory. Her high school years were spent in Argentina and Mexico. Though she considers being a Latina as one of her identities, she regards Australia her home and where she belongs most. It is the first place she remembers living, it has served as her home base throughout her life returning there quite frequently, and she has lived there the longest. no, it's fine here

In a TCK study done in Japan, Minoura found that the years from 9 to 15 were most critical. "Those who lived overseas from the age of 9-15 identified with the nationality of wherever they lived then" (Fail, Thompson, & Walker, 2004). This proved to be true for my participants, though it was not the nationality they identified with, it proved to resonate within them as a place they hold closest to their hearts.

#### *Expectations of Moving and Its Impact on Identity*

From the narratives, it was determined that one's expectations of the timing and duration spent in a country, of both actual and pending transitions, as well as, in and out of countries, can impact whether TCKs choose to let their host culture in or not. This affects their identity.

This lack of knowing what to expect, and the absence of stability, encourages the TCK to put up their guard and are hesitant about sewing any roots into their host culture. These TCKs are unsure if they should attempt to get to know their host culture and "settle down," when they could be uprooted at any point. They must relearn their surroundings, and get accustomed to a new set of norms, attitudes, language, etc. "Why even bother?" is the attitude they manifest. All participants, except TCK 2, commented on how little time they had to adjust to the idea of moving. "We had to get accustomed to the idea [of moving] very quickly ...I didn't get to say goodbye to my friends ...I had very little time to process everything and had to get over it" were some of the comments exhibited in the interviews. Even when told they would be moving, when this move would take place was always "up in the air." "We could have left after a whole year; we could have left in a few weeks," TCK 1 states. TCK 5 was assured by his parents at the start of sophomore year in high school that he would be staying put in China till the end of graduation, only then did Shanghai officially become his "home." TCK 4 was also able to eject herself out of this "layover," once she was under the impression that she would be staying put in Argentina for a while, and assumed the identity of her host culture, to the point where, even today, she considers herself to possess a Latina identity.

"In the end, I thought I was going to be there the whole time and graduate from high school there, so I felt... local."

Open communication between child/adolescent and parent seemed to be crucial in order for the child's expectations to not deviate too much from what may actually happen. TCK 5 remarks that from a really young age he was aware that he would be moving around numerous times due to his father's occupation, and though he was unhappy when the news that they would be moving again was relayed to him, his expectations cushioned the blow and he was able to experience relatively easy transitions. He mastered the art of moving and acquired the skills necessary to transition and adapt with ease, which has become a large part of who he is today.

On the other hand, false perceptions that additional moving will not occur as TCK 4 experienced after repatriating back to the US, can also affect one's identity.

"I thought we were done moving. I was getting used to the fact that this [Michigan] was where I was going to spend the rest of my life. It felt right."

TCK 4 found out he was moving overseas for the second time and recalls threatening to throw a chair out the window out of rage. His feelings appear to have been generated from the gap between expectation and reality which is an example of Helson's disconfirmed expectancy theory (1964) (Fail, Thompson, & Walker, 2004). If someone has a strong expectation then any deviation from it is seen as greater than it really is. Helson's theory can also be applied to TCK 3's experience, as she was uprooted from her home in Australia after residing there for eleven years and believed she was going to live in Australia the rest of her life. She remembers being upset with her parents when she learned she was moving to Argentina, as well as struggling upon arrival in her new home. Then, in Argentina, under the impression that she would be staying there till the end of high school, she found herself being carted off to Mexico. Oblivious she had been signed up for a mobile childhood, being kept in the dark has impacted TCK 3's future identity as she refuses to put her children through the same thing. Her grief was so immense, when asked whether she wanted her to children to be TCKs or not, a prominent reason not to raise them as TCKs was, "the feeling I felt when my parents said we were moving... I don't want them to experience that."

This state of only partially immersing themselves in the culture in which they are currently in, combined with being abruptly taken out of their previous culture, thus leaving the TCK still attached to their previous culture, creates a condition in which they are straddling two cultures. This is called liminality, to be in between cultures, and it is distinctive of globally mobile people (Grimshaw & Sears, 2009). “They occupy the space “in-between” the ending of one set of attachments and the beginning of the next” (Grimshaw & Sears, 2009). This is a result of false or a lack of expectations.

### *Contextual Affordances*

The community you are immersed in, as well as the school you attend, can impact the degree to which you are exposed to your host culture. These factors can aid, but sometimes also complicate, the transition into a new country. This affects how you identify with your host culture and your ability to maintain your American identity.

Expatriate communities are neighborhoods where a foreign environment is recreated and all the needs of a foreigner are catered to. The community is built with the foreigners’ interests and tastes in mind. The international school system plays a similar role to expatriate communities. It helps create a community where students can be around other students who are from the same international background, creating the solidarity and comfort expatriate communities also provide. Though each school varies, as expatriate communities also do, these international schools create an illusion of not being in your host country. The curriculum, your teachers, and your classmates are all foreign, stripping any traces of your host culture from your consciousness. TCK 1, 4, and 5 attended American schools in the host countries. TCK 1 states she gained a lot of her American identity, ironically, back in Tokyo due to her expatriate community and American school, after she had spent a few years in Germany and lost her sense of being an American.

The expat community can be useful in helping expatriates transition and feel comfortable or safe in their host country, but it can also act as a barrier between the expatriate and the host culture. Participants commented on how they could have just as easily been back in the United States when in these communities. TCK 5 states he often forgets where he is even today while he attends his school in Arizona. This could be the result of growing up in expatriate communities where your actual location can be immaculately concealed if desired; it’s easy to feel like you’re in a Western community, when in actuality in a Middle Eastern or Asian country.

These expatriate communities can also serve as a safe haven for it is where they gain their sense of belonging. TCK 1 calls it “a home away from home,” and comments on not feeling foreign while immersed in her expatriate community in Tokyo. As those in local communities and school inevitably absorb their surroundings of the host culture, these individuals in expatriate communities and international schools do just that and incorporate the characteristics of a native of this community into their identity. Within the expatriate community or the international school, the distinct identity that is of a TCK is formed. It possesses its own culture and as it did for TCK 1, 4, and 5, who were residents of this community, and it provides them with a sense of belonging, community, and home. TCK 4 comments, “I felt like I belonged at the school. I belonged in that community of expats.” These environments preserve the participants American culture, restrain influences of the host culture, but also promote a culture unique to being a TCK and a member of these surroundings.

On the other hand, TCK 3 was raised like an Australian as she attended the local school and lived among other Australian families. She repeated this local lifestyle again in Argentina. It was only in Mexico, did she attend an international school and live in an expatriate community for two years. She does not feel strongly attached to this lifestyle and comments on how she prefers to be a local in a community.

“My friends were all Argentine... we did so many Argentine things, it was impossible not to... I could speak Spanish... it was inevitable that I was slowly becoming Argentine as well, and it was apparent in my house too”

She identifies herself as Australian and Latina, the two cultures she was immersed as a local in, and is not interested in continuing to live in foreign countries.

TCK 1 and 4 identify and feel more attachment towards being an American than TCK 2 does. Yet, TCK 1 and 4 have lived overseas for a longer period of time. This is attributed to the fact that the TCK 1 and 4 managed to preserve their American identity, whereas TCK 2 had severed several ties to his American identity while abroad. TCK 2 went to a more localized international school in Germany where his friends were not American but were instead international and he would communicate with them in both German and English. He also lived in a local neighborhood which provided many outlets for him to directly experience local German culture. TCK 2 has no qualms about leaving the US indefinitely upon graduation. This is indicative of how strong an influence your surroundings while overseas can have on your sense of identity and belonging, regardless of the length to which you are overseas.

#### *Host Culture's Response on Identity and Belonging*

The host country's perceptions and attitudes toward foreigners, as well as whether or not the TCKs appearance is heterogeneous to the appearance of the country's locals, can influence the degree to which the TCK incorporates the host culture into their identity. TCK 1's appearance elicited locals to treat her like a foreigner and that is what she comfortably remained in a culture accustomed to and welcoming of foreigners.

“In Japan, because I look so different from them, they would immediately come up to me and speak English. I didn't even try to really communicate with them. They were friendly but I just didn't really ever need to. “

Whereas TCK 2's similar looks to his host culture's people provided many opportunities to interact with locals and it urged him to engage with others as a local due to their expectations.

“A lot of times people would come up to me and they would just speak to me in German.”

TCK 3 quickly learned she would not be accepted as a foreigner due to the lack of tolerance for foreigners in Argentina, and so she assumed an identity as an Argentine.

“Argentines are not friendly to foreigners so I almost feel like we had no choice [but to assimilate]”

Due to TCK 5's mixed appearance, his appearance played a larger role upon repatriation, back to the US, as he was confronted with the question, “Why do you speak such good English?” He was the only participant who mentioned having been asked this a number of times and he was clearly perturbed and irritated by it. Just as the reaction of the locals had an impact on the participants overseas, the Americans reaction to his appearance and his flawless English, influenced TCK 5's feelings of disconnect with other Americans and his desire to move back overseas where he can more easily avoid this discomfort.

A TCKs identity development is effected by how the host country perceives foreigners and whether they place you in that category or not. “The individual's self-concept is either reinforced or modified, depending on the reaction of the audience” (Grimshaw and Sears, 2009).

#### *Repatriation*

Repatriation and identity and belonging share a reciprocal relationship. While the identity and sense of belonging of the individual will influence the experience of repatriation, conversely the repatriation experience can also prompt reevaluation of these two elements as well.

### ***Expectations of Repatriation***

The individual's expectations of what the repatriation experience will be like can impact the actual incident for the TCK individual. The experience of repatriation will affect the type of questions, or lack thereof, posed on the individual's identity.

TCK 5 knew what to expect due to the fact that he had been returning to the US every summer to participate in sports camps with other American individuals. His expectations matched what actually occurred when he began to attend his college in Michigan, thus he reported having experienced a smooth transition.

“I knew, just like every time I went to soccer or basketball camp, I knew that as soon as I told people where I was from, the really stupid, ignorant questions would come out. But having done that all my life, I guess it doesn't even faze me as much anymore. I knew coming to college wasn't going to be a difficult thing at all. It was like going to camp every summer. I knew what to expect. I readjusted really quickly. It was fine. I knew there would be dumb people asking me why I spoke English without an accent and all that crap.”

TCK 3 had been exposed to the US through annual summer visits; however, she had never once felt the US was her home. She expected to feel like a foreigner, and her expectations were confirmed. She comfortably accepted any incongruities she experienced with her peers which whom she shares no external differences with and her identity and belonging remained unquestioned.

TCK 1 on the other hand, though aware from her summers spent in the US that her peers would fail to understand her circumstance, she had believed because she was returning to her country of origin, she would not have problems fitting in. As her expectations were failed to be met, she encountered a thorough reexamination of her identity.

### ***Shattered Illusions***

Anticipating feelings of marginality upon entrance into a country you consider foreign is expected; the inability to find their place in their host culture is explicable. However, returning to your “home country,” a place that you believed was familiar, and being confronted with feeling out of place, can startle and negatively impact the individual's adjustment, as well as, identity (Fail, Thompson, & Walker, 2004). This is what occurred when TCK 1 and 4 repatriated; their illusions were shattered.

As a TCK overseas, when unable to fit comfortably into a host culture, one may console themselves through reassurance and rationalization that they are still a part of their original culture. Additionally, like a security blanket, their inclusion into their original culture serves to mend any marginality or rejection they may feel while abroad. TCK 1 returned to the US however, only to realize, in addition to not being able to label herself as German or Japanese while overseas, she felt she could not confidently or completely label herself American either. How does one react when they discover what they had believed their entire life turned out to be false?

“I'm not fully American. I can't classify myself as that because I've had a different experience than other Americans. I'm not fully international. I went to an international school, but at the same time, I feel like I have the same...ambitions... values as Americans. What am I? I don't know what to classify myself.”

TCK 4 had also always felt like an American while overseas; “even when I was abroad I did have a lot of pride about being an American,” he states. When he reentered the US as an adolescent, he realized certain attributes and characteristics had developed within him due to his special background that made him a little different from his other American peers. As TCK 1 did, TCK 4 was also hit with a harsh reality when he first repatriated as he realized what he thought was home while overseas, did in fact not feel like home after all.

“After five years in Dubai, I thought Michigan was home. We would go back every summer to our lake house and hang out with some friends but mostly family. And then being back and it wasn’t my home and I felt out of place, I didn’t have any friends, I don’t know, it just felt really weird being back.”

This rude awakening results in one of the most difficult, and complicated, reformulations of identity the TCK is forced to encounter.

### ***The Normalcy of Feeling Marginal***

TCK 2 also notes feeling dissimilar to his American peers in college. Yet, unlike TCK 1’s turmoil over her inability to fully fit in with her peers, as well as not being able to classify what she is, TCK 2 did not regard being different as a major concern.

“I mean still if my friends are talking about some American classic movie that I’ve never seen they would be like “how have you never seen this?” I guess that happens for a few things. But it doesn’t faze me too much. I just figure I’ll eventually see it or something.”

“I don’t feel like a foreigner but it’s definitely different. When I’m with a group of friends I’m either doing something differently than everybody else or wondering why people are doing what they’re doing so I guess I do have some sort of foreign aspect but I don’t feel like an outsider because of it.”

There are two reasons for the difference in TCK 1 and 2’s views on marginality. These contrasting views may have stemmed from how attached they feel toward their American identity. TCK 2 does not, nor ever did, “fully embrace” being an American. The minimal attachment he feels toward the significance of “being an American” results in his lack of concern for being different. Additionally, perhaps TCK 2 is accustomed to not fully fitting in because he was immersed in a more local, German, environment while overseas, thus inevitably encountering situations where he would be different frequently. Being marginal almost feels normal to him because he is accustomed to the situation. TCK 1 on the other hand, grew up in an expatriate community and attended an American school where she considers herself a native of, never feeling separate or atypical from others.

The TCK’s views and maintenance of their original culture while overseas, in addition to their previous encounters and perceptions of being marginal, will affect their experience of repatriation, moreover their identity and belonging.

### ***The Lack of Recognition and Understanding of TCKs***

Despite TCK 5’s smooth repatriation, his identity still underwent change upon repatriation due to the lack of recognition and understanding he consistently encountered from others about his upbringing, and essentially, who he is.

“Most difficult part of being a TCK? The stupid people that ask why you don’t have an accent when you speak English. The people who don’t understand my background. The people who

when they ask where are you from and when you say somewhere else besides the US and they look at you like oh but you speak such good English. Yea. The ignorant people.”

TCK 5’s resentment towards American’s inability to understand him has resulted in a disconnect between him and original culture. His frustration has stemmed into vilifying his original culture, thus diminishing the extent to which he identifies with it. TCK 5’s experience in the US where others fail to understand his background is the culprit behind his strong desire to live somewhere else, where others tend to be more familiar with this concept, and his remarks on changing his citizenship if he could.

Others not being able to comprehend this phenomenon or who TCKs are, as a result of learned helplessness, TCKs conceal or abandon their multicultural identities in order to avoid the adversity involved in being not understood. They have learned that they lack the means in which they can get their depiction across and are exhausted of trying to attempt this ludicrous feat. This has resulted in TCK 1, TCK 4, and TCK 3 choosing not to discuss their past. By doing so, they are covering up where they come from, who they are, and stifling their TCK identity.

TCK 1 comments:

“My friends here don’t understand. I feel like they think oh that’s cool but they really don’t know what it’s like let alone really understand what I really went through. I try and explain it but I can’t. So I don’t really talk to people about those experiences.”

“It sucks, when you move here, well in my case, it’s almost like you’re covering up your past. And like, you can never be open about it. The main reason is because people can’t relate. That’s a common theme for me. It’s just, I feel self-conscious, or I don’t know, my experiences don’t really have any effect, or impact, on anybody else so why should I talk about them. They can’t relate because they won’t know what I’m talking about. They don’t know what it’s like to go to an international school.”

“At Penn State I can’t answer the question like that so I’ve learned to say, New York. I guess it depends who I’m talking to. Sometimes I won’t mention that I lived overseas. Like to people here.”

Dismissing her past and ignoring her dissimilar ways, TCK 1 has assimilated completely since returning. She also feels like her international identity and interests have been stifled due to her monocultural environment which lacks diversity

TCK 4 similarly recounts his experience.

“I felt American but it was just weird. People would be like, “You come from China. What does wingwang wingwang mean?” They knew what China was like but they didn’t get what it meant to be like me. To live overseas but not be Chinese. They were single minded and didn’t understand how the rest of the world worked. They knew there were other countries but they just... didn’t get it. They didn’t understand my background so I just kinda stopped talking about it or mentioning it.”

Even among her international friends, TCK 3 finds it exhausting to explain her particular experience, because it’s something very unique to other international experiences.

“You know, a lot of people don’t even know what it is. I do find that sometimes I choose not to talk about my background. I just don’t want to tell people the whole story of where I come from. It’s just so elaborate and so hard to explain to someone. I think sometimes I wish it were easier to just be like, oh yeah I’m from wherever.”

### ***Inevitable Adaptation***

The participants, except TCK 3, were forced to question their American identity when they repatriated back into the US. However, as they are expert chameleons, regardless of their various levels of desire to fit in, they all remarked on how they have naturally undergone metamorphosis, an action that is innate to them, and have noticed their American emulation.

This idea of adapting is illustrated in TCK 1's comments on repatriation.

“When I first got here, I guess I did feel a little foreign, but now having been here for a while, I feel like a part of them. I feel like I incorporated this American, PA, lifestyle... Over the past few years, it has gotten tremendously easy to talk to Americans. I really feel different than I did when I first got here...If I went to a more diverse school, I would talk about my international experiences. I would classify myself as international, more than I do here. Because I want to fit in here.”

### **Summary Regarding Issues of Place and Moving**

There are a number of factors that emerge as a consequence of relocation and location, which influence the TCK's experience of belonging and identity. Repatriation seemed to be the most difficult, extensive, and complicated factor experienced by the participants.

Research shows that repatriation has a negative impact on TCK's identity and well-being (Plamondon, 2008). They must question the degree to which their original nationality is still apart of them, and in some cases be confronted with reality that they were not who they thought they were their whole lives. “90% of American TCK's feel out of sync with their peers once repatriating back to the United States” (Useem & Cottrell, 1993). The reformulation of their identity is ceaseless, for being a TCK does not include an end date; the job never ends, even when they “return home.”

The results, in addition to my own personal experience, propose the notion that perhaps repatriation is necessary in order for TCK's to conceptualize the idea of possessing their own identity and culture as a population. TCK 5's annual exposures to camp over the summer in the US, functioned as repeated repatriations, thus began to question and believe the legitimacy of TCKs as a group. He was the only individual to have recognized previous to this study the idea that TCK is a distinct identity and culture. His future plans consist of reentering the life of an expatriate, furthermore the international school community, as a teacher. This may be due to the fact that he has accepted the culture and society as a functioning civilization and his realization helped him find his place, his belonging and identity, in our world typically structured like an obstacle course for TCKs.

### **Future Identity and Mobility**

My final research question explored future identity, in relation to desire for future mobility, among the participants. The TCK's entire narrative makes an impression on who they are today, but it also impacts who they desire to become. Their future identity, and ways in which they choose to experience belonging, is built upon their entire TCK journey up until this point.

All participants, besides TCK 3, desire to return overseas eventually, if not immediately.

TCK 1 would like to go back overseas eventually. She does not have a specific place she would like to live in the world. She hopes to move around, as she is accustomed to change. She comments on how despite her resentment and ambiguity towards change, she predicts it will remain a necessity in her life. TCK 1 does want her children also be TCKs. However, one thing she specifies that she would want

differently than her experience, is for them to intermittently return to the US, perhaps more times and for longer periods than what she experienced.

“I don’t want them to be a constant TCK. I don’t want them to be a constant American. I want them have both. When I came to college, I felt lost. I didn’t know if I should have out with international kids or American kids. I want them to be able to decide. I want them to know. I didn’t really know how to act around full Americans because I was overseas for so long and I had few American friends left in US.”

TCK 2 fervently desires to immediately move overseas. He would live anywhere in the world, but would also be ecstatic to go back to Germany. He says settling down eventually would be nice, but could see himself moving quite frequently. He too, would also like his children to be TCKs.

TCK 4 also expressed a desire to go back overseas, where he would be able to experience more, as would his children. Like TCK 1 however, he seemed to describe this return overseas as a temporary stint in his life. This differs from TCK 2 in that, TCK 2 sees himself permanently living overseas and settling down overseas.

This was true for TCK 5 as well, for he too also wished to permanently move overseas. He hopes to leave the US immediately after graduation to work at an international school. He comments on why he wants to return into the international school system.

“I don’t know, international schools, I feel like that’s my home in a way too. Because everybody has the same experience there. Similar background, same experiences. That’s how I feel about everybody at international schools.”

TCK 5 wants his children to grow up TCKs, “I wouldn’t have it any other way,” he insists. Moving around periodically, he claims, would be ideal.

TCK 3 was the only participant who wished to terminate her mobile lifestyle, but would welcome the idea of travel to be incorporated into her job description. However, instead of staying in the US, she considers “coming home” as settling down in Australia. She does not want her children to experience being a TCK because she thinks it would be difficult on them, but also she adds, this notion comes from selfish reasons. She simply just does not want to move again. The idea of staying put for even a decade is daunting to her. She already recognizes how difficult it will be to resist the temptation of change that has remained a constant in her life, yet asserts how strongly she hopes to remain in Australia.

### **Summary and Discussion on Future Identity and Mobility**

Without a permanent home to which they can return to or utilize as a home base, as well the multiples moves experienced during their developmental years, TCKs have great difficulty in deciding where to “build their nest.” (Zilber, 2004). All the participant’s experiences leading up today have influenced their current desires to continue or abstain from further mobility. The discrepancy in TCK 3’s answer to withdraw from a life of being an expatriate is a reflection of her own experience as a TCK. One factor in her story that I believe may have been a large influence on her decision was the added difficulty of being a “local,” in her host cultures. While the other participants had varying outlets for them to avoid being forced to fully assimilate into their host culture, as well frequent or constant exposure to expatriate environments and culture, TCK 3 did not have this luxury. The incessant marginality she experienced may be a large source behind her exhaustion of this lifestyle. Expatriate environments surround the TCK with others like themselves, acting as a support system and aid, perhaps necessary in this complex upbringing.

As individuals who entered this phenomenon without consent, as they embark on their adult life, and take control over their reins, generally, it seems they would select to perpetuate a lifestyle similar to the one they were exposed to as dependents, as adults, and would choose to immerse their child in this lifestyle as well. This desire for continuation, and proliferation, could be an indication that the phenomenon of individuals moving overseas, and the establishment of TCKs as a population, is not only improving but succeeding.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion

Identity and the manner in which belonging is experienced is unique to the TCK population. While several elements can differ across TCK stories accounting for multiple differences among TCKs, there are apparent characteristics and features unique to this population experience.

The identity of a TCK is formed by a set of attributes of both limitations and skills, which develop in relation to their mobile, changing environment, differentiating them from other populations and cultures. Their identities are categorized by their chameleon like quality, and are highly adaptable and accepting creatures. A TCK identity is in constant reformation and is unique to other identities, outside, but also within, their group. Like a snowflake, TCK identities take many forms and no two are like. Yet this idea of being dissimilar because of its motley origins is what unifies these identities. As a group TCKs experience belonging relationally; additionally, without a concrete, singular place to call home, these individuals are both comforted and burdened by the fact that they have many homes, and can call anywhere home due to their ability to belong anywhere from experience. TCK have become a functioning population and possessors of a distinct culture, as their commonalities can be gathered and used to describe an identity and belonging experienced uniquely by them.

Despite their legitimacy, however, TCKs remain unknown, thus are not understood by others, nor do they understand themselves. The lack of recognition as a group, in addition to the little research available and shared, prohibits TCKs from identifying with a group. This lack of identification makes it challenging, if not impossible, to describe who they are.

The expatriate or international community is a unique environment, built for TCKs, and TCKs become products of that environment. Once out of the expatriate community, TCKs try to find their place in the world. However, their attempts are often futile, for they are searching for a niche in a world that has yet to understand how to cultivate a place for them. Unable to categorize, or even begin to describe their circumstance has negative ramifications on their identity, such as covering up, stifling, and modifying their identities to better “fit in.” They struggle to understand how to fit into a monoculture setting; like a children’s toy box with variously shaped cutouts. TCKs are shaped so uniquely that they do not fit through or match the molds available.

Some have called TCKs boundary layer people. “This term comes from modern physics referring to the molecular activity that takes place when the surfaces of two different materials rub against one another... the two types of matter adapt to and accommodate one another. The boundary layer molecules are a mixture” (Zilber, 2004). This can be easily applied to the blended identity of a TCK. However, once a TCK identity is concocted, then comes the question, “what is this new mixture now called?” Then, much like the belonging of a TCK, “what do we do with it? Where does it go?” In other words, “who are we? Where and how do we belong?”

It is time for TCKs to advocate for, and construct, a new hole for their uniquely shaped block to fit through. It is the answer to two questions that were labeled long ago as inexplicable. Once society in general becomes more knowledgeable about the phenomenon and the population of TCKs, the means to answering these questions for the TCK becomes clear. Awareness, acknowledgement, accommodation, and acceptance of TCKs are the steps I am imploring our society to take. Further research will aid in awareness and acknowledgement from populations, TCK and non-TCK. The world should learn to accommodate TCKs to aid in eradicating the TCK’s turmoil attached with identity and belonging. It wasn’t until 2000 that the US census allowed people to select more than one race to describe their ethnicity (Sandefur, Campbell, & Eggerling-Boeck, 2003). This type of modification and readjustment needs to take place to start the process of integrating TCKs into society. Following accommodation,

acceptance of TCKs as its own group and culture is another means to helping these individuals with their identity and achieving belonging. David Pollock, co-author of one of the leading books on TCKs, has already acknowledged the utilization of the term, “third culture kid,” as a legitimate and tangible entity, has provided TCKs with a sense of identity and belonging (Pollock, 2009). Additionally, recognizing the distinct culture that accompanies membership and the lifestyle of a TCK is crucial because the role of culture is to provide individuals with a sense of identity, belonging, as well as confidence (Van Reken & Bethel, 2007).

Accepting TCKs as its own group with their own way of life, characteristics, and distinct culture is necessary because it is in relation to others like themselves in which they feel belonging, and are given a platform to foster the identity unique to a TCK. The inability to come to the realization that being a TCK is in fact a category and more and more a common and acceptable answer to understanding themselves, in my opinion, stifles their ability to identify with others, identify themselves, and the development of their identity. This identification of being a part of a group will help TCKs find a community and a sense of belonging in it, in addition to an acceptance of where they come from and who they are because of it.

### Closing Remarks

As TCKs, we are propositioned with questions we cannot answer as easily others. We are forced to face questions earlier than others too, due to the immediate necessity of answers. And sometimes, we must examine questions that others do not have the need to do so. These may be reasons for TCKs experiencing a prolonged adolescence (Useem & Cottrell, 1993). We all remember how difficult and awkward adolescence can be; constant examination and contemplation characterizes this time period. As we gain knowledge about ourselves and how we fit into society, we grow into ourselves, shedding these adolescent strains, becoming more confident and comfortable. Isn't that why we hear about women in their 30's and 40's becoming self-assured and radiating a new type of beautiful? TCKs are plagued with this syndrome of being unsure about themselves and their place in the world, similar to adolescence, and are signed up for the possibility of a lifetime of questioning, and consequently unease.

Upon the conclusion of my thesis, two things became very clear to me. First of all, my beliefs that the recognition of TCKs and their distinctive features of their population and culture, as well as spreading awareness and including them into the bureaucracy of society being crucial to TCKs, and beneficial to society, was further affirmed. The surgery I performed on these five TCK participants, examining their inner layers beneath their often misguided guises, revealed a commonality among them, suggesting TCKs are a distinct population, formed from a distinct culture. That is who we are and where we belong. However, additionally, I realized self-study, TCKs making an effort to learn about themselves and seeking answers, is also just as vital. The answers cannot only come from society; TCKs are holding the keys to the locks which seal their desired answers. The adversity I experienced in Japan, and again at an older age when I entered college in the US, triggered the desire to know more and what I found was relief and an immense weight lifted off of me. I was able to proceed with the development I wasn't able to complete due to the inability to even explain where I was from, which is integral in tackling a bigger question all humans hope to answer, who am I. Once we overcome obstacles, we acquire wisdom, strength, more understanding about ourselves and the world. Repatriation, despite being dubbed the most difficult and sometimes detrimental time for a TCK, perhaps is necessary in order for us to really begin to tackle the questions: where do I belong? Who am I? Just as people in monocultures refrain from doing so, being overseas and surrounded by other TCKs, these questions are overlooked. The answers are there; they just remain abstract and undefined, and only through digging are TCKs able to uncover these answers. As Marx would say, struggle needs to be undergone before a class consciousness, a revolution, can be formed. For the TCK today, I think this hardship aids in their growth and is beneficial, but in the

future, I hope this catalyst is unnecessary. Perhaps, the self-study will be what encourages the world's acceptance and awareness of TCKs, as our confidence and self-knowledge increases. Subsequently, we will refrain from stifling or masking our true identity and will be able to assist in the proliferation of our society.

My inability to explain or classify myself did not prevent me from making a group of friends in college, who today I consider my family, or from believing my time in college to be a front runner in the period which may come to be signified as "the time of my life." Yet, it did consume me, and became a large part of who I was. The complications with identity and belonging TCKs face have become an ingrained problem of the TCK experience, but as I continued to immerse myself in the available knowledge on TCKs and sought out other TCKs, I learned more about who I was and was able to confirm what I was experiencing wasn't unusual; it relieved me. How did I expect others to understand me, if I didn't understand myself first? Knowledge about TCKs I came to see was crucial in being about to explain myself and to feel comfortable in my own skin. The oddity I experienced in the US was largely birthed from my own confusion and insecurities. As I implore the world to learn and incorporate more about TCKs, I also urge my fellow compatriots to seek answers and understand more about themselves.

I will be graduating this May and have accepted a job with an international company in their Tokyo office. My search for answers has not only resulted in comprehension and appreciation for my TCK experience, but has shed light on the fact that further exploration in hopes of rectifying my disorientation in Japan, as well as closure, is necessary. I would like to go back as an individual who is more confident and secure with my identity than I was in the past, and understand and learn to feel comfortable with my place in Japan. This experience has taught me distress can be alleviated with answers, and the answers are out there. I would like to continue my quest for answers, and look at another portion of my identity that leaves me flustered, being biracial. Early I referred to a lifetime of questioning TCKs, and perhaps bicultural individuals, embark on, but, this glass is half full, and instead we may be in for a lifetime of revelations.

## Chapter 6

### Limitations and Future Areas of Study

There are a number of limitations that come with the subject of my study. Identity and belonging are difficult to study as they are not concrete. It is measured subjectively, which makes it extremely crucial to refrain from generalizing findings. In addition to the subject matters not being tangible, an established scale or measuring rubric was not used to ascertain my findings, thus the interviews were analyzed under my interpretation. Though I strived to stay as unbiased and impartial as possible when gathering and evaluating the interviews and results, it is not to say somebody else could construct and interpret this study differently than myself. It is also difficult to draw findings and conclusions when the research available today tends to be inconsistent and scarce.

The level to which the interviewees felt comfortable, as well as the degree to which the stories were affected and monitored by the participants when telling their story, must be taken into account. They may not have felt comfortable discussing experiences that were personal or intimate. The level of familiarity I had with each participant prior to the interview, may have affected their level of disclosure. Their gender may also have an impact on their interpretation of their experiences as well as the amount they chose to divulge. The medium used for interviews, in person versus Skype video conference call, may also affect the nature of the interview. The duration of the interview, which was about one hour, must also be taken into account. The quality and depth of the answers given at the end of the interview could be influenced by the fatigue of the participant.

The limited number of participants must also be taken into consideration. I had hoped to study a larger number of participants to see if these findings would be consistent across a wider range of people. In addition to the increased number of participants, the TCK experience encompasses a vast number of varied experiences, thus it would have been beneficial for this study if I was able to interview more participants from TCK experiences of different patterns and factors.

Identity formation and sense of belonging are not static and they evolve over time. This study looked at the participants' identity and belonging over the course of the college senior's lifespan. I would have liked to proceed as a longitudinal study in order to ascertain differences in description of identity, belonging, perceptions of being a TCK, and future desires for mobility at later stages in life. It would be interesting to know whether the participant's desires for mobility were actually executed or not.

The meaning of stability for TCKs is also an area of study I would like to pursue further research in. When the lives of the individuals are comprised of steady change for the majority of their lives, does this mean constant change is how they experience stability?

Two additional elements, in relation to the TCK individual's identity and belonging, which would be interesting to examine are the effects of biracial TCKs on the experience of identity and belonging, as well as, the effects of being a second generation TCK. Biracial individuals have additional struggles with these two concepts as they are born into two separate cultures, and second generation TCKs would come from an original culture that is already of an amalgamated nature due to their TCK parent's exposures.

Our ever changing world will influence the evolving nature of the expatriate community, and it will not be long till a new model of a TCK is manufactured. This fuels a necessity for frequent research upon each generation of TCKs. Not only is repeated research on current TCKs necessary to understand the present, it is in this way we can also prepare and control the outcome of the next generation and TCKs to come.

The postmodern condition challenges the “idea of a “settled” character, one with an original and unified identity” (Grimshaw & Sears, 2009). It is predicted that eventually, “few of us will no longer live in a monocultural world” (Stultz, 2003). Our world today is comprised of shifting, overlapping, combining, and splitting of cultures, and researchers are coming to see this is only the beginning of a further globalized world (Grimshaw & Sears, 2009). TCKs are the outcome of cultures that undergo some or all of these actions; in 1984, Ted Ward, a sociologist, deemed TCKs prototype citizens of the future (Pollock, 1998). “There is still much to be learned about [TCKs], and even more to be learned from them” (Stultz, 2003). Research on this population will aid us in understanding more about the consequences of intercultural interactions. This research will not only be beneficial to the TCK individual, but to the future of the world.

Socrates once said, “An unexamined life is not worth living.” As stated earlier, TCKs are a preview of the type of individual to emerge in the future, however their current significance and evidence has been overlooked. The amount of research on this population so far, and the extent to which the world is cognizant of them, does not do its prevalence justice. For selfish reasons, I do not want my life to go unexamined. This lifestyle has become conventional enough to be taught and acknowledged by others, and more importantly discussed and embraced by the group itself.

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## *ACADEMIC VITA*

### ACADEMIC VITA of Alyssa Yoshimura

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#### Activities:

Founder of student organization, Third Culture Kids (TCK), State College, PA  
Volunteer/co-leader, four Habitat for Humanity trips (US, Philippines, Mongolia)  
Member, Penn State College of Health and Human Development Global Leadership Initiative, State College, PA  
April 2010 - Present