THIRD CULTURE KIDS' REPATRIATION AND PLANNED TRANSITION TO COLLEGE FROM A SOUTH ASIAN COUNTRY: A QUALITATIVE COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY

by

Sandra Wiemann Blank

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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APPROVED BY:

Billie Jean Holubz, Ed.D., Committee Chair

Constance Pearson, Ed.D., Committee Member

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative collective case study was to understand the transition to college in the United States of third culture kids (TCKs) who have spent at least one year in South Asia during their upbringing (ages 6-18). Schlossberg's adults in transition theory was employed to study planned transitions to college. This study attempted to answer the research questions: How do TCKs perceive the major events or benchmarks in their transition to college? How did expected and unexpected outcomes impact TCKs' experience during their transition to college? What resources do TCKs typically access during their repatriation to college transition in the U.S. What are the strategies TCKs used in their first year of college that contributed to their persistence to graduation? For this study, a recruitment flyer was posted on alumni websites of two international schools in a South Asian country. Purposeful sampling and subsequent snowball sampling were used to guarantee 12-15 participants who met the criteria of the study and had experienced the transition to college under investigation. Through several open-ended semi-structured questions, the participants were invited to reveal what their first-year adjustment to college experience entailed through individual and focus group interviews. Additionally, data was collected from participant reflective journals that each participant was required to keep. These journals were used to record each student's recollections of their repatriation for college transition experience. Further, all data was coded, and themes and categories were identified. With-in case and cross-case analysis were conducted.

Keywords: acculturation, culture, culture shock, enculturation, expatriate, hidden immigrant, global nomad, home (first) culture (country), host (second) culture (country), re-acculturation, repatriation (reentry), reverse culture shock, third culture, Third Culture Kids (TCKs), and transition.

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Dedication

I dedicate my dissertation to the glory of God. Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

I dedicate my dissertation to Dr. B.J. Holubz, whose encouragement, competence, and prayers guided me every step of the way and was used by God to help me to persevere. Without her help and assurance, there is no way that I would have persevered to the end. I praise God for Dr. B.J. Holubz, who endured with me for four years.

To my husband, David, My Beloved, who pushed me in the right direction and believed in me. He believed that I could do it when I had my doubts. As iron sharpens iron so one man sharpens another.

To my parents, who made many sacrifices for my siblings and me.

To all Third Culture Kids and international students who experience the transition to college in the U.S.

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List of Abbreviations

Businessmen's Kid (BusKid)

Educator's Kid (EdKid)

Military Brat (MilBrat)

Missionary Kid (MK)

Diplomat's Kid (DipKid)

Third Culture Kid (TCK)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

American third culture kids (TCKs) generally have a difficult transition back to the home country after spending at least one year of their upbring overseas in South Asia. Many U.S. TCKs experience reverse culture shock (RCS) throughout their return and adaptation to college life (Altweck & Marshall, 2015; Smith & Kearney, 2016). However, because American TCKs hold an American passport, TCKs are most often not being helped in their college transition like international students are. At many U.S. colleges the international students receive a lot of support when they first arrive on campus. Yet TCKs are frequently ignored by colleges when they arrive on campus.

Although many U.S. schools know that international students need special backing, the U.S. schools do not realize that the TCK demographic needs support like international students. TCKs are not a homogeneous population but should be treated as such to enable them to have a successful transition and to continue to graduation from the college (Kartoshkina, 2015). If TCK students are supported by the college in their first year on campus, the TCKs are much more likely to continue to graduation (Smith & Kearney, 2016). Chapter one includes the background of the college transition for TCKs, including the history, social context, and theory that guided the study, the researcher's situation to self, the study problem and purpose statements, the significance of the study, the study research questions, the study's definitions, and the summary for the chapter.

Background

The background section contains a summary of the most relevant literature to the study. The background section provides the historical, social, and theoretical contexts for the research

problem. The historical background section goes back to the 1960s when Useem et al. (1963) started research on TCKs and continues until the present. The societal background section includes the different contexts that TCKs find themselves in when starting college. The theoretical background section includes the theoretical concepts and principles that form the underpinnings for the study.

Historical Background

Since the 1960s when Useem et al. (1963) laid claim to the term third culture kid (TCK), scholars and teachers have been concerned with comprehending and helping this group of persons. Useem et al. (1963) defined the third culture as an intricate amalgamation of a person's home culture and host culture(s), which combined to form a distinctive new culture. TCKs develop "new types of selves" (Moore & Barker, 2012, p. 5; Useem et al., 1963, p. 170), and through this form an exclusive society that is both common to all TCKs and is confirmed in association with other TCKs. Useem & Useem (1967) described this new form of self as a TCK culture, and therefore not as the individual TCK's own unique culture. It is a culture that is unique to and shared by all TCKs and TCKs tend to feel that they are part of a special cluster who they grew up with. TCKs have a sense that they have embodied something superior to themselves, be it their home nation(s), home government(s), or Deity (Pollock et al., 2017).

In addition, unlike refugees and immigrants who plan to resettle in their host country, TCKs do not plan to stay or settle in the host countries, but rather intend to return to the countries of their passports in the future (Fanning & Burns, 2017; Freedman, 2018; Lijadi & van Schalkwyk, 2018; Lijadi & van Schalkwyk, 2017; Lyttle et al., 2011; Pollock et al., 2017). Nevertheless, the experiences of TCKs are like new immigrant non-western students' experiences when the new immigrant non-western students relocate to western countries (Anjalin

et al., 2017; Holliday, 2017; Li et al., 2018; Limberg & Lambie, 2011). Before Adler (1977), earlier publications harmfully categorized cultural hybrids as *marginal man*, i.e., dysfunctional, isolated, and peripatetic. Commencing with Adler's *multicultural man,* more modern conceptions have depicted cultural hybrids or *TCKs* in a more optimistic light (Adler, 1977; Greenholtz & Kim, 2009; Useem et al., 1963).

For a child to exhibit characteristics of TCKs, the time outside the U.S. must be significant (at least 1 year) and that time must occur during their upbringing (birth to 18 years old) when one's sense of identity and ideas about the world are being formed. In addition, Lijadi and van Schalkwyk (2017) indicated that such "kids" are people who, during a crucial part of their upbringing, have spent at least six months outside their parents' home countries. Other researchers also used the criteria of individuals who had lived abroad for more than six months. These are a few examples that demonstrate that there is no agreement amongst researchers who have contributed to the literature on TCKs as to when in an individual's life, in how many countries, or for how long one must live in the host country, to qualify as a TCK (Choi et al., 2013, Melles & Frey 2017, Melles & Schwartz, 2013). TCKs find their sense of belonging to be with others who have had similar international experience and TCKs typically expect to repatriate to their home country at some point in their lives, generally for college (Fanning & Burns, 2017; Lijadi & van Schalkwyk, 2018; Lijadi & van Schalkwyk, 2017; Pollock et al., 2017).

Global Nomad is a term used interchangeably with the term Third Culture Kid and was conceived by Norma McCaig (1994). Global Nomad was used to represent individuals who as part of their upbringing have resided in at least one country overseas away from their passport country because of their parents' occupation. Throughout the years, research and other literature

about Global Nomads has been published by participants of a wide array of disciplines (Abe, 2018; Pollock et al., 2017; Tanu, 2015). These researchers include social scientists and mental health personnel working with TCK organizations that send employees to international locales. These writings also include parents of TCKs, international schoolteachers and anecdotal accounts written by adult TCKs.

The first doctoral dissertations about TCKs were published in the 1960s and 1970s under Useem's guidance (Cottrell, 2009). During the 1970s and 1980s, there were many other studies conducted on the TCK population (Adler, 1981; Fail et al, 2004; Ward, 1989). Later, in 1999, Useem compiled a bibliography listing 240 theses and dissertations written mostly by adult TCKs on TCK-related issues (Cottrell, 2009). In general, this TCK literature mainly concerned the impressionistic and anecdotal accounts of adult TCKs sharing their experience as kids of either military employees known as MilBrats or missionaries, known as MKs (Cottrell, 2002). In the first two decades of the 21st century, many current qualitative studies were conducted (Abe, 2018; Choi et al., 2013; Fail et al., 2004; Hervey, 2009; Fanning & Burns, 2017; Kortegast & Yount, 2016; Lijadi & van Schalkwyk, 2017, 2018; Limberg & Lambie, 2011; Melles & Frey, 2017; Melles & Schwartz, 2013; Smith & Kearney, 2016; Pollock et al., 2017; Tanu, 2015). Current qualitative studies on TCKs have focused on the issues of reentry, the search for identity in late adolescence and early adulthood and have displayed a tendency to be anecdotal. The children of military parents have also been widely researched by the military in military publications (Cottrell, 2002). Except for the Missionary Kid (MK) category and the Military Brat (MilBrat) category, the other TCK categories mentioned above have not been adequately studied (Kortegast & Yount, 2016). Thus overall, the field remains "under-researched" (Smith & Kearney, 2016, p. 958). Furthermore, there is little research that focuses on cross-culturally

highly mobile children that is specific to TCKs. In addition, the research on TCKs and similar cross-culturally mobile children is not consolidated or unified (Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011; Szkudlarek, 2009).

Gilbert (2008), Hoersting and Jenkins (2011), Hopkins (2015), Lijadi and van Schalkwyk (2014), Long (2020), and Moore and Barker (2012) stated that leaving their host country involved grief for the TCK. Several researchers studied TCK's lack of commitment and their reluctance to become close to others (Fanning & Burns, 2017; Lijadi, 2018; Lijadi & van Schalkwyk, 2014). Several researchers discovered that attending a reentry seminar reduced feelings of anxiety, depression, and stress, and enabled TCKs to have an easier time acculturating back home (Bates, 2013; Bikos et al., 2009; Davis et al., 2013; Dykhouse & Bikos, 2019; Hervey, 2009; Hopkins, 2015; Klemens & Bikos, 2009; Young, 2014). Hopkins (2015) indicated that TCKs are becoming more common and more visible. Ai and Wang (2017) studied international students and the very similar repatriation international students experience compared to TCKs.

It seems that a high proportion of TCK research continues to be theses or dissertations that are not further published (Cottrell, 2009). To make the crucial and fascinating TCK population better known to the research community, as well as to sensitize others to TCKs' challenges and their strengths, more academic research needs to be conducted and published. Szudlarek (2009) discovered that the TCK phenomenon has been comprehended and investigated from several varying perspectives. Yet, in view of the complex transition and identity alterations of TCKs, astonishingly little research has been dedicated entirely to the reentry transition of TCKs. Nonetheless, there are accessible publications that describe identity development, grief for the loss of the host country milieu and contacts, as well as isolation and

loneliness in the home country, with the latter of these aforementioned items being the foremost of the trials in the TCKs' reentry (Pollock et al., 2017; Kortegast & Yount, 2016; Smith & Kearney, 2016; Storti, 2001).

The evolving nature of U.S. culture also makes a difference in ease of adaptation. Up until the 1950s, U.S. TCKs repatriated to a nation that was not internationally leaning. This culture made it very challenging to find "soul mates" (Cottrell, 2007, p. 62) or other people who had international experience. Now in the U.S. the cities are generally very international and multi-cultural. College is where the long-term TCKs frequently have their initial actual involvement in the American scene. Many colleges now encourage foreign students and encourage study overseas for U.S. students. Having more students with international experience increases the likelihood of finding others who are TCKs. Many nations, in contrast, continue to be comparatively homogeneous. Some countries, even today, are less open to those with a "foreign" upbringing (Cottrell, 2007).

Societal Background

Since Useem and Useem's work (1967), the numbers of TCKs have increased and the complexity of the TCK family has become much more varied and multifaceted. More children have multicultural upbringings (Abe, 2018; Pollock et al., 2017; Useem & Useem, 1967). It is noteworthy to reflect briefly on the former U.S. President Barack Obama, who is considered bicultural (Melles & Schwartz, 2013). Obama has some of the characteristics typically associated with TCKs: being open to people from a variety of cultural backgrounds, being sensitive to these people and comfortable with them (Abe, 2018; Bosuwon, 2017; Lyttle et al., 2011; Melles & Schwartz, 2013; Ozlem, 2020; Pollock et al, 2017). Like some TCKs, Obama has been criticized for being too aloof and emotionally detached and possibly prejudiced, like some TCKs (Abe,

2018; Melles & Schwartz, 2013; Pollock, et al, 2017). Other TCK's show a lack of commitment and a reluctance to become close to others (Fanning & Burns, 2017; Lijadi, 2018; Lijadi and van Schalkwyk, 2014).

A participant of Gilbert's study (2008) remarked that though he tried to retain contact with his old friends when he moved, he also defined himself as being aloof and careful about establishing contacts because of his recurring losses during moves. The significance of Gilbert's study is that it described the endless process of grief resulting in an individual who feels rootless and isolated as well as having a failure to make commitments, a prolonged adolescence, and an unending condition of liminality. The concluding consequence of existential losses is a lengthy, conceivably long-lasting liminal state in which TCKs retain ambiguity about security and confidence, identity, where TCKs fit in, and where their home is. Other researchers indicated that, as their way of coping, TCKs tend to often disconnect from others during transitions. TCKs use this coping tactic because of the habits TCKs have developed from having to disconnect in relationships so frequently during their mobile upbringing (Choi et al., 2013; Lijadi, 2018; Lijadi & van Schalkwyk, 2017; Lijadi & van Schalkwyk, 2014; Melles & Frey, 2014). Knowing these two TCK tendencies would encourage colleges to provide opportunities for TCKs to connect with each other (Smith & Kearney, 2016).

When TCKs return to their parents' home countries, TCKs tend to have a harder time readapting to their parents' home culture than their parents do (Altweck & Marshall, 2015). Yet most of the literature on Americans as well as other international students coming back to a home culture has focused on their expatriation, not their repatriation (Andriano et al., 2017; Kartoshkina, 2015; Li et al., 2020). It is understood that TCKs often develop associations with multiple cultures, but do not feel like they necessarily belong to any of them. Thus, TCKs

identify with other TCKs, more readily than with a particular place or culture (Davis et al., 2013). A study has been conducted on immigrants and racial subgroups showing that biculturalism is positively connected with emotional and sociocultural adjustment (Abe, 2018). During the time that TCKs are living as expatriates overseas, TCKs form their own third culture. TCKs' culture is different from either their home or their host culture. TCKs' culture is a temporary social structure that TCKs create that helps give a sense of belonging in either their home or their host culture when TCKs meet with other TCKs who have also had an overseas experience that is like their experience (Fanning & Burns, 2017; Lijadi, & van Schalkwyk, 2014).

Hoersting and Jenkins (2011) stated that moving between cultures can affect one's emotional security and self-worth, especially for TCKs who grow up in a host country, instead of their home country. Additionally, Smith and Kearney (2016) discovered that TCK students felt like they lost their cultural identity during their transition to college in their home country. Altweck and Marshall (2015) discovered that some of the complex aspects of the transition to college in the home country and the inherent reverse culture shock associated with this move make this transition more difficult than even the original transition to another country. The difficulty of the transition is amplified further by the available support structures at the college. The TCK students are not technically international students. Therefore, the college assumes that the TCK does not need the support the college could provide (Kartoshkina, 2015). Smith and Kearney (2016) outlined that from a retention perspective, the TCK's engagement with other students who have shared overseas experiences is protective for their initial adaptation to college. The TCKs' shared experience, rather than shared physical, racial, religious, or environmental homebased features, is shielding for their perseverance to graduation.

On the other hand, Melles and Frey (2014) indicated that, as their way of coping, TCKs tend to often disconnect from others during transitions. TCKs use this coping tactic because of the habits they have developed from having to disconnect in relationships so frequently during their upbringings epitomized by mobility (Choi et al 2013; Lijadi, 2018; Lijadi & van Schalkwyk, 2017; Lijadi, 2014). Knowing these two TCK tendencies would help encourage colleges to make available opportunities for TCKs to connect with each other (Smith & Kearney, 2016). TCKs continue to have social problems throughout their lives because TCKs know parts of at least two cultures, but have not fully experienced any one culture, making them feel inadequate around monocultural children. To compensate, TCKs often build social networks between themselves and choose to socialize with other TCKs (Cranston, 2017; Moore & Barker, 2012). Useem et. al. (1963) have calculated that TCKs connect two cultures through paths that link these distinct cultures. As a result, all TCKs share a comparable culture of merged cultures. This shared culture is a new culture that is centered around the building of bridges. TCKs can thus play the important role of linking cultures (Zilber, 2009). Useem et al. (1963) have used the metaphor of a bridge to describe how TCKs are good at bridging cultures.

It is important to note that the TCK group is not a scientific sample, and the TCK lifestyle is not branded by pathology (Gaw, 2007). Yet, TCKs have reported not being understood by their counselor because of the counselor's not being familiar with TCK related fears (Bushong, 2013). TCKs' experiences and trials suggest that clinicians may profit from having both cognizance of and sympathy for the issues unique to TCKs. However, resources to help clinicians improve such cognizance and sympathy are rare (Bushong, 2013).

Useem (1994) reported that many TCKs chose their college without ever visiting the campus and often relied on recommendations of personal contacts because these TCKs were

living outside the U.S. Attending a college sight unseen may partly account for why some TCKs end up transferring to another college from the first college they join. One study has shown that thirty-eight percent of TCKs were unsuccessful in earning a bachelor's degree from the preliminary college they joined, with more than 50% instead attending three or more colleges (Useem & Cottrell, 1993). Because the first year of college is crucial to continued persistence, many investigations have studied the postsecondary transition experiences of numerous populations of students (Hervey, 2009; Kortegast & Yount, 2016; Smith & Kearney, 2016). Of these, the three more recent noted studies are explicit to the TCK experience in college and are focused on the transition experience of TCKs to college.

Study of the transitions of military veterans to college can be relevant to the current study in evaluating potential solutions for the TCK transition to college. Like TCKs, student veterans face relational and social trials when student veterans arrive on campus. Veterans face difficulties as they transition to student life on campus and find it challenging to relate to student peers and faculty members (Schiavone & Gentry, 2014). Comparable to TCKs, veterans face physical, emotional, and inner issues (Schiavone & Gentry, 2014; Whitworth et al., 2020).

Studies of similar student transitions in other countries can also provide potential insights and raise questions relevant to the current study (Cottrell, 2007; Fail et al., 2004; Shimomura, 2014). For example, within Japan's collectivistic context, it is vital to be a part of the group. When the Kaigai/Kikoku-shijo (Japanese TCKs) have re-entered Japan, their differences have been looked down upon by Japanese culture. Through widespread research, a perceptual model shift, and changes in educational guidelines, Japan has come to perceive the Kaigai/Kikoku-shijo as benefitting society rather than being liabilities to society (Kano Podolsky, 2004; Shimomura, 2014). The emergence of returnees posed an important question for Japanese educators: Was

Japanese education culturally inclusive enough to accommodate cultural diversity among students? Within this research it was suggested that it was not, attributing this to Japan's standardized educational systems that fostered the cultural marginalization of returnees. This is because the Japanese educational system was intended for people who were likely to spend their entire lives in their home country. In the Japanese educational system compliance to the norm is the implied premise. Thus, in Japan such returnees were handled as problematic children because TCKs did not conform.

Theoretical Background

Increasingly, researchers have looked at comprehending the issues surrounding repatriated MKs from a variety of theoretical perspectives (Klemens & Bikos, 2009). One of the premises of Erikson's (1959) psychosocial development theory is that if one stage is not finished successfully, then later stages will also be affected. Therefore, it was hypothesized that adult TCKs may likewise struggle with close relationships. Erikson's stage after adolescence is intimacy vs. isolation, when young adults begin forming meaningful associations after forming a solid sense of their identity. Erikson's fifth stage occurs right before or during the time many TCKs are returning to their passport cultures. Individuals in this stage are moving from the stability of childhood to becoming independent adults. During the fifth stage of development, adolescents are in the process of resolving the crisis of forming and figuring out their identity and their role in society. Erikson has stated that during this period adolescents are worried about how they appear to others compared to what TCKs feel about themselves. The adverse consequence associated with this stage is role confusion. This occurs when a teenager is not able to settle on a work-related identity. Another adverse consequence is that teenagers may over-identify with groups and with heroes in their locality to the point that TCKs lose their identity.

While one is still in this stage of development, the way the crisis of the fifth stage is resolved will in turn significantly affect how the sixth stage will be completed during one's young adulthood (Erikson, 1959). The sixth stage of development is when young adults start forming intimate, loving relationships with others. If a person has effectively established an identity for themselves, the person is then keen to identify with another person. If the person's identity is not fused adequately or if it is lost in the worry of how the person seems to others, the person may detach themselves for self-preservation reasons. Wrobbel (1990), along with many other researchers (Melles & Frey, 2014; Smith & Kearney, 2016; and Useem & Cottrell, 1993), used Erikson's (1959) adult stages of psychosocial development to undergird their studies. Smith and Kearney (2016) used the Kubler-Ross Grief Theory as the foundation for their study. Further, other studies were conducted using yet other theories as the basis for their studies, including (a) multicultural identity theories (Moore & Barker, 2012; Pho, 2018), (b) identity formation theories (Lyttle et al., 2011), (c) intercultural adaptation theories (Selye, 1956), (d) acculturation theory (Gudykunst & Lee, 2003) and (e) Schlossberg's (1981) adults in transition theory (Kortegast & Yount, 2016; Rodriguez-Kino, 2013;Schiavone & Gentry, 2014).

Third Culture Kid theory, as defined, researched, and reported by sociologist Pollock et al. (2017) has formed the basis for most of the current research on cross-cultural adjustment, intercultural identity formation and transition today (Bates, 2013; Hervey, 2009; Lyttle et al., 2011; Moore & Barker, 2012; Melles & Schwartz, 2013; Peterson & Plamondon, 2009; Pho, 2018). This model details the common characteristics of TCKs: being highly mobile, having a cross-cultural way of life, having a system identity-correlating their identity with the group to which TCKs fit in (Hervey, 2009; Pollock et al., 2017), having a larger world view, having cultural disenfranchisement (Bates, 2013; Davis, 2010; Gilbert, 2008; Hervey, 2009; Lijadi,

2018; Pollock et al., 2017), having a multifaceted sense of belonging, having unresolved grief from numerous losses (Bates, 2013; Davis, 2010; Gilbert, 2008; Hervey, 2009; Lijadi , 2018; Pollock et al., 2017), and having a convoluted cultural identity (Amadasi, 2020; Moore & Barker, 2012; Pho, 2018). However, like most of the related research on the area of TCKs, TCK research is mostly anecdotal and not peer- reviewed (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001).

Situation to Self

By the original definition of a TCK and the necessity of having to have spent some years overseas during their upbringing (Useem & Useem, 1967), I would not have been classified as a TCK. However, Pollock et al. (2017) more recently broadened the definition of a TCK to include people like myself who grew up in a multicultural family within the borders of America. My father was from Europe and my mother is from South America. Both of my parents came to attend college in the United States as international students and met in the French Club at the University of Florida. When I was growing up, most of my parents' friends were international.

My husband was posted with the United Nations in Israel for a year, soon after we were married. During that year, we visited many of the surrounding countries, including Greece and Turkey to retrace the Apostle Paul's missionary journeys. We also were blessed to have been able to visit some areas in Palestine. Since my husband's Fulbright Scholar professor exchange in 1992, I have spent 23 of the past 30 years living in South Asia. Besides living in South Asian culture and being raised in a multicultural family, I also experienced the military culture of the U.S. Coast Guard for nine years. As my study is also exploring, the U.S. military is also a distinct culture. Additionally, because we primarily raised them in South Asia, my four children are all classified as TCKs.

Even though Pollock et al. (2017) are the experts on TCKs and are often cited in the research literature, Useem and Useem (1963) precipitated the research on this topic way back in the 1950s and 1960s in South Asia. Thus, I find it fascinating that my topic is TCKs and their transition to college builds on an idea that was first researched in South Asia. Considering this topic's origins, I find my international experience of living in South Asia for 23 of the last 30 years helpful to my choice of research areas. For only up until sometime after I started this research, I had no idea that South Asia was the birthplace of the phenomenon of TCKs.

I wish I could have helped my children more in their repatriation to America for college from South Asia, but I did not know much about TCKs at the time. I did not know I was one. While growing up, at times I did have some identity confusion, but I never knew why. I do remember being made fun of when I started first grade because of my accent. I had learned to speak English and Spanish at the same time before I started school. After living in South Asia for 12 years straight, I felt as if I had some identity confusion when I returned to the States for a year. I was not altogether certain that I was still "American!" Of course, now I realize that I am even more multicultural after living in South Asia for so long. Inadvertently, my husband discovered Pollock and Van Reken (2001) just a bit before we repatriated our oldest child to the U.S. in 2004. Our oldest child received all his primary and secondary educations in South Asia. I remember hearing about college transition disaster stories where TCK parents dropped their kids off at college and then expected them to be just fine as these parents returned to their host country overseas. Or worse, some parents just sent their kids back unaccompanied for college.

In application of what little we together understood on this topic, my husband and I managed to accompany each of our four children home from South Asia to live in the U.S. during their freshman year of college. Thus, we did at least know enough to realize that we

needed to be on the same continent as our kids were during the year our kids were making their transitions from South Asia to college in the U.S. We now feel that it was our follow-through in coming back for each of them that likely empowered our children during their difficult freshman-year transitions to college. Having said this, our youngest child, who had spent his 1st, 5th, and 9th grades in the U.S., had the most difficult transition of all our children. Our oldest child who lived in South Asia for 12 years before repatriating to the U.S. for college, had the next hardest transition experience. Our daughters chose to befriend international students at their very small liberal arts college in the U.S. and had much easier transitions. However, our older daughter did have some serious reverse culture shock when she started college. Since the last of my children started college, I have spent a considerable amount of time researching the current topic for my dissertation. I am an expert on TCKs who repatriate from South Asia to college in the U.S. Now I hope to add my new knowledge to my rich experience on the topic of TCKs and their repatriation to college and to their adjustment experience.

The guiding epistemology of my qualitative collective case study is constructivism, which suggests that meaning or truth is created by the individual (Crotty, 1998) and their viewpoints (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Knowledge is socially constructed, and case study investigators aid readers in the creation of knowledge (Stake, 1995). The emphasis for my study will be on hearing my participants' stories through which their lived experiences emerge (Wolcott, 2008). I will also be getting close to my participants, as a person with an epistemological assumption does (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As the researcher I am not independent, but rather I and the participants are interrelated. A closeness develops between the researcher and the participants during the research. This includes the impact that the participants have on the researcher. I am also a pragmatist. As Creswell and Poth (2018) and Patton (2015)

mention, I will focus on the products of my research and will figure out what works. Also, my emphasis is not on methods, but on the problem that is being studied and the questions that are being asked of the problem (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this way, I will be able to see the results of my study used to improve the transition experience for TCKs in their first year of college.

The ontological assumption addresses the nature of reality. It asks when something is real. In qualitative research, something is real when it is created in the intellects of the performers involved in the situation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In my study, the performers were the participants. The axiological assumption considers that all inquiry is loaded with value, especially the value systems of the researcher, the theoretical framework, the hypothesis utilized, and the societal and cultural norms for the researcher or the participants. I am aware that my values and cultural norms, as well as the values and cultural norms of the participants may affect my inquiry.

Problem Statement

The problem is that, because U.S. TCKs hold an American passport, U.S. TCKs are not treated like international students on U.S. college campuses. International students receive a lot of support when they first arrive on campus at many U.S. colleges. In contrast, TCKs are frequently ignored when they arrive on their college campuses in the U.S. TCKs need to be given attention at this juncture of their college career, so that TCKs do not fall through the cracks during their freshman year (Smith & Kearney, 2016). Neglect at the transition phase can hinder a TCK's persistence to graduation. Despite international students receiving support when they arrive from overseas, TCKs are mostly overlooked (Smith & Kearney, 2016). With globalization and the ease of travel, the number of TCKs is growing (Altweck & Marshall, 2015; Pang & Hutchinson, 2018) as more families choose to live and work abroad (Davis et al., 2015). For

fiscal year 2018, the U.S. GAO estimated that there were almost nine million Americans living abroad (U. S. Government Accountability Office, 2018). According to Smith & Kearney (2016), many of that number are children. There have been some studies on the MK and the MilBrat, but the Businessmen Kid (BusKid), Diplomat Kid (DipKid), and Educator Kid (EdKid) have been "under-researched and under-served" (Smith & Kearney, 2016, p. 956). The few research studies that have been conducted on this fashionable topic have been mostly unreliable (Abe, 2018; Fechter & Korpela, 2016; Pollock et al., 2017). This combination of factors has negatively impacted U.S. TCKs' transition to college and their perseverance to graduation. Because of these factors TCKs are not being given the tailored support TCKs require (Kartoshkina, 2015). Another possible cause of this problem is that TCKs are *hidden immigrants.* It is supposed by me that a study which investigates the transition experience via the collective case study method may remedy this situation, and help stakeholders learn why some TCKs are more resilient than others (Abe, 2018; Pollock et al., 2017). Many studies have been conducted in the first two decades of the 21st century, thereby indicating there is a growing interest in this topic (Hopkins, 2015). In addition, it is the U.S.TCKs that are coming to the U.S. for college from Asia rather than from other western countries that are having more difficulty than monocultural U.S. kids during their adaptation to college (Holliday, 2017; Li et al., 2018; Mesidor & Sly, 2016), and some of them may need counseling (Smith & Kearney, 2016).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative collective case study was to understand the transition to college of TCKs who have spent at least one year in South Asia during their upbringing (ages 6-18). The transition to college was generally defined as a planned transition, where "a transition is any event or non-event that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles"

(Goodman et al., 2006, p. 33). The primary theory that guided this study is Schlossberg's adults in transition theory (Schlossberg, 1981) as it is this part of the transition into adulthood during the TCKs' transition to college in the U.S. that the study will seek to understand. The four *S's: situation, self, support, and strategies* of Schlossberg's adults in transition theory are used to examine the participants coping strategies during their transition to college in the U.S.

Significance of the Study

This study has empirical, theoretical, and practical significance for higher education professionals, college administrators, students, parents of students and researchers. The theoretical significance of the study benefits researchers of higher education regarding student experiences, including transitions. Using Schlossberg's (1981, 2011) adults in transition theory as an eyepiece to see the transition to college experience through, this study sought to provide an account of student experiences as TCKs made the transition to college. This study sought to provide a picture of how TCKs managed their transition experience by focusing on how TCKs coped in relation to Schlossberg's transition theory's 4 S's: *situation, self, support,* and *strategies.*

Empirical Significance

This collective case study has empirical significance for college students, their parents, scholars, higher education professionals, and administrators. Although Kortegast and Yount's (2016) study was significant in looking at MKs' transition to college, their study consisted solely of white female MKs. Thus, these researchers admitted that it would be hard to generalize the findings of their study to other TCK categories and to other ethnic groups. Yet, there has been a growing interest in the topic of MKs since the inception of Useem and Useem's (1963) work in the 1950s and 1960s and a growing desire for empirical research on the topic. This is evidenced

by the growing number of studies conducted on TCKs in the first two decades of the 21st century (Hervey, 2009; Hopkins, 2015; Kortegast & Yount, 2016; Kwon, 2019; Smith & Kearney, 2016). Except for the MK category (Kortegast & Yount, 2017) and the MilBrat category (Cottrell, 2001), the other TCK categories of BusKids, DipKids, and EdKids have not been adequately studied. Thus overall, the field remains "under-researched" (Smith & Kearney, 2016, p. 958). This study will address the existing empirical research gap that persists in the literature regarding the different categories of TCKs, particularly the BusKid, DipKid, and EdKid categories and the lack of literature on TCKs repatriating to college in the U.S. from South Asia.

Theoretical Significance

Much of what has been published on the topic of the TCK has been based on sentiments, personal experiences, and biographies (Davis et al., 2013). In the history of TCK studies, there have been very few publications that have focused on TCKs' emotional adaptations (Abe, 2018). This study addressed these adaptations, while also including the less researched categories of TCKs and the empirical research gap in the literature. It was much more ethnically diverse than Kortegast and Yount's (2016) study which only had white women as participants. The result of this study also has theoretical significance for researchers of higher education regarding student living, and transition. Using Schlossberg's (1981, 2011) adults in transition theory as a lens system through which to understand the TCKs' transition to college experience, I sought to provide a portrayal of TCK student experiences as the TCKs repatriated from South Asia to the U.S. for college. More explicitly, I sought to provide an account of their interpretations of their transition to college experience. This included any training the TCKs received for their repatriation back to the U.S. and their experience transitioning to their college after spending one

year of their upbringing (ages 6-18) overseas in South Asia. This study thus provides a new perspective to the application of Schlossberg's (1981, 2011) transition theory.

Practical Significance

This study may be important for TCKs and for colleges that currently do not implement a formal TCK identification process during either the application process, or when the TCKs arrive on campus. With the results of this study, colleges will be better able to see the need to offer adequate opportunities and to encourage this demographic of their student population to gather (Smith & Kearney, 2016). Colleges will also be able to prepare their professors and residence supervisors to be attentive to the academic or social difficulties typically facing TCKs during their initial transition to college (Han et al., 2017). Besides colleges and mission-related establishments, the results of the study may be important for other organizations in stressing the importance of not only having training for their members for culture shock when their members go overseas, but of also conducting training for reverse culture shock when their members return (Bates, 2013; Davis et al., 2013; Presbitero, 2016; Young, 2014). The research may be used by and may benefit all direct TCK stakeholders: the TCKs, their parents, their college administrators and professors, residence assistants, and international school staff worldwide.

Research Questions

I focused on the experiences of TCKs who have spent at least one year of their upbringing (ages 6-18) in South Asia to understand their transitions to college in the U.S. Using a collective case study research design, I sought to examine the heart of their shared experiences. My study was guided by the theoretical framework of Schlossberg's adults in transition theory (Schlossberg, 1981, 2011) to understand the TCK's transition process. I collected data directly

from the TCKs in the form of individual interviews, focus group interviews, and participant journal entries to address the following research questions:

Research Question One

What were the major events or benchmarks in the transition to college process for TCKs? This is a behavior and experience question that was intended to get to the heart of the interviewee's experience (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). In this study, the TCK transition to college experience was defined through the theoretical framework of Schlossberg's (1981, 2011) adult transition theory. This theory offers a view into seeing student experiences as transitions out of expected events where students experience alterations in roles, contacts, or expectations. This question seeks to describe students' transition to college experience, including the challenges the students encounter (Goodman et al., 2006).

The first S of the 4 S's of Schlossberg's (Schlossberg, 1981, 2011) adults in transition theory, *Situation* refers to what else is going on in a person's life at the time of the transition. Other life stressors occurring at the time of the transition may affect the transition, including the type of transition (Goodman et al., 2006). It is not the event that is most important, but its influence on an individual's daily functioning (Schlossberg, 1981, 2011). During the transition of entering and adjusting to a student's freshman year of college, freshman students may find themselves in circumstances that affect their readiness for college (Schlossberg, 1981, 2011). One of the tactics that was used in examining the influence of a study participant's transition was to assess the degree of difference between their pre-transition and post-transition environments. This is because an individual's success or failure in adapting to a new environment has been robustly correlated with the similarity or dissimilarity of the pre-transition and post-transition environments, despite the person's attitude toward or definition of the change.

Research Question Two

What expected and unexpected outcomes did TCKs experience during their transition to college process? This question corresponds to the second of the 4 S's of Schlossberg's (1981, 2011) adults in transition theory. The second of the 4 S's, *Self* or who is it happening to? refers to the individual's inner fortitude for coping with the transition. Each person differs in life issues and personality. Attitude affects how a person manages the transition. A student who is pessimistic may have more difficulties during the transition, than an optimistic student.

A person's explanatory style is the way that the person looks at an event or transition. It can explain how a person weathers transitions without becoming depressed or giving up (Goodman et al., 2006). An individual with a positive explanatory style is an optimist and one with a negative explanatory style is a pessimist. Life inflicts similar setbacks and tragedies on optimists and pessimists alike, but optimists tend to weather them much better. A person's explanatory style is thus the key to coping. In addition to handling transitions better, individuals who perceive that they have more control over their lives experience fewer of the harmful effects of stress.

It is also generally assumed that to some extent a person's past experiences determine the person's mental set, and if an experience was negative, then the mental set resulting from the experience may somehow evolve into a self-fulfilling prophecy (Goodman et al., 2006). The converse is also true. When more resources are made available to help in one's coping with the transition, it may be made more positive than the previous transition. Whether the person appraises the transition as positive, negative, or benign is important. A person's appraisal will clearly affect how the person feels and copes with the transition.

Research Question Three

What resources do TCKs typically access during their repatriation to college transition in the U.S.? This question refers to the third of the 4 S's of Schlossberg's (1981, 2011) adults in transition theory), the *Support* an individual has during the transition. What help is available? Supports and available options differ for everyone. Davis et al. (2013) inferred that MKs would need greater emotional and social support when these TCKs first arrive in the U.S. than their U.S. peers who did not repatriate to college from overseas. These supports can include family or friends, and any other support groups the student has. There are several supports that may be helpful to a TCK student entering college. These supports may include home support, other freshman friends, friends entering college with the student at the same time, friends the TCK makes during the transition, or groups the TCK joins during their freshman year (Goodman et al., 2006). The TCK's close relationships—including "trust, support, understanding, and the sharing of confidences" (p.75) are an important resource during stressful transitions.

Research Question Four

What are the strategies TCKs used in their first year of college that contributed to their persistence to graduation? This question corresponds with Schlossberg's (1981, 2011) adults in transition theory's fourth S, *Strategies*, or what enablers the individual chooses to access while in the transition phase. The person can choose strategies that assist them in reframing their circumstances so the person can cope with the transition phase of their freshman year (Goodman et al., 2006). Here coping refers to the behaviors of an individual to prevent, alleviate, or respond to stressful situations and avoid being harmed. Coping can occur before, during, or after a stressful or challenging situation. The key to coping is through how the individual views the strain, stress, or event, and if the individual sees it as harmful, benign, or challenging. The coping

strategies the individual uses are more important than the event, hassle, or strain and the individual's appraisal of their circumstances are more central to coping than the event.

Definitions

1. *Acculturation*- the process of relearning cultural norms (Gudykunst & Lee, 2003).
2. *BusKid*- child of business parent(s) (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001*).*
3. *Culture*- a self-sustaining system that duplicates itself through communication and that consists of meanings, beliefs, morals, and rules that guide conduct. Culture undergirds every feature of human activity, comprising of the political, financial, communal, and spiritual spheres of people (Moore & Barker, 2012).
4. *Culture Shock*- defined as the "anxiety that results from losing all of our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse." (Oberg, 1960, p. 177); a disease of adaptation (Oberg, 1960).
5. *DipKid*- child of diplomatic parents (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001).
6. *EdKid*- child of international school educators (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001).
7. *Enculturation*- the process of being socialized into one's home culture (Kim, 2007).
8. *Global Nomad*- individuals who have resided a noteworthy portion of their upbringing in at least one country overseas from their passport country because of their parents' occupation (McCaig, 1994).
9. *Hidden Immigrant*- a person who seems to belong to a culture by outward appearance, but who acts more like an international student or immigrant (Pollock et al., 2017).
10. *Home Culture (first culture)*- the country from which the parents hold their passports (Pollock et al., 2017).
11. *Host Culture (second culture)*- the country where the family lives (Pollock et al., 2017).

12. *MilBrat*- child of military parent(s) (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001).
13. MK- child of missionary parent(s) (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001).
14. *Re-acculturation*- the process that occurs when individuals return home from a sojourn abroad (Davis et al., 2013).
15. *Repatriation/Reentry*- the transition period back to the home country after living overseas (Zilber, 2009).
16. *Reverse Culture Shock*- a process that can occur when a sojourner returns to their passport culture. In the progression, their hopes, and ideals for the culture they are returning to do not always match their experience, creating a cognitive discord that must be dealt with (Furnham, 2009).
17. *Third Culture*- or *Interstitial Culture*- an abstract culture that is created from TCKs shared experiences and relationships with people from other cultures living the same lifestyle (Limberg & Lambie, 2011; Pollock et al., 2017). It is a culture created at the interstices of societies, by people who mediate. It is a bridging culture which reflects the participants' cultures (first and second) yet transcends these cultures; "it is not a blended culture" (Cottrell, 2007, p. 57). Perhaps the most noticeable feature of third cultures is the self-conscious determination on the part of its carriers to create the communal grounds for living and working together (Useem, 1963). The shared lifestyle of the expatriate community (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001).
18. *Third Culture Kid*- the kids of American Foreign Service Officers, missionaries, technical workers, businessmen, educators, and media representatives; they have spent a considerable part of their upbringing outside their parents' home culture (Pollock et al., 2017; Useem & Useem, 1967). Expected repatriation is also an essential attribute of

TCKs. Most parental job assignments have a stipulated time, and no intention exists to settle in the host country. A privileged lifestyle is a characteristic which most TCKs have in common, except for missionary kids. A high SES level is offered by the sponsoring organization, such as domestic support, a chauffeur, staying in a gated neighborhood, disposable salary, tourism, etc. Group identity is also a key feature of TCKs. For the purposes of this study, they will have spent at least one year of their upbringing (ages 6-18) overseas.

19. *Transition*- “any event or non-event that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles” (Goodman et al., 2006, p. 33).

Summary

The problem is that, because TCKs hold an American passport, U.S. TCKs are not treated like international students during their transitions to college in the U.S. At many U.S. colleges, international students receive a lot of support when they first arrive on campus. In contrast, TCKs are frequently ignored when they arrive on their college campuses in the U.S. In effect TCKs are *hidden immigrants* who are not noticed on the campus (McCaig, 1994). MKs have been researched much more than the other categories of TCKs (Kortegast & Yount, 2017). MilBrats were also widely researched (Cottrell, 2001). But there is a growing number of TCKs, including: BusKids, DipKids, and EdKids. The number of TCKs is rising (Altweck & Marshall, 2015), with ever-increasing numbers of people criss-crossing international borders for work (Lijadi & van Schalkwyk, 2017). Also, because of the increasing easiness of intercontinental travel along with superior technology (Davis et. al, 2013), this growing student demographic needs to be given more consideration on the college campus when the TCKs first arrive for studies. Although some TCKs are offered expatriation seminars by their organizations

(Andrianto & Jianhong, 2017), MKs are the only TCK demographic who are offered repatriation seminars which have been shown to enhance the preliminary transition to college (Kortegast & Yount, 2016).

The purpose of this qualitative collective case study is to understand the transition to college of U.S. TCKs who have spent at least one year in South Asia during their upbringing (ages 6-18). The participants in this study will have lived overseas for at least one year prior to their starting college in their home country, the U.S. The transition to college is a planned transition and how much the TCK feels they are in control of the transition affects how the TCK transitions (Schlossberg et al., 2006) to college in their parents' home country.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

With this literature review I provide a theoretical understanding of the college transition of TCKs. Besides being meant to be helpful to future researchers studying TCK repatriation for college, this review is also meant to highlight the existing empirical research gap concerning the various categories of TCKs, particularly the Businessman's Kid (BusKid), Diplomat's Kid (DipKid), and Educator's Kid (EdKid) categories, and the lack of literature on American TCKs repatriating to college in the U.S. from South Asia. The literature on TCKs and their transitions to college has focused almost exclusively on Missionary Kids (MKs) and Military Brats [(MilBrats) (Kortegast & Yount, 2016)]. A gap in the empirical literature exists because these other categories of TCKs have been neglected (Smith & Kearney, 2016). Accordingly, this study attempts to discover the transition to college experience for all the categories of TCKs. Along with the MilBrat and the MK, I included the BusKid, the DipKid, the EdKid, and others not falling into these clean categories. Repatriating to America for college after spending a portion of their upbringing (at least one year) in South Asia is a gap in the literature. My study thus focuses exclusively on American TCKs repatriating to America from South Asia. The current chapter focuses on the theoretical framework that guides this study, the related literature that explains what TCKs are, the issues TCKs face during transition to college, and a summary.

Theoretical Framework

Schlossberg (1981, 2011) conceived the effects of adults in transition and delineated a model as a technique to scrutinize human adjustment to transition**.** The adults in transition theory with its 4S model of transition was developed by Schlossberg (1981, 2011) and is the guiding theory for my study. Schlossberg's adults in transition theory is an extensive theory that looks at

the related setting, the development, the associated life span, and the creation of meaning (Goodman et al., 2006). For this model, a "transition" is defined as "any event, or non-event, that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles" (p. 39). An event is seen as something that happens that creates a change for the individual. The second type of transition is an unexpected transition, which may be unanticipated and upsetting, and this occurs when there is an emergency such as a surprising illness or operation or needing to relocate far away from one's family or friends, or even a surprise raise. The third type of transition is called a non-event transition. This is a transition that a person expects to happen, but it never transpires. These may be the failure to get married, not getting an anticipated promotion, not having a baby, not being able to make a wanted job change, and not being able to give up work when projected.

The progression of transitioning roles, connections, behaviors, and expectations takes time and resources and may trigger numerous feelings and responses (Kortegast & Yount, 2016; Schlossberg, 1989). According to Fragoso et al. (2013), transitions may involve emotional stressors such as anxiety, and feeling guilty, as well as being conflicted between academic and family obligations. Students may feel a lack of control during transitions that makes the transition harder. On the other hand, the researchers have stated that positive outcomes were evident when students overcame a transition well. The three key parts of the Schlossberg adults in transition theory (1981, 2011) are: impending transitions, taking stock of coping assets, and taking responsibility (Goodman et al., 2006). Impending transitions signifies the experience leading up to the transition, including the location, and the impact of the move, as well as the transition as an event or non-event. In the second part, taking stock of coping assets, one can better comprehend how the person will handle the transition when the person can see both the disadvantages and advantages within each of the four categories (4 S's) of *situation*, *self,*

support, and strategies. Schlossberg's (1981, 2011) theory also suggests that it is important to know whether the event is considered planned, unplanned, or a non-event, which can impact the results within each of the "4 S's." If advantages outweigh disadvantages, then the transition will be easier.

In the model, Schlossberg (1981, 2011) used a "4 S System" to explain how individuals contemplate coping resources. In using the 4S model of transition, Schlossberg considered the person's *situation*, *self*, *support*, and *strategies*. These are the variables which influence adults' capacities to cope with transition. In this system, individuals examine their strengths and weaknesses concerning how the individuals deal with the transition and are proactive (Goodman et al., 2006). The first S, *situation,* signifies the individual's circumstances at the time of transition and includes the reasons that led to the transition, a person's predictable level of influence in the transition, and whether the transition is perceived as beneficial or unsolicited. How the person has dealt with other transitions previously may impact their transition to college.

The second S, *self,* refers to one's capabilities for managing the transition (Goodman et al., 2006). *Self*-features are categorized into two groupings: personal and demographic features and psychological assets. The personal and demographic features may be considered preliminary factors and may include one's gender identity, race, socioeconomic status, or stage in life. One's psychological assets may be considered subsequent factors and may include one's level of self-assurance, tenacity, impetus, and ability to manage hardship and ambiguity. In my study, the TCK students' psychological assets are part of what I looked at as the TCKs repatriated to the U.S. and made their transition to college after having spent at least one year of their upbringing in South Asia because of their parent's employment.

The third S, *social supports,* comprises the aid present for a person at the time of transition (Goodman et al., 2006). This aspect includes one's dear relationships, household, colleagues, community groups, and the university the individual is transitioning to. This aspect may also include one's recognized and casual training, mentoring, and on-going career guidance (Goodman et al., 2006). The fourth S, *strategies,* recommends the actions individuals practice to thwart being wounded by life tensions. This coping strategy may transpire previously, throughout, or later during a challenging or problematic situation. For the purposes of my study, I thus looked at the coping resources used before, during, and after the TCK students' challenging transition to college after repatriating to the U.S. from South Asia.

Schlossberg's adults in transition theory (1981, 2011) provided a theoretical framework that helps to better comprehend the main facets of the transition experience. The earliest theory has since been revised in 1995, 2006, and most recently in 2011. Schlossberg's adults in transition theory (1981, 2011) has been used to study manifold groups that have transitioned into or out of educational settings, including academic probation students (Tovar & Simon, 2006). Brown & Scribner (2014) studied the transition that non-traditional as well as traditional students experienced. These researchers discovered the importance of an emphasis on the value of new supports, and specifically on an array of individuals and locations on campus. These supports go along with the third *S* in Schlossberg's adults in transition theory and the need for such supports. The following studies used Schlossberg's (1981, 2011) adults in transition theory to study the transitions in their studies (Livingston et al., 2011; Smith & Kearney, 2016).

Researchers uncovered that students who could handle themselves well, who did not sense robust negative emotions, who handled stress well, and who looked for societal assistance were more apt to have a successful transition to college. This conclusion agrees with the adult

transition theory, that the students' own strengths and weaknesses, sources of help, techniques of surviving, and the facets of the transition itself impact how the students move through a transition (van der Zanden et al., 2018; van der Zanden et al., 2019; Schlossberg, 1981).

The following studies used Schlossberg's adults in transition theory to study the transitions of veterans and MilBrats in their studies (Livingston et al., 2011; Smith & Kearney, 2016). These researchers outlined that for veterans who were transitioning to college, the transition was anticipated, and the veterans were able to be self-directed and felt in control of the process. MilBrats experienced certain aspects of college transition in a different manner than their civilian counterparts. College transition seemed to be a symbol of a withdrawal from the military population for many MilBrat students. The transition event prompted some MilBrats to doubt their own identity with additional concern for how their military upbringing may have enlightened this identity. MilBrats' backgrounds seemed to give students both advantages and disadvantages in the college transition.

Pellegrini and Hoggan (2015) studied women veteran students' transition to the community college. The researchers discovered women veteran students' unique needs. These students' relationships with faculty went a long way to ensure their success. This finding goes along with the third *S* in Schlossberg's (1981, 2011) transition theory which emphasizes the need for relational supports in the new location. Griffin & Gilbert (2015) studied how institutions can facilitate successful transition of veterans to higher education. Diamond (2012) studied service members transitional progression in an academic setting. Ryan et al. (2011) studied veteran transition from the military to higher education. The Ryan et al. study aimed to determine ways in which veteran transition to college was similar, as well as, different from the traditional student's transition to college. Wheeler (2012) studied the transition process of veterans who

leave the military and attend community college. Three themes were identified: (a) academic experiences, (b) personal sociocultural relationships, and (c) VA benefit bureaucracy.

Kortegast and Yount (2016) is the only study involving TCKs that used Schlossberg's (1981, 2011) adults in transition theory and focused on the MKs' transition to college. Kortegast and Yount stated that MKs had to negotiate new academic and social cultures while simultaneously managing their sense of their cultural identity. Family and faith offered important support that assisted students in developing personal coping skills and new social support. My study was only the second study that used Schlossberg's (1981, 2011) adults in transition theory to describe TCKs repatriation to college in the U.S. Also, my study included MilBrats, BusKids, and EdKids. There is a gap in the literature in these latter two categories. Studying TCKs who repatriate to the U.S. for college also helped to fill the gap in the literature of TCKs who repatriate to the U.S. to college from South Asia.

Schlossberg's (1981, 2011) adults in transition theory has been used in other college transition studies. Karmelita (2016) explored the effectiveness of a transition program for adult learners and indicated that the program was a positive experience that aided their transition to the student role. Neber (2018) studied nontraditional student's transition to college through Schlossberg's adults in transition theory, along with other theories.

Related Literature

Below are several sections that highlight TCK related literature. Under the related literature heading, the sections include (a) TCKs, (b) liabilities and benefits of the TCK lifestyle, (c) MilBrats, (d) BusKids, and (e) EdKids. Under the transition to college heading, the sections include (a) general transition factors, (b) veteran transition to college, (c) peer support, (d) repatriation of TCKs in general, (e) culture shock and reverse culture shock, (f) homesickness,

(g) persistence to graduation, and (h) counseling requisites. Under the addressing key issues faced by TCKs heading, the sections include (a) lack of institutional support, (b) home defined, (c) relationships, (d) social media, (e) sense of belonging, (f) identities, (g) cultural identity, (h) other ramifications of a cross-cultural lifestyle, (i) non-American TCK research, (j) Kikokushijo, and (k) international students compared to TCK students.

TCKs

TCKs are also known as Global Nomads (McCaig, 1994), cultural chameleons (Smith & Kearney, 2016), and cultural hybrids (Lijadi, 2017; Moore & Barker, 2012; Pollock et al., 2017). Known as sojourners, as well, TCKs have been described as ideal 21st century international peoples (Ward, 1989). TCK students are described as belonging to subpopulations that are categorized by the parents' livelihoods and/or overseas supporting organizations. These subpopulations include the following: (a) business, (b) diplomat, (c) military, and (d) missionary (Cottrell, 2002; Hervey, 2009; Pollock et al., 2017) and the newer most overlooked label, educator (Hannaford, 2016; Zilber, 2009). The lengthy list of famous adult TCKs includes Kobe Bryant, Isabel Allende, Yoko Ono, Freddie Mercury, and Barack Obama (Abe, 2018; Ward, 1989).

Liabilities of the TCK Lifestyle

Because TCKs are recognized with their parent's more customary backgrounds, the TCK population is still habitually ignored at many institutes (Miller, 2020). Even though these globally mobile students have been brought up in nations that are not their own, TCKs often do not sufficiently know their parents' country's culture (van Niejenhuis et al., 2018). Instead, TCKs have created a third culture for themselves that only the TCKs and other TCKs like them may appreciate (Useem et al., 1963). Many institutions have created programs, organizations,

and events to back these less orthodox students in their transition to college (Smith & Kearney, 2016).

Even TCK studies use the TCK tag as a cover for all the TCK types, each demographic category has fluctuating experiences that are centered on their family, culture, and organizational situations (Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011; Hu & Dai, 2021; Kortegast & Yount, 2016; Korwin-Kowalewska, 2020; Moore & Barker, 2012; Smith & Kearney, 2016). In one study, relative to their age group colleagues, 90 percent of adult TCKs specified that TCKs felt exclusive throughout their lives (Useem & Cottrell, 1993). Participants described their taking longer to fit in, because of their acclimating only after observing their surroundings and realizing what was required of them in their new situations. Because TCKs may reside in so many places and relocate continually, TCKs often form very multifaceted identities that are very different from those formed by people living in a single nation or culture. One study uncovered that the bulk of the participants in their study pronounced some complications in adjustment (Useem & Cottrell, 1993). Some of these issues included delayed adolescence, principally on the arrival to their passport countries (Arnett, 2002).

The experiences of having to fit in and of being in contact with different languages and nations may strengthen cultural understanding and open-mindedness in the TCK (Cheng & Yang, 2019; Dewaele & van Oudenhoven, 2009; Lyons et al., 2018). Parents who reside, work, and raise their children in an overseas community are not necessarily cognizant of how this exclusive education impacts a child's development. Researchers examined the link between self-concept, cultural identity, as well as cultural homelessness These researchers acknowledged the requirement to study the influence of cross-cultural moves during explicit developmental years and to determine whether this would be emotionally useful or detrimental (Abe, 2018; Hoersting

& Jenkins, 2011). TCKs often feel socially tentative because TCKs sense that they are unlike those around them (Fail et al., 2004). Many TCKs experience identity issues, including a sense of rootlessness, liminality, isolation, and unresolved loss and heartache (Grimshaw & Sears, 2008; Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011; Moore & Barker, 2012; Pollock et al., 2017). These above-mentioned emotional issues include feelings of rootlessness and a lack of fitting in because of the experience of adapting to a foreign philosophy, only to repatriate to their passport nations (Bonebright, 2010).

Benefits of the TCK Lifestyle

The experiences of TCKs give them multiethnic skills not often existing in monocultural kids who have not lived outside of their sole nation (Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009; Bates, 2013; Choi et al., 2013; Davis et al., 2010; Dewaele & van Oudenhoven, 2009; Fanning & Burns, 2017; Lyttle et al., 2011; Miller, 2020; Moore & Barker, 2012; Myer et al., 2019; Pollock et al., 2017). Brought up globally, TCKs are regularly bilingual or even multilingual from a very early age and are influenced positively by their opportune dealings with diverse tongues and countries. TCKs also have the capacity to modify identities and adapt to several nations and have boosted cultural consciousness (de Waal et al., 2020; Melles & Frey, 2017; Moore & Barker, 2012; Myer et al., 2019; Nash, 2020; Peifer & Yangchen 2017; Miller, 2020). On campus, TCKs tend to have a wide and diverse set of friends, adapt graciously to life outside their parents' homes, and demonstrate more advanced oral abilities than their monocultural peers (Limberg & Lambie, 2011). TCKs tend to be more open-minded (deWaal et al., 2020; Lyttle et al., 2011; Moore & Barker, 2012; Pollock et al., 2017) and have an extended worldview that comes from personal experiences of relocation (Kwon, 2019; Pollock et al., 2017). TCKs also demonstrate more knowledge of international politics than their monocultural peers (Davis et al., 2010; Kwon,

2019; Lyttle et al., 2011; Melles & Schwartz, 2013; Pollock et al., 2017; Useem & Downie, 2011).

Other TCK research, has bolstered these conclusions, indicating that TCKs grow in superior levels of social empathy than non-TCK people (Lyttle et al., 2011). TCKs competently grasp social interactions and understand others' insights, concepts, and temperaments. These advanced skills allow TCKs to connect across a range of social situations. Researchers emphasized that TCKs extraordinary capability to grasp and be comfortable with diversity is, conceivably, the most significant positive stemming from their experiences (Abe, 2018; Basow & Gaugler, 2017).

TCKs have also been discovered to have higher levels of general adaptation as opposed to monocultural children (Abe, 2018; Selmer & Lauring, 2014). There are corresponding studies that show that TCKs pursue and complete education at higher rates than their monocultural American peers (Cottrell, 2002; Useem & Cottrell, 1993). It is captivating to note that TCKs, who have been shown to wrestle with the transition to college are nonetheless also inspired to complete their degrees at such elevated levels. This TCK struggle during the transition to college seems to plainly go against the deductions of TCKs as being four times as likely as non-TCKs to receive a bachelor's degree [(81% vs 21%) (Useem & Cottrell, 1993)]. The facts relating to adaptation issues point out that it also may take TCKs longer to complete their degrees (Lijadi, 2018).

Military Brats (MilBrats)

As a subcategory of TCKs, MilBrats, have been widely explored (Cottrell, 2002). The lives of MilBrats are characterized by mobility (Gilbert, 2008; Lijadi & van Schalkwyk, 2017). Excessive mobility and persistent separation from a parental figure because of a deployment

illustrates the lives of MilBrats. The armed forces group is drastically more mobile than the usual civilian family, with the conventional military family relocating every two to three years, a rate 2.4 times greater than their classmates' noncombatant families (Clever & Segal, 2013). Although most MilBrats reside on the mainland United States, practically all MilBrats make at a minimum one move outside of the mainland United States during their childhood. Regular movement makes MilBrats susceptible to the incessant state of transition both physically and emotionally (Gilbert, 2008; Davis et al., 2013). Transition produces stress that may lead to despair and isolation (Baba & Hosoda, 2014; Bikos et al., 2009; Davis et al., 2013; Purnell & Hoban, 2014; Wu et al., 2015). Individuals form their sense of identity based on the reactions and opinions of family and friends, as well as, of the social contexts in which the individuals live. Because TCKs must focus more on adjusting to new environments rather than on gaining a full sense of self-identity, development is often disrupted (Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009; Rockinson-Szapkiw & Heuvelman-Hutchinson, 2018). While academic preparation for college is essential, a student's social experiences at college may be even more critical (Hlinka, 2017; Tinto, 1993).

Missionary Kids (MKs)

In 1989, Missionary Kids (MKs) were predicted by Ward to be the model citizens of the future. Twenty-five years later, in 2014, it appeared that Ward's predictions were accurate, particularly if one takes a broad view from missionary kids to other TCKs (Kortegast & Yount, 2016; Pollock et al., 2017; Ward, 1989). Missionary Kids (MKs), who spend a noteworthy share of their upbringing in a country other than their home country, because of their parents' faith-based ministry, experience an overabundance of impediments during their repatriation to their parent's home country (Bonebright, 2010; Li et al., 2020).

MKs usually spend some of their developmental years (between the ages of 6-18) out of the country (Martin, 2017). In the process of living overseas, MKs do not identify fully with the home or the host culture. Reentry adaptation tensions for MKs may include feelings of cultural homelessness, inner cultural struggle, having more than one worldview or a different one from the U.S., reduced socialization with home country peers, and feelings of rootlessness. As a result, MKs' hurdles repatriating to the U.S. may cause them to have grief, restlessness, anxiety, including social anxiety, and feelings of isolation.

Statistics reveal that 85 percent of MKs spent more than 10 years in foreign countries and 72% lived in only one foreign country (Cottrell, 2002). Of all TCKs, MKs usually have the most contact with the indigenous population and the smallest amount of contact with people from their passport country. MKs are also the most probable of the TCKs to assimilate themselves into the indigenous culture. Thus, MKs struggle to acclimate to their parents' culture and the bulk of MKs relate mainly with the country in which their parents worked (Bikos et al., 2009; Kortegast & Yount, 2016). One concern for MKs is that they may be particularly vulnerable to social isolation and withdrawal because of difficulties re-entering and adjusting to their passport culture (Bonebright, 2010). The re-entry may even be considered stunning (Davis et al., 2013).

Business Kids (BusKids)

Another vocation that may lead to TCKs is business (Pollock et al., 2017; Wiegel, 2010). Sixty-three percent of BusKids have resided in foreign countries a minimum of 10 years and are more apt than MKs to inhabit several countries. BusKids have a high interface with both their host residents and persons from their home country (Cottrell, 2002).

Educator Kids (EdKids)

Current research (Zilber, 2009) into the other categories of TCKs has discovered a subgroup that is now named Educator Kids. Zilber made up the term "EdKids" for this subsection in the first book ever authored on the topic. EdKids, are a lesser-known subdivision of TCKs. These are TCKs who relocate to various countries with parents who teach in international schools. A key feature distinguishing EdKids from TCKs in other TCK categories is that EdKids' families have more influence over decisions related to relocating. EdKids may make such choices as a family, whereas other sponsorship groups frequently determine relocation options. The EdKid demographic of TCKs produces an exclusive model of a nuclear family whose family-job-school-community experiences are intertwined.

Transition to College

All individuals who attend college must endure transitions. For the TCK, such transitions often also involve repatriations back to their home country from their host country. This may make them more vulnerable to reverse culture shock (Gaw, 2000; Hervey, 2009; Presbitero, 2016). The following sections address (a) general transition factors, (b) veteran student transition to college, (c) peer support, (d) homesickness, (e) persistence to graduation, and (f) counseling requisites. In addition, the following key issues of TCKs are addressed: (a) lack of institutional support, (b) home defined, (c) relationships, (d) social media, (e) sense of belonging, (f) identities, (g) cultural identity, (h) other ramifications of a cross-cultural lifestyle, (i) non-American TCK research, (j) Kikokushijo, and (k) international students compared to TCKs). These sections are followed by a summary.

General Transition Factors

A range of multi-faceted issues affect students in their transition to college life. These comprise individual, social, and academic matters that are crucial to student success (Calcott, 2014; Nelson et al., 2012). Students who feel secluded and confused during the transition may be apt to quit their studies (Briggs et al., 2012). Furthermore, freshman-year students may be presented with opportunities for involvement in unsafe behaviors, some of which may be maladaptively implemented as coping mechanisms (Dvořáková, 2019; Ebert et al., 2019; Li & Asante, 2020; Vilatte et al., 2017)). Some of these unsafe behaviors may include binge drinking and substance abuse (Bai et al., 2020; Cox et al., 2016; Kiciman et al., 2018; Mahfouz et al., 2018; Thurber & Walton, 2012; Wang et al., 2020; Wiens et al., 2020; Yurasek et al., 2020). Another crucial factor in the students' adjustment is the support offered by different college systems during TCKs' transition (Calcott, 2014).

The transition from high school to college has been a focus of research interest at universities around the world since the 1970s (Calcott, 2014; Gray et al., 2013). One area of specific apprehension is that, for some students, their freshman-year of college is their only year of college (Calcott, 2014). Making new friends and being stressed to fit into prevalent social networks may be difficult. Approximately 25% of freshman-year college students neglect to register for classes in the fall of their sophomore year (National Student Clearinghouse Research, 2022). Since the freshman year of college has the top percentages of student attrition, considerable research has been done concerning the transition experiences of many populaces of students during this year (Calcott, 2014; Tinto, 1993).

One distinct concern faced by freshman students is the deficiency of information about what to expect (Calcott, 2014). There may be a discrepancy between their perceived romantic

ideas and the true realities of college life. Preparation for these realities is vital to how students begin and deal with their transitions (Adler, 1975, 1981). This preparation involves becoming equipped for the change by obtaining proper expectations of the TCKs need for backing, for perspective motivations for what the students are in college to achieve, for suitable information, and for required honed educational capabilities (van der Zanden et al., 2018). Related to these verdicts, in terms of students' educational preparation, numerous researchers have verified that students with a higher grade-point average in high school and who did well on national college entrance exams were more apt to show better freshman-year academic performance (Bowman, 2014; Soria et al., 2013; Wurf & Croft-Piggin, 2015; van der Zanden et al., 2018) Some researchers indicated that students with more highly educated parents achieved better in the freshman-year at university while other scholars discovered no connection.

Students who joined athletics at college were more apt to experience greater academic achievement in the freshman year (van der Zanden et al., 2018). Calcott (2014) outlined that social networking strategies were considered as crucial to transition and social integration. Other TCK studies included other factors pertinent to successful college transition. These other studies focused on issues of cultural homelessness (Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011), identity development (Arnett, 2002; Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009), and emotional well-being (Klemens & Bikos, 2009).

Veteran Student Transition to College

Comparable to veterans of the post-World War II era, student veterans are returning to higher education from modern-day conflicts in record numbers (Lim et al., 2018) As student veteran populations and their visibility have increased on campus, researchers have explored how higher education works for this student group. Like TCKs, student veterans face

interpersonal and community challenges, as well as physical and emotional ones, when they transition to campus life. Student veterans also find it challenging to relate to student peers and faculty members (Jenner, 2019; Schiavone & Gentry, 2014).

Because of the many benefits of bachelor's degree completion, both to this student group as individuals and to society, and the positive historic economic impact of large numbers of veterans earning a bachelor's degree, university researchers and policymakers have concluded that higher-education professionals should be devoted to both improving the educational attainment of veterans and in transforming colleges to promote this goal (Jenner, 2019). As the number of veterans enrolling in college after military service is 200,000 per year now, there is alarm that numerous of these will drop out before completing their degrees. For student veterans, communicating with official veteran organizations on campus may help in their overcoming impediments and in their making the most of their exclusive resources and support structures now being made accessible to them (Jenner, 2019). Additionally, creating hubs where student veterans may elect to connect with others who have the common veteran experience is vital. These hubs give independence to veterans to come and go and join as they feel comfortable. These hubs also provide a space where there is a shared vocalized language, and the veteran culture may be promoted within the larger culture of the college (Boettler, 2017).

Veteran co-identity organizations may also have a crucial role in successful transitions. Since the latter part of the 20th century, the literature points to co-identity organizations being supportive in the transition and adaptation to higher education for many demographics of students (Gray et al., 2013). Co-identity groups safe-havens--student clusters that focus on a feature(s) of identity (Adams & McBrayer, 2020). The features of identity may include race/ethnicity, faith, sexuality, gender, dis(ability), marital/parent status, age, or veteran status.

Thus, in a culture where many veterans elect to employ social camouflage, having a place where faculty, staff, and most notably peers realize some of what the transition is like is critical to the achievement of veterans (Boettler, 2018). For the institute, co-identity groups with such endeavors are useful involvements that are easy to implement and are low-cost (Jenner, 2019). Co-identity groups engender abundant positive experiences and may have the capability to constructively impact educational results for students transitioning to higher education. Some of the researchers investigating co-identity organizations have also discovered unwavering bonds to persistence in higher education (Adams & McBrayer, 2020; Boettler, 2017). For example, black cultural centers are influential in both black students' sense of belonging on campus and in the transition to college for black freshman students (Gray, 2013; Jenner, 2019).

Scholarship has shown that non-veterans graduate at higher rates than veterans (Boettler, 2018). As the number of combat veterans and other veterans enrolling in higher education increases, it is essential to examine their experiences to provide backing for veterans through registration, retention efforts, and on to completion and employment. This new outlook backs the prevailing body of literature built on similar studies (Arminio et al., 2015; Boettler, 2018). Additionally, the academic majors that many veteran women were stated to be pursuing were found to be closely correlated with the job the veteran women had held in the military. For veteran women, confidence in persistence to their academic degree completion stemmed from happiness with their academic major and plans to work in an associated career (Heitzman & Somers 2015).

Peer Support

Even prior to arrival at one's freshman year in college, many students may use Social Networking Sites ("SNSs") to build a peer network (Gray et al., 2013). Using SNSs helps

diminish uncertainty about the college experience. It has been indicated that freshman students' partaking in peer-led support groups led to less loneliness and to a superior feeling of social backing during the transition to college. Many studies also show that such involvement aided the students' social mixing and adaptation (Callcott et al., 2014; Collings et al., 2014; van der Zanden et al., 2018). Peer networks give students the sensation that the students were partly in control, mostly because the organizational cues were frequently given by other students. Consequently, the acknowledgement of the worth of peer-networks, became much more vital to students toward the conclusion of their freshman-year. Peer networks assisted as a social backing intervention, which positively influenced the partaking students' levels of social adaptation (Gray et al., 2013).

Living collectively with fellow students has been linked with improved levels of peer support, more collaboration with faculty members, and overall, more fruitful adaptation to college (Goldman, 2019; Gray et al., 2013). Shared support from peers and participation in student activities have been shown to be robust forecasters of academic achievement amongst African American and Latino students (Winkle-Wagner, 2015). Ethnic student groups may help engage minority students' cultural upbringings and may help them to maintain robust ties with their own cultural backgrounds while easing their socialization into the campus (Jenner, 2019). Formal subcultures may thus be crucial in smoothing minority student adaptation and connection. Jenner (2019) has suggested that the positive results that students of color feel when interacting with co-ethnic organizations may be generalizable to many sidelined student groups.

Repatriation of TCKs in General

The repatriation of TCKs frequently happens while the family stays in the host country. Therefore, international schools and government agencies have started to recognize ways to

support these students upon re-entry (Morales, 2015). Transitional services have evolved that have been stated to be useful in improving the transition from host to home country (Bates, 2013; Davis et al., 2013; Kortegast & Yount, 2016; Morales, 2015). Researchers discovered that TCKs who participated in social activities upon repatriation had a smoother transition (Purnell and Hoban, 2014). The TCKs who enthusiastically engaged in the community and cultural facets of the home country experienced better emotional success during the transition. Still, other TCKs from Purnell & Hoban's study (2014) felt that it was difficult to infiltrate the well-formed social groups of their home country cohorts. The results of this study suggested that their social experiences within the home country greatly impacted their perception of the repatriation process, either positively or negatively.

Bates (2013) uncovered that students who were in their freshman-year transition to college and who were able to create a support system at their colleges, whether through faculty, staff, international students, or parents, had a propensity to have a smoother transition. But even these students stated that facets of their transitions were difficult, expressly when previous relationships were disrupted by physical distance. Adler (1981) stated that, for TCKs and their families to have an easier transition, the re-entry process must be skillfully managed. Without the transition being managed, there is a possibility that the reentry process may be unnecessarily difficult. For some TCKs, if well-managed, this time of transition may provide a period for self-reflection and improvement (Adler, 1975; Han et al., 2017; Howe-Walsh & Torka, 2017).

Culture Shock and Reverse Culture Shock

Researchers have described culture shock as a downhill spiraling whirl of self-doubt about socializing with locals, self-protective exclusion, and crippling solitude (Adler, 1975; Anjalin et al., 2017). Culture shock is typically defined as the sentiments and succeeding

activities brought on by intermingling in a novel or dissimilar cultural setting from that to which one is familiar (Chavoshi et al., 2017; Presbitero, 2016; Songsirisak, 2018; Young, 2014). Often associated with TCKs, researchers have used the term culture shock to attempt to describe the feelings of loneliness, pressure, and apprehension that often accompanies one's transition to a new culture or repatriation (Cetin et al., 2017; Chavoshi et al., 2017; Jang, 2010; Nilemar & Brown, 2019; Young, 2014). It is possible that transitioning students are initially enthused when facing original culture shock. The transitioning students think of it as part of the experience of residing in a new and unique culture (Young, 2014). Conversely, it is widely accepted in the field of international education that it may be more difficult for students to readapt to their home culture upon return (repatriation) than it is to adapt to their new culture upon arrival when expatriating to a foreign country (Vallesteros et al., 2019; Young, 2014).

Reverse culture shock is the distress encountered upon arrival to one's own country after a global or similar cross-cultural experience (Gaw, 2000; Presbitero, 2016). Reverse culture shock reveals itself in numerous ways and to variable degrees depending on the individual and their situation (Akhtar et al., 2019; Presbitero, 2016; Young, 2014). Reverse culture shock is often more serious because students believe wrongly that they will adapt smoothly back to their home nation. The distress takes the TCKs by surprise, and the TCK students are not prepared for it (Akhtar et al., 2018; Alkubaidi & Alzhrani, 2020; AlSaleh & Moufakkir, 2019; Hervey, 2009; Xia, 2020; Ellis et al., 2020; Young, 2014). Also, the people around such TCK students may not be expecting them to have trouble readapting and their reactions toward TCK students may exasperate the situation (Freedman, 2018; Young, 2014). Thus, research implies that repatriations home for TCKs are much more traumatic than the experience of moving to a foreign country (Andrianto et al., 2018). Stress is thought to be tied to the practice of assessing

personal values and behaviors in relation to the cultural expectations of their TCKs' home culture (Hervey, 2009; Young, 2014).

Homesickness

Scholars have also suggested some of the developments and reasons associated with nearly all TCKs feeling a great amount of homesickness (Thurber & Walton, 2012). Homesickness triples the risk of students leaving college. Thurber and Walton indicated that for aiding students in normalizing their expectation of homesickness, extending some control to students over their situations, and helping them to begin new friendships at their new setting may all work to battle homesickness. Also, staying connected to home, family, and friends through social networking may prevent loneliness and homesickness (Baslow & Gaugler, 2017). The transition from home-based living to living away from home symbolizes an important transition for freshmen college students. For a lot of students, the transition to college is an exciting journey, socially and intellectually. However, for some TCKs, the experience is overwhelming and stressful (Calcott, 2014).

Even though some new students have prior experience with traveling, summer camps, or other trips away from their hometown without parents, all students must face the difficulties of separately handling themselves; making new friendships; adjusting to new schedules; and being effective in various academic, and extracurricular activities (Thurber & Walton, 2012). These trials often impart self-uncertainty and force a painful adaptation of young adults' academic and social self-concepts. The changes to new students' practices, diets, social situation, physical locality, and expected stresses may bring on powerful homesickness. Homesickness sufferers report depressive and anxious signs, constrained behavior, and difficulty focusing on topics that are unrelated to home. In its minor form, homesickness enhances the growth of coping skills and

inspires healthy attachment actions, like recommencing interaction with loved ones. Most people miss something about home when they are not there, making homesickness an almost universal experience. However, extreme homesickness may be painful and debilitating (Acharya et al., 2018; Mesidor & Sly, 2016; Thurber & Walton, 2012; Tran et al., 2020).

Persistence to Graduation

College graduation rates are stationary or dropping today, particularly among young Americans (Pascoe et al., 2020). This is a development that threatens to weaken the nation's global competitiveness and further aggravate inequity in the nation's income dispersal. In the past, efforts to guarantee academic excellence, access, and student achievement in higher education in the U.S. have produced one of the highest college graduation rates in the world. Up until now, the graduation rate of 50% has remained stable, even though postsecondary institutional registration has continued to grow. Approximately 2,800,000 students graduated from high school in 2013, 1,850,000 joined college, but only 925,000 of these students earned a bachelor's degree (https://www/educationdata.org). While student retention remains a challenge in all postsecondary institutions because retention is stationary or possibly now starting to decrease, the dropout problem is of particular concern and warrants extra research (van Rooji et al., 2018).

It is more probable that non-traditional students may not continue past their freshman-year of college, as contrasted with traditional college students (Radford, Cominole & Skomsvold, 2015). Most students who drop out of college do so during or immediately after the freshman year (Credé & Niehorster, 2012). Earning a degree is linked to intellectual, societal, and fiscal benefits for individuals, their families, and society at large. Thus, it is crucial for these groups to gain a better comprehension of freshman-year student success (van der Zanden et al.,

2018). Researchers stated that students' feelings of connection with and integration into the college community are considerable factors in establishing their college experience (Bowman et al., 2019; Demetriou et al., 2017; Gray et al, 2013; van Rooji et al., 2018). This is if the students remain at a certain institution (Gray et al., 2013). Providing support for students to help them make connections and to become integrated into the university community has been identified as aiding in dedication to and perseverance to study (Calcott, 2014; Ecohard & Fotheringham, 2017; van Rooji et al., 2018).

Researchers indicated that college student's engagement is often linked with perseverance to graduation, showing that students who are more involved in the college, whether through student groups, seeking mentorship relationships, or academic engagement, are more likely to persevere at college (van Rooji et al., 2018). Theoretical viewpoints on college student development and retention also emphasize the strong relationships between student involvement, integration, and perseverance (Tinto,1993, 2012). However, the student's sense of belonging was uncovered to be the vital feature that contributed to retention. Sense of belonging was defined chiefly as social aspects and more important than demographic or academic factors (Tett et al., 2017). Gray et al. (2013) stated that the degree to which the student had socially adapted to the college may have led to a higher degree of perseverance, or an improved probability that the student would return to college for the sophomore year. This corroborates the view of a student's sense of belonging being the vital feature contributing to retention. Sense of belonging was determined to be chiefly concerned with social aspects. These societal aspects were found to be more important that demographic or academic factors (Tett et al., 2017).

In another study, backing from family and organizational skills were the two factors most ranked as being most influential to freshman-year students' ability to continue their studies,

followed by being able to balance work and study obligations, support from peers, assistance from staff, help from peer mentors, and financial resources (Calcott, 2014). From a retention perspective, involvement with other students of shared experiences or attributes is protective for perseverance to graduation (Smith & Kearney, 2016). In this regard, the TCK experience itself was the main component helping TCKs relate to others with a similar experience, rather than their common physical, cultural, spiritual, or geographical traits. Such engagements with those having similar experiences, particularly in the freshman-year, is critical for retention (Fanning & Burns, 2017; Smith & Kearney, 2016).

Non-College Life Events (NCLEs) may affect students' likelihoods to persist to graduation in many ways (Cox et al., 2016). However, traumatic NCLEs may also make it more likely that a student may abuse substances (Cox et al., 2016; Thurber & Walton, 2012), have insomnia, depression, or rage; all of which may affect a student's ability to focus. Besides, even if NCLEs do not deplete students' time, the NCLEs may sap students' vitality and may curb the focus of their scholastic efforts (Cox et al., 2016; Demenech et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2019; Ward, 2020). In addition, a student's dysfunctional responses to stress may serve to isolate colleagues, friends, and professors, thus impeding social and academic integration into the college (Tinto, 1993).

Counseling Requisites

Researchers have ascertained a high burden of mental health problems among students in college, including among international students (Eisenberg et al., 2013; Gebregergis et al., 2019; Rabia & Karkouti, 2017). Investigations have revealed that college students are more susceptible than the general population to several mental illnesses (Pham & Shi, 2020) or psychological distress (de Moissac et al., 2020). Students who report difficulty socially adapting to college are

more likely to be suffering from feelings of isolation, angst, and despair (Bates, 2013; Davis et al., 2013; Gray et al., 2013; Han et al., 2017; Wu et al., 2015). Upon returning to the United States, TCKs may experience depression, anxiety, and elevated stress during re-acculturation (Davis et al., 2013; Young, 2014). A better comprehension of the relationship between mental health and other individual-level factors is essential. These factors include population elements, SES, and co-transpiring health conditions. Knowing to look out for these may aid campus personnel in detecting higher-risk groups and may propose new avenues for assisting these groups (Lijadi & van Schalkwyk, 2017).

Smith & Kearney (2016) uncovered that TCKs reported grief that lasted up to six years after repatriation. These findings suggested the value of supplying ample resources for TCKs to cope with their grief so that it does not hamper their transitional process (Gilbert, 2008; Li et al., 2017; Morales, 2015; Smith & Kearney, 2016). Research also indicates that TCKs showed poorer levels of emotional health than their monocultural college-age peers (Klemens & Bikos, 2009). According to investigations guided by researchers it was vital for successful TCK transition to ensure that transitional programs, and helpful therapists, were available (Auerbach et al., 2019; Morales, 2015; Rabia & Karkouti, 2017). To counteract worsening student mental health, on-campus psychotherapy is progressively more available, and has been demonstrated to have a constructive impact on student scores and total well-being (de Moissac et al., 2020).

The necessity for these supports is congruent with other research on TCKs (Bates, 2013; Davis et al., 2010; Pollock et al., 2017), as TCKs often experience exclusive trials that stem from their upbringing. Depression is comparatively common among TCKs (Gray et al., 2013; Le & LaCost, 2017). However, researchers discovered was that students who do not visit therapy facilities believed that mental health specialists on a college campus may not be conversant with

the transitions the TCKs were facing and would be incapable of assisting them (Auerbach et al., 2019; Rabia & Karkouti, 2017).

Useem and Cottrell (1993) noted that the potential unintentionally negative impacts and emotional challenges in the TCK's upbringing are often not fully recognized or accepted until the TCK becomes an adult. Most TCKs who ultimately seek therapy are adult TCKs in their thirties (Bushong, 2013). Questions concerning identity represent one of the most common reasons why TCKs seek counseling. Other challenges that adult TCKs face, and seek therapy for, are relationships, not owning a sense of belonging, and unresolved grief (Bushong, 2013; Gilbert, 2008; Pollock et al., 2017; Sterle et al., 2018). In therapy, the most common exhibiting problems include depressing pointers, anxiety, interpersonal troubles, or feelings of not fitting in anywhere. In addition, adaptation ailments and indications of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are the most common findings of those TCKs who seek therapy (Bushong, 2013).

TCK parents often do not realize how different their child's repatriation experience to their home nation is compared to their own experience (Pollock et al., 2017; Smith & Kearney, 2016). For the TCKs' parents' own repatriation experience to their home country is quite different. Also, the TCKs' difficulty during their transition to college is compounded by the college's lack of comprehension of this issue.

Because the TCK is what is called a *hidden immigrant,* frequently the TCK needs professional counseling to deal with the stress of the repatriation transition. There are several counseling therapies that have proven to be successful in working with TCKs during their repatriation to college. The first of these therapies is called Relational Cultural Therapy (RCT). This is used when someone is struggling with relationship and identity issues. This therapy is good for those who like to disconnect themselves from others during transitions (Melles & Frey,

2014). The second of these therapies is called Process-Experiential/Emotion-Focused Therapy Technique (PE-EFT) and is used for TCK identity incorporation and their resolution of grief (Davis et. al., 2015). The third therapy is called Collage Life Story Technique (CLET) which has been used with TCKs who are cagey in relationships (Fanning & Burns, 2017; Lijadi & van Schalkwyk, 2017).

TCKs want counseling help regarding long-term relationships and close friendships and for the loss TCKs feel with not being able to maintain or have such relationships (Fanning & Burns, 2017; Lijadi & van Schalkwyk, 2017). TCKs are conflicted about wanting to stay out of relationships, a behavior TCKs may have adopted from their high mobility lifestyle and having to leave friends so often (Kwon, 2019). TCKs at the same time recognize that they want relationships (Cranston, 2017). Yet when TCKs have the possibility of staying closer to friends in college, many of these TCKs were discovered to have kept relocating to other colleges (Kwon, 2019; Melles & Frey, 2014).

Addressing Key Issues Faced by TCKs

TCKs face several issues when transitioning to college. Below, I will share literature on the various issues TCKs face when transitioning to college, including (a) the lack of college support, (b) how TCKs define "home," (c) relationships, (d) social media, (e) sense of belonging, (f) identity, and (g) cultural identity. In addition, I will address (a) other ramifications of a cross-cultural lifestyle, (b) non-American TCKs, (c) Kikokushijo (Japanese TCKs), and (d) international students compared to TCKs.

Lack of Institutional Support

The support offered by college structures is seen as a vital feature of effective transitions through the providing of opportunities and provision for socialization and adaptation. Briggs et

al. (2012) described the instantaneous building of relations between students and staff, low staff to student ratios in freshman-year classes, and staff availability information provided to students. College support also comprises the institutions' allotment of staff as freshman managers occupied with small clusters of students and their making use of the most student-centered members of its staff in its freshman units (Calcott, 2014). Traditionally, institutions have tried to help students in this process through events such as prolonged orientation programs, social occasions like group fairs and mixers, and freshman conversation classes highlighting constructing classroom community (Gray et al., 2013).

Adams and McBrayer (2020) suggested that for students who do not identify with a majority culture, one way that institutions of higher education can assist in the challenges of transition is by providing support centers or groups. However, rather than being institutionally instigated, such support groups tend to be student-driven and are also frequently founded on recognition of a shared attribute. Support groups are often based on racial, ethnic, or sex acknowledgment. Thus, with the limited exceptions referred to earlier, TCKs do not seem to be a populace that has profited from the presence of support facilities to assist in their transition to higher education. Nevertheless, it has not yet been determined whether this lack of support is because these institutions do not recognize TCK issues, or whether these institutions have determined that the TCK population is not distinctive enough to warrant their own special emphasis (Smith & Kearney, 2016).

Home Defined

TCKs have a hard time being able to tell anyone where home is for them. Thus, on the one hand, in relationships, TCKs would like to be friends with those who are having similar TCK issues (Bates, 2013; Fanning & Burns, 2017; Lijadi, 2017; Pollock et al., 2017). Yet on the other

hand, in relationships TCKs tend to isolate themselves. TCKs may feel as if they belong everywhere and nowhere, all at the same time. TCKs may have a confused identity. U.S. TCKs have an American passport but are culturally of some other nation and do not think and act like Americans (Bates, 2013; Lijadi, 2017; Pollock et al., 2017). Often, when a TCK repatriates to the states for college, the TCK faces an unsettling time readapting to what was their original home culture. For what feels like home to the TCK is different (Cranston, 2017; Hervey, 2009; Young, 2014) and TCKs have naïve anticipations of what “home” will be like. As many TCKs have not spent much time in their parent’s home culture, TCKs feel like they do not fit in (Bates, 2013; Hopkins, 2015; Pollock et al., 2017; Smith & Kearney, 2016). The feeling of not fitting in is partly true because the TCK identity is formed through mobility, rather than through a place (Cranston, 2017; Lijadi, 2017).

Humans are a roaming group. Relocation has persistently been and may continue as a likely part of the human experience (de Haas, 2014). Humans have constantly journeyed in pursuit of something called home, a delicate environment, a society, a physical locality, a partisan system, an ancient period and locale, or a combination of all of these (Shimomurya, 2014). In identifying the complexities and functions of home, a migration study questioned the traditional idea of home as a fixed place or as a particular feeling of identity. As an alternative, it conceptualized home as a vivid personal creation through numerous, lived or imagined relationships with people and places (Mueller, 2015; Taylor, 2015; Shimomurya, 2014). Globalization and mobility have also ruined some people’s connection to home as a place. To these people the concept of home may be nebulous, including for migrants who face uncertainty in belongingness. This may especially be the case for TCKs (Shimomurya, 2014).

Walters and Auton-Cuff (2009) have explored how the lived experience of movement between multiple cultures has influenced identity development in women. Typically, migration was a disruption in the women's identity development and often the women had to focus on enduring and adapting, rather than on attaining a sense of who they were. Although the women participants in this study felt themselves special and thought of themselves as outsiders in the multiple places where they lived, these women indicated that they felt protection and great encouragement when in the company of their TCK friends (Dettweiler et al., 2015; Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009). This companionship gave them meaning and identity (Abe, 2018; Cranston, 2017). This same meaning and identity dilemma is confirmed by Useem et al. (1963).

Multiple researchers have concluded that despite diversity in the TCK membership, TCKs talk about their TCK experience in a coalesced way, as if it were easier for them to get along with other TCKs than with monocultural Americans (Morales, 2015; Useem, et al., 1963; Pollock et al., 2017). The participants in these studies all expressed the same feeling that TCKs were part of a unique in-group. The study by Useem et al., (1963) is particularly useful and pertinent to the present study because it highlights the sense of identity that all TCKs share even though TCKs have grown up in a variety of cultures and backgrounds. Sometimes a TCK has experienced a confused identity in relation to a specific country but may share an identity with another TCK who has had a similar international experience as this TCK (Fanning & Burns, 2017; Cranston, 2017).

Relationships

Purnell and Hoban (2014) outlined the vital role that social networks play during repatriation to Australia for college. A student's opportunity and capacity to build meaningful contacts influence their positive adaptation to college (Gray et al., 2013). Acquiring and retaining

a local support network is thus one of the crucial predictors of student adaptation. Fostering a local support network, in addition to abilities such as learning to handle new social freedoms and integrating to social life, is therefore indispensable to social assimilation at college.

Regarding non-classroom stressors, researchers discovered that students who lived on campus had more academic success in their freshman year (Soria et al., 2013; van der Zanden et al., 2018). A student tends to be more aware of access to social resources if they are living close to other college students. Studies suggest that higher social adaptation is the result of living in on-campus accommodation (Enochs & Roland, 2006; van der Zande et al., 2018). In their study exploring the impact of living environment on college adaptation, Enochs and Roland (2006) stated that freshman college students adapted more easily when they were able to attain high levels of self-determination in their first year living away from home. In addition, students were more likely to socially adapt to college when they perceived their residence hall compatriots as cohesive and as a source of social backing.

Social adaptation reflects the degree to which students have integrated themselves into the social structures of university residencies and the broader university (Credé & Niehorster, 2012). Social adaptation to a college environment is one aspect of student adaptation and acts as one of the most important events developing adults embark on that foretells triumph in college and beyond (Gray et al., 2013). Social adaptation is the progression by which students become assimilated into the campus community, develop support systems, and navigate the new freedoms provided by college life. In contrast to social adaptation, student adaptation is a blend of students' societal, personal-emotional, and academic adaptation along with their stated feelings of dedication to the institution.

Managing the college transition and being in emotionally close contact with others is crucial during a college student's freshman year (Gray et al., 2013). The transition process is a significant element in student success. For the bulk of students who drop out of college do so in the freshman year. For many young adults, relocating to college epitomizes their first experience living away from home, a move usually linked to enhanced independence. Even more than academic learning, these developing adults are sharing in a kind of social education, whereby these young adults learn how to mingle with others, advance in greater cultural mindfulness and critical thinking abilities, and negotiate interpersonal and group work trials. The degree to which new students may cope with this transition and socially assimilate into the institution is a vital feature for shaping future success. Success in this case is measured through old academic indicators, such as grades.

Sax and Weintraub (2014) uncovered that freshman students who wanted more communication with their father and who felt estranged from their parents experienced less well-being. In contrast, students who were able to talk with their parents about monetary issues, but whose parents nevertheless anticipated their managing their own personal finances by themselves, experienced improved well-being (van der Zanden et al., 2018). Together with these individual variables, social support is also vital for students' freshman-year academic success. Numerous studies have shown that students who have exhibited higher quality dealings with parents, faculty, fellow students, and high school best friends have also had higher GPAs in the freshman year.

Freshman college students who devote more time to Facebook tend to be happier with their social lives (Gray et al., 2013). Using Facebook for the purpose of working together with other students may aid students in their adaption to college because actions, such as chatting

about schoolwork or classes give the student the opportunity to be involved in focused, continual, and protracted exchanges with other students, possibly allowing these students to develop friendships and to exchange other types of social support. Such students tend to be more engaged with on-campus events, and more closely linked with their university peers.

Data and research related to TCKs have shown that many of them struggle to create relational connections on their college campuses (Gaw, 2000; Kim et al., 2017). The reasons for the TCKs' difficulty in connecting with other students needs to be understood. According to Hannaford (2016), much of the research on TCKs has been limited to their experiences while the TCKs are still in secondary schools and in their freshman-year in college.

In addition, other studies were completed in the era before the introduction of the internet, which has made connecting with long-distance family and friends much easier (Gray et al., 2013; Hannaford, 2016). As a result, while these previous studies provided a good starting point, these studies are not always applicable to the more modern TCK, who is not necessarily as excluded from a community now when the TCK moves to a new place (Gray et al., 2013).

According to Davis et al. (2013), TCKs have frequently lived through very emotional involvements as children already, with more sudden and more frequent transitions than most kids, and thus with the frequent necessity to start new relationships. Researchers discovered that TCKs were better able to develop close relationships with other TCKs if the other TCKs were also suffering a similar disorientation to the one, they were experiencing (Bates, 2013; Cranston, 2017; Fanning & Burns, 2017; Greenholtz & Kim, 2009; Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011; McLachlan, 2007; Moore and Barker, 2012; Peterson & Plamandon, 2009; Sheard, 2008; Smith & Kearney, 2016; Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009). In effect these students were thus reconstructing their third culture through these association choices. Evidently, in the cases of

TCKs who did not reconstruct the third culture, many of them were found to be lonely at college (Melles & Frey, 2014; Smith & Kearney, 2016). TCKs often felt like they were on the fringe of groups (Altweck & Marshall, 2015). Even students who go overseas for a study abroad program for only six to twelve months end up experiencing some of these same issues when repatriating to the states (Cranston, 2017; Dettweiler et al., 2015; Kartoshkina, 2015).

Additionally, Lijadi and van Schalkwyk (2014) have indicated that TCKs typically only have strong and stable relationships with their family. Other researchers have found that because of their frequent moves, TCKs are hesitant to commit themselves in relationships or to go deep in relationships (Bates, 2013; Cranston, 2017; Greenholtz & Kim, 2009; Hervey, 2009; Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011; Hopkins, 2015; Lijadi, 2018; McLachlan, 2007; Moore & Barker, 2012; Peterson & Plamandon, 2009; Sheard, 2008; Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009). Yet other researchers have uncovered that TCKs want to keep moving and feel comfortable moving habitually (Kwon, 2019; Melles & Frey, 2014).

Social Media

According to Purnell and Hoban (2014), an institution's limiting the TCK's social networking may lead to the TCK's having greater difficulties as they repatriate. In fact, researchers outlined that the major reasons for transitional hardship was missing friends and family while feeling lonely and misunderstood. More than a decade ago, the Pew Internet Project indicated that 79% of students agreed that online communication tools like email and instant messaging positively impacted their academic experiences. These platforms gave students routes to contact faculty members, coordinate with peers, and stay socially connected to others (Gray et al., 2013; Yang, 2020). Gray et al. showed that relating to other students online is a vital feature of the socialization process in college. Therefore, the researchers expected that through

“friending”, which is a Facebook term for connecting with a friend via the Facebook social networking site, fellow students at the college would be positively connected and have an improved social adjustment to college (Gebre & Taylor, 2020; Gray et al., 2013). Social Networking Sites (SNS’s), such as Facebook, were specifically created to support relationship upkeep, as the associates (“Friends”) on these sites are apt to reflect offline relationships (Gray et al., 2013).

An exclusive facet of sites like Facebook is that the site lowers the amount of work needed to identify others and find out more about them, thereby helping TCKs to detect those with resources that the TCK may want and to make future contacts easier (Gray et al., 2013). Research suggests that college students are using Facebook to be involved in social information-seeking, and to find out more information about others around them. Social networking may thus help students find those with commonalities to themselves and help them make friends. Also, social media spaces, such as Facebook, allow students to interact with other students and faculty and to find and share information connected to extracurricular group social events (Deng et al., 2021; Gray et al., 2013). In addition to more long-standing occasions to encounter and network with other students, today’s cohort of students enters the college setting with access to social media tools presenting communication opportunities that may prove beneficial for the adaptation process (Gray et al., 2013).

Social media comprising SNSs, personal blogs, and geographically restricted dialog settings may ease the students’ transition from high school to college by offering them informational and social support to find and link them with other students (Gray et al., 2013). Of these social media tools, Facebook is one of the sites that is most entrenched in the lives of U.S. college students. Other SNSs, like Twitter and LinkedIn, hold social and technical affordances

that allow persons to participate in interpersonal maintenance activities, learn about others, and exchange a diversity of resources, containing emotional support. These tools may redesign the way young people link with others throughout their transition to college. Such SNSs might ameliorate friend-sickness, the anguish related to missing old friends after moving away to college. Moreover, access to communication via technology substantially impacts the participants' sense of belonging by developing and sustaining social and familial relationships across the world (Bagnall, 2012).

Social media is no substitute for a student's becoming actively involved with new friends during their transition to college. In fact, one study implies, though indirectly, that students who utilized social media more often, and thus as a substitute for physical social involvement in their college transition, could end up feeling more isolated (Calcott, 2014). But this relates more to such students' sense of belonging on campus during their transition.

Sense of Belonging

One challenge that TCKs encounter because of the transitory nature of their upbringing is a chance to develop a traditional sense of belonging (Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011). Students with more international experience are more likely to struggle with a feeling of lack of belonging. In the long term, this lack of belonging may negatively impact a students' sense of self-esteem. For students who feel disconnected due to their postulating that they do not belong in a location have lower self-esteem. For TCK students who have moved internationally and have struggled with determining where they belong, this could have long-term consequences (Hervey, 2009; Pollock et al., 2017). A continually challenged sense of belonging could lead to negative consequences, including weakening students' academic accomplishment and physical health (Modir & Kia-Keating, 2018). While all college students may struggle to determine where they belong, TCK

students seem to encounter the issues related with sense of belonging at earlier ages (Hervey, 2009; Pollock et al., 2017).

The college atmosphere stimulates almost every student's inborn yearning to belong and to feel socially accepted (Calcott, 2014; Sevinc & Gizir, 2014; Tinto, 2012; Wardley & Bélanger, 2013; van der Zanden et al., 2018). When that yearning is not easily or instantly met, penetrating homesickness may be a consequence (Thurber & Walton, 2012). However, some studies have indicated that students who utilized social media more often, felt more isolated. Regarding students' participation in extracurricular activities, the opposite was found. Instead of the regularity, it was the participation in extracurricular activities themselves that helped students adjust better to college (Calcott, 2014). The quality of this participation and the quality of the activities were together related to higher levels of university adaptation

The third culture is not about the place, but is a culture created by expatriates (Cranston, 2017). Through this construct, expatriates from various countries have created a way of life that is distinct from either their home or their host culture, but it is a culture they share (Kortegast & Yount, 2016; Kwon, 2019; Pollock et al., 2017). Researchers stated that the TCK experience was the underlying factor helping TCKs connect to others—rather than their shared physical, racial, spiritual, or geographical characteristics (Kwon, 2019; Smith & Kearney, 2016). The TCKs, by means of this construct, form an exclusive culture that is shared by all TCKs, and one that may be thus confirmed in association with other TCKs (Cranston, 2017; Moore & Barker, 2012). TCKs feel most comfortable around others who have had a similar TCK experience (Fanning & Burns, 2017; Moore & Barker, 2012; Wersig & Wilson-Smith, 2021).

Difficulties with adjusting to adult life may come from the mixture of influences in the various cultures that an individual has lived in (Hervey, 2009; Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011). Such

a mixture may create challenges in creating an identity. It may also create challenges for the TCK in developing a sense of belonging. Sentiments of rootlessness and restlessness may make the transition to adulthood a difficult period for TCKs

With this third culture construct, TCKs may align themselves with other TCKs. This culture is where some TCKs get their sense of belonging (Cranston, 2017; Kortegast & Yount, 2016; Kwon, 2019; Smith & Kearney, 2016). In addition, TCKs have the tendency to align themselves with other TCKs because TCKs have a desire to be heard. TCKs feel that only students of the TCK demographic may understand them (Kartoshkina, 2015; Smith & Kearney, 2016). TCKs also realize that their monocultural classmates do not understand that TCKs are different from how TCKs appear (Davis et al., 2015). At one university, the TCK students did not feel supported by either the university administration or its faculty, who probably did not understand TCKs and their struggles (Smith & Kearney, 2016).

For many TCKs, it is the third culture, rather than the first or second culture, which gives them a sense of belonging and a sense of being comprehended amongst others with comparable experiences (Cranston, 2017; Smith & Kearney, 2016). However, having a cultural identity and the sense of belonging to a culture are not automatically one and the same. Consequently, researchers determined while using the CLET Therapy Technique that nearly all TCKs either have multiple senses of belonging or no sense of belonging at all, triggering them to feel irrelevant to the mainstream (Hopkins, 2015; Kwon, 2019; Lijadi & van Schalkwyk, 2017; Melles & Frey, 2014; Moore & Barker, 2012). While numerous geographical moves enhance the life experiences and ambitions of some students, for others, these experiences have a long-lasting adverse effect on their identity and sense of belonging. This latter group experienced identity turmoil, confusion, and rootlessness (Shimomurya, 2014).

Repetitive language, cultural, and physical transitions make TCKs question their identity and sense of belonging, especially when TCKs are not settling permanently in one country (Shimomurya, 2014). TCKs often feel socially ambivalent because TCKs sense that they are different from those around them (Fail et al., 2004). On the other hand, TCKs find the most comfort, confidence, and sense of belonging when TCKs are among others like themselves. Researchers agree that TCKs identify best with other third culture kids, particularly in the school setting (Fail et al., 2004; Grimshaw & Sears, 2008; Sears, 2011; Pollock et al., 2017; Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009). TCKs feel bonded to one another, regardless of where or when they grew up in a foreign country. TCKs share a unique cultural heritage. Research on TCKs from Japan, Denmark, Italy, Germany, the United States, and Africa has shown that TCKs from different countries share more in common with other TCKs than TCKs do with their own peer group from their passport country (Bates, 2013; Lijadi, 2017; Pollock et al., 2017).

Identities

That so many parents choose to provide their children with an international education is testimony to the enriching effects of a life on the move (Bates, 2013; Bushong, 2013; Grimshaw & Sears, 2008; Miller, 2020). However, the people who have experienced a mobile expatriate lifestyle during their childhood often report a feeling of confusion into adulthood over their identity as individuals. Sense of belonging and connectedness is very crucial in determining a student's identity and in creating perceptions of self. It needs to be understood that identity is an evolving phenomenon and individuals create their identity through social contact. Initially, students experience perception of loss because of dislocation and of alteration of environment in their transition to college (Calcott, 2014).

TCKs are not ‘international students’ in the traditional sense (Kortegast & Yount, 2016). Yet TCKs are susceptible to the pain resulting from the inconsistency between the name of the country printed on their passport and their sense of connection with this name (Bates, 2013; Lijadi, 2017; Pollock et al., 2017). In general, when people travel to different cultures as adults, these people may experience culture shock. However, these adults already have a sense of who they are and where they belong (Pollock et al., 2017). Consequently, the difference between adults who travel and TCKs is that TCKs move between cultures before they have had the opportunity to complete the critical task of personal or cultural identity formation. Since TCKs form a sense of personal and cultural identity the same way everyone else does, TCKs catch these from the environments and cues around them. But TCKs catch many different cues, cultural rules, behavior, and values from the various cultures they intermingle with as TCKs. Thus, for TCKs the finding of a sense of identity becomes a difficult and confusing task.

The challenges of mobility are also part of the transition phase and impact identity (Bates, 2013; Grimshaw & Sears, 2008; McLachlan, 2007; Pollock et al., 2017). Researchers have uncovered that mobility, which is one of the traits that define TCK students, is defined as frequent moving within and between cultures and may have lasting impacts on identity development as well as relationships This movement is found to add to a perplexed sense of identity within the TCK student (Bates, 2013; Grimshaw and Sears, 2008; Pollock et al., 2017). Researchers stated that TCK adolescents worldwide were struggling with delayed identity development (Arnett, 2002; Cottrell, 2009). McLachlan (2007) looked at internationally mobile families and discovered that parents and children alike agreed that the children struggled with identity development because of their frequent moving. Children were often unable to identify

one "home" location, instead responding with the places the children had lived, or the places their parents called home, even while the children had never been to those locations.

One of the challenges of being a TCK during childhood is developing a sense of belonging, commitment, and attachment to a culture (Pollock, et al., 2017) These factors play a strong role in one's self-esteem and identity and are especially apparent as being either present or not present among TCKs. For the unique life experiences of TCKs influence every aspect of their lives. Thus, TCKs tend to develop either multiple senses of identity or no definable identity at all (Amadasi, 2020; Fail et al., 2004; Greenoltz & Kim, 2009; Grimshaw & Sears, 2008; Hu & Dai, 2021; Moore & Barker, 2012; Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009).

Further, the desire of many U.S. TCKs to fit in or blend in with Americans seems to cause them to socially reject their U.S. TCK identity, which is often described as a *hidden identity* (Kortegast & Yount, 2016; Smith & Kearney, 2016). Moore and Barker (2012) were not able to identify what causes a TCK to develop one type of identity versus another. The findings in Abe's study (2018) showed that having pessimistic thoughts of one's home culture or not having optimistic feelings about any culture may be a risk factor for TCKs. In addition, the TCKs' sense of identity and well-being is directly and negatively affected by repatriation (Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011).

Cultural Identity

Cultural identity is a sense of belonging to a culture or ethnic group, and it is formed in a protracted and precise manner (Ai & Wang, 2017; Dillon & Ali, 2019; Qun et al., 2018). The creation of cultural identity in a person comes about when one learns about and acknowledges the many aspects of a culture: (a) it's history, (b) legacy, (c) language, (d) hallowed beliefs, (e) inheritance, (f) aesthetics, (g) thinking patterns, and (h) the collective structure of a culture.

Cultural identity is formed from a specific culture that gradually forges a person's identity. Similarly, national identity is not fixed at birth. Rather, it is instilled or forged in people growing up in certain locations and epochs.

Individuals retain their identity with more than one culture without a loss of self-identification linked to another culture (Gambhir & Rhein, 2019; Moore & Barker, 2012). In this sense, it is possible for TCKs to feel a robust relationship with multiple cultures (Li et al., 2019). Adults may encounter culture shock when relocating to a new country. However, adults have a sense of individual and cultural identity that most children and adolescents have yet to form (Barker, 2017; Hervey, 2009; Kortegast & Yount, 2016; Lietaert & van Gorp, 2019; Pollock et al, 2017; Sustarsic, 2020). Many TCKs feel a strong sense of identity with their host country while still preserving their relationship with their home country. Because of this link with both countries, many TCKs redefine their self-identity. Frequently, TCKs create their identity as a mixture of both home and host country (Moore & Barker, 2012), a phenomenon called polyculturalism (Hong et al., 2016). In addition, TCKs frequently feel and function like hidden immigrants (Pollock et al., 2017) in their country of origin because TCKs look and speak as if they ought to belong, yet TCKs often lack familiarity with provincial cultural trivia (Gambhir & Rhein, 2019; Kortegast & Yount, 2016).

Often TCKs do not know the "slang or idioms" of their home country (Klemens & Bikos, 2009, p. 721), have attained changed food palates, and struggle to preserve foreign customs (Klemens & Bikos, 2009). Researchers noted that TCKs reported feelings of being on the outside looking in because of their experiences in living overseas (Kortegast & Yount, 2016; Long, 2020). Their TCK identity was often described as a "hidden" identity (Kortegast & Yount, 2016; Pollock et al., 2017). Smith and Kearney (2016) stated that TCKs had significant struggles with

cultural differences, with identity and with relationships. The TCK's transition to college was marked by a loss of cultural identity, and a need to (re)define home. These TCKs felt that they needed to navigate new social and academic cultures, while managing their sense of a loss of cultural identity. Thus, as some TCKs struggled to adopt and understand their American identity when the TCKs returned to college in the states. These TCKs had to renegotiate their cultural identity.

According to Moore and Barker (2012), TCKs tend to feel they have a multicultural identity rather than a lack of cultural identity because of their TCK upbringing (Barros & Albert, 2020). In this sense, TCKs may feel a connection with and be able to fit into multiple cultures (Dai & Hardy, 2020; Lauring et al., 2019). Similarly, Colomer (2017 indicated that TCKs' sense of belonging, and self-identity was rooted in their TCK upbringing. The researchers showed that TCKs' multiculturalism was more critical in their determination of self-identity than even gender orientation, religious conviction, natal country, socioeconomic standing, or present home (Colomer, 2017). Also, researchers have shown that the freshman-year academic success of students who were more open to making contacts with others with different values was superior (Bowman, 2013; van der Zanden et al., 2018).

According to Briggs, et al. (2012), the college transition for a person "is a personal investment of the cultural capital accrued through school and college education" (p. 3). This cultural capital, which is a crucial factor in terms of positive transition, both encompasses the actions that enculture a person and is dependent on social class. Cultural capital is commonly so ingrained that the cultural capital operates on a sub-conscious level and is tricky to identify. The varied nature of cultural capital is chiefly apparent in a freshman-year college group that may contain a wide variety of students, such as older undergraduates, first-time college students,

international students, and individuals from non-urban areas and poor backgrounds, who may be less educated about what to anticipate (Calcott, 2014).

Other Ramifications of a Cross-Cultural Lifestyle

A person having cultural homelessness has been found to have both benefits and drawbacks (Capielo Rosario & Dillon, 2020). At times, TCKs have been linked to low self-esteem, feeling less control over their lives, and a disappointing level of familiarity with belonging and connection (Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011). On the flip side, TCKs have a propensity to be more culturally intelligent because of their life experiences (Melles & Schwartz, 2013; Lyttle et al., 2011). TCKs are particularly proficient at building relationships with other cultures, while not enjoying a cultural identity of their own (Moore & Barker, 2012; Pollock et al., 2017). In another study of TCKs and sense of belonging, Moore and Barker (2012) questioned TCKs of a wider age range (18-44) and discovered that many of them still struggled with a sense of belonging. Most TCKs were self-identified as being multi-cultural (combining many cultures into their own identity) or as having multiple cultures that TCKs could switch between. Although TCK individuals may feel at a loss as to where they belong, TCKs still have some sort of cultural identity (Korwin-Kowalewska, 2020; Moore & Barker, 2012).

It is the cross-cultural lifestyle that allows many TCKs unique opportunities to develop attributes largely viewed as strengths both during their upbringing and later in life (Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011; Moore & Barker, 2012). In this regard, because TCKs are subjected to different cultures while growing up, TCKs thus often identify as distinct from other children in their home country, even after returning home. There may be psychological benefits to being a bi-culturally competent individual, meaning that repatriation and adjustment to the host culture do not pose a difficulty for the individual (Korwin-Kowalewska, 2020; Moore & Barker, 2012). Individuals

who do not experience an easy transition into the new culture are referred to as being culturally rootless and homeless (Bates, 2013; Davis, 2010; Gilbert, 2008; Hervey, 2009; Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011; Lijadi, 2018; Pollock et al., 2017). What is more, persons who are culturally homeless often experience chaos over their identity. The TCK is often abroad during the adolescent developmental years when identity is generally set internally (Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011).

Non-American TCK Research

There is little research on TCKs from different passport countries as the bulk of the literature has been conducted in the United States (Cottrell, 2009). Social science research on TCKs shows global commonalities in their experiences and growth paths (Useem et al., 1963; Lijadi & van Schalkwyk, 2017). Even if TCKs have not lived in the same countries or have not lived globally during similar time periods, TCKs share recognizable experiences (Useem et al., 1963). Schaetti (2000) concurred that there is such a thing as third culture that surpasses place and nationality, despite a comparative absence of empirical proof.

Kikokushijo

In Japan, the use of the phrase, third culture kids, to describe children who have returned from living overseas is not universally accepted (Kano Podolsky, 2004). Instead, the most highly studied non-American TCK group is the Kaigai/Kikoku-shijo from Japan. Both terms in the wider sense are acknowledged as children of expatriates who are educated outside of Japan (Kano Podolsky, 2004; Nae, 2019; Ono, 2018; Shimomura, 2014). While Kikoku-shijo in Japanese and English is portrayed as expatriate children who have returned to Japan, Kaigai-shijo are children of expatriates who are still living out of the country (Kano Podolsky, 2004). To

help their restoration into Japanese society, the government of Japan has investigated these groups widely since the 1960s (Kano Podolsky, 2004; Ono, 2018; Shimomura, 2014).

Of these groups, *Kikoku-shijo* (returnee children) is a term which has various implications (Kano Podolsky, 2004). Community understanding of *kikoku-shijo* is much more prevalent in Japan than the understanding of TCKs in the United States. Government accounts as early as 1966 acknowledged the necessity for the school system to change for them. However, views of *kikoku-shijo* have not always been helpful. In the 1970s, especially, *kikoku-shijo* were labeled in media accounts. Even their own parents labeled these returnees as educational strays in need of improvement to decrease their foreign attributes and to effectively reintegrate them into Japanese culture (Ono, 2018).

Most of the Japanese research in the general area of TCKs has focused on how these Kaigai/Kikoku-shijo have influenced Japanese society and how Japan may assist them as a group without upsetting Japan’s culture and its collective society (Enomoto, 2018; Kano Podolsky, 2004; Ono, 2018). Within Japan’s communal context, it is vital to be a part of the group. Thus, when the Kaigai/Kikoku-shijo have re-entered Japan, their changes have been looked down upon by Japanese culture (Enomoto, 2018; Fail et al., 2004; Kano Podolsky, 2004; Ono, 2018; Shimomura, 2014). Through extensive examination, a perceptual model shift, and changes in educational guidelines, Japan has come to perceive the Kaigai/Kikoku-shijo as benefits rather than liabilities to Japanese society (Enomoto, 2018; Kano Podolsky, 2004). The Kaigai/Kikoku-shijo phenomenon is well known in Japan, but researchers report that the term “Kaigai/Kikoku-shijo” restricts these TCKs, as it puts all such children into one classification, thereby discounting their individuality (Kan Podolsky, 2004; Shimomura, 2014). According to researchers, most TCK literature focuses on children from Western/individualistic passport

countries, and thus the terms TCK or Global Nomad imply elements of freedom for TCKs, allowing them more mindfulness of the self and of an improved sense of belonging (Kano Podolsky, 2004; Melles & Frey, 2014; Shimomura, 2014). In contrast, Norway has used the term "suitcase children" to describe these highly mobile children (Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011).

International Students Compared to TCKs

Much of the literature on TCKs does not acknowledge the parallels that the TCK populace shares with international students (Perez II, 2017; Tvesi, 2018). While not all the experiences of these populations are the same, both are engaged in a transition process that may expose them to new educational and to new cultural experiences. Also, the international student population is more comprehensively studied and far more supported than the TCK demographic. For this reason, a review of some of the literature on international student involvements with the transition to college offers an important foundation for understanding this investigation. However, research on the retention of international students is relatively scarce.

The number of international students in the U.S. increased from 1.3 million in 1990, to 2.1 million in 2000, and to more than 5 million more recently (https://monitor.icef.com/2022). Consequently, there is now an astonishing number of international students coming to the U.S. for college (Shimomurya, 2014). This number of international students is anticipated to keep increasing, reaching approximately eight million students by 2025. Thus, researchers have urged colleges to appoint international students to academic advisors who are culturally sensitive and experienced in working with international students (Joseph & Hartwig, 2020; Mesidor & Sly, 2016; Zhang, 2018). This advice was given in part because, such students from a foreign country who study in the U.S. recount lesser feelings of belonging in the freshman year than students from the U.S. (Strayhorn, 2012).

Researchers have stated that freshmen students who feel more despondent, lonesome, and socially uneasy are less satisfactorily adjusted socially (Akhtar & Kroener-Herwig, 2019; Anjalin et al., 2017; Bender et al., 2019; Ching et al., 2017; Dutta & Chye, 2017; Gibbs et al., 2020; Gu et al., 2020; Li & Asante, 2020; Li et al., 2019; Mesidor & Sly, 2016; Olagoke-Oladokun et al., 2019; Patrick, 2020; Shan et al., 2020; Syawaludin et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2018; Wattanacharoensil et al., 2020; Yang et al,. 2018; Yeung et al., 2021; Yin et al., 2021; Young, 2017). Additionally, the degree to which students may admit and handle their feelings is related to superior levels of adaptation (Chen et al., 2020; van der Zanden et al., 2018). Researchers also outlined that creating a social network is an important forecaster of social adaptation to college for international students (Baba & Hosoda, 2014; Mesidore & Sly, 2016; Tchoh & Mertan, 2018; Pho, 2018). On the other hand, the lack of social connection and identified discrimination are forecast factors for adjustment difficulties (Albhlal & Alotaibi, 2020; Bristol & Goings, 2019; Chen et al., 2019; Gopalan et al., 2019; Heng, 2017; Ibragimova & Tarasova, 2018; Othman et al., 2019; Shan et al., 2020; Sly & Mesidor, 2016; Tsevi, 2018; Wang et al., 2018; Wu et al., 2015).

Researchers have indicated that the absence of language proficiency has a powerful impact on the adaptation processes of international students (Ahrari et al., 2019; Albhlah & Alotaibi, 2020; Ammigan et al., 2020; Dai & Hardy, 2020; Doyle et al., 2018; Li et al., 2019; Lin et al., 2019; Luo et al., 2019; Olagoke-Oladokun et al., 2019; Singh, 2020; Yu & Moskal, 2019; Zhang, 2016). This finding potentially translates to the TCKs' adaption process during their transition back to the U.S. for college. For even though most TCK students may not necessarily have problems comprehending English, TCKs may not have full regular use of slang, or the slang TCKs used was distinct from the slang used in America. For instance, some students used

the British term “boot” when the American word is “trunk.” Another challenge could be with TCK students who have grown up going to neighborhood schools, where teaching is in a non-English language, and English is only spoken in their home. Consequently, TCKs may not have a thorough grasp of academic English, which is rather distinct from day-to-day English. Facing language issues could cause TCKs the same type of difficulty that international students have confronted (Eccohard & Fotheringham, 2017; Yu & Moskal, 2019; Pho, 2018; Songsirisak, 2018).

For international students, the transition to college in a host country contains many changes. Many international students wrestle with the same matters that nearly all new college students wrestle with (Mesidor & Sly, 2016; Wang et al., 2018). But out of necessity, international students must also labor to construct a new social support system of contacts and to transition to a dissimilar academic culture (Belford, 2017; Dai & Garcia, 2019; Pho, 2018). In addition, international students must work to adapt to a new home and are in an identity growth stage wherein they must also work at discovering who they are as individuals (Erikson, 1959; Mesidor & Sly, 2016; Pollock et al., 2017).

There is evidence that a student’s home country may play a role in the adaptation experience that international students have, with students coming from the West to the United States having a rather less challenging experience than Asian students (Alemu & Cordier, 2017; Alharbi & Smith, 2018; Alsahafi & Shin, 2019; Anjalin et al., 2017; Baba & Hosoda, 2014; Ladum & Burkholder, 2019; Lin et al., 2019; Mesidor & Sly, 2016; Moon & Larke, 2020; Shiddiq, et al., 2020; Wang, 2017; Wang et al., 2019; Yin et al., 2021). Resemblances in culture and language are often mentioned as explanations for why European students have a less upsetting acculturation process. Nevertheless, researchers have discovered that the culture of the

international students’ home country was just one of the variables shaping the adaptation progression of international students (Alsulami, 2020; Chiou & Chang, 2019; Jamal & Wok, 2020; Lopez, 2020; Mesidor & Sly, 2016; Mohamed, 2020; Olagoke-Oladoku et al., 2019; Pho, 2018; Singh, 2020; Wang, 2018). Holiday (2017) has emphasized that in studying international student populations at three western universities, their psychological adaptation may be predicted by the degree of similarity their home culture shared with that of the western culture. Students from nations that were dissimilar in culture to western culture were more prone to have trouble adapting psychologically (Alkubaidi & Alzhrani, 2020; Baba & Hosoda, 2014; Holliday, 2017; Li et al., 2018).

The other variables that have been studied in the body of international student literature concentrate on status, prior cross-cultural engagement, and peer interaction (Brunsting et al., 2021; Mesidor & Sly, 2016; Olagoke-Oladokun et al., 2019). While international students may have a high-ranking status in their home country, their situation in the United States is frequently changed, and this may lead to acculturation problems for some international students. Prior cross-cultural experience is also thought to contribute to acculturation because earlier positive experiences are believed to lead to a smoother adaptation in later moves. Peer interaction with co-culturals and host country nationals has additionally been stated to be a variable (Mesidor & Sly, 2016; Olagoke-Oladokun et al., 2019).

Some institutions considered advisory sessions and freshman-year seminars (Rodriguez et al., 2017). Van der Zande et al. (2018) indicated in such instances that when variables, such as students' SAT scores, high school grade point average (GPA), and gender were controlled, the advisory sessions and freshman-year seminars have had positive effects on students' GPA and credits. Common features outlined in these programs were a focus on (a) motivating interaction

between students, (b) encouraging teacher-student contact, (c) improving student responsibility for their study, (d) strengthening contacts with the college, and (e) improving the skills required for academic success. Many researchers discovered that along with individual and social variables, organizational variables may play a part. Many researchers investigated the effects of extraordinary freshman-year student support enterprises. Adewale et al. (2019), Shu et al. (2020), and Wardley and Belanger (2013) have disclosed that offering correct recruitment resources help with queries. Also, an international student's psychosocial skills all contributed to the freshman's adaptation to university and their welfare. Moreover, special housing and prearranged activities also had helpful effects on freshmen's wellbeing (Olagoke-Oladokun et al., 2019; van der Zanden et al., 2018).

Although TCK students do not identify as international students, TCK students share many characteristics with international students. One area of challenge for both students is adapting to a new place, finding new friends, and making connections with peers (Pho, 2018). In addition, the theories of culture shock and of cultural and national identities associated with international students as sojourners may be more widely used to comprehend the problems experienced by TCK returnees. It is held that just as sojourners are likely to suffer from culture shock when reentering their home culture, yet in due course, international students will return to their earlier sentiments and activities (Ai & Wang, 2017). One participant in Ai and Wang's study, experienced many complex emotional changes when this participant returned home, and was forced to recreate their identity in their home country.

Summary

Although there has been a variety of anecdotal writings concerning TCKs, TCKs have not been academically researched very much (Cranston, 2017; Fechter & Korpela, 2016; Smith

& Kearney, 2016). Yet, in recent times, the quantity of families worldwide moving cross-border is rising as advances in technology and the increasing ease of international travel is causing more probability of living in other cultures (Davis et. al., 2015; Lijadi & van Schalkwhk, 2017; Melles & Schwartz, 2013; Hopkins, 2015). Hence, TCKs are a big and quickly increasing demographic in global society and yet one that is mostly hidden and unsupported on U.S. college campuses (Smith & Kearney, 2016). Although there are prominent members of U.S. society with a TCK upbringing and the fact that the TCK phenomenon is not new, TCKs are one of the most "under-researched and underserved populations in global society" (Smith & Kearney, 2016, p. 958). Yet, academic interest in the TCK experience has been growing since the 1950s. This is evidenced by the relatively larger number of studies conducted in the last decade (Hopkins, 2015; Kortegast & Yount, 2016; Smith & Kearney, 2016).

TCKs usually reenter their home country for college (Smith & Kearney, 2016). However, much of the literature points to the disorientation that this demographic of undergraduate experiences upon their arrival on their college campus. Because TCKs do not have a foreign passport like international students, oftentimes TCKs are not given the attention that the college acknowledges as necessary for international students. As a result, TCKs do not receive the needed attention and support. This student demographic typically does not seek the help TCKs desperately need and instead many of TCKs end up switching colleges a few times before finally graduating, if the TCK does persist that long. Because of their highly mobile lifestyle, many TCKs cannot settle down and live in one place for very long as TCKs typically have a rootlessness in their identity that sticks with them (Kwon, 2019). TCKs may not have a sense of belonging to a culture or people (Smith & Kearney, 2016).

MKs generally receive more support during their repatriation to their home country for college from their organization (Kortegast & Yount, 2016). Despite this available support, many MKs do not take advantage of the available resources, wishing to blend in and re-assimilate into American culture on the other hand, there were several benefits that were uncovered for children that have grown up in other cultures. These benefits may help them be more resilient when repatriating to college (Abe, 2018; Moore & Barker, 2012). More studies need to be done to ascertain why some MKs are more resilient than others (Abe, 2018).

There are multiple reasons why so little study has been conducted until now to explore the repatriation of TCKs who are not MKs or MilBrats, but are rather BusKids, DipKids, and EdKids (Kortegast & Yount, 2016). Of these multiple reasons, the lack of unity among these other categories is a dominant factor. Consequently, a serious empirical research gap in the literature has existed. Thus, this study has been aimed at providing TCK stakeholders with relevant information to help close this empirical research gap in the literature. The focus of this study has been to gather the information needed to highlight the repatriation experience of these other categories of TCK college students that until now have been neglected (Smith & Kearney, 2016). With little to no other studies until now focused on the repatriation of TCKs (except for a few on MKs and MilBrats), this study represents a much-needed addition to the empirical research currently available. In addition, this study adds to the scant amount of inquiry concerning U.S. TCKs who grow up in South Asia and repatriate to the US for college.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative collective case study is to understand the transition to college of TCKs who have spent at least one year in South Asia during their upbringing (ages 6-18). The problem this study examines is that TCKs are often overlooked on college campuses during their transitions in their freshman year because these students have an American passport, causing many of them to be unsuccessful in persevering to graduation (Smith & Kearney, 2016). TCKs are not classified as international students. Thus, even though TCKs are experiencing reverse culture shock during their adjustment to college in the U.S., TCKs frequently do not receive necessary support (Altweck & Marshall, 2015; Smith & Kearney, 2016). Chapter three includes an explanation of the research design, participant selection technique, and research settings. The chapter also provides a clarification of the research measures (i.e., the data gathering and analysis tactics) that were utilized in this study, as well as the procedures used to assure both the trustworthiness and appropriate ethical considerations for this study.

Research Design

The research design in this study enables a rational order that ties the experimental data to the study's preliminary research questions and, finally, to its conclusions (Yin, 2018). Researchers use the qualitative research method to ensure the reliability and accuracy of their study (Patton, 2015). Qualitative studies utilize systematic data collection measures, painstaking preparation, several data sources, triangulation, and outside evaluations to yield high-quality qualitative data that are dependable, truthful, reliable, balanced concerning the phenomenon under study, and sensible to the individuals studied. The three sources from which abundant data was collected during my study included individual interviews, focus group interviews, and

participant reflective journals. The trademark of a good qualitative study is that it proposes in-depth scrutiny of a case, and that this scrutiny is reachable by amassing and integrating countless arrangements of qualitative data (Yin, 2018). Because qualitative research includes a concentration on the emic view of the participants and on the meaning of their experiences rather than on the researcher's etic view (Creswell, 2008), the qualitative research method is appropriate for investigating the focus of my study, TCKs' transition to college.

In qualitative research, rich and descriptive detail is critical to the data collection process (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Thus, while only a few individuals may be studied, the thick, descriptive, and holistic data collected provides illumination of the phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). My research study employed a qualitative research method because qualitative investigation is used to discover the meaning in a phenomenon, experience, or event (Patton, 2015). For my study, I used the qualitative research method to discover the meaning of TCKs' transition to college in the U.S. after their repatriation from a South Asian country. Smith and Kearney (2016) indicated that TCKs' repatriation to college is under-researched and that consequently these TCKs are under-served. Creswell (2008) recommended a qualitative study for a phenomenon about which little is known. Qualitative research "can refer to research about persons' lives, lived experiences, actions, emotions, and feelings as well as about organizational functioning, social movements, cultural phenomena, and interactions between nations" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 11). Qualitative research was appropriate to study the lived transition experience under investigation in my study.

My study is thus qualitative versus quantitative. Instead of pretending to have no biases, it makes more sense for the researcher to examine their preconceptions and work out how their feelings might skew the research and then, with this insight in mind, work to prepare questions to

offset their biases (Rubin & Rubin, 2004). As much as possible, the questions in my study allowed me to conduct my investigation without personal bias. In my study, the following data sources helped to explain answers to the research questions: individual and focus-group interviews, and participant reflective journals. In quantitative research, in contrast to the qualitative data sources detailed above, the data is gathered from surveys, assessments, experiments, and additional data (Patton, 2015). Qualitative methods aid the researcher to study matters in more depth and detail. Advancing fieldwork minus being restricted by predetermined taxonomies of analysis thus adds to the complexity, honesty, and detail of qualitative research. In contrast, quantitative procedures necessitate the usage of undeviating procedures so that the mutable perspectives and experiences of persons may be put into a limited quantity of static response taxonomies to which measurement figures are allocated.

In quantitative investigation, the focus is on the measurement instrument. These include the test items, survey queries, or other measurement tools (Patton, 2015). By contrast, in qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument. The reliability of qualitative methods, then, emphasizes to a large degree the ability, expertise, and thoroughness of the individual conducting research—and events happening in an individual's life that may turn out to be a disruption. Exhaustion, fluctuations in comprehension, and aberrations stemming from inequalities in training, aptitude, and involvement among diverse “instruments,” may transpire. This deficit in thoroughness is more than compensated for by the flexibility, comprehension, and competence to build on an implied comprehension that is the bizarre sphere of the human instrument (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Controlled experiments mainly aim for numerical investigation of quantitative data, while qualitative data are the main concentration in naturalistic inquiry (Patton, 2015). Qualitative data

describes in such a way that as the researcher takes the reader into the time and place of a location the reader can recognize what it was like to be there. Through the data, the researcher communicates somebody else's involvement in the world in their own words telling their own story. Given the qualitative stress on pushing for depth of understanding in the setting, attitude surveys and psychological exams are insufficient for revealing internal outlooks. To get at greater meanings and preserve context, face-to-face exchanges are both essential and desired. It is suitable to point out that many major contributions to our comprehension of the world have come from researchers' own experiences. There are many examples where familiarity with sources of information have made important understandings possible, such as Piaget's proximity to his kids, Freud's closeness and sympathy with his patients, Darwin's intimacy with wildlife, and Newton's personal happenstance with an apple. In summary, proximity does not make prejudice and forfeiture of viewpoint unavoidable, just as remoteness is no assurance of impartiality.

It is at the point of data analysis where qualitative and quantitative techniques offer stark differences (Stake, 1995). Qualitative researchers look at a solitary occurrence, the instance, and draw meaning from it without looking for multiple occurrences of it. Qualitative research is one of the planned ways that researchers grasp new meanings about cases through direct interpretation of the distinct occurrence. It is a method of pulling the data apart and putting them back together again meaningfully. Quantitative researchers seek a collection of instances. Quantitative researchers expect that issue-relevant meanings will emerge from the aggregate.

The rationale for choosing a qualitative study over a quantitative study was to gain a clearer picture with in-depth interviews and questioning. Furthermore, the researcher seeks to explore a phenomenon (Stake, 1995). The phenomenon under study was the TCKs' transition to

college after having lived overseas in South Asia for at least one year during their upbringing (ages 6-18). The quantitative method is not appropriate for this specific study because the purpose is to describe the TCKs' transition to college experience. Designing a study around open-ended research questions that help the researcher describe and investigate a key phenomenon in the real world (Yin, 2018) is the appropriate design for this study. Using a case-study design allows for the description and investigation of a causal relationship and the possibility of analytic generalization as opposed to statistical generalization used to assess the strength of the relationship between the sample and the population (Yin, 2018).

Maybe nothing better captures the variance between quantitative and qualitative methods than the diverse reasonings that support sampling methods (Patton, 2015). Qualitative inquiry characteristically concentrates in-depth on comparatively small samples, chosen purposefully. Quantitative methods typically are contingent on bigger samples chosen randomly. Not only are the procedures for sampling dissimilar, but the very reasoning of each method is unique since the purpose of each method is different

What would be bias and weakness in statistical sampling becomes a planned emphasis and forte in qualitative sampling (Patton, 2015). The reasoning and power of purposeful sampling lie in choosing information-rich cases for study. Information-rich cases are cases from which one can learn a great deal about problems of vital importance to the purpose of the investigation, thus the term purposeful sampling. Studying information-rich cases produces insights and in-depth understanding instead of experimental generalizations. Purposeful sampling concentrates on choosing information-rich cases whose study illuminates the queries under study. Purposeful sampling is occasionally termed purposive or judgment sampling since you choose the purpose you want participants to serve, and you go out to discover that purpose. More

can be learned from intensively studying information-rich cases than can be learned from numerical portrayals of what the average case is like.

I selected a qualitative case study because it is a suitable design for a study when the main concentration of data collection was on what was happening to persons in a situation and how persons were affected by the situation (Patton, 2015). Qualitative case study was the appropriate design because the emphasis is on a specific concern rather than on the case itself. The cases are simply a vehicle for use in comprehending the specific concern (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In my study, through individual interviews, focus group interviews, and participant reflective journals, I focused on the specific issue which is understanding the participants' experiences when TCKs transition from overseas in South Asia to their college campus in the U.S. after having lived at least a year of their upbringing (ages 6-18) overseas. The focus in my study is on the specific concern, rather than on the cases themselves.

One major purpose of case study research is to represent the emic perspective, that is, reality as constructed by the individuals who were studied (Yin, 2018). Case studies are a favored approach when "how" and "why" questions are being asked about a contemporary phenomenon. In addition, case studies may offer noteworthy insights not offered by randomized controlled trials (RCTs) as RCTs are inadequate for describing the essence of "*how*" or "*why*" a given action/intervention worked (or not) and case studies may examine such issues. The case study method was best suited for this study for another reason. That reason is that a variety of evidence gathering approaches was used to examine the data (Yin, 2018). These data gathering approaches included interviews, participant journals, and focus group interviews. The cases in this study were the contemporary entity, including 14 TCK students who repatriated to the U.S. for college from South Asia, after spending at least one year of their upbringing in South Asia

(ages 6-18). The TCK participants were investigated "in depth and within its real-life context" (p. 18).

The case study design is familiar to social scientists because of Freud who made it widespread in psychology (Creswell, 2008). This approach was also common in medicine, law, and political science. Case study research has a long, distinguished history across various other disciplines including anthropology and sociology. Hamel, Dufour, and Fortin (1993) mentioned Malinowski's study of the Trobriand Islands, French sociologist Le Play's study of families, and the case studies of the Department of Sociology at the University of Chicago from the 1920s and 1930s through the 1950s as precursors to qualitative case study research (Creswell, 2008). Currently, there are many case study options for textbooks and other published approaches, including the option developed by Yin (2018), who espouses explanatory, exploratory, and descriptive qualitative case studies in the field of education (Creswell, 2008). There is also the option of Merriam and Tisdale (2016) who advocated for a general approach in the field of education. Stake's (2006) book on multiple case study analysis presents a step-by-step approach and provides rich illustrations of multiple case studies in the Ukraine, Slovakia, and Romania.

The boundary between a case and its setting may not be clearly defined (Yin, 2018). Real-life matters do not readily drop into clearly defined categories. The capability to appreciate any such distortion as a part of a case study is considered a strength of case study research. By contrast, at best, other approaches may treat any distortion between the focus of the study and its setting as irritation. These distortions are important for my study to strengthen my study. The case study approach facilitates the investigation and a comprehensive portrayal of a bounded system wherein the researcher has negligible control over the case situation (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). What is crucial to case identification is that it be bounded, meaning that it must be

demarcated or defined within certain constraints. Examples of constraints for bounding a case study include the explicit place where the case is situated and the timeframe over which the case is deliberated. The selection of the people involved in the case may also be defined as a constraint (Yin, 2018).

For my study, I am seeking to understand and explain the U.S. TCK's freshman-year transition to their physical U.S. college campus after repatriating from a South Asian country to the U.S. for college. The modern real-life contexts are each participant's physical college campus during their freshman year. This is the bounded context (Yin, 2018). The bounded system includes a homogeneous group of people (cases) with a common experience (Krueger & Casey, 2015). In my study, this common experience is the U.S. TCK's repatriation from a South Asian country to the U.S. for college, after having lived overseas in South Asia for at least one year during their upbringing (ages 6-18). Except for the category Dipkids, my study included all the categories of TCKs. My study included two categories that are often overlooked, the EdKids, and the BusKids, and their transition experience during their freshman year of college. I studied each homogeneous participant's freshman year of college after each participant made the transition to their physical college campus. The homogeneity relates to their experience, not their personal characteristics. My study also had two participants who were in the "other" category of TCK, as neither of their parents' employment matched one of the TCK categories.

Interviewers often concentrate the conversation on a limited range of topics and then attempt to understand these in detail (Schwandt, 2007). The depth and detail sought in interviews is the thick description that is rooted in the interviewees' personal experiences and shape the data that researchers collect and synthesize. For example, "[t]o thickly describe social action is actually to begin to interpret it by recording the circumstances, meanings, intentions, strategies,

motivations, and so on that characterize a particular episode" (p. 296). It is through the process of thick description that the qualitative researcher may bring a case to life in a way that is not possible using the statistical approaches of quantitative research. Thick descriptions help readers to compare cases with their own circumstances (Gall et al., 2010). The design of my study facilitates the extraction of multiple thick descriptions from the inevitable study distortions created by the diversity in the lives of the study participants and their varied college campuses and experiences.

Thick, rich description offers the basis for qualitative analysis and writing. Respectable description takes the reader into the setting being described Patton, 2015). Thick description enables the researcher to open a world to the reader through rich, detailed, and concrete descriptions of people and places so that the reader can understand the phenomenon studied and draw their own interpretations about meanings and significance. Qualitative analysis is grounded in thick description. A thick description does more than record what a person is doing. Thick description goes beyond mere fact and surface appearances. Thick description presents detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another. Thick description evokes emotionality and self-feelings. Thick description inserts history into experience. Thick description establishes the significance of an experience or the sequence of events for the person(s) in question. In thick description, the voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard.

According to Stake (1995), a single case study allows the researcher to study the "particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances" (p. xi). Utilizing collective cases can provide more compelling, robust evidence and can cause possible direct replication, which can strengthen the analytic conclusions of the

study and may be effectively generalized from more easily (Yin, 2018). The collective case study is a special effort to examine something having lots of individual cases, parts, or members. In my study, the participants are the plurality of students, and the plurality of parts are diverse college settings that these students have transitioned to. The personal temperaments, backgrounds and host country experiences of the participants vary. Likewise, each student as a unique person together with their own transitional setting represents an individual case. Therefore, though we study one collection or bounded system of people in detail, each individual case within the collective case study has its own problems and relationships (Stake, 1995).

After studying the individual cases, I then contrasted the individual cases by conducting a cross-case analysis to identify emergent themes (Yin, 2018). The collective case study design enabled me to analyze the perceptions and the lived experiences of each individual participant and to examine differences and similarities between cases. Conducting a multiple case study enabled me to explore differences within and between cases. The goal was to replicate findings across cases. Yin posited that "the variety of field settings adds to the numerous important and interesting human events that can become the subject of qualitative studies" (p. 109). Because comparisons are drawn, it is imperative that the cases be chosen carefully so that the researcher may predict similar results across cases, or predict contrasting results based on a theory. For purposes of this research, a collective case study was appropriate as it allowed for within-case and cross-case analysis of results within and across cases. Yin argued that the undertaking of a replication design in multiple-case studies is of "critical intent" (p. 55). Using 12-15 cases as a collective case study approach allows for cross-case conclusions. Consequently, to develop a more robust research design, a collective case study replication design was utilized.

Research Questions

Research Question One: How do TCKs perceive the major events or benchmarks in their transition to college?

Research Question Two: How did expected and unexpected outcomes affect TCKs experience during their transition to college?

Research Question Three: What resources do TCKs typically access during their repatriation to college transition in the U.S.?

Research Question Four: What are the strategies TCKs use in their first year of college that contributed to their persistence to graduation?

Setting

The setting for my study began with their schooling in South Asia for at least one year during their upbringing (ages 6-18). I chose participants from two different types of schools and used pseudonyms to protect the identities of the participants who graduated from these schools. Both schools have students who would be classified as belonging to all the TCK categories (Buskids, Dipkids, Edkids, MilBrats, and MKs). For my study, I posted the information flyer on the Alumni websites of these two schools to collect potential participants for my study.

For the first school setting, I am giving the pseudonym of *Agape School*. It is an English-medium international residential co-ed school located on a large campus (250 acres) in the mountains on the outskirts of a medium-sized town, with students ranging from ages 3 to 21. Only a few children of schoolteachers and staff do not reside in the school dormitories, as well as day students, who are few. Their student to teacher ratio is 6:1. This school has a long history of providing quality education. It has a large, active alumni association with over 5000 members worldwide. School population: 450 students, including approximately 40% who are host country

nationals, 30% from the U.S., and approximately 30% from more than 30 additional countries. Fifty-one percent of the students identify as female. The tuition at this school is somewhat expensive, but tuition grants are offered to half of the students to make it more affordable for them to attend. This school has a principal and vice principal and administrative staff along with academic department heads.

Major features of this school include its college preparatory curriculum with two types of diplomas, including the International Baccalaureate (IB) and a fully- accredited American High School diploma. It belongs to the Council of International Schools. This school prepares students to take examinations to qualify them for high quality colleges all over the world. Almost half of the graduating students attend colleges in the U.S.

To the second school I am giving the pseudonym of *Phileo School*. It is a much larger non-residential co-ed school located on a small city campus in a massive city with students ranging in ages from 3 to 19. Only some of the teachers and their families reside on the campus. It is a much younger school, and it also has an excellent reputation for quality education. Major characteristics of the school include its college preparatory curriculum, with three types of diplomas including the International Baccalaureate program. Student population: 1000+ students, including 30% who are host country nationals, 20% from the U.S., and 50% from more than 64+ additional countries. Fifty-one percent of the students are male. Ninety-seven percent of the graduates of this second school in my study go on to international universities. Thirty-five percent of the students at this school hold American passports.

This school provides an exceptional American education with an international perspective. International Baccalaureate Diploma Program (IBDP) and Advance Placement (AP) are offered. These programs provide a strong foundation for students to apply to and attend

universities around the world. More than half of the graduating students attend college in the U.S.

Once the student repatriated from a South Asian country and was of college age, the setting for this study shifted to the participant's U.S. college campus during their freshman year of college. The college demographics for this study were based on study participants' college choice. During the interviews, some of the participants may still have been on their college campuses, whereas others may have already graduated. When conducting the interviews with the participants, questions were focused on their adjustment during their freshman year of college. Although the participants were notified about the study via the alumni website of their schools in a South Asian country, the participants represented a variety of college campuses in the U.S.

Many students from these two high schools in a South Asian country repatriate to America for college. In the past, the graduates of these two high schools have attended a wide variety of types of colleges in the U.S. Except for one, the colleges chosen by the participants were all over the U.S. The participants transitioned to colleges that were in the U.S. because the participants for my study were all U.S. passport holders returning to their home culture for college. Depending on the college that the participant chose to attend, the administration of their college may have been aware or unaware of the issues that TCKs face when arriving on their campuses. Some colleges may have TCK offices which address the needs of this demographic of student population, whereas other campuses may not.

Participants

All the participants of my study were graduates of either *Agape School* or *Phileo School* (Pseudonyms) and all the participants had made the transition to their freshman year of college in the U.S. It was not necessary for them to have graduated from college to participate in the study.

Some may not have graduated from their colleges because these TCKs did not receive the support they could have been helped by during their initial transition.

I used the method of purposeful sampling where I selected participants based on their meeting the criteria for my study. The criteria included having to have a U.S. passport, repatriating from the South Asian country to the U.S. for college, and having lived in the South Asian country for at least one year of their upbringing. To find enough information-rich cases, I used snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is an approach for locating information-rich key informants or critical cases (Patton, 2015). Snowball sampling is when the researcher asks the participants who have met the criteria for the study if these participants also know other people like themselves (Krueger & Casey, 2009). By asking several people who else to talk with, the snowball gets bigger and bigger as the researcher accumulates new information-rich cases (Patton, 2015). I asked potential participants for others like themselves when I made initial contact with them (Krueger & Casey, 2009).

I used maximum variation sampling in my study. This strategy of sampling aims at capturing and describing the central themes that cut across a great deal of variation (Patton, 2015). For small samples, a great deal of heterogeneity can be a problem because individual cases are so different from each other. The maximum variation sampling strategy turns that apparent weakness into a strength by applying the following logic: Any common patterns that emerge from great variation are of particular interest and value in capturing the core experiences and central, shared dimensions of a setting or phenomenon Thus, when selecting a small sample with great diversity, the data collection and analysis yielded two kinds of findings: a) high-quality, detailed descriptions of each case, which are useful for documenting individuality, and

b) important shared patterns that cut across cases and derive their significance from having emerged out of heterogeneity. Both are important findings in qualitative inquiry.

Initially, the information flyer for the study and the consent form were posted on the website of *Agape School* and *Phileo School* in the South Asian country and interested alumni were asked to contact me by email. To those TCKs who responded, I sent a questionnaire that allowed me to determine if the TCK met the criteria for the study. The TCK had to have lived at least one year overseas in the South Asian country during their upbringing (ages of 6-18) and have a U.S. passport. The TCKs must have already made the transition to their freshman year in college, but not necessarily have graduated. Most of the TCKs had graduated. The sample size was the 12-15 needed to reach saturation. The TCKs selected were individuals who had information-rich cases (Patton, 2015). The bounded system was a homogeneous group of people transitioning to college after having lived in the South Asian country as their common experience. The TCK participants were all at least 18 years old.

Procedures

After receiving both of my site permissions and prior to conducting this research study, I requested and obtained permission from Liberty University's Institutional Review Board [(IRB) (see Appendix A)]. Both school site permissions were granted (see Appendix B and C). The IRB exists to protect the volunteer-human participants' rights and wellbeing (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The IRB committee reviewed the research proposal to ensure the following: that all risk to participants was minimized (Yin, 2018); whether if appropriate, potential, or real benefits outweigh risks; whether the researcher has obtained the full, informed consent of the research participants (Schwandt, 2007) to ensure that participants have made informed decisions to participate; and to ensure the participants' privacy is well-protected (Yin, 2018). I, the

researcher, acknowledge the potential for bias in my study, according to my values and interests. I asked permission from each of the schools to post the recruitment flyer on their alumni websites and l only posted the flyers once I received the schools' permission.

Once approval by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was obtained, I posted a recruitment flyer on the alumni websites for the two international schools in the South Asian country (See Appendix D). The schools have the pseudonyms of *Agape School* and *Phileo School* and alumni interested in the study were asked to contact me by email or phone. I invited those who met the criteria for the study (of having spent at least one year of their upbringing (ages 6-18) overseas and having a U.S. passport and having repatriated to the U.S. for college from a South Asian country to join the study. I sent them an invitation email. In the literature review, mention is made of studies conducted in other countries. For the purposes of my study, the participants were U.S. passport holders repatriating to the America for college after living overseas in the South Asian host country for at least one year during their upbringing (ages 6-18). Once IRB approval was obtained, I conducted a pilot study prior to the actual study to refine interview questions and procedures (Yin, 2018). According to Yin (2018), pilot data can assist in strengthening the validity of the study and provide significant understanding into the important matters to be researched. I conducted the pilot study using the interview questions on individuals outside of my participant group to guarantee clarity and appropriate phraseology (Patton, 2015; Yin, 2018). Then, I changed and adjusted the questions, as needed, based on the pilot study. I also conducted a pilot study on the focus group questions with individuals that were outside the participant group (Krueger & Casey, 2015; Patton, 2015).

I sent the recruitment flyer (see Appendix D) to potential participants who met the criteria for the study, to partake in the study, even though I had already posted the recruitment flyer on

the alumni website of their high school. I sent each recruitment flyer out as I gathered each response. The consent form attached to the recruitment flyer summarized the purpose and procedures for the research study. I sent an informed consent form (See Appendix E), along with the recruitment flyer, to those who met the criteria for the study and who I chose to participate in the study. The informed consent form advised the interested participants of the recognized dangers, as well as the anticipated benefits of the study. The informed consent form also informed them of their right to freely extract their data at any time, of the steps that were to be taken to shield their identity, of the data collection and data analysis activities in which they were expected to participate, and of the researcher's commitment to give them feedback once my research study was completed (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Prior to the start of each 30-to-40-minute individual interview, each participant was informed that the interview would be digitally recorded (Yin, 2018) for the purposes of transcription only. Before interviewing each participant, I asked each participant to answer my screening questions. Then, I interviewed participants individually while using Microsoft Teams, which has audio-video capability so that I was able see the participants' facial expressions. In addition, I conducted 30-to-40-minute focus group interviews with groups of three participants on Microsoft Teams, so that I could see the participants. As much as possible, I chose groups with TCKs from the same TCK category. For the purposes of my study, this was not actually necessary because I was studying TCKs, rather than by individual categories. The participants may have enjoyed the focus group interview better if they were with other TCKs who were like them. I emailed participants to find out if they were able to participate in a scheduled focus group interview. I gave them different dates and times when they could choose to participate in the focus group interview. I used Microsoft Teams to audio/video record both the individual

interviews and the focus group interviews. I took field notes during these interviews. Microsoft Teams transcribed these interviews and I coded, with-in-case analyzed, and cross-case analyzed all the data I collected. I examined documents, such as the journals, from each participant. I backed up amassed data frequently using cloud storage (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Member checking is a vital technique for researchers to assure the credibility of the transcription (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The validity of the reconstruction of each participant's emic perspective was corroborated by member checking (Stake, 1995). The transcriptions were made accessible to all the interviewees to complete the member checks. After gathering data and drafting a report for each case, I asked the interviewee associated with a transcript to read it for accuracy, completeness, and possible misrepresentation. The member checks provided new data for the study, as well as contributed to the revision and improved interpretation of the reporting.

The Researcher's Role

A qualitative study requires researchers to explain their role as the human instrument. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and Creswell and Poth (2018) maintain that the investigator is the principal measuring instrument. The investigator conducts data collection and is personally involved in the phenomenon being studied. I served as the human instrument and collected the data through interviewing participants individually and in focus groups, and by examining the participant reflective journals. As the human instrument, I collected, analyzed, and interpreted the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I am undoubtedly older than most of the participants and needed to be aware because of by my being an elder that I could inadvertently affect how the interviewees answered the questions. There was the possibility that the younger participants were trying to show me respect and be too polite (Rubin & Rubin, 2004). I ensured that I did not try to over-control the interviews, but rather I encouraged involvement by each participant, and I asked

additional follow up on questions that I felt were not answered adequately (Krueger & Casey, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2004). Main questions were tied to the research questions whereas probing questions helped elicit details and follow-up questions explored and tested ideas (Rubin & Rubin, 2004). This is how I conducted the individual and focus group interviews, so that the participants felt the need to be involved in the interview process. I did not have any authority over the participants, other than during the interviews.

Other study design characteristics may also have affected the study. My study followed the interpretive approach towards social knowledge. This approach recognizes that meaning occurs through exchanges and is not uniform from either person to person or place to place (Rubin & Rubin, 2004). Individuals comprehend their worlds and how they create and share meanings about their lives. The interpretive approach stresses the importance of understanding the overall text of a conversation and, more broadly, the implication of seeing meaning in the milieu. This approach accepts the significance of culture and the need of a relativistic approach to culture in the discussion. Although I organized and classified themes while collecting my data, I was more interested in determining the meanings of the proceedings, how individuals adjusted, and how they perceived what had transpired. Because I was accentuating the intricacy of human life, the times and settings were important. I understood social life as continually altering.

I am also a pragmatist and was interested in the practical aspects of the study. Pragmatism focuses on the outcomes of the research – the activities, circumstances, and consequences of inquiry – rather than precursor conditions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Pragmatists have a concern with “what works” (p.326) and on resolutions to difficulties. My interpretive lens views knowledge as a tool for organizing experience and I am deeply concerned with the unity of theory and practice (Schwandt, 2007). Instead of an emphasis on approaches,

the significant feature of my research was the problem being considered and the questions being raised about this dilemma (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In my study, I worked to see the union of Schlossberg's adult transition theory (1981) and the improvement of TCKs' transition to college.

The guiding epistemology of my qualitative collective case study was constructivism, which suggests that meaning or truth is created by the individual (Crotty, 1998) and their viewpoints (Creswell & Poth, 2018). People do not uncover knowledge so much as construct it. Individuals fabricate ideas, models, and systems to make sense of their experiences, and they incessantly put to the test and modify these explanations in the light of new experience (Schwandt, 2007). The emphasis for my study was on hearing my participants' stories through which their lived experiences emerged (Wolcott, 2008). In addition, I became close to my participants because of some of my epistemological assumptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

My parents were both immigrants to the U.S. from different countries (and cultures). By some more recent classifications for a TCK, even though I grew up in the U.S., I would thus be classified as a TCK (Pollock et al., 2017). This is because I grew up in a multi-cultural home. My father was half Belgian and half German and my mother is Colombian. I grew up in the District of Columbia suburbs. Education was emphasized by my parents while I was growing up, and I have far exceeded my parents' expectations. I received a B.S. (Management) from the U.S. Coast Guard Academy (USCGA). At the time I applied (as well as now), the USCGA was the U.S. college with the most competitive undergraduate admissions process. It is one of the highest-ranking public colleges. I received an M.Ed. (Honors) in Elementary Education and have also received my Ed.D. with honors.

I was also a military officer and am familiar with military culture, having been in the U.S. Coast Guard for 9 years. I also married an active-duty Naval Officer and experienced and

continued to experience Navy military culture. After marriage, I lived in Israel for a year and traveled extensively to its surrounding neighbors during that time. Our travels included visiting Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. Our travels also included spending one week each in Greece and Turkey and 5 weeks in Cyprus for the birth of our first child. Finally, I am a middle-aged conservative woman who has lived in a South Asian country for 23 of the past 30 years. My morals (values) are based on a belief in and commitment to a conservative Christian worldview.

In many ways, I may relate to the confusion that may result in one's identity when one spends extensive time overseas. Although I was older and my identity had already been formed, I remember feeling conflicted about my identity the first time I returned to the U.S. after residing in the South Asian country for 12 years straight. This feeling may have been like what TCKs experience since their identity is not fully formed when they repatriate to the U.S. for college (Hervey, 2009). From data collection to analysis, all these factors may have an influence on how I conducted my study. All these features may possibly have influenced what I as the researcher may have heard from the interviewees in the study, and how I as the researcher analyzed the data (Yin, 2018).

Bracketing is Husserl's (1931) term for the researcher writing down their own thoughts to help them reduce bias in their study. In my study, I kept a reflective journal so that bias was addressed. In bracketing, the researcher holds a specific phenomenon up for serious inspection. This specific phenomenon is taken out of the world where it occurred. It was taken apart and dissected. Its elements and essential structures are uncovered, defined, and analyzed. This specific is treated as an instance of the phenomenon that was being studied. It was not interpreted in terms of the standard meanings given to it by the existing literature. Those preconceptions are suspended and put aside during bracketing. In bracketing, the subject matter is confronted on its

own terms, as much as possible. Therefore, I kept a record of all methodological and logistical decisions that I made during each stage of my study. Patton (2015) indicated that during data collection and analysis, the researcher needs to continually engage in reflexivity, as well as be cognizant of their potential prejudices.

My children went to one of the international schools whose alumni were participants for my study. I did not have any authority over any of the participants in my study. I am not working at any of the colleges or universities that the participants are attending or attended, nor did I work at the *Agape School* or *Phileo School,* except for volunteering and going on hiking and camping trips, and coaching middle school girls' basketball at the *Agape School.*

Data Collection

The purpose of this qualitative collective case study was to understand the transition to college of TCKs who have spent at least one year in South Asia during their upbringing (ages 6-18). A foremost strength of case study data collection is the opportunity to use diverse sources of evidence (Yin, 2018). In addition, the most significant benefit offered by using many sources of evidence is the "development of *converging lines of inquiry"* (Yin, 2018, p.115) which is a method of triangulation and validation. When following a "corroboratory" approach (Yin, 2018, p. 116), the same fact or phenomenon is corroborated from numerous sources. Case studies that use manifold sources of data for evidence are more highly regarded in terms of their overall quality than those that depend on only a solitary source of data (Yin 2018). Thus, I collected three types of data for this study: individual interviews, focus group interviews, and participant reflective journals (which the participants were told about during their individual interview). All the research questions were answered during each of the data collection strategies.

Interviews

After I received IRB approval, I conducted a pilot study prior to the actual study to refine interview questions and procedures (Yin, 2018). I conducted a pilot study with the interview questions on individuals outside of the participant group to guarantee lucidity and appropriate wording (Patton, 2015; Yin, 2018). I conducted this pilot study with both the individual and focus group interview questions Then, based on the pilot study, I adjusted the questions (see Appendices F and G).

Qualitative interviews are discussions in which a researcher tenderly directs a conversational partner in a lengthy conversation (Rubin & Rubin, 2004). The term conversational partner emphasizes the dynamic role of the interviewee in influencing the conversation and directing what direction the research should take. The term implies a pleasant and collaborative experience, as both interviewer and interviewee work together to attain a mutual understanding. The researcher stimulates depth and detail about the research topic by following up on the responses provided by the interviewee during the discussion.

Responsive interviewing explores the interviewees' understandings of their experiences and of their awareness of the world in which they live and work (Rubin & Rubin, 2004). Because the interviewer contributes enthusiastically to the discussion, they must be mindful of their own views, experiences, cultural definitions, and biases. The researcher does not share personal information with the interviewees during the interview. In case studies, sharing personal information may reduce the information shared by the interviewees. The interviewer suffers serious ethical responsibilities to safeguard the interviewee. Furthermore, the interviewer is intruding on the time, energy, feeling, and imagination of the interviewee and consequently owes allegiance and safeguarding in return.

Interviewers should not enforce their views on interviewees (Rubin & Rubin, 2004). Interviewers ask broad enough questions to avoid limiting what interviewees may answer, pay attention to what interviewees tell them, and alter their questions to investigate what they were hearing, not what they considered true prior to commencing the interview. The responsive interviewing design is flexible and adaptive. The interviewer may change course based on what they are learning. In the interviews, the inquirer and the participants contribute to a conversation that is fixated on the research questions. The most common method of interview is the one-on-one interview wherein one person is extracting data from another person (See Appendix F). It may be defined as a purposeful conversation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). See Appendix H for a sample interview transcript.

I decided to use a semi-structured interview protocol, versus a highly structured interview method, or an unstructured method. I also conducted the interviews in the participant's workplace or home via Microsoft Teams. This gave me some information on how the participants lived so that I was able to get to know the participants better. Unstructured interviews are usually conducted by inquirers who are not knowledgeable in the subject (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This is not the case in my study. I am an expert on TCKs and their repatriation to the U.S. for college. I also decided against the highly structured interview where the interviewer is not able to enter the interviewee's world with such rigid questioning.

Standardized Open-Ended Interview Questions

1. Please introduce yourself to me, as if we had never met before.
    a. Where were you born?
    b. Where have you lived and how long did you live at each location?
    c. Why did you have to move?

2. How was your adjustment to your college?
3. Please describe your college decision experience.
4. How did you do with previous transitions in your life?
5. Describe your positive transitioning experiences.
6. Describe your negative transitioning experiences.
7. Think back to your freshman-year of college. Imagine when you were befriended by a TCK student. What was it like?
8. Think back to your freshman-year of college. Imagine when you were befriended by a non-TCK student. What was it like?
9. Describe any personal characteristics you have that made it easier during your transition to college.
10. Describe any personal characteristics you have that made it harder during your transition to college.
11. If you did not stay at the same college or university for four years, can you elaborate on why you felt like you could not persevere at your first college?
12. What are the positives of being a TCK?
13. What are the negatives of being a TCK?
14. How do you feel the TCK lifestyle has affected your identity?
15. When people ask you where you are from, what do you say?
16. Where would you say your home is and why?
17. What was your sense of belongingness like in your host country before you repatriated to the U.S. for college?

18. What was your sense of belongingness like in your home country during your freshman-year of college?
19. What factors contributed to your sense of belonging?
20. How would you rate your adjustment to the culture in the U.S?
21. How did you manage without the family support you were used to during your transition to college in the U.S.?
22. Please tell me about your experience, if your college helped you during your transition to college, because they recognized that you were a TCK.
23. Imagine you are at an international school at a meeting with senior TCKs who all are about to repatriate to the U.S. for college. Based on your experiences what advice (support or strategies) would you recommend that the counselor give the seniors?
24. Describe the preparation for repatriation you received from your international school.
25. Describe any re-entry seminars that you attended.
26. Tell me about any (informal) community groups on your campus that you joined during your freshman-year.
27. Describe any homesickness you experienced during your transition to college.
28. Please tell me about a strategy that helped you control the meaning of your transition/adjustment to college?
29. Is there anything we have forgotten in our discussion concerning your transition to college that you think it would be important for me to know?

Questions 1.a-1.c are background/demographic questions. I, the researcher, used these questions to obtain some of the demographics of the participants in the study (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). These questions are knowledge questions and were envisioned to be

comparatively frank and non-intimidating. The questions preferably helped to develop an affinity between the participant and the researcher (Patton, 2015).

Questions 2-8 are *situation* questions. This is the first *S* in Schlossberg's adult transition theory. The four *S*'s are factors that influence how the person coped during a transition. From these questions, I, the researcher looked for answers that illuminated the person's *situation* at the time of transition and factors that led to the transition. I also looked at whether the person was in control of the decision to transition and whether the person viewed the transition as positive or negative (Schlossberg et al., 2011).

Questions 9-19 are *self*-questions. This is the second *S* in Schlossberg's adult transition theory and I, the researcher, looked for answers that the person gave concerning their personal and demographic characteristics (gender, race, socioeconomic status, and age) and psychological resources that helped them in their transition, such as a person's level of confidence, resolve, incentive, and aptitude to manage difficulty and doubt (Schlossberg, 1989).

Question 11 is the initial question that probably necessitated a comparatively high degree of openness, because of this, I elected to ask it after the interview was proceeding nicely. Idyllically by this stretch in the interview, a good relationship had been created (Patton, 2015).

Questions 20-22 are *support* questions. This is the third *S* in Schlossberg's adult transition theory and I, the researcher wanted answers concerning what *support* was available to the person at the time of their transition. These supports may have included training, mentoring, professional development, or any occasions when the person had a chance to reflect on and learn from their experience (Schlossberg, 1989).

Question 23 offers the participant to take another person's viewpoint which is frequently helpful in attaining new understandings (Patton, 2015).

Questions 24-28 are *strategy* questions. This is the fourth *S* in Schlossberg's adult transition theory, and the researcher was looking for answers from the person that explained their responses to their transition that altered the situation, controlled the direct problem, and showed how they handled the stress resulting from the transition (Schlossberg, et al., 1989).

Question 29 is a *one-shot* question (Patton, 2015) and was intended to give the participant one additional occasion to offer treasured understanding. This *one-shot* question also served as the final query. The interview questions are also located in Appendix F.

Focus Groups

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), focus group interviews are interviews that are conducted with a group of people who are knowledgeable about a topic. The data is socially constructed in the group setting by the interaction of the people in the group. The data created in the focus group is different from the data that is produced in individual interviews. Participants share their stories, hear others' stories, and might hone their own stories according to what others share. According to Patton (2015), focus group interviews are based typically on homogeneous groups and involve open-ended interviews with groups of five to eight people on specially targeted or focused issues. Sampling for focus groups typically involves bringing together people of similar backgrounds and experiences to participate in a group interview about major issues that affect them.

My focus groups consisted of three people in each of the four focus groups and a fifth group with two people. The purpose of directing a focus group interview was to better comprehend how people felt and to get them to reflect on an event (Krueger & Casey, 2015) about a certain phenomenon. In my study, I was looking at whether the TCK received any support from their college during the transition. In my study, the phenomenon was their

transition to college and the challenges it brought into the participants' lives. Participants were selected because they had certain features in common that related to the theme of the focus group (Krueger & Casey, 2015). In my study, the participants were all U.S. TCKs who have transitioned to college in America after having spent at least one year during their upbringing (ages 6-18) overseas in a South Asian country.

In my focus groups, the discussions were planned to acquire insights on a defined area of interest in a nonjudgmental, non-hostile environment (Krueger & Casey, 2015). Focus groups work best in this type of environment where the participants feel relaxed, valued, and welcome to give their sentiments without fear of judgment. I looked for the range of opinions, insights, concepts, or feelings that people have about an event. In my study, the transition of the TCK to college was the event and whether the TCK received any type of support from their college during their transition experience is what I was looking for. I solicited the data I was looking for through open-ended questions while maintaining a natural environment where the participants may be influenced by each other, just as they would be in real life (See Appendix G for the focus group questions and Appendix I for a sample focus group transcript). The researcher was the mediator, listener, spectator, and analyst. The researcher conducted focus groups until theoretical saturation was obtained. Saturation was the point where the researcher heard the range of concepts and was not getting new perceptions.

I conducted my focus group interviews in stages so that I had time for early analysis, reflection, and rerouting built in. Focus group analysis began in the first focus group. Data collection and analysis were concurrent. Doing the analysis as one goes serves to improve data collection in focus groups (Krueger & Casey, 2015). I conducted a focus group first, transcribed and coded what I had, analyzed it, and then made decisions on how I should proceed. The reason

that I had five focus groups was so that I could analyze the groups across groups—cross-case analyze them. The questions in my focus groups varied a tad from those used in the individual interviews. I gave out questions to the internet focus groups ahead of time, in part to inform partakers of the scope of the discussion and to convey a sense of the time outstanding in the discussions. The number of questions was restricted to 30 to 60 minutes and included audio and video capabilities. I asked focus groups five to eight questions.

Just as in the individual interviews, the initial question was replied to by each participant and contained a non-threatening often factual question that did not signify rank or order. I focused my questions and put the more vital questions later in the script. I categorized the questions so that they moved easily from one question to the next. I asked questions that offered the participants an opportunity to take an instant to reflect and to list or rate items before they spoke. I kept track of who was replying and not responding to questions and called on those who were less loquacious. I included one or more finishing questions as I completed the group. I completed the group with an "all things considered" (Krueger & Casey, 2015, p. 209) question which worked well to end the focus group.

I was in a quiet professional setting, giving my undivided attention to the participants. I took a few notes during the interview and recorded the interview. Immediately, once the interview was over, I took notes on what I perceived was not said in the interview, but I felt may have been true (things the participants did not say but could have been said). In other words, I attempted to read between the lines of the interview (Yin, 2018). Stake (1995) suggested that the researcher take notes on what they felt was the gist of the whole interview.

Participant Journals

After the focus group interviews, I gave the prompts and asked the participants to take some time and answer the prompts (See Appendix J for the journal prompt and see Appendix K for a sample participant answer to the journal prompt). I asked them to email me the answers to the prompts once they had completed them. The participants were allowed to take their time and complete them in two weeks from the time of their focus group interview. Also, I provided detailed information regarding my biases, values, and experiences as well as reflexivity with detailed field notes in the form of researcher reflective journal entries throughout the study including just prior to and directly after each interview (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

I utilized memoing throughout the data collection phase and kept this information stored in my reflective journal. Memos are short phrases, key concepts, or ideas that arise to the researcher. Memos are not just descriptive synopses of data but efforts to synthesize them into higher level analytic meanings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher discovered evidence that portrayed multiple perspectives about each category (Stake, 1995). Creswell and Poth (2018) uncovered memoing to be a worthy investment of their time as a means of creating a digital audit trail that can be retrieved and examined.

Creswell and Poth (2018) recommended memoing during every analytic session and returning frequently to the memos written during the opening analysis as a way of tracing the progression of codes and theme advancement. Miles et al. (2014) explained the urgency of memoing as when an idea strikes, the researcher should stop whatever else they are doing and write the memo. These authors recommend that the researcher ought to incorporate their reflections of all kinds, even the vague and murky ones.

Data Analysis

The final step of the research phase included preparing and analyzing transcriptions of the individual interviews, the transcriptions of the journals, and the transcriptions of the focus group interviews. This was to determine if any reoccurring themes and correlated subthemes surfaced and were readily apparent (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I analyzed participants' journals where they recorded recollections of their experiences when they transitioned to college. To keep each case clear, I collected data and analyzed data simultaneously as I went along. This way I was not overwhelmed by the voluminous amount of data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I kept a daily reflective journal in which I made notes on the study. Keeping a reflective journal helped me to bracket out my opinions and concepts (Husserl, 1931). Each interviewer creates their own style that they are happy with and that matches their personality. Because the interviewer and interviewee intermingle and sway each other, the interviewer needs to be self-aware, scrutinizing their own prejudices and beliefs that might have impacted the interviewee (Rubin & Rubin, 2004).

As I collected and analyzed the data, I produced categories, themes, and results that were strong enough to include in what arose in later data collection (Krueger & Casey, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I designed a system for organizing, cataloging, and indexing the data log that made it possible for me to retrieve data efficiently, duplicate them, and use them for a variety of tasks (Schwandt, 2007). A hard copy of the entire data set, along with my organizational scheme, was set aside from the data set that I worked from when I was doing data analysis. Data was stored in a variety of places on my computers to guarantee my collected information was not lost (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The Word documents were password protected Word documents stored within password protected file folders on my password protected computers. With each set

of data that I analyzed; I synthesized the analysis to generate the findings. I used all the data analysis processes listed here and below with all three types of data collected.

I as the researcher created patterns and looked for correspondence between two or more categories. When multiple cases (more than or equal to two) are investigated, Yin (2018) has suggested a cross-case synthesis as an analytic method when the researcher is conducting a collective case study. The insinuation of this is that the researcher may compare the data while looking for parallels and differences among the cases. Finally, the researcher may develop naturalistic generalizations from analyzing the generalizations that the reader may learn from the case for themselves, applying learnings to a population of cases, or transferring them to another comparable context (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher may then do what they can to establish the generalizability of their findings (Patton, 2015).

Stake (1995) recommends that in categorical aggregation the researcher may seek an assortment of examples from the data, in the hope that issue pertinent meanings will appear. Categorical aggregation or case themes is thus another tactical method that I used to grasp new meanings after direct interpretation of the cases. The meaning comes as a class from across the occurrences. For example, one might have 20 smaller categories and then collapse them into five themes. These themes are one aspect of the major findings in a case study. These themes are thus the larger categories derived during case study data analysis and are made up of multiple occasions that are aggregated (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Developing some manageable classification or coding scheme was the first step of analysis (Patton, 2016). This essentially meant my analyzing the core content of interviews, and other data to determine what was significant. I began this by reading through all the transcriptions from interviews, and documents, making comments in the margins and/or

attaching post-it notes that contained notions of what to do with the different parts of the data. This constituted the first cut at organizing the data into topics and files. In this way, I came up with topics by looking at what was there and giving it a label (code). The copy on which these topics and labels were written became my index copy of the interviews and journals.

As the researcher, I wrote shorthand codes on or near the relevant data passages (Patton, 2015). During the first reading of the data transcripts, my aim was to develop the coding categories for my classification system. During the second reading of the data transcripts, I started the formal coding in a systematic way. More readings of the transcripts were necessary before I could completely index and code all the data transcripts. I used different colored highlighting pens to color code different ideas or concepts. For this step, I developed a codebook from the interview questions.

A code is an abbreviation for the more important category yet to be discovered (Saldaña, 2016). Coding is the process of aggregating research data into smaller categories of information and assigning it a label. Coding draws connections from raw data to identify patterns and categories (Creswell, 2018). Codes are for the essence capturing of important aspects of the research story. When grouped together according to similarity, they facilitated the development of categories (Saldaña, 2016). Before coding, I read all the interviews. The idea behind this was to "enter vicariously into the life of participants, feel what they are experiencing, and listen to what they are saying through their words or actions" (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p.86). I examined the raw data and utilized In Vivo Coding. I lifted direct quotes deemed most significant from the transcript and placed them in the right column.

Besides developing and then re-reading the individual case studies, I also read all the data multiple times to begin to code the themes and categories that were common among the

individuals. Patton (2015) stated, "Classifying and coding qualitative data produces a framework for organizing and describing what has been collected during fieldwork" (p. 465). While coding, I did what Saldana (2016) suggested. Saldana (2016) suggested that the researcher keep a copy of the research questions, conceptual framework, and purpose of the study in front of them to remain focused on coding decisions. In addition, I kept in mind the following questions Saldana (2016) suggested to have in mind while coding: (a) What are people doing? (b) What are they trying to accomplish and how? (c) What means, or strategies are they using? (d) How do participants talk about/characterize/understand what is going on? (e) What assumptions are being made? (f) What do I see going on here? (g) What am I learning from the notes? (h) Why did I include them, and what strikes me? Because multiple participants are a part of this study, I coded one participant's data first and progressed to the next participant's data.

To generate categories, I conducted initial coding first, In Vivo Coding, and then used Pattern Coding (a second-cycle coding method), where I grouped coded data based on similarities (Saldana, 2016). Pattern Coding pulls together a lot of material into a more meaningful unit of analysis and is used to develop themes from the data. I reviewed the descriptive codes, assessed their commonalties, and assigned them a Pattern Code. The categories were used to develop statements that described a major theme. In my study, I completed data analysis by collecting and coding data into themes that emerged as the data was collected. Saldana (2016) suggested coding participant data individually and unilaterally, which allowed for a fresh perspective in coding the subsequent participant's data. Yin (2018) suggested that the researcher would need to manually analyze the results of the data as "developing a rich and full explanation or even a good description of your case, in response to your initial '*how*' or '*why*' questions, will require much thinking and analysis on your part" (p. 211).

Interview Analysis

I started by transcribing the interviews. I used shortened transcripts in my study. I then read the first transcriptions of the interviews and journals and wrote down notes in the margins of the transcriptions [(commentaries, explanations, and questions) (Krueger & Casey, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016)]. Then, I went back and grouped the codes that were similar. I repeated this coding sequence with each subsequent reading of the next participant's transcript. Next. I merged the two lists of codes into a master list. This master list became a cataloging scheme reflecting the repeating patterns in the study. Eventually, I constructed categories and themes that caught the repeating patterns that were cutting across the data. I ensured that the codes were related to the research questions, the purpose, and the theoretical framework of the study. In some instances, I used the exact words, or In Vivo coding, used by the participant (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

In Vivo coding is appropriate for virtually all qualitative studies. In Vivo coding is particularly appropriate for beginning qualitative researchers learning how to code. In Vivo coding is also suitable for studies that prioritize and honor the participant's voice (Saldana, 2016). First cycle coding is a way to initially summarize segments of data. In Vivo coding draws from the participant's own language for codes. While I read my interview and journal transcripts, I followed Saldana's (2016) advice for this first cycle coding method. In the process I thereby attuned myself to words and phrases that seemed to call for bolding, underlining, italicizing, and highlighting. In Vivo coding provided me with a crucial check on whether I was grasping what was significant to the participant. Following Saldana's (2016) suggestion I put participant-inspired codes in quotation marks to keep track of them.

Pattern coding, as a second cycle method, was a way of grouping those summaries into a smaller number of categories, themes, or concepts (Saldana, 2016). Pattern codes are thus explanatory or inferential codes, ones that identify an emergent theme, configuration, or explanation. Pattern codes pull together a lot of the material from first cycle coding into more meaningful and parsimonious units of analysis. Pattern codes are a "sort of meta code" (Miles & Huberman, 2014, p. 86). I used Pattern Coding in my study because Saldana (2016) pointed out that this type of coding is appropriate for several items that were applicable to my study. These items included the condensing of large amounts of data into a smaller number of analytic units, the development of major themes from the data, and the laying of the groundwork for cross-case analysis by generating common themes and directional processes. For second cycle pattern coding, I collected similarly coded passages from the data mass. Then, I reviewed the first cycle codes to assess their commonality and assign them various Pattern Codes. After that, I used my Pattern codes as stimuluses to enable me to develop statements that describe major themes, patterns of action, networks of interrelationships, and/or theoretical constructs from the data.

Yin (2018) advocated using 'pattern matching' to identify recurring themes which may surface from the participants' interview inputs. For case study analysis, *pattern matching logic* is one of the most desirable methods to use. This logic compares an empirically based pattern with a predicted one (or with several predicted ones). When the patterns concur, the results help a case study to fortify its *internal validity*. For this, I needed to recognize all sensible threats to my data pattern matching validity and to my performing of repeated comparisons.

In my analysis, a typical format was to first provide a detailed description of each case and the themes within the case, called a within-case analysis**.** Next, I followed this with a thematic analysis across the cases, called a cross-case analysis, as well as an assertion or an interpretation

of the meaning of the case. The main reasons for engaging with cross-case thematic analysis was to improve the likelihood of generalizability or transferability as it related to the understanding or explanation of this phenomenon (Stake, 1995). For cross-case analysis, I incorporated an organizational structure of the data as represented by a series of worksheets proposed by Stake (2006) that correlated to the steps that I took during the cross-case analysis process. I listed each research question in a table in my reflective journal, and I used it to provide the overarching focus during the analysis phase. Assertions are finalized when the researcher makes sense of the data and provides an interpretation of the data couched within the personal views of the participants as well as within corroborating theories or constructs in the literature. Finally, I examined themes that were common or different across the cases (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The initial priority was to be impartial to the specific case and to do a good job of looking at each case's particulars before watching for patterns across cases (Patton, 2015).

As the researcher, I looked at each case lengthily to gather as much data as possible concerning the context of each case (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Once I completed the with-in case analysis, I started my cross-case analysis. My aim was to build a universal description that fit all the cases as suggested by Merriam and Tisdell.

Focus Group Analysis

In general, I used the same step-by-step plan for my focus group analysis as that used in my interview analysis. Focus group analysis is a thoughtful, focused process. It comprises of four separate and critical qualities. It is methodical, uses confirmable procedures, is done in a consecutive manner and is an ongoing process. This analysis approach may be based on whole transcripts, shortened transcripts, notes or recollections (Krueger & Casey, 2009). I used shortened transcripts in my study. The partition between data collection and analysis is much

clearer in quantitative studies than in qualitative ones. My focus group analysis commenced with the first focus group. Thus, my data collection and analysis were simultaneous. This improved the data collection for my focus groups. I planned my focus groups so that I could transcribe the conversation from one group before doing the next. I wrote a short synopsis of the group, going question by question to ensure that all questions were answered adequately. Soon after each focus group, I completed these transcripts.

Journal Analysis

Because of the criteria for my case selections, the journals for my research could only be in the setting of my study and were guaranteed to aid in producing perceptions into the phenomenon under study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). After evaluating the genuineness and nature of the participant journals, I adopted a system of coding and cataloging them. I developed elementary descriptive categories in the beginning stages of the research for the coding, so that during the analysis stage I had easy access to the data. I conducted content analysis which is an inconspicuous method that allowed the inquirer to analyze comparatively unstructured data in view of the “meanings, symbolic qualities, and expressive contents the data have and of the communicative roles the data play in the lives of the data’s sources” (p. 179). Content analysis is most frequently used to analyze documents. I therefore used content analysis in my study to get to those meanings, figurative attributes, and dynamic contents contained in the data and the roles the data had played in the participants’ lives.

Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) have insisted that a qualitative researcher needs to arrange for the trustworthiness of their study. Trustworthiness is defined as that characteristic of an investigation (and its conclusions) that make it significant to audiences (Schwandt, 2007). The

steps the researcher must include are credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Credibility are the steps taken to assure that necessary approaches were used to sufficiently sustain or disprove interpretations or deductions of a study (Creswell, 2018). Dependability concerns the trustworthiness of the approaches and core processes used to conduct the study. Confirmability is the degree to which the outcomes of the study may be verified (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Transferability is the facility of the study to be conducted in a comparable location attaining parallel conclusions (Creswell, 2018).

Credibility

Lincoln and Guba (1985) advocated that the information gathered during the study should be gathered in a structured, truthful, and reliable manner which would lend and support the credibility of the study. There should also be a level of confidence in the findings gathered at the conclusion of the study. Credibility parallels internal validity in quantitative studies and addresses the issue of the inquirer providing assurances of the match between the subjects' views of their experiences and the inquirer's re-creation and understanding of the same (Schwandt, 2007). A credible investigation must attempt to present, rather than distort, the participants' views (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Schwandt, 2007). Accordingly, I guaranteed that the findings of the study made sense and were both credible to the participants and to the audience of the study. I ensured that the findings portrayed an "authentic portrait" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.279).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Schwandt (2007) emphasized member checking and peer debriefing as techniques that were helpful for establishing credibility. Member checking is the most important method for proving credibility, as it permits the participants to examine their transcribed data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A hallmark of case study research is the use of multiple data sources, and triangulation, a strategy that enhances data validity and credibility

(Yin, 2018). Triangulation between complementary approaches and data sources should yield largely converging conclusions (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2018). Consequently, I used triangulation to corroborate the information collected. This increased the credibility of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In addition, by conducting member checking and peer debriefing, I ensured that the level of credibility of my study was improved.

Finally, credibility depends on the richness of the information gathered and on the analytical abilities of the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Descriptions should be thick, context-rich, and meaningful (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2004). The offered data will be well linked to the classes of preceding or developing theory. Accordingly, as the researcher, I sought after negative evidence and aggressively considered rival explanations (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2018).

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability in qualitative research parallels reliability in quantitative research and stresses the process of the investigation and the inquirer’s obligation for ensuring that the process is reasonable, observable, and recorded (Schwandt, 2007). When all interviews and focus-group sessions are digitally recorded and transcribed, confirmability is increased (Yin, 2018). Confirmability is the degree to which the findings of the study may be validated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Confirmability also parallels objectivity in quantitative research and is involved with determining the fact that the data and explanations of an inquiry are not simply creations of the researcher’s imagination. Confirmability calls for connecting assertions, conclusions, and descriptions to the data themselves in easily discernible ways (Schwandt, 2007).

Further, I used the bracketing technique of reflective journaling to increase the credibility, the dependability, the confirmability, and the transferability of my analysis. For this,

information related to both self and method was recorded on a regular basis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I have included an example of this recording in my reflective journal as an appendix to this manuscript (see Appendix L). Further, by keeping a reflective journal, I was better able to bracket my beliefs, preconceptions, prejudgments, knowledge, and emotions. This enabled me to better concentrate on the research issue and the research questions and to be more open and receptive to participant experiences (Husserl, 1931).

The responsive interviewing model contends that the researcher needs to incessantly scrutinize their own understandings and responses (Rubin & Rubin, 2004). Personal participation is a great strength of the responsive interviewing model because identification inspires individuals to dialog. However, dynamic participation within the interview may generate difficulties, as the researcher's own feelings and prejudices may impact what the researcher asks and how their interviewee replies. Thus, I explicitly stated what my biases were and was reflective in how my biases could affect the study. Then, as a check, I went back and confirmed that the results were dependent on the participants and circumstances of the inquiry, rather than on me, the researcher. This was in accordance with another suggestion made by Miles and Huberman (1994). By this, the study's overall methods and procedures were pronounced clearly and in a detailed fashion. Also, the procedures I employed have been explained herein so that someone can replicate my study and conduct an audit trail. Finally, my conclusions are linked with displayed and condensed data.

Stake (1995) advocated using a technique called member checking to support the dependability of the study. For this step, I first received permission from each participant to record their interview. I also ensured that each oral interview was conducted in the same manner. While I asked the same interview questions of each person, I asked probing questions designed

to encourage the participant to expand on or explain some of their responses, thus increasing the richness of information provided by the interviewee. After conducting each oral interview, I immediately transcribed each recorded oral interview while it is 'fresh' on my mind.

The case study protocol not only assists in allowing for replication of the study, but also bolsters the dependability of the study (Yin, 2018). According to Patton (2015), dependability and confirmability are obtained with solid descriptions and a thorough explanations of analytic techniques. Yin (2018) suggested that the combination of using multiple sources of data collection methods and triangulation, of creating a database, of maintaining a chain of evidence, and of using caution when considering electronic sources, together help to counter issues of dependability and reliability in a case study (Stake, 1995). Accordingly, I used multiple sources of data collection methods and triangulation, created a database, maintained a chain of evidence, and used caution when considering electronic sources. Further, to increase dependability and confirmability, in my study I used solid descriptions and a thorough explanation of analytic techniques.

Transferability

Transferability parallels external validity in quantitative research and deals with the problem of generalization, in terms of case-to-case transfers (Schwandt, 2007). Transferability entails the inquirer's responsibility for giving readers the necessary material on the case studied such that readers may determine the level of resemblance between the case studied and the case in which findings may be transferred. A research study's findings are transferable to the extent that they can be applied to individuals or situations other than those in which the findings were attained (Gall et al., 2010). Studies that have more breath in their sample are used to generalize, but with less people the aim is transferability (Krueger & Casey, 2015; Merriam & Tisdale,

2016). In this case, when someone wants to use the outcomes of the study, that person needs to think about whether the results may transfer into another setting. The person who is reviewing the study may analyze the approaches, procedures, and kinds of members and then choose the degree to which these are suitable to the conditions they face. The case study approach provides an opportunity to shed empirical light on some theoretical concepts or principles in a way that can go beyond the specific case being investigated. The case study approach may enable generalizable findings and/or lessons learned. Analytic generalizations beyond the setting of a specific case(s) and the generalizations, principles, or lessons learned from a case study may be applied to a variety of situations (Yin, 2018).

The degree of transferability is an unswerving function of the likeness between the two settings (Patton, 2015). This is called *fittingness.* As the researcher, I used several strategies to help readers of my case study to determine the transferability of my findings to their situation or to other situations. For this step, I have provided a deep description of the participants and contexts that comprised the cases, so that readers who are interested in applying my findings may determine how similar they are to the situation of interest to them. For this step, I have addressed the issue of whether my selected cases are representative of the general phenomenon being investigated. Further, while using a collective case design, I conducted a cross-case analysis which helps the reader determine whether there is transferability at least within the cases that I studied (Gall et al., 2010).

Additionally, I have certified that the sample settings and processes are adequately described so that others may compare this study's samplings with other samples (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I have ensured that my samplings are diverse enough to help with wider application. In addition, the findings include enough "thick description" (p. 279) to ensure that

my findings are transferable to other settings, and that they are consistent with, linked to, and/or assenting of prior theory. The transferable theory from the study was made explicit. Lincoln and Guba (1985) stressed the importance of transferability in qualitative research so that lessons learned may be transferable. This was enhanced by using rich, thick descriptions. Data collection methods employed triangulation, as doing so provides both credibility and transferability to the findings (Yin, 2018). The use of multiple data sources provides triangulation and increased study validity because the more sources of data that are gathered and organized, the more evidence there is to provide a clear and meaningful picture that is free from bias (Stake, 2006). Finally, I conducted pilot testing of interview questions and focus group questions to help obtain transferability (Yin, 2018).

Ethical Considerations

Ethics is the explanation for human actions, particularly as those actions encroach on others (Schwandt, 2007). The investigator is thought of as aloof and unbiased and an outside specialist; the investigated as subjects, data suppliers, and respondents. The investigator is viewed as a mediator who aids the investigated to trigger their own capabilities for self-observation, criticism, and support. The investigator is also seen as a reporter, advocate, change agent challenger to the intimidating and well-known. The investigated is viewed as co-investigators, co-contributors, and colleagues. The agreement between the investigator and the investigated explains the purpose of the investigation, the anticipated length and scope of the subjects' contribution, the methods to be employed by the investigator, assurances of privacy, the probable dangers/rewards to subjects, and how participants may gain supplementary information from the investigator.

I guaranteed that I had received IRB approval from Liberty University before I started collecting data for my study (Krueger & Casey, 2015; Yin, 2018). I was aware that I had to be vigilant to ensure the participants of my study were not harmed and that I knew what preventative measures I could take to ensure the same. When a participant conveyed interest in participating in my study, I ensured that the participant completed an informed consent form that described the activities they would be required to partake in. I encouraged the participants to ask questions and I advised them of the voluntary nature of their involvement. I guaranteed them that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time (Kreuger & Casey, 2015). Also, I ensured that their personal information would be protected and that I would use pseudonyms for each participant and for their South Asian school associated with my study to help protect their identities. I gave the pseudonyms of *Agape School* and *Phileo School* to the two high schools where I gathered the participants from their alumni associations. In addition, I guaranteed that any information attained before, during, and after the different interviews, focus groups, and participant reflective journals would be confidential. This is because I may not share this information with external parties and may not publish outcomes without the member's authorization.

I ensured that the participants were conscious of the nature of my case study and that, as suggested in the references, I solicited them to willingly take part in the study (Krueger & Casey, 2015; Yin, 2018). While recruiting participants for the study, reciprocity between myself and the participants, not harming participants, fair and honest reporting, and how the findings of the study would be made public were all considered (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

I ensured that no harm came to the participants, including that I did not deceive them during the study (Yin, 2018). Further, any data that I collected from the participants is being kept confidential. I safeguarded that they are not put into any objectionable situation, including not giving out their name for someone else's future study. All electronic data is being password-protected on two computers and all hard copy data is being kept in a locked filing cabinet for three years from the completion date of the study. I have a master list of the types of information gathered and their location (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

I did not coerce the participants to collaborate in the study if it was against their interests (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This included obtaining their consent to participate in the study. I resolved to ensure that each participant received complete information about the study and what it would involve (Krueger & Casey, 2015; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The participants were advised that there would be member checks conducted to confirm and deepen the conclusions of the study. Expectations and specific procedures were clarified as the study continued. Participants were told how the data and analysis of the study would be stored and who would have access to these (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2018). I worked hard to be knowledgeable and trained in case study methodology so that my competence to conduct the study was not questioned (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative collective case study was to understand the transition to college in America of TCKs who have spent at least one year overseas in a South Asian country during their upbringing (ages 6-18). This chapter provides a comprehensive explanation of the qualitative collective case study design used for the study, the participant selection procedure, and the participant settings. In addition, it provides thorough accounts of the data collection and

analysis approaches, and defines the steps taken to ensure trustworthiness. Lastly, this chapter outlines the ethical considerations that were likely to be encountered during the study and the actions taken to protect both the identities of the participants and the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative collective case study was to understand the transition to college in the United States of American third culture kids (TCKs) who have spent at least one year in a South Asian country during their upbringing (ages 6-18). Chapter four includes participant descriptions; the data in the form of narrative themes, two tables: a) participants, b) codes to themes, a schematic of the themes, outlier data, and research question responses. The purpose of chapter four is to present the results of the data analysis as findings.

Participants

I selected 14 people to participate in my study. Each participant represented one case, which I defined as being a U.S. passport holder, over the age of 18 and having lived in South Asia and attended one of the two identified schools in South Asia for at least one year; before graduating and making the transition to college in the U.S. I ensured a level of diversity in the TCK categories by screening the participants from two different schools in South Asia, rather than just one school. The participants identified as all but one of the TCK categories (DipKids). The five TCK categories are business (BusKid), diplomatic (DipKid), educator (EdKid), military (MilBrat), and missionary (MK). Nine participants identified as being MKs, with two more being two of the categories (MK and another category simultaneously). One was a MilBrat, as well as an MK. The other was an EdKid as well as an MK. Two participants identified as EdKids. Two participants identified as Other TCK category because they did not fit into one of the five TCK categories. There was one participant who identified as a BusKid. Basic information for these 14 participants is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Participants

Participant	Yrs.in South Asia before college	Highest Degree Earned	Age	TCK Category
Camille	05	B.S. (Liberal Arts)	20's	Other
Mercedes	15	M.S. (Ph.D. Candidate)		50+ MK
Alan	09	M.B.A.	50+	MilBrat/MK
Magdalena	17	M.S. (Nursing)	50	MK/EdKid
Karan	09	H.S. (Music Ed.)	20's	MK
Timothy	17	M.S. (A.B.D.)	50+	MK
Keziah	01	M.S. (Architecture)	20's	EdKid
Erika	02	B.A. (South Asia/German)	20's	BusKid
Luke	12	M.A. (Theology)	50+	MK
Amalia	07	B.A. (Elem. Ed.)	50+	MK
Jeremiah	14	B.S. (Mech. Eng).	50+	MK
Noah	05	H.S. (Filmmaking)	20's	EdKid
Marcy	09	B.A. (Communications)	20's	Other
Arman	04	M.A. (Development)	30's	MK

Camille

During her interview, Camille revealed that she was born and raised in the northeastern part of the U.S. and is currently living and working in her hometown. Camille is working in the medical field and is planning to study medicine and become a medical doctor. Camille is the third of six children. During the interview, Camille revealed that her mother was very much

drawn to South Asia, so Camille had the opportunity to travel and live there for several years. Camille also had the occasion to live in France for two years when she was growing up. During the interview, Camille said, “I can feel fairly at home in the three different places and then the flip side is that I don't necessarily feel fully at home anywhere.”

Mercedes

Mercedes was born in the U.S. but moved to South Asia with his parents when he was quite young because his parents were missionaries there. Mercedes’ father was from South Asia, and his mother was from Germany. Mercedes is the oldest of three children. Mercedes was in boarding at *Agape School* for many years and learned to be independent while there. Mercedes did not have a hard time making friends at college as he had moved frequently enough earlier in his life to know how to make friends quickly when he moved to a new location. Mercedes mentioned in his interview that the cycle of making friends and then losing them because of a move was difficult. Mercedes said about his college, “People weren’t mean. I was able to make friends. That kind of helped me through that transition.”

Alan

During the interview, Alan revealed that his father was a military chaplain and he had to move quite a few times by the time he was nine. Alan grew up in South Asia, where his parents worked as missionaries. For much of his upbringing, Alan boarded at *Agape School*, only seeing his parents during the longer holidays. Alan was quite eager to return to the U.S. upon graduation from his high school in South Asia. During the interview, Alan said, “And I made a very bad mistake. I would've been a perfect candidate for all kinds of student aid… Shoot! I'm not proud I did that. I never applied.” Alan’s transition to college in the U.S. was not easy, as he had to work full-time at night to put himself through college.

Magdalena

Magdalena was born in the U.S., but went to South Asia, where her parents were missionaries and educators, when she was quite young. Magdalena is the oldest of three children. Magdalena had always had easy transitions earlier in her life and she felt like her transition to college was no different. During the interview, Magdalena said, "Never really had any negative transition experience. I don't remember it being hard to make friends…" Magdalena married another MK while she was in college, and they helped each other with some of the TCK issues. Currently, Magdalena lives in the Southeast U.S. and is a nurse practitioner. Magdalena feels a bit distant from her TCK upbringing because she has not returned to South Asia for many years. However, Magdalena admits that her identity is very much influenced by her being a TCK. During the interview, Magdalena said, "Being a TCK is who I am."

Karan

Karan was born in the southwestern part of the U.S. and accompanied his parents to South Asia where his parents were missionaries. Karan is currently a student at a small Christian liberal arts college in the midwestern part of the U.S. Karan felt like his transition to college was easy because there were other alumni from his school in South Asia nearby who helped him get settled in. During the interview, Karan said, "Yeah, I'm classified as an international student. That's the care package that I got. That's the group that I meet with and do events with some. There's not really a third culture kid type of thing on campus, it's more just International Student Association, which includes a bunch of TCKs."

Timothy

Timothy grew up in South Asia where his parents worked as missionaries. When Timothy was young, his parents were excommunicated from their mission. Timothy grew up in

the jungle and did not have formal schooling until sixth grade. Timothy stayed at the boarding school until he graduated and went to college. Timothy does not believe that his transition to college was very difficult. Timothy felt that people were interested in getting to know him since he was different. Timothy wrote in his journal, "Ironically, my unique accent and coming from a different place was an advantage when it came both to developing leads -- and then, making the sale." During the interview, Timothy said, "In a sense, it is my identity, very much so and I've always been [South Asian]. Uh, yeah, so [South Asian] I am, and I maintain that today. But I am also American."

Keziah

Keziah was born in the northeastern U.S. and moved to a remote location in the northeastern part of the U.S. for ninth and tenth grade to attend an international school where her parents worked. After two years, Keziah moved to a boarding school in Switzerland for one year. Finally, Keziah ended up completing her high school in South Asia, where her parents both worked at her school. All three of these schools had many international students. Keziah felt like the transition to the international school in South Asia was difficult because the values/morals and culture were so different from the school she attended in Switzerland. Keziah thought her transition to the U.S. for college was a lot easier than the transition to her high school in South Asia. Keziah admitted that she is a bit conflicted at times concerning her identity. During the interview, Keziah said, "Being a part of the architecture school within the larger university environment helped me settle in and find friends more quickly."

Erika

Erika was born in the mid-Atlantic region of the U.S. and lives there currently. Because Erika's father is a businessman, she lived in Germany for three years during her upbringing.

Erika thought the transition back to the U.S. from Germany when she was in middle school was very difficult. Erika spent her last two years of high school in South Asia. Erika also went back to Germany for study abroad for one year while she was in college. After college, Erika lived with her father in Japan for a year, and she appreciated the freedom and safety she experienced in Japan compared to South Asia. During the interview, Erika said, “I did literally every activity I could possibly jam into my schedule those two years I was in [South Asia], and I loved being active in doing activities. But I think when I went to college, I was just so exhausted that I joined nothing for a year.”

Luke

Luke grew up in South Asia where his parents were missionaries. Luke roomed with his brother who was two years older than him at college and that was helpful to have another TCK to whom he could relate to as his roommate. Luke had a difficult time with the cultural transition to his college. Luke is currently retired after working for Wycliffe translators for many years. After his work with Wycliffe including a stint in Sudan and Kenya, Luke worked in real estate long enough so he and his wife could retire. During the interview, Luke said, “I know, as a person of faith, throughout my life, I would say that one of the great blessings was being raised in [South Asia].” During the interview, Luke said, “Yes, I think it is kind of like a watermark on a piece of paper. You are indelibly marked. I don’t see how you could not be.”

Amalia

Amalia was born in South Asia where she later attended boarding school and where Amalia’s parents were missionaries. Amalia would only see them during her longer school holidays. Amalia’s transition was a lonely experience for her, as her parents sent her back from the mission field to attend college alone. Academically, Amalia’s transition was smooth.

However, she stated that it was difficult socially and culturally. Amalia hated Americans. During the interview Amalia said, “It was horrible. I would say that was probably one of the largest nightmares in my life. I think for me that's been the biggest disadvantage… I don't feel I belong anywhere.” Amalia married another MK who had attended the same high school in South Asia. Together, Amalia and her husband raised their family in Nepal.

Jeremiah

Jeremiah was raised in South Asia and always wanted to return there after college. Jeremiah’s reason for going to college in the U.S. was so that he could eventually return to South Asia to work professionally. Jeremiah felt like rooming with his brother was helpful to him during his transition to college. Jeremiah’s brother had had a difficult transition to college, but he knew the ropes two years later and was able to help Jeremiah adjust better than he had. Jeremiah also felt like being involved with a Christian organization on campus was very helpful to him. During the interview, Jeremiah said, “We did a lot of activities together. I joined up with Navigators, which gave me a small community.” Jeremiah married another MK who had gone to his high school in South Asia, and they spent many years in Nepal.

Noah

Noah was born in the northeastern part of the U.S. and lived there until his parents found jobs in South Asia when he was in middle school. Noah had had a difficult transition to high school in South Asia. During the interview, Noah said, “You know the way that international schools work. You know, traveling and how silly American people can be.” Noah stated that the transition to college was difficult because he went to a small college in a large city in the northeastern part of the U.S. and discovered moving to a large city disorienting. Noah found

much comfort in his Asian girlfriend. Although from a different Asian country than the one Noah grew up in, Rebecca could relate to his experiences during his transition.

Marcy

Marcy is the youngest of two children. Marcy was born in Japan and lived in Japan until she was nine. Marcy's parents are from the U.S. and Japan and Marcy stated that her experience at her boarding school in South Asia helped her to make her friends her family, since she did not have any family close by. When she was growing up, Marcy had extreme anxiety to the point of falling physically ill whenever she had to make transitions to spend time with her mother during her bi-annual school holidays. Marcy initially made friends with the students at her college who were Japanese, but later branched out to others. Marcy has a lot of identity confusion because one of her parents is from Japan and the other is from the U.S. and Marcy grew up in South Asia. Whenever Marcy visits Japan, she is not accepted as a citizen from that country because she is biracial. During the interview, Marcy said, "Once in a while I come across people who have just as weird backgrounds as me, and we instantly hit it off. Those are the people that I feel I can express myself completely to." Marcy just graduated from college and is looking for a job overseas.

Arman

Arman was born in the western part of the U.S. but spent a lot of his upbringing in politically unstable Afghanistan. Arman is the second of four children and is very close to his siblings. Arman was raised on a medical compound where his father was a medical doctor in Afghanistan. Arman's family had to evacuate from Afghanistan many times. Arman did not bond with local people his age in Afghanistan because people were afraid to be associated with foreigners. Arman's friends were other MKs. Arman felt like his upbringing in the missionary

community was very sheltered. When Arman was sent to South Asia for high school, Arman had a very difficult transition. In South Asia, he was bullied and had a hard time finding people who understood him. By the time Arman graduated though, he loved being at his high school. However, when it got close to graduation, Arman started feeling depressed and carried the depression with him to college in the U.S. During the interview, Arman said, “I was also going through a cultural adjustment and so I wasn't sure what part of it was, you know, neurochemical and what part of it was cultural.”

Results

Immediately after the data was collected from each interview, I went through the transcripts to ensure the interview had been transcribed accurately. I did the same after each focus group and after I collected each participant journal entry. I color coded and highlighted any statements that I felt would be useful to my study. This procedure for doing things went along with within-case analysis (Robert Stake, 2006). I highlighted and color coded each participant’s statements from all three of their data: (a) their individual interview, (b) their focus group, and (c) their journal prompt. I used a different color for each code. I ended up with more codes than I used in my analysis. The top thirteen codes had been mentioned in the data between 9 and 22 times. I had multiple color-coded sheets for each participant. These sheets that I made for each participant helped me to do within-case analysis. Keeping a sheet for each participant was as if I was doing a single case study and I had a profile for each participant. Then I did cross-case analysis by looking at each participants’ data sheets and finding the similarities and differences in them, comparing them to each other. Finally, I counted the number of times the codes were mentioned in the data and figured out the major and minor codes. At this point in my analysis, themes and subthemes emerged.

After I meticulously analyzed the data from the interviews, focus groups, and participant journals, seven separate major themes emerged. These themes are summarized in Table 2. Also, many subthemes emerged that were related to two of the major themes. I recognized these themes by the coding of the member checked data and I appointed values to the (sub) themes and established the relationship between the data. I started the process by ensuring the accurate transcription of the interviews and focus groups. I color-coded similar data and counted them to see which codes were repeated most often. During this process, the major and minor themes emerged from the data. In addition, I went through all the data and highlighted any quotes that I believed would be helpful to include while discussing the themes and sub-themes and how they answered the research questions.

The next section addresses these developing themes and subthemes and how they answer my study's research questions. I did not use any software to help me in my data analysis. At the advice of my chair, I did all my analysis manually to be close to my data. I went through the above process twice because the first time I did not count how many times the codes were mentioned in the data. During the second time, I counted how many times the codes were repeated in the data. By conducting the analysis twice, I believe I am very familiar with the data.

Easier Transition Usually Follows Previous Hard Transition

This theme, easier transition usually follows previous hard transition, emerged as an important theme, also answering the first research question. The first research question concerns the TCKs' *situation* and the major events or benchmarks that TCKs experience during their transition to college. More than half of the participants (8 out of 14) had difficult previous transitions and had an unexpected easier transition when they transitioned to the U.S. for college. During her interview, Kayla said, "So for me, the transition to college was actually very easy.

Very, very, very easy and I think it's because I had already done the repatriation when I was younger." Some TCKs were surprised by how much easier their transition to college was and how much better it was than what they had anticipated. Luke had some previous difficult transitions and he felt like those earlier transitions made the transition to college easier. During the interview, Luke said, "Those types of things were all quite beneficial in adjusting to someplace new, 'cause I'd been through several adjustments already." Some other participants said that having made the transition earlier helped them be more prepared when they repatriated to the U.S. for college. For example, during his interview Noah said, "But living through the first experience made me feel stronger and more prepared the second time around."

Uncertainty Identifying "Home"

This theme, uncertainty identifying "home," emerged as an important theme, also answering the first research question. The first research question concerns TCKs' *situation* and the major events and benchmarks during the TCKs' transition to college. More than two-thirds (10 out of 14) of the TCK participants dread being asked where their home was located. This question about where their "home" is, was a hard question to answer. Sometimes TCKs thus struggle while answering the question. For many TCKs it depends on who is asking them the question, of where their "home" is, as to how they respond. Karan who grew up in South Asia, said, "It depends on whether I want to give a short answer or longer answer, I tell them I'm from [South Asia] and that [South Asia] is my home because it's the place I've lived the longest." When someone asks a TCK where they are from, oftentimes they must edit their answer in their mind depending on who is asking them the question. Sometimes TCKs feel like their answers are neither totally honest nor complete. During his interview, Jeremiah said, "I always had problems answering the question." In her interview, Marcy said, "Like so the worst question you get as a

third culture kid I think, is where are you from? Because it's so hard to answer. Because now I also kind of feel like I'm homeless. So home is everywhere, but home is nowhere." Some TCKs feel torn between more than one culture and that everywhere they have lived is home. In her interview Erika said, I consider everywhere I've lived a home." Participant comments like these thus show that TCKs feel that they are "homeless" or that home is everywhere and nowhere.

Frustration Not Knowing U.S. Pop Culture

This theme, frustration not knowing U.S. pop culture, emerged as a major theme. It helps answer the first research question concerning the TCKs' *situation* and the events and outcomes of the TCKs' experience during their transition to college. Although there is American pop culture all over the world, almost two-thirds (9 out of 14) of the participants felt frustrated with their not being familiar with American pop culture when transitioning to their college in the U.S. During his interview, Jeremiah said, "I guess more feelings of not belonging of not understanding American pop culture." Some TCKs feel like they stay on the peripheral of the culture when they transition to college in the U.S. from South Asia. During his interview, Arman, a younger participant said, "I didn't have a solid grasp of most pop culture, sports references, and so on, so it was very hard to relate on that basis." Sometimes TCKs melted into the background because they did not think they knew enough to contribute meaningfully. Karan, said, during his interview, "There were times where I felt like I really didn't know the lingo." At her college, Kayla felt similarly to Karan. During her interview, Kayla said, "I know I was very much behind on pop culture. Freshman year, especially there were all these pop culture references and styles that I just was unaware of. Just didn't understand. Kind of nodded my head along too." She thus just pretended that she knew what her peers were talking about.

Most TCKs Have a Strong TCK Identity

This theme, most TCKs have a strong TCK identity, emerged as a major theme, and helped answer the second research question concerning the TCKs' *self* and expected and unexpected outcomes during their transition to college. Almost two-thirds (9 out of 14) of the participants felt like they could strongly identify as being a TCK. Keziah said, "It was hard to be as close with people if they didn't understand your life path, even a little bit." Some TCKs felt like TCKs who have moved more may be more of a TCK than they are, even though they are TCKs. During her interview, Erika said, "I feel like I almost don't even really consider myself a true third culture kid." However, most of the TCKs in my study felt like being a TCK was their identity. In his interview, Luke said, "I think it is like a water mark on a piece of paper. You are indelibly marked. I don't see how you could not be." Timothy felt the same way. During his interview, Timothy said, "In a sense, it is my identity, very much so and I've always been [South Asian]."

TCK Relational Mindset

Under this theme, TCK relational mindset, five sub-themes emerged that answered the second research question concerning the TCKs' *self* and their expected and unexpected outcomes during their transition to college. These sub-themes include a) TCK participants were highly adaptable, more than two-thirds (10 out of 14), b) TCK participants were comfortable in diversity, more than half (8 out of 14), c) TCK participants were non-judgmental, almost a third (4 out of 14), d) TCK participants were open-minded, almost half (6 out of 14), and e) TCK participants had a sense of rootlessness, almost half (6 out of 14).

Most TCKs are Highly Adaptable

TCKs have several advantages as compared to their monocultural classmates. More than two-thirds (10 out of 14) of the participants said that one of the advantages of being a TCK was that they were very adaptable. In her interview, Camille said, “I have this incredible flexibility.” During her interview, Erika said,” I tone it up, or tone it down.” According to the data, apparently, all the moves help TCKs to learn better how to adapt to new locations or situations. Karan said, “Just being able to adapt to different cultures—any environment.” TCKs tend to be much more adaptable than their monocultural peers. As a result of learning to adapt TCKs can be who they need to be in different circumstances. Some TCKs admit that they are like chameleons and can camouflage themselves when needed. During his interview, Timothy said, “I found that I am a good chameleon…. I could fit in with any group…”

Most TCKs are Comfortable in Diversity

More than half (8 out of 14) of the TCK participants felt like they could get along with just about anyone and fit into any group of relationships. Timothy said, “Being different was always the key. People wanted to engage.” TCK participants admitted that they can engage a wide range of people, as well as people who are very different. During the interview, Keziah said, “I am able to be friends with a broad range of different people. That includes people who are very different.”

Most TCKs are Non-judgmental

TCKs pride themselves on not being judgmental. Almost a third (4 out 14) of participants said that they were non-judgmental. During her interview, Keziah said, “I don’t judge a book by its cover, nor do I judge others too soon.” Neither do TCKs enjoy being judged by their cover.

Arman mentioned during the interview that, “It was hard because people assumed things about me from what they saw on the outside, when what was on the inside was totally different.”

Most TCKs are Open-minded

Compared to their monocultural classmates who have never left the country, almost half of the TCKs in my study (6 out of 14) believed that they were more open-minded than their monocultural classmates. During the interview, Mercedes said, “I am open to experiencing new cultures and challenges.” TCKs believe that to get along in multicultural places, you have to be open-minded. During her interview, Keziah said, “I feel like having a lot more of a, uh, inter, cultural, multiple religions, just so much variety that you have to be really open-minded; I think it really helped.”

Some TCKs Have a Sense of Rootlessness

Almost half (6 out of 14) of TCK participants said that they had some sort of rootlessness about them. Some TCKs, who lived in more than one country while growing up felt like they have a foot in each country. A good example of this is Mercedes, who grew up in South Asia. Mercedes went to the U.S. for college, and ended up being there for 13 years, before he moved back overseas to South Asia. As an adult, Mercedes has spent 14 years overseas in South Asia, and plans to remain overseas indefinitely, even though he has a house in the U.S. Mercedes does not feel like he has a home base anywhere. Mercedes wants to continue experiencing new cultures and challenges. During the interview, Mercedes said, “I am like a tumbleweed or rolling stone and don’t have a place to call home.” Some TCKs mention that they are world travelers as adults because of all the travelling they did as a child. During the interview, Erika said, “I'm also a bit of like that child of the world where I absolutely love traveling and exploring and leaving America.”

TCK Support

From data obtained from the participants, it was determined that there are three types of support that TCKs stated that they appreciated during their transitions to college in the U.S. after repatriating to the U.S. from South Asia. In her interview Keziah said, “You just get each other so much faster. It’s just like you are on the same page.” Unfortunately, what should have been a fourth type of support was instead indicated to be lacking: college support. Some colleges tried to include TCKs in their international student support. However, because TCKs did not think they were international students, they did not take advantage of the mis-aimed support being offered to them. Yet TCKs did seek to befriend international students. For example, in her interview Keziah also added, “Kind of that familiarity. I sought out other TCKs and international students.”

Family Support

From the data, there appeared to be a big difference as to how a TCK with family support and one without family support adjusted to their U.S. college campus. Half of the participants (7 out of 14) in my study said that having their family close by was very helpful to them during their transition to college. On the other hand, those who did not have family support when they arrived at college, struggled during their adjustment period. TCKs who did not have family support or a place to celebrate the holidays discovered it to be very difficult to be alone in the dormitory during holiday periods. Amalia said, “Alone in the dorms during holidays is not a happy place.” Some TCKs were able to room with siblings or relatives. Jeremiah said, “My brother showed me the ropes. Having someone who could understand me was very helpful.”

High School Alumni Support

More than two-thirds (10 out of 14) of the participants in my study either had high school alumni support or wish they had had high school alumni support during their transition to the U.S. for college. In her interview, Marcy said, “A friend of my sister’s actually helped me move from my hotel to my dorm room, even though I’d never talked to him once at [Agape School].” In his interview, Karan said, “I definitely managed just from my two high school friends. They picked me up at the airport. They really just helped me settle in.” Concerning what the high school alumni association is doing to help, Amalia said, “So having that connection established early is actually very valuable, and I know the alumni association is trying to make those links all over the U.S.” Whether formal support from their high school alumni association or informal support because some of their friends from high school chose to support them, everyone who had their high school alumni support appreciated the fact that it helped them immensely to have that support when they first arrived at their college.

Benefit Sharing in the Third Culture with Other TCKs

Because their monocultural classmates have a hard time connecting with TCKs’ upbringings, around two-thirds (9 out of 14) of the TCK participants searched for other TCKs or students with international experience who could relate to their upbringing overseas. Arman wrote in his journal, “And there's just this instant sense of recognition… this instant familiarity.” TCKs create their own culture that is not necessarily like their host or home culture, but a third culture that is different from the first two. When TCKs connect with other TCKs or international students, they do not feel alone nor misunderstood. In his interview, Noah said, “I met someone who, isn’t a TCK, but international, my partner. And that was like huge for me to have someone to talk to, who understood what was going on in that change.” It is easier for TCKs to bond with

someone who has a similar transition experience to theirs. Marcy wrote in her journal, "Our worldview of what we consider 'normal' takes away the need to explain every little detail of what we are trying to convey."

Minimizing Focus of Upbringing

TCKs noticed that it was often hard for their monocultural classmates to be able to relate to their TCK upbringing overseas. More than half of the TCKs in my study (8 out of 14) stated that they would quickly take the focus off their upbringing when they noticed their monocultural classmates became blurry-eyed. Some of their monocultural classmates appeared to be interested at first, but then disappointingly the conversation would die away very quickly. Arman wrote in his journal, "I was disappointed by how little my peers seemed to care about my background. People would initially sound fascinated, but there was rarely any follow-up or thoughtful questioning." During the interview, Arman said, "They seemed taken aback at my raw observations about life, humor in grim situations, or nonchalance about the circumstances of my upbringing." In public, sometimes TCKs can be much more reserved. During his interview Mercedes said, "Just playing it safe; just being cautious or quietly analytical." TCKs find it difficult to talk about South Asia. Marcy wrote in her journal, "Someone said, 'Marcy talks about [South Asia] too much.' We all laughed at that moment, but I haven't been able to talk about my experiences in [South Asia] the same ever since."

TCKs and Their Opportunity to Learn Other Languages

One of the minor themes that emerged from the data and that almost thirty-five percent (4 out of 14) of participants said was that a benefit to being a TCK is that a TCK may learn one or more other languages. Because TCKs were children when the TCKs started learning the other languages, TCKs' pronunciation was impeccable. During the interview, Luke said, "I think the

best part of my Hindi is that the pronunciation is perfect. Luke said people did not expect him to know their language and then to have such flawless pronunciation benefitted him. During the interview, Timothy said, “Yeah, as the chameleon, my ability to speak three [South Asian] languages was always very good.”

Some TCKs Have Identity Confusion

Another minor theme that emerged from the data was that a third (5 out of 14) of the participants admitted that they had some form of identity confusion. During the interview, Noah said. “I definitely didn’t feel like I belonged in America. I definitely felt really confused about my national identity. Some TCKs have a multicultural identity and have a sense of belonging to more than one culture. During his interview, Karan said, “My dad’s half [South Asian] and I speak Hindi. I’ve grown up there, but I’m not really [South Asian]. I mean, I am, but I am not.” Some TCKs have an identity crisis and do not feel like they belong anywhere. During her interview, Marcy said, “And of course with my identity crisis, I didn’t feel like I fit in anywhere.” Comparably, during the interview Arman said, “I was confused. I had a lot of angst. And I felt isolated at the same time.”

Table 2

Thematic Table of Major Themes and Sub-Themes

THEMES	SUB-THEME	INVIVO CODES THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THEMES	#TIMES CODE APPEARS	% PARTIC’s SAID IT
Previous Difficult Transition		“easier than before “made it easier”… done it before” “very difficult previous transitions” “living through it before” “feel more prepared.” “most difficulties there” “definitely struggled” “horrible”	21	8/14

Uncertainty Identifying "Home"		"not feeling accepted" "didn't know where home was" "Not sure where home is" "problem answering the question" "depends on who asks"	18	10/14
Knowing Pop Culture		"didn't know lingo" "In public, more reserved" "high school behind time" "no solid grasp most pop culture" "little I knew of American culture"	18	9/14
Identity		"we were different" "not part of [South Asian] culture" "not part of parents' culture "it is my identity" "like a watermark on a piece of paper" "you are indelibly marked"	22	9/14
TCK Relational Mindset	Adaptability	"am really adaptable" "adapt to different cultures" "any environment" "several adjustments already" "am a good chameleon"	20	10/14
	Comfortable in Diversity	"connect really different people" "connect wide range of people" "being different… always the key"	14	8/14
	Non-judgmental	"not super dogmatic" "jingoistic or patriotic" "lack of judgment" "accepting" "not judging too soon"	9	4/14
	Openminded	"open to new cultures/challenges" "willing to try new things"	11	6/14
	Rootlessness	"tumbleweed or rolling stone" "don't have a home"	10	6/14
Support	Family	"family close by helpful" "brother roomie great" "showed me the ropes" "softened culture shock"	16	7/14

		"where family is, is home" "location secondary" "home church community" "kids were like cousins"		
	High School Alumni	"high school classmates met me" "alumni take you shopping" "alumni pay for necessities." "good to have place to get away" "good to have some alumni contact."	18	10/14
	Share Third Culture w/TCKs	"get each other so much faster" "no need for a lot of explaining" "kind of that familiarity" "you are on the same page."	22	9/14
Minimizing focus of Upbringing		"didn't know how to answer "conversation fizzled out fast" "extremely self-conscious" "only talk of [South Asia] to high school friends." "tendency to clam up." "didn't want to talk at all." "superficial questions asked" "stopped talking"	22	8/14

Outlier Data and Findings

Below I listed some outlier data and themes that did not specifically align with the research questions or themes in my study.

More Family Support During College

Arman was the only participant who mentioned that he had more family support when he was in college in the U.S. than when he was in high school in South Asia. His parents were in Afghanistan while he was in high school, and his parents were stateside when he was in college. Other participants received less family support when they were in college than when they were

in high school. Arman said during his interview, "We were actually closer than we'd been…and it was easier to make phone calls. So, I actually had more family support in college."

All Their Transitions During Their Upbringing Were Easy

Thirteen percent (2 out of 14) of the participants had easy previous transitions and their transition to college was no different. Some participants always had easy transitions transitioning back to the same place in the U.S. Jeremiah said, "I had a church family and the kids there were like cousins." In the same way, Magdalena always went back to the same place and had church support. During the interview, Magdalena said, "We always went back to a place where we already knew people and I never had a difficult transition."

Evacuations During Their Upbringing

Arman was the only participant who had to be evacuated several times when he was growing up in Afghanistan. Arman was the only participant who had part of his upbringing in Afghanistan and the latter part of his upbringing in South Asia. The evacuations were difficult for Arman because his family did not necessarily go to the same place in the U.S. each time. During his interview, Arman said, "We had many evacuations because of political turmoil."

A Couple TCKs Blessed to Have a College Administrator Take Interest in Them

Thirteen percent (2 out of 14) of the participants had a college administrator who took a special interest in them and followed them through college. Arman wrote in his journal, "I found a few very caring administrators and staff who were sensitive to the international student experience (my closest parallel) and showed concern and asked good questions. I felt seen by that." Both Arman and Luke felt blessed to be singled out by an administrator at their college. During his interview, Luke said, "Uh, each year she would kind of pick out one student. There were 2500 students there, and just to get to know. And it was me."

Experiencing Anxiety or Depression During Their Transition to College

Two of the participants (2 out of 14) in my study said that they had experienced either anxiety and/or depression before, during, and after their transition to college in the U.S. Arman said he was not sure if it was reverse culture shock or depression, but then he realized that he was depressed. Marcy had to make transitions frequently and said that she would get severe anxiety each time. It was no different when Marcy transitioned to college. Although 2 out of 14 participants does not seem like a large percentage of the participants in my study experiencing mental health issues, it is quite serious. Some other participants either may not have wanted to share about their mental health struggle or they were not self-aware enough to realize that they were experiencing mental health struggles during their transition to college.

Participating in the International Student Orientation

Although almost a third (4 out of 14) of the participants in my study could have availed to the international student support offered by their college, they chose not to. This was because they believed they were not international students and did not need this support that was being offered them. One participant in my study Noah, benefited from attending the international student orientation that he was invited to. During his interview, Noah said, “I went to the college international student orientation, and I really liked that.” Noah added that it was helpful to him, even though Noah did not end up making friends from the people Noah met there. Camille said, “Throughout my freshman year, I was invited to international student activities, but I never attended any.”

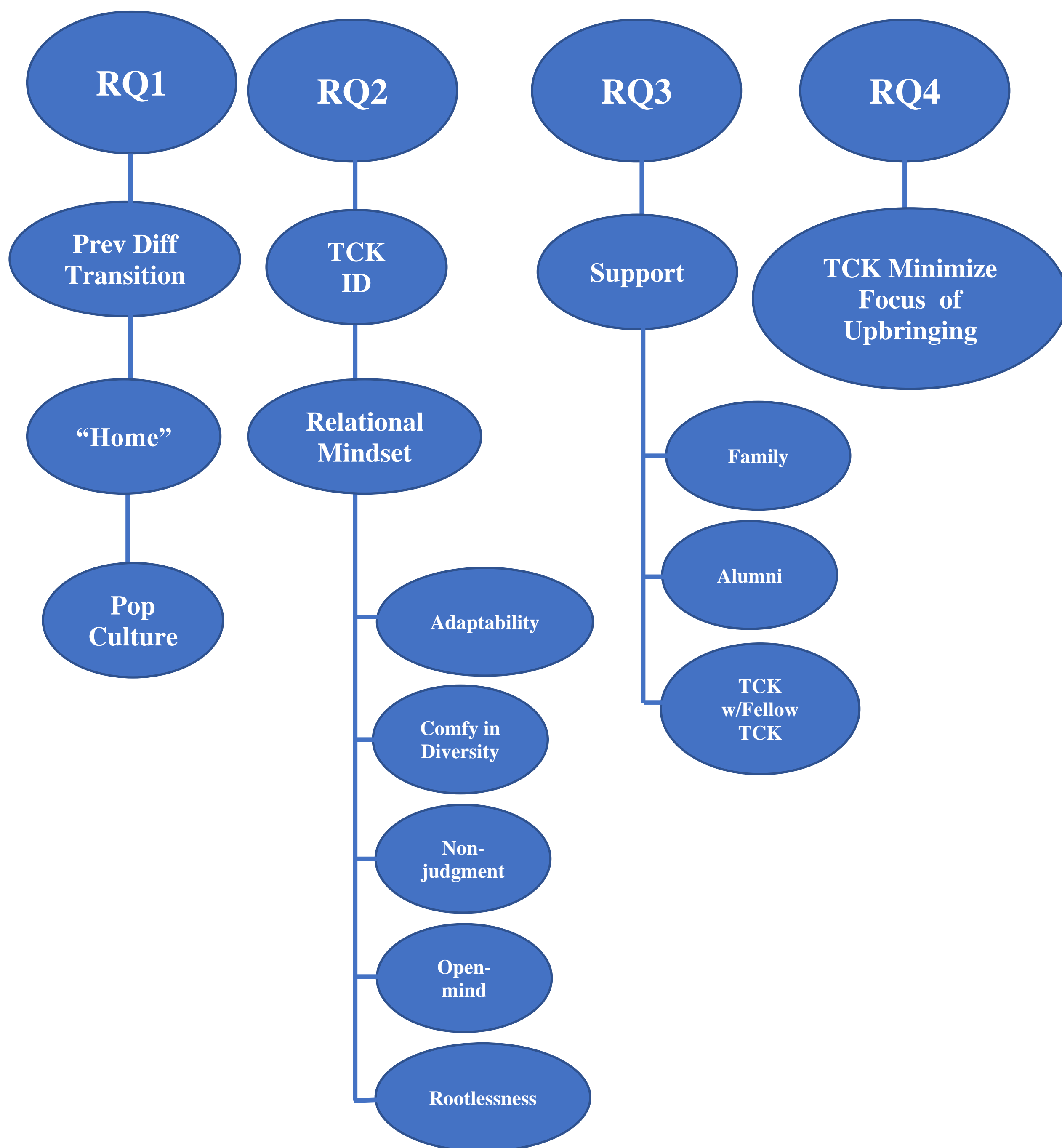

Figure 1

Major Themes and Sub-Themes

Research Question Responses

The following section will address the themes that emerged and answer each of the research questions. These themes with some of their sub-themes are summarized in Figure 1.

Research Question One:

What were the major events or benchmarks in the transition to college process for TCKs?

In focusing on research question one, four main themes emerged that address the major events and benchmarks in the transition to college process for TCKs.

TCK Easier College Transition Usually Follows a Difficult Previous Transition

More than half (8 out 14) of the participants who had a difficult transition during their upbringing felt like the transition to college was unexpectedly easy. Keziah said, “It was easier than transitioning to [South Asia].” Generally, the first repatriation back to the U.S. from overseas was the most difficult. During the interview, Arman said, “I think I was initially surprised at how easy it seemed to be …that was a nice surprise. I didn’t initially notice a lot of dissonance.” The in vivo codes of “easier than before,” “done it before,” “very difficult previous transition,” “feel more prepared,” and “horrible” contributed to the theme that the TCK easier college transition usually follows a difficult previous transition.

TCKs’ Uncertainty with Identifying Home

More than two-thirds (10 out of 14) of the TCK participants avoid answering this question when it is posed to them, “Where is your home?” Jeremiah said, “I don’t know how to answer. I try not to answer.” A lot of times how TCKs’ answer the question depends on who is asking the TCK the question. Timothy said that the question about where his home was, “Always lead to an interesting conversation.” Because the answer to the question of where their home is

tends to end up being relative to who is asking the question, many TCKs feel like they are not giving the whole or complete truth of the answer. Some TCKs do not feel like they have a home, whereas some TCKs say they can be at home anywhere they have lived. Some of the in vivo codes of “not sure where home is,” “problem answering the question,” and “depends on who asks,” supported the theme of the TCKs’ uncertainty with identifying home.

TCKs’ Frustration with Not Knowing American Pop Culture

Two-thirds (9 out of 14) of the participants said that their transition was a huge adjustment for them because they had been living in a very sheltered environment in South Asia and were not familiar with American pop culture. Mercedes mentioned during the interview, “The dating scene was something I was not familiar with.” Whether TCKs attended a Christian college or a secular college, TCKs uncovered that the culture was hard to get used to. Luke said, during his interview, “The culture at my Christian college was not as conservative as I had anticipated.” The in vivo codes of “didn’t know lingo,” “no solid grasp most pop culture,” and “little I knew of American culture,” contributed to the theme TCKs’ frustration with not knowing American pop culture.

Some Felt Their Being Overprotected in South Asia Hindered Their Transition to College

About a third (4 out of 14) of the participants said that they felt like they had been overprotected in South Asia, for several reasons. Erika wrote in her journal that while she was being overprotected in South Asia, “Meanwhile my high school friends in the states were pretty much doing whatever they wanted… I just reveled in the fact that I could do whatever I wanted, whenever I wanted,” (referring to her life at college compared to how her life had been in South Asia). During her interview, Camille said, “I feel like I had a like a much more sheltered upbringing in that regard (the dating scene).” Both Erika and Camille thought that compared to

their American friends, their high school years in South Asia were much more protected—that they had a lot less freedom in South Asia, compared to their American friends back home. In his interview, Karan mentioned, "There's a big change in the amount of freedom that I was given from high school compared to college."

Research Question Two:

What expected and unexpected outcomes did TCKs experience during their transition to college process?

In focusing on research questions two, two main themes and five sub-themes emerged that address the expected and unexpected outcomes that TCKs experienced during their transition to college process.

TCK Identity

Almost two-thirds (9 out of 14) of the participants felt like they could identify as being a TCK. Some TCKs mentioned that because both of their parents were American, they did not necessarily feel like they were TCKs. Others with both parents who were American, did feel like they were TCKs. During the interview, Karan said, "Honestly, I see [South Asia] as my home more, but I feel like I do also belong to the U.S.—I have a sense of belonging to both." During the interview, Timothy said, "In a sense, it is my identity, very much so and I've always been [South Asian]." The in vivo codes of "we were different," "it is my identity," "like a watermark on a piece of paper," and "you are indelibly marked" influenced the TCK identity theme.

Relational Mindset

Most TCK participants mentioned that they have a certain mindset that was different from that of their monocultural classmates at college in the U.S. During his interview, Luke said, "There was a subset that looked similar, but they were clearly different," referring to TCKs at

college. TCK participants said that they believed they were much more adaptable than their monocultural classmates (10 out of 14), they were more comfortable in diversity (8 out of 14), they were non-judgmental (4 out of 14), open-minded (6 out of 14). During his interview, Alan said, “Willing to try new things” and had a rootlessness about them (6 out of 14). There was also the theme of extroverted TCKs versus introverted TCKs (5 out of 14). During his interview, Jeremiah said, “I mean, may be partly as an introvert, but maybe it caused me to be more of an introvert (on being a TCK).

Most TCKs are highly adaptable. In my study, the data showed that TCKs may have had difficult repatriations to the U.S. when they were younger. But these transitions helped them to become more adaptable when they got older. TCKs had several advantages as compared to their monocultural classmates. More than two-thirds (10 out of 14) of the participants said that one of the advantages of being a TCK was that they were very adaptable. According to my study’s data, the many moves that TCKs make help them to become more adaptable in the long run. Some TCKs call themselves chameleons because as Timothy said in his interview, “I can adapt to any group and get along with anyone.” TCKs are certainly much more adaptable than their monocultural peers tend to be. During the interview, Mercedes said, “I am open to experiencing new cultures and challenges.” The in vivo codes “am really adaptable,” “any environment,” and “am a good chameleon” influenced the theme that most TCKs are highly adaptable.

TCKs are comfortable in diversity. More than half of TCKs in my study (8 out of 14) were used to being around different types of people, so they could mingle with people who were different easily. Keziah said during the interview, “I find I can connect with people who are really different. I can connect with a wide range of people.” Timothy talked about how his being

different made people want to get to know him. During his interview, Timothy said, "Being different was always the key. People wanted to engage." The in vivo codes of "connect really different people," "being different…always the key" contributed to the theme that TCKs are comfortable in diversity.

TCKs are Non-judgmental. TCKs pride themselves on being non-judgmental. During his interview, Mercedes said, "You are accepting." Almost a third (4 out of 14) of the participants said that they were non-judgmental. During the interview, Keziah said, "I don't judge a book by its cover, nor do I judge others too soon." The in vivo codes "not super dogmatic," "lack of judgment," "accepting," and "not judging too soon" influenced the theme that TCKs are non-judgmental.

TCKs are Open-minded. TCKs in my study were proud that they were open-minded. In my study, almost half of the participants (6 out of 14) mentioned that they were open-minded. In her interview, Keziah said, "So I feel like having a lot of uh intercultural, multiple religions, just so much variety that you have to be really open-minded." Karan gave some suggestions for high school graduating seniors. During the interview, Karan said, "Be open to experiencing the culture, learning new things because in college you're going to be changing into like a completely different person then so…" The in vivo codes "open to new cultures and challenges," and "willing to try new things" motivated the theme that TCKs are open-minded.

TCKs Have a Rootlessness About Them. Almost half (6 out of 14) of the TCKs in my study said that they had a rootlessness about them. One participant could not believe she had lived in the same place for so long. During the interview, Keziah said, "I'm antsy to move. Eight years is too long." Some TCKs say that they never are anywhere long enough to feel like it is home. Even though Mercedes has a home in the U.S., Mercedes did not feel that the U.S. was his

home. During his interview, Mercedes said, “Home is where the family is. The house is not my home.” The in vivo codes of “tumbleweed or rolling stone” and “don’t have a home” prompted the theme of TCKs having a rootlessness about them.

Extroverted TCKs Versus Introverted TCKs. During the interview, Karan said, “I have always been extroverted, friendly and quick to make new *dosts*” (Hindi for friends). More than one-third (5 out of 14) of the participants noted that because they were extroverted and optimistic, they had an easier time adjusting to their college environment. Magdalena said, “I don't remember it being hard to make friends. I'm a social butterfly, so I enjoyed people.”

On the other hand, thirteen percent (2 out of 14) of participants were introverted, but still able to make friends at college. During the interview, Erika said, “Though I am an introvert, because I had moved around a little bit, I think I kind of knew what I needed to do to make friends.” One of the participants was not so fortunate. During the interview, Jeremiah said, “Being a TCK and already being introverted, possibly made me more introverted.”

Research Question Three:

What resources do TCKs typically access during their repatriation to college transition in the U.S.?

In focusing on research question three, one main theme and three sub-themes emerged that addressed how TCKs typically availed to the resources available at their college during their repatriation to college transition. Another theme that appeared was TCKs not availing to international student support on their campus.

From data obtained from the participants, it was determined that there are three types of support that TCKs indicated that they appreciated during their transitions to college in the U.S. after repatriating to the U.S. from South Asia. Unfortunately, what should have been a fourth

type of support was instead found to be lacking was college support. Some colleges tried to include TCKs in their international student support. However, because TCKs did not think they were international students, TCKs did not take advantage of the mis-aimed support being offered to them.

Family support.

From the data, there appeared to be a big difference as to how a TCK with family support and one without family support adjusted to their U.S. college campus. Half (7 out of 14) of the participants in my study said that having their family close by was very helpful to them during their transition to college. Luke said, "I roomed with my brother. That was helpful. He knew the ropes." On the other hand, those participants who did not have family support when they arrived at college, struggled during their adjustment period. Those participants who did not have family support or a place to celebrate the holidays, discovered it was very difficult to be alone in the dormitory during holiday periods. Amalia said in her interview, "Alone in the dorms during the holidays was not a happy place." The in vivo codes of "family close by helpful," "brother roomie great," "softened culture shock," and "home church community" contributed to the theme of family support.

Alumni Support.

More than two-thirds (10 out of 14) of the participants in my study either had high school alumni support or wish they had had alumni support during their transition to the U.S. for college. Amalia wished she had had alumni support. During her interview, Amalia said, "Those first one to two years were really hard…The lack of having anywhere to go for the holidays." Having either formal support from the TCKs' high school alumni association or informal support because some of the TCKs' friends from high school chose to support them, TCKs who had high

school alumni support appreciated the fact that it helped them immensely. Erika said,” Someone appointed contact in the vicinity who you can trust and reach out to. It’s nice for you to have someone to reach out to.” The in vivo codes of “high school classmates met me,” “alumni take you shopping,” and good to have some alumni contact” impacted the theme of alumni support.

Support From Other TCKs.

Almost two-thirds of TCK participants (9 out of 14) looked for support from other TCKs when they first arrived at college. Arman wrote in his journal, “And there's just this instant sense of recognition… this instant familiarity.” TCKs create their own culture that is not necessarily like their host or home culture, but a third culture. When TCKs connect with other TCKs or international students, they do not feel alone nor misunderstood. Marcy wrote in her journal, “Our worldview of what we consider ‘normal’ takes away the need to explain every little detail… Those are the people that I feel I can express myself completely to and believe it’s the reason I didn’t lose myself just yet.” It is easier for TCKs to bond with someone who has a similar transition experience to theirs. During the interview, Noah said, “It was so refreshing to befriend someone who had a similar experience like my girlfriend (who is from China). She is my girlfriend now because we just bonded over everything.” The in vivo codes of “get each other so much faster,” “no need for a lot of explaining,” “kind of that familiarity,” and “you are on the same page” influenced the theme of support from other TCKs.

TCKs Not Availing to International Student Support on Their Campus.

About a third (4 out of 14) of the participants received invitations to participate in international student activities. But these TCKs declined to participate. During the interview, Camille said, “All of freshman year, I received invitations to international student events. But I never attended a single one.”

Research Question Four:

What are the strategies TCKs use in their first year of college that contributed to their persistence to graduation?

In focusing on research question four, one major theme emerged. This theme, the strategies TCKs use in their first year of college that contributed to their persistence to graduation, concerned the strategy that TCKs in my study utilized in their first year of college that ultimately contributed to their persistence to graduation. This theme is that *TCKs minimize the focus of their upbringing* as a coping mechanism, (8 out of 14 participants). Thus, this theme best answers research question four.

Most TCK participants (8 out of 14) shared that they initially befriended monocultural peers, but quickly realized that these peers could not relate to their upbringing. These TCK participants would rapidly minimize the focus of their upbringing whenever they noticed their monocultural classmates becoming blurry-eyed. For TCKs to make friends with their monocultural peers, they felt they had to minimize the focus of their upbringing to have a deeper conversation with them. During his interview, Mercedes said, “Yeah, you just gotta kind of learn to live with it. But yeah, in general people don’t have an understanding of where you’re coming from. There’s not a whole lot of shared experience.” Since TCKs need to learn (or re-learn) American culture, it was good that they could make friends with their monocultural peers, as well as other TCKs or international students. Regarding minimizing the focus of her upbringing, Marcy wrote in her journal, “Someone said, ‘Marcy talks about [South Asia] too much.’ We all laughed at that moment, but I haven’t been able to talk about my experiences in [South Asia] the same ever since.” Marcy could then only talk about South Asia with the high school TCK friends she had had in South Asia, not her friends at college. Another “strategy” that was mentioned by

Luke that enabled him to persist to graduation was his faith. Luke said, “My faith was probably the rail that kept me on the straight and narrow and on the upward path.”

It is more probable that non-traditional students may not continue past their freshman-year of college, as contrasted with traditional college students (Radford, Cominole & Skomsvold, 2015). Most students who drop out of university do so during or immediately after the freshman year (Credé & Niehorster, 2012). In my study, all 14 participants were able to persist to graduation, although three of them changed colleges after their freshman year. The students’ sense of belonging was indicated to be the vital feature that contributed to retention. The students’ sense of belonging is defined chiefly as social aspects and thus these aspects are more important than demographic or academic factors (Tett et al., 2017). The participants in my study said that they had been more than adequately prepared academically for college, but that the social aspect of the transition to college was challenging for them. Luke said, “Back then there was no sense of any need for helping them adapt, or think through life choices or social issues.” From a retention perspective, involvement with other students of shared experiences or attributes is protective for perseverance to graduation (Smith & Kearney, 2016). In my study, about two-thirds (9 out of 14) of the participants made friends with other TCKs, but about a third (4 out of 14) said they also made friends with monocultural peers. Some of the shared experiences or attributes that they shared with their monocultural peers included sports or the arts. Thus, my study outlined that it was not academics that the TCK participants wrestled with. The TCKs struggled with the social aspects of integrating into the college. The TCKs were caught by surprise, as their high school in South Asia had apparently not prepared them adequately for the social transition to college.

Summary

The theme that if TCKs have difficult transitions during their upbringing, these TCKs then usually have easier transitions to college, which included almost two-thirds (9 out of 14) of the participants, was repeated 21 times. Almost two-thirds (9 out of 14) of the participants had a difficult time explaining where their home was because of their frequent moves. Where is home was thus the question TCKs most dreaded being asked. The theme of the uncertainty of the TCK identifying home was repeated 18 times in the data. The theme, that TCKs had a frustration not knowing U.S. pop culture when they arrived on their campus was repeated 18 times and by 9 out of 14 of the participants (about two-thirds). The theme of the TCK identity was repeated 22 times by 9 out of the 14 of the participants. Being a TCK was their identity. More than two-thirds (10 out of 14) of the participants agreed and repeated 20 times the theme that one of the greatest advantages of being a TCK was that they were very adaptable and could get along with just about anyone. The sub-theme that TCKs were comfortable in diversity was repeated 14 times by 8 out of 14 of the participants in my study. These TCKs said they could get along with many different people. The sub-theme that TCKs are non-judgmental was repeated nine times in my study data and by 4 out of 14 of the participants. TCKs did not like to judge others. The sub-theme that TCKs are open-minded was repeated in my study's data 11 times and by almost half of the participants in my study (6 out of 14). These TCKs liked trying new things and meeting new people. The sub-theme that TCKs have a rootlessness about them was repeated in my study 10 times by 6 out of 14 of the participants. They did not like to stay in one location for very long. The sub-theme of family support was repeated 16 times in the data in my study by half of the participants (7 out of 14). It helped the participants if they had had family close by during their transition to college. The sub-theme of the importance of alumni support was repeated 18 times

in my study's data, and it was mentioned by 10 out of 14 of the participants. Whether it was formally by the alumni association of their high school in South Asia or informally by alumni from their high school in South Asia, participants appreciated any alumni support they received during their transition to college. The sub-theme of sharing the third culture with other TCKs was repeated 22 times in my study data by 9 out of 14 of the participants. The third culture made it easy for the TCKs in my study to find and relate to others who had similar experiences to their own experiences. The final theme of TCKs minimizing the focus of their upbringing was repeated the most of any theme (except for the theme of sharing the third culture with other TCKs) in my study (22 times) and it was mentioned by more than half of the participants (8 out of 14). After trying to engage with monocultural classmates on their campus during the TCKs' transition to college in the U.S., the TCKs in my study, stopped talking about their upbringing with the TCKs' monocultural classmates, because their monocultural classmates could not relate to it.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative collective case study was to understand the transition to college in the United States of third culture kids (TCKs) who have spent at least one year in South Asia during their upbringing (ages 6-18). Chapter five consists of five discussion subsections: (a) interpretation of findings, (b) implications for policy and practice, (c) theoretical and empirical implications, (d) limitations and delimitations, and (e) recommendations for future research.

Discussion

The discussion section has five major subsections including: (a) interpretation of findings; (b) implications for policy or practice; (c) theoretical and empirical implications; (d) limitations and delimitations; and (e) recommendations for future research. My study has participants from two international schools in South Asia. Most of the participants attended *Agape School.* Only one participant attended *Phileo School*. My study had 14 participants who were mostly from the MK category, but also included the EdKid, MilBrat, and BusKid category. I collected qualitative data by conducting individual interviews with each participant, met with five focus groups, and had each participant answer questions in a journal.

Interpretation of Findings

This section begins with a summary of thematic findings as discussed in Chapter Four, followed by a series of interpretations deemed significant by the candidate.

Summary of Thematic Findings

From the data, many themes and sub-themes emerged that supported the research questions. Supporting the first research question that goes along with the TCKs' *situation*, the

first theme that was prominent with more than half of the participants (8 out of 14) was that when TCKs experienced a difficult transition before their transition to the U.S. for college, the TCK subsequently had an easier transition to the U.S. for college. Another theme that emerged from the data that helps to answer the first research question was one that more than two-thirds (10 out of 14) of the participants mentioned. This was that the TCK has uncertainty with identifying "home." Many times, their answer to this question depended on the person who was asking this, the most dreaded of all the questions that most of this studies' participants faced. Dependent on how involved the TCK wanted to get in a conversation with the person, was how the TCK would answer the question.

Helping to answer the second research question and regarding the TCKs' *self,* was the theme of the TCK identity. Two-thirds (9 out of 14) of the participants could identify with the unique TCK identity that the participants and other TCKs shared. The participants said that being a TCK is who they are. Also helping to answer the second research question, the sub-theme of the TCKs being highly adaptable was mentioned by more than two-thirds (10 out of 14) of the participants. The participants said that they felt like TCKs were much more adaptable than their monocultural classmates. Some TCKs even compared themselves to chameleons. TCKs stated that they could be whoever they needed to be in any situation.

Helping to support the third research question, concerning *support*, two-thirds (9 out of 14) of the participants said that they enjoyed the support they received from their fellow TCKs in the third culture. The third culture is a unique culture that TCKs share with others who have a similar experience as theirs. TCKs said that the third culture was a safe place for TCKs. There were many things TCKs did not need to explain to other TCKs because these had had the common experience and could understand each other. Finally, one of the most frequently

occurring themes of minimizing the focus on their upbringing (mentioned 22 times) helped to answer the fourth research question concerning *strategies* TCKs use to cope during the transition to college in the U.S. More than half (8 out of 14) of the participants said that they tended to minimize discussion concerning their upbringing at college with their monocultural classmates. By minimizing discussion about their upbringing, TCKs were denying part of who they were, but helping themselves to blend in better at college.

Thus, out of the numerous themes and subthemes emerging from the data obtained via this study, six are dominant. These include (a) that an easier transition usually follows a hard previous transition, (b) the TCK's uncertainty with identifying "home," (c) that TCKs have a strong TCK identity, (d) that TCKs are highly adaptable, (e) that for TCKs it is the third culture that they enjoy being a part of, and (f) that TCKs minimize the focus on their upbringing. Accordingly, these are further summarized hereinafter.

For TCKs, an Easier Transition Usually Follows a Hard Previous Transition. This theme, that for TCKs, an easier transition usually follows a hard previous transition, emerged as an important theme, and it answers the first research question concerning the TCKs' situation. This theme, that for TCKs, an easier transition usually follows a hard previous transition, also helps highlight the major events and benchmarks that the TCK participants experienced during their transition to college. More than half of the participants (8 out of 14) had difficult previous transitions and had an unexpected easier transition when they transitioned to the U.S. for college. Some TCKs were surprised by how much easier their transition to college was and how much better it was than what they had anticipated.

TCKs' Uncertainty with Identifying "Home." This theme, the TCKs' uncertainty with identifying "home," also emerged as an important theme, and it also answers the first research

question concerning the TCKs' situation. Further, it helps highlight the major events and benchmarks that TCKs experience during the TCKs' transition to college. For more than two-thirds (10 out of 14) of the TCK participants dreaded being asked where their home was located. In general, where their home is represents a difficult question to answer for many TCKs. The TCKs' answer depended on which person was asking them the question as to how the TCK would respond. Oftentimes when asked where they were from, the TCK would have to revise and tailor their answer. Thus, sometimes the TCK felt like their answers were neither totally truthful nor thorough. Sometimes the TCK had to struggle to answer the question. Some TCKs felt like they were "homeless." Also, some TCKs felt that home was everywhere and nowhere. Some TCKs felt torn between more than one culture and that everywhere they had lived was home. Some TCKs find that they are never able to find a good answer to this question of "Where is your home?"

Most TCKs Have a Strong TCK identity. Some TCK participants in my study felt like people who have moved more may be more of a TCK than they are, although they are TCKs. Yet some TCKs, in my study, sometimes felt like they were a TCK and sometimes they did not feel like a TCK. TCKs, in my study, discovered that it was hard to find other people who comprehended them unless the other person was also a TCK. For some TCKs, in my study (9 out of 14), being a TCK is their identity, such that being a TCK is part of who they are. The TCK's strong TCK identity provides the basis for who they are. Two TCKs in my study ended up talking for three days the first time they met because they had so much to talk about. These TCKs loved how they could relate to each other and ended up getting married.

TCKs are Highly Adaptable. TCKs have many advantages as compared to their monocultural classmates. About two-thirds (10 out of 14) of the participants said that one of the

advantages of being a TCK was that they were very adaptable. According to the data, all the transitions and moves TCKs have made serve to help TCKs to learn better how to adapt to new locations or situations. TCKs may be who they need to be in different circumstances. Some TCKs in my study admitted that they are like chameleons and would camouflage themselves when needed. However, TCKs may also lose a sense of self by trying to blend in and by trying not to "rock the boat."

The Third Culture That TCKs Enjoy Being a Part of. The TCKs' monocultural classmates had a hard time connecting with the TCKs' upbringings. Thus, more than two-thirds of the TCK participants (9 out of 14) searched for other TCKs or students with international experience who could relate to their upbringing. TCKs create their own culture that is not necessarily like their host or home culture, but a third culture that is different from the first two. When TCK participants connected with other TCKs or international students, TCKs did not feel isolated nor misinterpreted. It was easier for TCK participants to bond with someone who had a similar transition experience to their own experiences. TCKs felt bonded to one another regardless of where or when they grew up in their foreign country(ies).

Most TCKs Minimized the Focus of Their Upbringing. Though many TCK participants may become whoever they need to become in social situations, often TCKs chose instead to bury who they are. The TCK participants stuffed it down because they thought that others would not be able to relate to their upbringing overseas (8 out of 14 of the participants). Initially, some of these TCK participants interacted with everyone. But the TCK participants found out quickly that monocultural students who did not have any international experience were not able to relate to them and their upbringing. There was not much to talk about. Sometimes the TCK participants ended up not talking to other people about their upbringing because they

discovered that monocultural people were not able to relate to their upbringing. Some TCK participants would stuff down their upbringing for years and not talk about it. Some of these TCK participants felt like they had been holding their breath, in a sense. When they finally talked about their host country and upbringing again after stuffing it down for a few years, they felt like they were breathing again. Arman used his exotic past as a hook in conversations since it was his distinctive feature. Yet rather quickly people who initially seemed to be quite interested would have their eyes glazed over. Thus, Arman learned to stop discussing his upbringing.

Implications for Policy and Practice

This section includes specific recommendations for various stakeholders. In my study there are implications for policy, as well as implications for practice.

Implications for Policy

It may appear wise to have a federal policy or state policies that would require college admissions staff to make special considerations for American TCKs who are coming to the U.S. for college from South Asia. The TCK students are not technically international students. As a consequence, the college assumes that the TCK does not need the support that the college could provide (Kartoshkina, 2015). Hence, despite international students receiving support when they arrive from overseas, TCKs are mostly overlooked (Smith & Kearney, 2016).

Ai and Wang (2017) studied international students and the very similar repatriation international students experience compared to TCKs. Colleges may offer specific support to TCKs that is like the support offered to international students. These TCKs could be in the same category as international students coming to the U.S. for college from South Asia. Karan mentioned that he was put in the same category as international students and received a care package in his dorm room with some much-needed supplies because his college recognized he

would not be travelling with a pillow and blankets all the way from South Asia! Also, an administrator at Karan's college took it upon himself, with his wife, to offer get-togethers with TCKs in their home regularly.

Offering specific support to TCKs would thus be a logical step, because now each college has its own policy. Some colleges are sensitive to this demographic of student populations (TCKs coming to their school from South Asia) and already lump the TCKs with their international students as far as giving them added support when they first arrive on campus. Some colleges already have specific groups for TCKs. Many colleges, though, are not sensitive to this freshman TCK student demographic. There is one college on the west coast that has reportedly been sensitive to TCKs for decades, but this is unusual.

Institutions of higher education should work to increase their awareness and comprehension of the TCK demographic of their student population and the usual repatriation/transition challenges that TCKs experience when arriving at their institute. Melles and Frey (2014) indicated that, as their way of coping, TCKs tend to often disconnect from others during transitions. TCKs use this coping tactic because of the habits they have developed from having to disconnect in relationships so frequently during their upbringings epitomized by mobility (Choi et al., 2013; Lijadi, 2018; Lijadi & van Schalkwyk, 2017; Lijadi, 2014). Knowing these two TCK tendencies would help encourage colleges to make available opportunities for TCKs to connect with each other (Smith & Kearney, 2016).

Thus, institutions of higher education need to create and employ useful support and services to help TCKs be successful in overcoming the challenges experienced during this difficult transition. These higher education institutions would do well to encourage a culturally diverse environment. In addition, higher education institutions need to successfully convey

information about their existing support and services so that TCK students may gain access to these resources that can aid in their successful transition to college.

Implications for Practice

Previous research reported that TCKs (particularly MKs) and some of the participants in my study had difficult transitions to college (Kortegast & Yount, 2016). Most of those who had had difficult repatriation transitions back to the U.S. earlier in their lives, discovered that their repatriation to college was easier than the previous transitions.

My study included EdKids, in addition to MKs, MilBrats, and BusKids, and their experience repatriating to the U.S. for college from South Asia. EdKids is a relatively new category of TCK (Zilber, 2009), whereas the other TCK categories have been around for many decades (Useem et al., 1963). I did not find any studies that had been conducted on this topic with students repatriating to the U.S. for college from anywhere in South Asia. Also, the results of my study, although most of my participants were also MKs like previous studies (Hervey, 2009; Kortegast & Yount, 2016), the addition of EdKids and BusKids may have added a different flavor to my study.

Students coming to the U.S. for college from the study's two international schools in South Asia, *Agape School* and *Phileo School,* would benefit from their college in the U.S. recognizing that they need the same support that international students from South Asia coming to the U.S. for college need. TCK students coming from other places in Asia to college in the U.S. would also benefit from having this needed support from their college in the U.S. Based on the data in my study, the participants' colleges either lumped their TCK students with their international students or ignored them. If the college includes TCKs with international students, the college needs to encourage the TCKs to avail to their international student support/functions.

College support also comprises the institutions' allotment of staff as freshman managers occupied with small clusters of students and their making use of the most student-centered members of its staff in its freshman units (Calcott, 2014). In particular, student-centered staff with international sensitivities should be employed in clusters that included TCKs. For similar reasons, U.S. colleges are advised that it may be appropriate to link TCKs coming to their colleges from South Asia to the appropriate faculty advisors. These faculty advisors may either be from South Asia or have a personal interest in South Asia and be familiar with the culture. It would be helpful if the professors were trained to know if TCK students coming to their college from South Asia were struggling to socially integrate into campus life.

Some TCK participants said that they had a more difficult transition to the U.S. for college from South Asia because they had been overprotected in South Asia. If the international school in South Asia had given the students more freedom (while keeping them safe) during their time in South Asia, the TCK students may have an easier transition to their college in the U.S. Some participants had a difficult time going from no freedom to the unlimited freedom on their U.S. college campus. In addition, if the parents were able to give their TCKs more freedom in South Asia, their TCKs would have had an easier time adjusting to the vast freedom at college in the U.S.

While TCK students coming from South Asia felt like they were more than adequately prepared academically for their freshman year of college in the U.S., these students did not feel adequately prepared for the social and cultural adjustment they experienced during their transition to college in the U.S. Participants did not feel like they were prepared by their high schools in South Asia for the social adjustment they would have to make when they returned to

the U.S. for college. While academic preparation for college is essential, a student's social experiences at college may be even more critical (Hlinka, 2017; Tinto, 1993).

For example, it seems that certain TCK students thought that the culture at their high school in South Asia was more like American culture than it was. As an instance of this, women students at *Agape School* in South Asia let their male classmates hang all over them. To some of these female and male students from *Agape School* it was perhaps thus surprising when they arrived on their campus in the U.S. to see how female and male students interact with each other. It may also be important for other schools in South Asia to prepare their students for the social and cultural adjustments that they will experience during their transition to college in the U.S.

Traditionally many U.S. higher educational institutions have tried to help students in this transition process through events such as prolonged orientation programs, social occasions like group fairs and mixers, and freshman conversations classes highlighting constructing classroom community (Gray et al., 2013). But the International schools in South Asia on the other side of this transition also need to ensure that U.S. passport holders engage in training designed to prepare them for their transitions to college in the U.S. These international schools in South Asia may need to ensure that their U.S. passport holder students engage personally in programs preparing seniors for their transition to college in the U.S. For example, oftentimes the U.S. passport holder students at *Agape School* did not take the training offered by *Agape School* seriously. Sometimes TCKs were not attentive during the training that was being offered at their high school in South Asia because these TCKs did not believe they needed the training. This was in part because the TCKs believed they were U.S. citizens and that the transition to their home country would be an easy one. But sometimes making matters even worse for these TCKs is that often even families and others associated with these TCKs expect them to have an easy

transition. The international schools in South Asia may thus do well to provide interactive training to ensure that U.S. passport holders engage in the training offered them.

Theoretical and Empirical Implications

Among the aims of this study is the providing of practical guidance from empirical findings that shed light on related theoretical concepts to help TCKs in their adjustment to their first year of college. The theoretical framework coupled with the codes employed in this study have enabled several conclusive findings. These findings share both empirical and theoretical implications of significant value to accomplishing the aims of this study.

Theoretical Implications

I used Schlossberg's adults in transition theory (Schlossberg, 1981) as the basis for my study and discovered it was very helpful. Accordingly, I used this theory in the four subsections below to evaluate the theoretical implications of my study. I also found Robert Stake's collective case study method (Stake, 2006) useful. However, I felt like the multiple worksheets detracted from rather than enhanced my study. A researcher who uses Stake's (2006) collective case study design may be able to come to the same conclusions by conducting within-case and across-case analysis without using the worksheets, as I did.

Theoretical Implications for First S, Situation. In Schlossberg's adults in transition theory (1981), one of the tactics that was used in examining the influence of a study participant's transition was to assess the degree of difference between their pre-transition and post-transition environments (Goodman et al., 2006). An individual's success or failure in adapting to a new environment has been robustly correlated with the similarity or dissimilarity of the pre-transition and post-transition environments, despite the person's attitude toward or definition of the change. Although comparing the pre-transition environment with the post-transition environment sounds

more like what would be done in a quantitative study, in my study such a comparison was made by some of the participants in their own words. Almost one-third of the participants in my study (4 out of 14) said that their transition to college in the U.S. was more difficult than it needed to be because they had been overprotected in South Asia.

Schlossberg's adults in transition theory (1981) mentioned that how individuals did in previous transitions may affect how they do in later transitions. For those who had hard transitions when they were growing up, when more resources were made available to help in their coping with the transition, their transition to college was more positive than the previous transition (Goodman et al., 2006). In my study, more than half (8 out of 14) of the TCK participants said that their transition to college was easier than the earlier difficult transition they had experienced. Some of those who had difficult earlier transitions also had difficult transitions to college and their difficult transition to college was like a self-fulfilling prophecy (Goodman et al., 2006). The self-fulfilling prophecy was also true for the TCKs who had always had easy transitions when they were younger and had an easy transition to college as well. On the other hand, those TCKs who had not repatriated to the U.S. before college had a very difficult time coming back from overseas for college (Kortegast & Yount, 2016). Therefore, it may be that previous studies (Kortegast & Yount, 2016; Smith and Kearney, 2016) emphasized the difficult transition to college that TCKs endured because it was their first repatriation to the U.S. since growing up overseas. These earlier studies were reporting mostly on MKs.

Theoretical Implications for Second S, Self. In Schlossberg's adults in transition theory (1981) the second *S,* is for *sel*f. *Self*-features are categorized into two groupings: personal and demographic features and psychological assets. The personal and demographic features may be considered preliminary factors and may include one's gender identity, race, socioeconomic

status, or stage in life (Goodman et al., 2006). One's psychological assets may be considered subsequent factors and may include one's level of self-assurance, tenacity, impetus, and ability to manage hardship and ambiguity. In my study, the TCK students' psychological assets are part of what I looked at as they repatriated to the U.S. and made their transitions to college. The TCKs made the transition to college after having spent at least one year of their upbringing in South Asia because of their parent's employment. About a third (5 out of 14) of the participants in my study mentioned that because they were extroverted that their transition to college was easier. The TCKs were able to make friends easily because of this psychological asset of extroversion. However, one introverted participant said that although she was introverted because of the many moves she had to make during her upbringing, she knew what she had to do to make friends. Another participant said that being a TCK probably made him even more introverted than he already was.

Theoretical Implications for Third S, Social Support. The third *S* in Schlossberg's adults in transition theory (1981), s*ocial supports,* comprises the aid present for a person at the time of transition. These social supports include one's dear relationships, household, colleague clusters, community groups, and the university the individual is transitioning to. The social support may also include one's recognized and casual training, mentoring and on-going career guidance. In my study, one of the major themes was the *social support* that TCKs had when they transitioned to their college in the U.S. There were three sub-themes under this theme. The first of these *social supports* was family support. Half of the participants (7 out of 14) said that having family close by helped them immensely during their transition to college. The second of these *social supports* was high school alumni support. More than two-thirds (10 out of 14) of the participants said that they had alumni support or wished they had had alumni support during their

transition to college. Those participants who reported having had alumni support (Karan and Marcy) appreciated the help from alumni that was offered directly from their high school alumni or that was arranged by their high school alumni association. About two-thirds (10 out of 14) of the participants did not have alumni support during their transition to college but mentioned that they wish they had had some alumni support during that transition. The third of these *social supports* is the *social support* that TCKs received from other TCKs. Around two-thirds of the participants (9 out of 14) looked for other TCKs during their transition to college and said that having the other TCKs during that transition was a helpful support to them. During his focus group, Arman said, “Find a few people you can kind of unburden those experiences to and who will understand. I was grateful to have a few TCKs around. There was an instant bond there. That took a lot of the stress off and really helped.”

Theoretical Implications for Fourth S, Strategies. The fourth S, *Strategies,* recommends the actions individuals practice to thwart being wounded by life tensions (Goodman et al, 2006). The coping may transpire previously, throughout, or later during a challenging or problematic situation. For the purposes of my study, I looked at the coping resources used before, during, and after the TCK students’ challenging transition to college after repatriating to the U.S. from South Asia. I discovered that the participants in my study used the strategy of *minimizing the focus of their upbringing*. Minimizing the focus of their upbringing allowed the TCK to not have to deal with monocultural classmates who could not relate to their upbringing in South Asia. More than half (8 out of 14) of the participants reported that they had used this strategy during their transition to college to make that transition easier. Initially, some of these TCK participants had tried to befriend some of their monocultural classmates but felt like they were not being “heard” by them.

There is evidence regarding international students that a student's home country may play a role in the adaptation experience that international students have with students coming from other Western countries to the United States having a rather less challenging experience than Asian students (Alemu & Cordier, 2017; Alharbi & Smith, 2018; Alsahafi & Shin, 2019; Anjalin et al., 2017; Baba & Hosoda, 2014; Ladum & Burkholder, 2019; Lin et al., 2019; Mesidor & Sly, 2016; Moon & Larke, 2020; Shiddiq et al., 2020; Wang, 2017; Wang et al., 2019; Yin et al., 2021). Recognizing that students coming to college from Asia, whether international students or TCKs who spent a part of their upbringing in Asia before repatriation to the U.S. for college, have a similar transition experience. What has been written about international students coming to the U.S. for college and the difficulties assimilating into their college also applies to TCKs who come to the U.S. for college. Namely, that a TCK coming from Asia to the U.S. for college has a much more challenging experience than a TCK who comes from a western country to the U.S. for college. Students from nations that were dissimilar in culture to western culture were more prone to have trouble psychologically adapting (Alkubaidi & Alzhrani, 2020; Baba & Hosoda, 2014; Holliday, 2017; Li et al., 2018).

Empirical Implications

There are several empirical implications that go along with my study's themes. First, TCKs who had a difficult previous transition tend to have an easier transition to college. Second, TCKs' have an uncertainty of knowing where their home is. This is the most dreaded question TCKs fear having to answer. Third, TCKs' not knowing American pop culture. Fourth, TCKs have a strong TCK identity. Fifth, TCKs are highly adaptable. Sixth, TCKs are non-judgmental. Seventh, TCKs are open-minded. Eighth, TCKs have a rootlessness about them. Ninth, TCKs enjoy being a part of the third culture. Finally, TCKs tend to minimize the focus of their

upbringing. Details of these implications are included in the first ten of the fifteen subsections of empirical implications provided below.

In addition, an analysis of the implications of the empirical findings of this study have generated a series of recommendations for helping the TCKs with the transition to their first year of college in the US. These recommendations represent additional empirical implications of relevance to three audiences. The first of these audiences is the colleges receiving the TCKs. For this audience, the additional empirical implications include that the college must help TCK students connect with other TCK students. Additionally, the college needs to ensure that their personnel who deal with TCKs are either TCKs themselves or have the international experience that TCKs have. Further, the college especially, but all three of the relevant audiences as well as sending and receiving organizations of the TCK's parent's when applicable, should consider what they can do to enable their TCKs to have opportunities to attend re-entry seminars, which have been found to be very helpful. The second audience is the international schools sending the TCKs to colleges in the U.S. For this audience, several tailored recommendations have been summarized into a single subsection. One recommendation in this subsection is that the international schools in South Asia include cultural differences as a topic in their seminar for seniors who are graduating and going on to the U.S. for college. Also, during the focus group, Timothy said that high school internships in the U.S. during the summer holidays would be helpful for [Agape School] students. The third audience includes the families of the TCKs, for which recommendations have been summarized within a final empirical implication subsection. Details of the recommendations for the three audiences are included in the last five of the next fifteen subsections of empirical implications.

For TCKs, an Easier Transition Usually Follows a Hard Previous Transition. The theme, that for TCKs, an easier transition usually follows a hard previous transition, emerged as an important theme, and it answers the first research question concerning the TCKs' situation and helps highlight the major events and benchmarks that TCKs experience during their transition to college. More than half of the participants (8 out of 14) had difficult previous transitions and had an unexpectedly easier transition when they transitioned to college in the U.S. More than half (8 out of 14) of the TCKs were surprised by how much easier their transition to college was and how much better it was than what they had anticipated.

The TCKs' Uncertainty with Identifying "Home." Pollock et al. (2017) remarked that the worst question you can ask a TCK is "Where is your home?" The concept of home may be nebulous, including for migrants who face an uncertainty of belongingness (Shimomurya, 2014). Where a person is from is frequently different than where the person believes their home to be situated. The tangible and emotive sense of home may not be equivalent (Pollock et al., 2017). Some TCK participants considered themselves to be multicultural and said they could feel at home in any country that they have lived in before. However, the TCKs admitted that they do not feel totally at home in any country. Some of the TCKs feel like the TCKs are "homeless." Some TCK participants felt like their home was wherever their family was and that it was not necessarily about the location. If the TCKs were with their family, the TCKs could feel like they were "home." Many TCKs respond that how the TCK answers the question of where their home is depended on who was asking the question and how much time they had to answer. If the person asking the question seemed to be genuinely interested, then the TCK participant would have explained about their upbringing overseas. However, if the TCK participant did not have time or the person did not seem to want the long answer, then the TCK participant would just tell

the short version of their answer. The TCK participant would also offer the short version of their answer to the question if they did not believe that they would become friends with the person.

Pop Culture. TCKs frequently feel and function like hidden immigrants (Pollock et al., 2017) in their country of origin. They look and speak as if they ought to belong, yet they often lack familiarity with provincial cultural trivia (Gambhir & Rhein, 2019; Kortegast & Yount, 2016). TCKs do not know the “slang or idioms” (Klemens & Bikos, 2009, p. 721). The TCKs have also attained changed food palates, and struggle to preserve foreign customs. Researchers reported feelings of being on the outside looking in because of their experiences living overseas (Kortegast & Yount, 2016; Long, 2020). Around two-thirds (9 out of 14) of the participants in my study mentioned that they felt like they were often on the fringe of groups or the culture because they felt like they did not fit in to the culture or group. One TCK in my study mentioned that it helped them be more objective and so being on the fringe of groups or the culture was not always a disadvantage.

TCK Identity. Colomer (2017) stated that the TCKs’ sense of belonging, and self-identity was rooted in their TCK upbringing. TCKs showed that the TCKs’ multiculturalism was more critical in their determination of self-identity than even gender orientation, religious conviction, natal country, socioeconomic standing, or present home. Sometimes TCKs experienced a confused identity in relation to a specific country but may share an identity with people who have had a similar international experience as they have experienced (Cranston, 2017; Fanning & Burns, 2017). TCKs talked about the TCK experience in a coalesced way, as if it were easier for them to get along with other TCKs or sojourners than with monocultural Americans (Morales, 2015; Useem et al., 1963; Pollock et al., 2017). About two-thirds (9 out of 14) of my study’s participants mentioned that it was easier to become friends with other TCKs,

international students, or monocultural students with international experience. Many TCKs also said that they feel a sense of belonging when they are around others with a similar upbringing to their upbringing. TCKs are particularly proficient at building relationships with other cultures while not enjoying a cultural identity of their own (Moore & Barker, 2012; Pollock et al., 2017). Although TCKs may feel at a loss as to where they belong, they still have some sort of cultural identity (Korwin-Kowalewska, 2020; Moore & Barker, 2012).

Missionary Kids (MKs), who spend a noteworthy share of their upbringing in a country other than their home country, because of their parents' faith-based ministry, experience an overabundance of impediments during their repatriation to their parent's home country (Bonebright, 2010; Li et al., 2020). One MK in my study, Arman seemed to have more obstacles during his repatriation to the U.S. for college than the others. Initially Arman thought that he was experiencing reverse culture shock. Later Arman realized that he was depressed. Amalia said that she was miserable. MKs stated that they found great encouragement and protection in the company of their TCK friends, and that the companionship gave them meaning and identity (Abe, 2018; Cranston, 2017; Dettweiler et al., 2015; Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009).

TCKs are Highly Adaptable. TCKs had the capacity to modify identities and adapt to many nations and had boosted cultural consciousness (de Waal et al., 2020; Melles & Frey, 2017; Miller, 2020; Moore & Barker, 2012; Myer et al., 2019; Nash, 2020; Peifer & Yangchen 2017). On campus, TCKs tend to have a wide and diverse set of friends, adapt graciously to life outside their parents' homes, and demonstrate more advanced oral abilities than their monocultural peers (Limberg & Lambie, 2011). My study corroborated the literature concerning TCKs' adaptability. More than two-thirds (9 out of 14) of the TCK participants in my study said that they considered themselves as much more adaptable than their monocultural classmates.

TCKs are Non-judgmental. TCKs competently grasp social interactions and understand others' insights, concepts, and temperaments (Lyttle et al., 2011). These advanced skills allow TCKs to connect across a range of social situations. Other TCK research has bolstered these conclusions, indicating that TCKs grow in superior levels of social empathy more so than non-TCK people. My study corroborated these earlier findings. For example, in my study about a third (4 out of 14) of the TCK participants mentioned that they were much more non-judgmental than their classmates at college and that they felt like they could understand what immigrants to the U.S. were trying to say when others could not understand the immigrants.

TCKs are Open-Minded. TCKs tend to be more open-minded (deWaal et al., 2020; Lyttle et al., 2011; Moore & Barker, 2012; Pollock et al., 2017). My study corroborated the literature concerning TCKs being more open-minded than their monocultural classmates. Many of the TCKs (6 out of 14) in my study liked trying new things, especially new cultures, and challenges. The TCKs were also open to diverse and very different people.

TCKs Have a Rootlessness About Them. Many TCKs experienced identity issues, including a sense of rootlessness [(Almost half at 6 out of 14 participants) (Grimshaw & Sears, 2008; Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011; Moore & Barker, 2012; Pollock et al., 2017)]. The emotional issues included feelings of rootlessness and a lack of fitting in because of the experience of adapting to a foreign philosophy, only to repatriate to their passport nations (Bonebright, 2010). Sentiments of rootlessness and restlessness may make the transition to adulthood a difficult period for TCKs (Hervey, 2009; Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011). Feelings of rootlessness and restlessness may have (6 out of 14) contributed to the TCKs having a hard time settling down in one place. TCKs like to travel and experience new cultures rather than staying in one place for very long. Mercedes said that when he hears about families who have lived in the same place for

generations, he thinks that that is not him and his family. Another participant said that they cannot commit to a job or to being in a certain location for more than a year, and that they can live anywhere.

Reentry adaptation tensions for MKs may include feelings of cultural homelessness, inner cultural struggle, having more than one worldview or one different from the U.S., reduced socialization with home country peers, and feelings of rootlessness (Martin, 2017). As a result, these MKs' hurdles to repatriating to the U.S. may cause them to have grief, restlessness, anxiety, including social anxiety, and feelings of isolation. Consistent with this, almost half of the TCKs in my study (6 out of 14) verified that they had a rootlessness about them that kept them from settling down in one place. Some of these TCKs were MKs, but some of them were also EdKids. Arman and Marcy said that they had some anxiety, restlessness, and grief when they repatriated to the U.S. for college. The changes to new students' practices, diets, social situation, physical locality, and expected stresses may bring on powerful homesickness (Thurber & Walton, 2012). Sufferers report depressive and anxious signs, constrained behavior, and difficulty focusing on topics that are unrelated to home (Acharya et al., 2018; Mesidor & Sly, 2016; Thurber & Walton, 2012; Tran et al., 2020). In my study two of the TCKs, Arman and Marcy, shared that they were depressed and anxious during their transition to college and felt homesick for South Asia.

The Third Culture that TCKs Enjoy Being a Part of. Although these globally mobile students have been brought up in nations that are not their own, TCKs often do not sufficiently know their parents' country's culture (van Niejenhuis et al., 2018). Instead, TCKs have created a third culture for themselves that only they and other TCKs like them may appreciate (Useem et al., 1963). It is within this third culture construct that TCKs may align themselves with other

TCKs. The third culture is where some TCKs get their sense of belonging (Cranston, 2017; Kortegast & Yount, 2016; Kwon, 2019; Smith & Kearney, 2016). In line with these findings, TCKs in my study said that people like themselves who have been in different cultures have an easy time relating to each other. The participants mentioned that it is not about the countries they have lived in. Rather, the important thing is that all TCKs have had some international experience. The TCK participants in my study said there is an immediate bond when they meet other TCKs. TCKs find other TCKs to be a refuge because they understand each other. They know what it's like to be oddballs because they have experiences that do not translate simply.

In my study, several TCKs mentioned that the third culture is not about the location, but rather that expatriates create a unique culture that is exclusive to TCKs, and it is the third culture that connects TCKs to other TCKs, international students, or monocultural students with international experience. It is in this third culture that the participants of my study said they felt comfortable in and felt a sense of belonging to. TCKs shared that they find the most comfort, confidence, and sense of belonging when they are among other TCKs. A consortium of researchers agreed with what my participants described, specifically that TCKs identify best with other third culture kids, particularly in the school setting (Fail et al., 2004; Grimshaw & Sears, 2008; Pollock et al., 2017; Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009). In addition, as mentioned by my participants, TCKs have the tendency to align themselves with other TCKs because they have a desire to be heard. TCKs feel that only students of the TCK demographic may understand them (Kartoshkina, 2015; Smith & Kearney, 2016).

For many TCKs, including those in my study, it is this third culture, rather than the first or second culture, that gives them a sense of belonging. TCKs enjoy being comprehended amongst others with comparable experiences (Cranston, 2017; Smith & Kearney, 2016). TCKs

share a unique cultural heritage. Research on TCKs from Japan, Denmark, Italy, Germany, the United States, and Africa has shown that TCKs from different countries share more in common with other TCKs than they do with their own peer group from their passport country (Bates, 2013; Lijadi, 2017; Pollock et al., 2017). Participants in my study (9 out of 14) typically agreed that they get along better with other TCKs than with monocultural American kids. Researchers indicated that the TCK experience was the underlying factor helping TCKs connect to others—rather than their shared physical, racial, spiritual, or geographical characteristics (Kwon, 2019; Smith & Kearney, 2016). TCKs, by means of this construct, form an exclusive culture that is shared by all TCKs and one that may thus be confirmed with associations with other TCKs (Cranston, 2017; Moore & Barker, 2012). TCKs feel most comfortable around others who have had a similar TCK experience (Fanning & Burns, 2017; Moore & Barker, 2012; Wersig & Wilson-Smith, 2021). The third culture is not about the place, but is a culture created by expatriates (Cranston, 2017). Through this construct, expatriates from various countries have created a way of approaching life that is distinct from either their home or their host culture, but it is one they share (Kortegast & Yount, 2016; Kwon, 2019; Pollock et al., 2017). TCKs in my study agreed with the findings of the literature that it was their ability to be in this third culture that gave them a sense of belonging wherein they were able to make friends with others who had had multiple-cultural experiences like theirs.

TCKs Tend to Minimize the Focus of Their Upbringing. The desire of many TCKs to fit in or blend in with Americans seems to cause them to socially reject their TCK identity, which is often described as a *hidden identity* (Kortegast & Yount, 2016; Smith & Kearney, 2016). However, during Moore and Barker's (2012) study on TCK identity, they were not able to identify what causes a TCK to develop one type of identity versus another. More than half (8 out

of 14) of the TCKs in my study tended to minimize the focus of their upbringing when after repeated attempts to connect with their monocultural classmates, they realized that it was easier to stuff down their upbringing and not talk about it.

The College Must Help TCK Students Connect with Other TCK Students. Even prior to arrival at one's freshman year in college, many students may use Social Networking Sites (SNSs) to build a peer network that may help diminish uncertainty about the college experience (Gray et al., 2013). Freshman students' partaking in peer-led support groups led to less loneliness and a superior feeling of social backing during the transition to college. Providing support for students to help them make connections and to become integrated into the college community has been identified as aiding in dedication to and perseverance to study (Calcott, 2014; Ecohard & Fotheringham, 2017; van Rooji et al., 2018). One participant, Karan, had an administrator at his college who Karan already knew because this administrator had worked at his high school in South Asia (*Agape School*). This administrator and his wife took it upon themselves to have informal gatherings of the alumni from *Agape School.* Whether student-lead or informally by an administrator, Karan said that this was helpful to his transition to college.

Admissions offices at future freshman TCK students' colleges may provide opportunities to ensure that future freshman TCK college students are befriended by other TCKs or international college students at the end of these TCKs' senior year in high school in South Asia. These future TCK college students may feel as if they have some social backing before they arrive on campus. The social support should continue once the TCKs arrive on the campus. Calcott (2014) indicated that social networking strategies were considered as crucial to transition and social integration. The college may ensure that their international student/TCK organization is on a social network platform so that their international students and TCKs may connect with

each other on this platform while the TCKs are still in high school in South Asia. A couple participants in my study said that they used social media to connect with their high school classmates during their difficult transitions to college.

Colleges Need to Ensure that Their Personnel Who Deal with TCKs Are TCKs Themselves or Have the International Experience That TCKs Have. Because TCKs reside in so many places and relocate continually, TCKs often form multifaceted identities that are very different from those formed by people living in a single nation or culture (Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011; Hu & Dai, 2021; Korwin-Kowalewska, 2020; Moore & Barker, 2012). Monocultural individuals will have a challenging time relating to the TCKs' upbringing since the monocultural individuals do not have the shared international experience. So, it is imperative that the people manning a TCK counselor position at the college also have some international experience. TCKs have reported not being understood by their counselor because of the counselor's not being familiar with TCK related fears (Bushong, 2013). Mesidor and Sly (2016) urged colleges to appoint international students to academic advisors who are culturally sensitive and experienced in working with international students (Joseph & Hartwig, 2020; Zhang, 2018). Such students from a foreign country who studied in the U.S. recount lesser feelings of belonging in the freshman year than students who have only lived in the U.S. (Strayhorn, 2012). TCK students who grow up overseas and repatriate to the U.S. for college may have similar lesser feelings of belonging. Two of the participants, in my study, Luke and Arman, mentioned in their interviews that they had been singled out by an administrator who was sensitive to their overseas upbringing and followed them through their college years. Luke and Arman said that they felt "heard" by this.

Re-Entry Seminars Have Been Discovered to Be Helpful. Preparation for reentry is a critical component of a successful reentry. The need for reentry preparation both before leaving the host culture and after arriving in the home culture are critical for a successful reentry adjustment (Adler, 1977). A shortage of reentry preparation appears to prolong the time it takes to re-acculturate into the home culture (Pollock et al., 2017). It is a widely accepted fact in the field of international education that it may be more difficult for students to readapt to their home culture upon return (repatriation) than it is to adapt to their new culture upon arrival when expatriating to a foreign country (Vallesteros et al., 2019; Young, 2014). In my study, MKs were the only TCK demographic who were offered repatriation seminars which have been shown to enhance the preliminary transition to college (Kortegast & Yount, 2016). Researchers stated that attending a reentry seminar reduced feelings of anxiety, depression, and stress, and enabled TCKs to have an easier time acculturating back home (Bates, 2013; Bikos et al., 2009; Davis, et al., 2013; Dkyhouse & Bikos, 2019; Hervey, 2009; Hopkins, 2015; Klemens & Bikos, 2009; Young, 2014). The timing of the re-entry seminar is crucial. In my study, a TCK who participated in a re-entry seminar between their high school in South Asia and their college in the U.S. indicated that the re-entry seminar was helpful. Attending a re-entry seminar as late as Thanksgiving break was too late to be very helpful. One participant, Mercedes, said that his parents' mission organization had provided some sort of re-entry seminar for the MKs. The seminar was not very helpful, since it was given near the end of the first semester of college.

Sending and receiving organizations not only have the obligation to be knowledgeable but must be responsible to advise their employees and family regarding transition phases and the problems of re-acculturation. One of the issues is that the family may still be overseas when the TCK repatriates to the U.S for college. So even though the organization may have a reentry

seminar for the employee when they return, the organization may not have something for the child of their employee who is repatriating to the U.S. for college earlier than their employee. Unexpected changes or circumstances are the most probable cause of readjustment problems.

The schools in South Asia and other schools in Asia would benefit their students greatly if they were to invite someone like me to give a seminar on the topic of repatriation to college in the U.S. In my study, some (4 out of 14) of the participants were invited to international student activities but chose not to participate because they did not think they were international students. U.S. colleges may more successfully attract TCKs to the international student activities, if the college names the activities as not only being for international students, but as being for international students and TCKs. The college needs to keep in mind that these globally mobile students have been brought up in nations that are not their own. Thus, TCKs often do not properly understand or feel at ease in their parents' country's culture (van Niejenhuis et al., 2018).

Practical Implications for International Schools. Those TCK participants who had connections with alumni from their high schools in South Asia stated that they had some needed support during their transition to college in the U.S. International Schools may help their graduates by helping them connect with alumni from their high school in South Asia before they graduate and move to the U.S. for college. It is a shame when the TCK participant Amalia had to be alone in the dorm during the holidays, rather than being invited by high school alumni to share some time with them. Thus, Amalia had a horrible experience during those holidays.

Practical Implications for TCK Families. As I end this work, it seems fitting to speak directly to the group that stands to gain the most from my study, in the practical sense: TCKs and their parents. I encourage you to give the topic of this study some careful thought as it applies to

your family's circumstances, especially how you may be able to help placate the before, during, and aftereffects of the TCK college transition in your case. Some suggestions that may be helpful for the TCK and/or their parents to seek out mentors, read books, attend seminars, and develop realistic expectations for the transition.

Limitations and Delimitations

It could be argued that the lack of generalizability of the present study is a limitation. However, because this was a qualitative study, there was no intention to make the results generalizable to the broader population of TCKs returning to the US from a variety of countries. Rather, the present study provides a snapshot of only TCKs with experience in South Asia. "Delimitations are in essence the limitations consciously set by the authors themselves." (Theofandis & Fountouki, 2019, p. 157). One delimitation of this study was to only include participants over the age of 18. Another delimitation was that the participants had to return to the United States for higher education. Another delimitation was that participants needed to live in the host country of South Asia for at least one year.

Limitations are weaknesses integral to the study that are beyond the researcher's control (Creswell, 2008). One limitation in this study was that most of the participants in my study were Caucasian. Another limitation was my setting the requirement of the number of years spent in South Asia to only one year. Early on, I was advised that qualitative was the more appropriate method for my study. At the advice of my chair, I chose to conduct a collective case study design rather than a phenomenological study. Although most of the participants in my study spent much more than one year in the host country in South Asia, I limited the requirement of the number of years spent in South Asia to one year to not restrict my ability to acquire the needed number of participants for my study.

Receiving IRB approval in mid-June when both schools were on their summer holidays possibly delayed my ability to secure participants. This caused another limitation because it took me a month to obtain my first participant. Only after that was I able to secure the other participants regularly over the next few weeks. Another limitation was because *Phileo School* had a new alumni website, it is possible that it was not being used as much as the *Agape School* alumni website from which I secured most of my participants. Also, although my contact at *Phileo School* worked hard to help me get participants for my study, she was unable to generate much enthusiasm. Initially, she was targeting younger alumni and did not get much of a response. Eventually one younger and one older alumnus from *Phileo School* expressed an interest in joining my study. But more participants came from *Agape School* which has a well-established website for their alumni. From *Agape School* I was able to obtain participants who had a wide range of ages.

The five TCK categories, based on their parents' employment are BusKids (businessmen's kids), DipKids (diplomats' kids), EdKids (educators' kids), MilBrats (military kids), and MKs (missionary kids). Another limitation in my study was that most of the participants that ended up expressing an interest in joining my study were MKs. I also had some participants who were EdKids, or BusKids. Another limitation of the study was that one of the five TCK categories was not represented. There were no DipKids in the participant pool. One participant was both MilBrat and MK. One participant was both MK and EdKid. Nevertheless, compared to other studies I looked at, this study had a better representation of the TCK categories; particularly the EdKid category, which was missing from all of the studies that I have examined.

TCK scholars have often described trials in getting representative samples. This study thus held a similar limitation. The participants who voluntarily chose to participate in this study may have been very different than those who chose not to participate in this study. I have kept this participant characteristic in mind when considering the transferability of the results.

I tried to group the members of the focus groups as close to the same TCK category as I could but was not totally successful. I thought they would feel more comfortable if the other members were in the same TCK category. This criterion (of being in the same TCK category) was not required for my study, but nonetheless represents a type of limitation. In focus group one, there were three older MK participants. I felt like this grouping was excellent. In focus group two, there were two participants in the "Other" category as their parents' employment did not fit any of the TCK categories and the final one was a BusKid. These three participants were close in age, and I felt like they were a good mix for the focus group.

I had another potential participant for focus group three. But she was in South Asia while the other two participants were in the U.S. Thus, when the two U.S. participants were available, this potential participant in South Asia was not. I had to end up having the focus group with only two participants because this potential third participant was not able to be very flexible with the timing for the focus group. This thus created another limitation in my study, because three participants would have been better than two in terms of the participants bouncing ideas off each other. Also, one of the participants in this two-person focus group was an MK and the other was an EdKid. Although the focus group went well, I felt like it might have gone better if the two participants had been in the same TCK category, and the third member had been able to join.

In focus group four, there were two MKs and one EdKid. I think the members of this group were comfortable, but maybe each type of TCK was uncomfortable with the other

category of TCKs' answers to some of the questions; this was a limitation in my study. For possibly the MKs withheld information because the other member in the focus group was not an MK. One of the MKs was quite a bit older than the other two participants who were much closer in age. Focus group five had all older MKs in it. One of the MKs did not view themselves as an MK adult, but only as a missionary kid (MK). Usually once an MK, always an MK. However, one participant did not agree with that assessment. I thought this group went well. Maybe if the third member had held the same worldview as the two MKs who were still identifying as missionaries, more may have been able to be said. It is possible that the MKs held back because they knew of the third member's worldview and did not want to say anything that would have been viewed as being politically incorrect or offensive.

Another limitation in my study was that half (7 out of 14) of the participants in my study were totally MKs and two others shared two categories: a) one was MilBrat and MK, and the other b) one was EdKid and MK. Most of the participants were MKs and older, thus possibly swaying some of the results. Fifty percent of the participants were 50 years old or older, 6 out of 14 were in their 20s, and one was in their 30s. These were the people who chose, of their own volition, to let me know they were interested in participating in my study. No one in their 40s was ultimately included in the study, although there was initially one participant in her early 40s who had to be dropped after completing her interview because she could not join a focus group due to scheduling problems. Although I was concerned that the data would be different for the older participants compared to the younger participants, that was not the case. The broad age range of the participants in my study may well have bolstered my study. No one in their sophomore year of college was included in the study, nor did anyone in that college year group show any interest in participating. There were two participants who were attending college at the

time of the study: a) Karan was in his junior year of college, and b) Noah was in his senior year of college.

Recommendations for Future Research

Dettweiler et al. (2015) is one of the few studies on study abroad programs. This and other studies conclude that TCKs think of themselves as outsiders in many places and that they find great encouragement and protection in the company of their TCK friends (Dettweiler et al., 2015; Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009). This companionship gives the TCKs meaning and identity (Abe, 2018; Cranston, 2017). Students who go overseas for a study abroad program for even only six to twelve months experience some of these same TCK issues when repatriating to the states (Cranston, 2017; Kartoshkina, 2015; Dettweiler et al., 2015). Accordingly, more studies need to be done on college study abroad programs and how students in these programs settle back into their American colleges.

A distinction to my study that may be studied in the future is how a TCK transitions to college in the U.S. from South Asia comparing how their transition to college went relative to how their previous transitions had gone. In my study, those TCKs who had difficult previous transitions, generally had an easier transition to college. A quantitative/correlative study may be conducted looking at how long the TCK had been in South Asia or Asia before their repatriation and how this length of time affects their repatriation to college. It would be interesting to see what the correlation is between those TCKs who had repatriated from their high school in South Asia or Asia and those who had repatriated to the U.S. earlier than high school. A quantitative correlational study may also be conducted looking at those who were offered international student or TCK support when they arrived at college comparing those who accepted the support with those who did not accept the support. Some TCKs participants (4 out of 14) were invited to

international student activities on their campus but chose not to attend them. Although some colleges put TCKs in the same grouping as international students, almost a third (4 out of 14) of my participant TCKs did not believe they needed the extra support. Therefore, they did not get involved in international student activities, even though they had been invited to participate in the activities.

My study may be replicated including DipKids in the sample of participants by recruiting more kids from an appropriate school or in the appropriate manner to ensure DipKids are represented. To ensure DipKids' participation in the study, my study may be replicated using recruiting from Embassy Schools in South Asia or other countries in Asia. In addition, MilBrats were studied extensively earlier during TCK research, but more updated studies would be helpful. For future study, more MilBrats could be included by recruiting from appropriate schools or in the appropriate manner to ensure MilBrats are represented. It is possible that some of the other American Embassy Schools in South Asia may have had a larger representation of MilBrats who have attended their school. Regardless, some other countries in South Asia and Southeast Asia have U.S. military bases and may thus have more MilBrats students. For example, the Philippines may have MilBrats students attending their American Embassy School since they have U.S. military bases in their country.

Another study might include TCKs who are under the age of 18. Another study might be able to look at TCKs from other countries repatriating from their host country to their home country for college. A quantitative study could look at and compare TCKs who receive college support for their transition to college with those TCKs who do not. An interesting study might be to look at how TCKs use technology to try and live in two cultures while transitioning to the U.S. for college after growing up overseas.

Future research may look at why some TCKs adjust easier to the U.S. from South Asia using a quantitative correlational study approach. This research should also consider why some TCKs instead have a harder adjustment to the U.S. for college and why some TCKs are never able to adapt back to U.S. culture after growing up in South Asia. This would thus include an analysis of why some TCKs could neither make friends easily nor relate to their U.S. peers. Another study may look at the difference between TCKs who lived on a compound in their host country compared with TCKs who lived in the culture.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative collective case study was to understand the transition to college in the United States of TCKs who have spent at least one year in South Asia during their upbringing (ages 6-18). U.S. third culture kids (TCKs) generally have a difficult transition back to their home country after spending at least one year of their upbringing overseas in South Asia. This transition of TCKs frequently happens as their repatriation to the US while their families stay in the host country. Therefore, international schools and government agencies have started to recognize ways to support these students upon re-entry (Morales, 2015).

From what was gleaned from this study’s TCK participants, one of the most important takeaways for parents and educators to know is that it is the TCKs who had a difficult previous transition sometime before their starting college that subsequently had an easier transition to college. Missionary Kids (MKs), who because of their parents’ faith-based ministry have spent a noteworthy share of their upbringing in a country other than their home country, have been found to experience an overabundance of impediments during their repatriation to their parent’s home country (Bonebright, 2010; Li et al., 2020). It could be that one of the reasons in previous decades that MKs had difficult transitions to the U.S. for college after growing up overseas was

because these TCKs' repatriation for college was their first repatriation to the U.S. after growing up overseas. Accordingly, parents would be advised to ensure that their TCKs make at least one repatriation back to the U.S. before their repatriation back to the U.S. for college (not just a visit but a move).

The other important takeaway from my study is that the TCK is a unique demographic of student. Two-thirds (9 out of 14) of the participants agreed that they had a distinctive TCK identity. Because of this, two-thirds of the participants (9 out of 14) said that some of the support they appreciated when they transitioned to college was from fellow TCKs. Participants in some other studies than my own were found to feel themselves special and to think of themselves as outsiders in the multiple places where they lived. These people indicated that they felt protection and great encouragement when in the company of their TCK friends (Dettweiler et al., 2015; Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009). It is with these other TCKs that TCKs feel like they are heard. My study thus strongly corroborates these other findings together with the finding that, while academic preparation for college is essential, a student's social experiences at college may be even more critical (Hlinka, 2017; Tinto, 1993). Also, as shared by 9 out of 14 of my study's participants, it is with other TCKs that the TCK does not have to minimize the focus of their upbringing like they most typically have to do with monocultural classmates.

This study was conducted using Robert Stake's (2006) collective case study method which included three types of data collection: individual interviews, focus group interviews, and individual reflective journals. Fourteen participants were ultimately included in the study. Most of the participants were MKs. But there were also EdKids, and a BusKid, as well as a MilBrat/MK and an EdKid/MK represented in the study. Two TCKs fell into the "Other" TCK category because their parents' occupations were different from those in the TCK categories.

The themes that surfaced in this study illustrate the TCK phenomenon and the intercultural adjustment problems that TCKs grapple with when they repatriate to their home country. Those TCKs who connect with other TCKs or with others with international experience when they arrive on their campus from South Asia tend to have a much easier repatriation-transition to college experience. TCKs find their sense of belonging to be with others who have had similar international experiences and TCKs typically expect to repatriate to their home country at some point in their lives, generally for college (Fanning & Burns, 2017; Lijadi & van Schalkwyk, 2018; Lijadi & van Schalkwyk, 2017; Pollock et al., 2017). More than two-thirds of the TCKs in my study said that an advantage of being a TCK was that they were highly adaptable, even comparing themselves to chameleons being able to change their colors. TCKs have the capacity to modify identities and adapt to several nations and have boosted cultural consciousness (de Waal et al., 2020; Melles & Frey, 2017; Moore & Barker, 2012; Myer et al., 2019; Nash, 2020; Miller, 2020). Along with the theme of TCK identity, the theme of TCKs minimizing the focus of their upbringing was repeated the most of any theme. This theme was repeated 22 times in my study, and by more than half of the participants (8 out of 14).

Among my main recommendations for the implementation of the many findings of this study is that colleges not only offer their TCKs the support and services they require when they arrive on their campus, but that these colleges ensure that their TCKs are made fully aware of what they are offering them. These colleges must sensitively encourage their TCKs to use the support and services they are offering. Also, my study confirmed the value of Schlossberg's adults in transition theory (1981, 2011) in the analysis of the college adjustment of TCKs. Accordingly, not only should this theory be further adapted to better accommodate future

research on this topic, but colleges must work to better familiarize themselves with this theory and to understand how I have already demonstrated this theory's relevance to the TCK.

As a conclusion from the limited types of TCKs studied by them earlier, Abe (2018) and others have emphasized that the TCKs' extraordinary capability to both grasp and be comfortable with diversity is conceivably the most significant positive stemming from their experiences (Basow & Gaugler, 2017). My study with more TCK categories further confirms this conclusion. TCKs may have greater understanding for the differences between people. Their experiences of having to fit in and of being in contact with different languages and nations may also strengthen the cultural understanding and open-mindedness of the TCK (Cheng & Yang, 2019; Dewaele & van Oudenhoven, 2009; Lyons et al., 2018). Yet it is essential to keep in mind that, although TCKs share certain resemblances with one another, they need to be viewed as individuals with distinctive experiences (Kan Podolsky, 2004; Shimomura, 2014). Thus, as this study further highlights, TCKs are a diverse group and need to be regarded as such.

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Appendix A - Liberty University IRB Approval Letter

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

June 17, 2021

Sandra Blank

Billie Holubz

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY20-21-735 THIRD CULTURE KIDS' REPATRIATION AND PLANNED TRANSITION TO COLLEGE FROM A SOUTH ASIAN COUNTRY: A QUALITATIVE COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY

Dear Sandra Blank, Billie Holubz:

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations

in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46: 101(b):

Category 2. (iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:
The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification

submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research

Research Ethics Office

Appendix B - Response From The Principal of Agape School

Dear Sandra,

Glad to connect again! Great to know that your four children are _________alumni.

Congratulations to you on your program and upcoming research study. This will be fine to post on the _____ Alumni Association website. Since you wouldn't be interviewing present day _______ students, you wouldn't need an IRB approval from the school itself if that makes sense.

I look forward to reading what you find in your research. Let me know if I can assist in any way.

Best regards,

Craig

Appendix C - Response From the Principal of Phileo School

Thanks Kalee!! Wonderful to support educational research! (I'm moving you to bcc now)

Hi Sandra!

This sounds like wonderful research and valuable too! Love it!

Our alumni coordinator is Janice Roper. She would have the best idea on how to link to our alumni resources. Janice is cc'ed on this message.

Janice, can you please work with Sandra on this effort. As a recovering doctoral candidate myself, I know how you appreciate any help you can get.

Best of luck. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Andy

Appendix D - Recruitment Flyer

Third Culture Kids and Their Repatriation to College in the U.S. Study

- Are you 18 years of age or older?
- Do you want to help other Third Culture Kids navigate their repatriation to college in the U.S. after having lived in a South Asian country for at least one year?

If you answered **yes** to either of these questions, you may be eligible to participate in an educational research study.

The purpose of this research study is to understand Third Culture Kids’ transition experiences to college after living in a South Asian country for at least one year. Participants will be asked to participate in interviews and write a journal entry. Benefits include helping other Third Culture Kids in their transition to college in the U.S. after spending at least one year overseas in South Asia.

Participation will be online through Microsoft Teams.

Sandra Blank, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Please contact Sandra Blank at __________ or _______ for more information.

Appendix E - Informed Consent Form

Title of the Project: THIRD CULTURE KIDS' REPATRIATION AND PLANNED TRANSITION TO COLLEGE FROM A SOUTH ASIAN COUNTRY: A QUALITATIVE COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY

Principal Investigator: Sandra Blank, M. Ed., Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be a U.S. citizen, have had at least one year of your upbringing in a South Asian country and must have repatriated to the U.S. for college. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.
Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to understand the transition to college in the U.S. of Third Culture Kids (TCKs) who have spent at least one year of their upbringing in a South Asian country.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Fill out a demographic questionnaire, which will take 5-10 minutes for you to complete.
2. Participate in an individual videotaped interview. This will take approximately 30-40 minutes.
3. Participate in a focus group videotaped discussion. This will take approximately 30-40 minutes.
4. Fill out a reflective journal answering a few questions. This will take approximately 20-40 minutes.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include future TCKs transitioning to college will have an easier time because of what is learned in this study and what colleges do in the future to help this demographic of student.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential by using pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews/focus groups] will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be

included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Sandra Blank. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [redacted]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. B.J. Holubz, at [redacted].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

____

Printed Subject Name

____

Signature & Date

Appendix F - Standardized Open-Ended Interview Questions

1. Please introduce yourself to me, as if we had never met before.
   a. Where were you born?
   b. Where have you lived and how long did you live at each location?
   c. Why did you have to move?
2. Of your adjustment to college experiences, which would you say were the most significant?
3. What made them significant?
4. How was your adjustment to your university (or college)?
5. If you graduated from college, did you stay at the same university (or college) for four years, or did you end up moving to other universities (or colleges) during your college tenure?
6. What went well during your first year of college?
7. What did you have to learn to adjust better during your first year of college?
8. How do you feel about your experiences adjusting to university (or college)?
9. How do you feel about your host country?
10. How do you feel about America?
11. Why did you or why did you not feel like you belonged to your home and host countries?
12. If you graduated from college, imagine you are at an international school at an assembly with TCKs who all seniors are and are about to repatriate to their home country for college. What advice would you give these senior TCKs concerning how to persist to graduation at college?

13. Think back to your first year of college. Imagine when you were befriended by a non-TCK student. What was it like?
14. Think back to your first year of college. Imagine when you were befriended by a TCK student. What was it like?
15. Describe the preparation for repatriation you received from your international school.
16. What are the positive as well as the difficult characteristics of being a TCK?
17. How has the TCK lifestyle affected your identity?
18. When people ask you where you are from, what do you say?
19. Where would you say your home is and why?

Appendix G - Standardized Open-Ended Focus Group Interview Questions

1. Tell us your name and what state you live in? Tell us, what is your favorite thing to do?
2. Tell us about your experiences during your transition and adjustment to college?
3. What were some of the challenging aspects of your transition to college? Socially/Academically?
4. What were some of the most rewarding aspects of your transition to college?
5. How has your transition to college experience influenced you as a person/employee in your current life/work situation?
6. Based on your transition to college experience, what recommendations do you have for students who will be facing the transition to college experience?
7. What was the most important thing said in this conversational group today?
8. Do you have anything to add concerning your transition to college that was not covered in the conversation today? Is there anything we have forgotten? (Krueger & Casey, 2015).

Questions 1 is an opening question. I, the researcher, will use this question to obtain some of the demographics of the participants in the study (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). The purpose of the opening question is to get each participant to speak early in the interview and feel comfortable, or else they may not talk later. It is easy to answer quickly. It is asking for facts (Krueger & Casey, 2015).

Questions 2 and 3 are introductory questions that introduce the topic of discussion and get the interviewees to think about how they are connected with the topic. These questions encourage participants to converse with each other. These questions allow the

interviewee to share about their experience with their transition phenomenon (Krueger & Casey, 2015),

Questions 3 and 4 are transition questions that move the conversation towards the key questions. They serve as an appropriate connection between the introductory questions and the key questions. Participants are being made aware of how others view the topic of discussion (Krueger & Casey, 2015). Questions 5 and 6 are the key questions that drive the study. The interviewer needs to allow sufficient time for these questions. The moderator may need to use probes and pauses more frequently with the key questions.

Questions 7 and 8 are ending questions. They bring closure to the conversation.

Appendix H- Sample Individual Interview Transcript

Noah (Guest)
Just hypersensitive at that time I remember I remember being aware that I was.

00:13:09.180 --> 00:13:19.230
Jonah (Guest)
I was very dialed in and I couldn't. I couldn't dial out if that makes sense. I would. I was very nervous and and I just also remember.

00:13:15.840 --> 00:13:16.330
Blank, Sandra
Yeah, yeah.

00:13:19.870 --> 00:13:27.130
Noah (Guest)
I went to the I went to the Emerson International School International student orientation and I really like that.

00:13:25.840 --> 00:13:26.370
Blank, Sandra
Oh, OK.

00:13:27.430 --> 00:13:34.290
Noah (Guest)
Uh, and I and I met some cool people, but frankly I didn't find people that I like.

00:13:35.440 --> 00:13:43.900
Jonah (Guest)
Uhm, in that in the beginning of college, I really. I really struggled finding people that I thought.

00:13:44.930 --> 00:14:13.730
Noah (Guest)
Or my type of people and I remember that being difficult 'cause I remember. It's not that I don't have friends, it's that I just don't like these people and that was like a weird way to, uh, maybe judgmental. But I struggled making connections with those people for sure, and I ended up finding some people later later on in my college experience that that I really did enjoy, but it took a while to adjust and get used to the people and and just being in a city.

00:14:14.730 --> 00:14:16.730
Noah (Guest)
Kind of long winded, but that's my answer.

00:14:15.030 --> 00:14:15.390
Blank, Sandra
So.00:14:16.850 --> 00:14:18.000

Blank, Sandra
Oh no, no, that's a good answer.

Appendix I - Sample Focus Group Transcript

00:11:46.790 --> 00:12:03.690
Erika (Guest)

I can go first, uh, for me, I actually had a very smooth transition to college. I've done a couple different transitions in my life and for me I was surprised. But college was one of the smoothest transitions I've had.

00:11:48.690 --> 00:11:49.260
Blank, Sandra
OK.

00:12:04.140 --> 00:12:34.450
Erika (Guest)
Uh, I think I really lucked out in that my first-year dorm had a lot of students who are from China. Like I'd say about 50% of my door. My dorm is small. It was like 40 students. About 50% were like from China. There is soon from Vietnam. There was another student who was sort of like a third culture kid as well. Who's American? So that made it very easy for me to move into the college life, I think. And it was like one of the smoothest transitions I've experienced so.

00:12:34.710 --> 00:12:36.260
Erika (Guest)
I was lucky in that way.

00:12:36.680 --> 00:12:38.370
Marcy (Guest)
Where did you go for college?

00:12:38.490 --> 00:12:43.690
Erika (Guest)
Uh, I went to Dickinson College. It's a small liberal arts school in Central PA.

00:12:45.430 --> 00:12:45.750
Erika (Guest)
Yeah.

00:12:46.500 --> 00:12:50.910
Marcy (Guest)
I relate to that in that sense had a very smooth transition.

00:12:52.720 --> 00:13:04.600
Marcy (Guest)
I didn't feel a lot of difficulty like readjusting to like a new culture or like space. And yeah, like it was easier to connect with like international students for me as well.

00:13:06.020 --> 00:13:09.620
Marcy (Guest)
Interana is very diverse and I was telling this to Sandra, but.

00:13:10.680 --> 00:13:17.960
Marcy (Guest)
People tend to kind of like click up with their own cultures so I'm half Japanese, so like I ended up hanging out a lot with Japanese people.

00:13:20.490 --> 00:13:28.610
Marcy (Guest)
And yeah, it was very smooth like I feel like I didn't feel shocked or like white. I did buy anything.

00:13:29.050 --> 00:13:29.500
Erika (Guest)
Yeah.

00:13:32.550 --> 00:13:49.050
Camille
Yeah, I agree. I mean, I, you know, I. I told Sandy this but you know I I made friends like right away. Kind of connected through like theater and dancing but also two of my closest friends from college were international students from Nepal and we just like.

00:13:49.730 --> 00:13:52.060
Camille
Kind of clicked right away and bonded.

00:13:53.290 --> 00:14:04.720
Camille
Over that, and I think that really helped to just like make it pretty seamless, but I also kind of like without thinking, you know, sought out the other international and 3rd culture kids.

00:14:06.110 --> 00:14:07.610
Camille
Kind of that familiarity.

Appendix J - Participant Journal Prompt

I want you to think back on your freshman year in college and note down remembrances concerning your adjustment to college that come to your mind, whether positive or negative. These can be any time during your freshman year. For instance, note down your feelings about what you were experiencing; the reactions of others to you that encouraged you; the reactions of others that discouraged you; how your monocultural classmates lack of interest in your international experience affected you. What advice you would give to seniors repatriating to the U.S. for college from a South Asian country.

Appendix K - Sample Answers to Journal Prompt

When I came back from [South Asia] for college, I went to the same college that my brother was at so I was able to room with him in college. This really softened the culture shock since he had to teach me how to do laundry, drive a car, get a driving license, etc. I also had a home church, so I had a group of families and kids my age that I knew and who knew me. This is not true for so many who come to the US without parents, and I realized how lucky I was. My brother even helped me get a job that I worked at for 3 years. College was a lonely time even with 65,000 students because I felt like I was just a number. I didn't understand the culture of how boys and girls interact and would spend weekends riding a bike on the trails of Minneapolis for many hours. I was in college to study and was surprised when other kids would party all Friday night and Saturday and then stay up all Sunday night to do homework. I did my homework a little every day and never had to stay up all night. At times other kids would start telling stories about their lives but when I started to share about my life, they quickly lost interest and changed the subject. I didn't know about cars or clothes, or TV so couldn't join into those conversations.

Appendix L - Sample of Reflective Journal

Some of my focus groups turned out better than the others. I tried to have them with members of the same TCK category (although this was not required for my study). Those with members from the same TCK category seemed to go better than those whose members were mixed TCK categories.

Older research on MKs (conducted decades ago) that stated that the MKs had a very difficult transition to college, may have indicated this because the MKs were making their first repatriation to the U.S. after spending some time over overseas. It appears from my data, that TCKs who had made earlier repatriations back from overseas before college, ended up having easier transition to college. This was because the difficult transition earlier gave them confidence for their college transition.

Turns out that one of the most repeated codes was *TCKs minimize the focus of their upbringing*. I believe that this is a strategy that TCKs use that ended up helping them persevere to graduation. When they minimize the focus of their upbringing with their monocultural classmates, they realize that this demographic of student population is unable to relate to their upbringing overseas and it causes them to look for other TCKs/international students who are better able to relate to their upbringing. This helps TCKs feel more supported when they are in the transition to their college and ultimately it helps them persevere to graduation. If they do not look for other TCKs/international students during their transition to college, they are more likely to drop out. There are more non-traditional students dropping out of college during their first year than traditional college students.

Under the second research question (self) there are several sub-headings that should go under TCK relational mindset. These include adaptability, comfortable in diversity, non-

judgmental, open-minded, and rootlessness. There should also be three sub-headings under the third research question (social support): family, alumni, and TCK with fellow TCK.