

**Career Choice Process and Adaptability of
Third Culture Kids**

by

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ABSTRACT

As both the result and the catalyst for globalization, third culture kids (TCKS) are a rapidly growing population. Their in-depth and prolonged exposure to a second, third, or more cultures outside that of their passport country during their formative years has a great impact on their lives. Through these cross-cultural experiences, they are molded and shaped to have certain characteristics as a result of their cultural blend. The TCK experience is one that provides them with rich material for learning on the one hand, and one which may bring confusion on the other. Paradoxes are common themes in many aspects of the TCK experience. This qualitative research is intended to explore the experiences of TCKs and how these experiences and what they have learned through these experiences shape their career choices and affect their subsequent adaptation to the workplace.

When making career-related choices, TCKs do have particular considerations that appear to relate back to their unique experiences. These considerations include the desire for autonomy and control in their jobs, who works around them (colleagues and supervisors), variety in the job content, and opportunity for growth and development.

In the study, many participants speak about their level of adaptability and confidence, and their sense of responsibility and trustworthiness. They have a broadened perspective, and often act as a bridge or mediator between people. Their experiences often give them more access to resources and as a result, they may be prone to develop multiple interests. In this research, many participants are good at handling a large number of relationships, but sometimes find it hard to have depth in individual relationships. Finally, the results show that different participants feel differently concerning their hybrid identity.

Letting go, reaching out to others, observing others, and letting others fully express themselves before making a judgment are some strategies that TCKs employ to help them adapt in the workplace.

Keywords: TCK (Third Culture Kids), career choice, workplace adaptation, Kolb's Experiential Learning Model

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

The purpose of Chapter 1 is to give an overview of the topic under study and to describe different aspects of the study. The sections in Chapter 1 include background of the study, purpose of the study, problem statement, research questions, significance of the study, and definition of terms.

Background of the Study

In the globalized world, boundaries between nations are rapidly disintegrating and the size of the global village seems to be ever-shrinking. As a result of increased global mobility, the number of third culture kids (TCKs) is quickly on the rise. Many children live a lifestyle of mobility and spend extensive time outside of their home cultures as a result of their parent's professions or for their own education. According to Pollock & Van Reken (2009, p. 13), a TCK is defined as "a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents' culture." TCKs do enjoy distinct advantages and encounter unusual challenges from their mobile adolescence which differentiates them from individuals growing up within a single culture.

Often, the TCK experience has so infiltrated an individual's being that the TCK experience leaves behind life-long marks that are both positive and negative. When making career-related decisions, exposure to multiple cultures and nations can complicate matters. While they enjoy advantages that others do not share, which often include multilingual abilities and multicultural experiences, TCKs also face challenges such as not having enough in-depth understanding about a particular culture, sometimes even their home culture, because they have spent their time split between many places. Once a career choice has been made, TCKs would have to adapt to their new roles within the work environment, just like how they would have to adapt to a new place each time they moved.

The discussion of career is important because to many individuals in the modern society, especially in the western part of the world, career has great significance attached to it. Career is often used to "attribute coherence, continuity, and social meaning" to life (Savickas, 2000, p. 1). Occupations offer individuals a way to be involved and to support

oneself in society. When individuals participate in employment activities that are productive and meaningful, it is beneficial to both the well-being of the individual and the hiring organization, and it is ultimately the building block that contributes to the stability of the society (Savickas, 2000).

A career defined in the narrower, more traditional sense of the word consists of “the sequence of [job] positions held by individuals over the course of their lives” (Montross & Shinkman, 1992, p. 5). In contrast, Super (1980) depicts a broader and more extensive picture of a career, involving the array of roles that we play in our lives, the way these roles evolve over time and how they interact with a person’s characteristics and the external factors in our world which then shape our careers.

Regardless of which definition we choose to use, for many individuals, a large number of years in life is spent on the planning, developing, or maintaining of careers so the examination of the decisions, process of career choice and workplace adjustment is an important topic. Furthermore, the career choices, process, and adjustment of TCKs are especially relevant to today’s world. Due to increasing global cooperation and competition, skills such as diplomacy, cultural competency, linguistic abilities, and the ability to reconcile different viewpoints are invaluable assets. As a product of globalization, individuals with a TCK background often acquire these skills naturally as they move through cultures, and in these aspects, they may have distinct advantages in the multicultural, global workplace arena over an individual growing up in a single culture (Selmer & Lam, 2004). Indeed, TCKs can be great workers in the modern workplace and their breadth of experiences may be valuable to the hiring organization (Jurtan, 2011; Selmer & Lam, 2002). For example, Selmer & Lam (2004) propose that TCKs may be ideal business expatriates to send for assignments abroad. Characteristics that they have developed through their cross-cultural experiences may reduce the amount of training and development needed (Selmer & Lam, 2004), thus helping to trim costs for the organization. With more understanding of the TCK phenomenon and its impact on TCK work experiences, TCKs can be better employed and developed as a valuable source of talent in the workplace today.

Problem Statement

A TCK experience leaves indelible impact on a person and can affect a person both positively and negatively throughout his or her lifetime. The impact of the TCK experience is pervasive and carries over to different aspects of life. Through their TCK experiences, TCKs often develop skills and characteristics that benefit them for a life time. They also develop coping strategies as they deal with the challenges of the lifestyle. A well-adjusted TCK may enjoy a rich and fulfilling life. However, depression and low self-esteem is also commonly cited in TCK literature due to adaptation difficulties. (Cottrell & Useem, 1999; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009)

Although there are informative studies on the general issues of TCK experiences, there is a scarcity of information on TCKs and their careers, especially with a focus on how TCKs make their career choices and how they adapt in their workplaces. This lack of information creates problems for both individuals and organizations. For individuals, such an information gap may mean a lack of resources to help TCKs make better career choices. Although the career choice process may be challenging for anybody, however, collectively, TCKs do share unique characteristics and may face challenges that are not share by non-TCKs. Thus, it is important to have more knowledge in this area to address the problems. The knowledge gap in TCK workplace adjustment processes may mislead TCKs into thinking that they are struggling alone and are without resources and without help. Poor adaptation in the workplace could result in low productivity, poor performance, and low job satisfaction. Not only would this be difficult for the individual, it would also be a loss to the hiring organizations as TCKs could potentially be a competent pool of workers in the global workplace with their rich experiences and unique characteristics.

For organizations, employers hiring TCKs without knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the TCK experience and their vocational tendencies or needs can also result in organizations placing TCKs in inappropriate positions. Organizations would not be able to harness the full benefits of the TCKs experiences and would not be able to recognize where they could support TCKs to help them overcome some of their challenges. A mismatch between an employee and his organization, a poor fit between an employee and his job, or inability to adapt in the workplace can translate into high costs

for an organization and create a lot of tension and frustration for both the individual and the organization.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the process that a TCK may go through when making career choices and how they adjust to the changes and challenges in their chosen careers. Specifically, the study seeks to uncover the possible effects that the TCK life experience may have on career choice and career adaptation for a TCK. To do this, the TCK experience is examined from the experiential learning perspective. It is an exploration of how the TCK experiences are interpreted by the participants, what knowledge, skills, and abilities the TCKs participants are able to develop from these experiences and finally how their learning from past experiences impact their subsequent choices in career and work adaptation.

Research Questions

1. What is the process that TCKs go through when making their career choices? What factors do they consider?
2. How does the TCK experience help or hinder TCKs in adapting to their workplace?
3. What strategies, skills, or abilities, developed through their TCK experiences, do TCKs employ to help them adapt to the workplace and overcome challenges that they may encounter at work?

To respond to these questions, this study takes a qualitative approach and is intended to be explorative. The TCK interviewees are mostly of Taiwanese background, with a few participants from other parts of the world such as the USA, Korea, and Hong Kong.

Significance of the Study

Today's work environment is one that is quick-paced, unpredictable, fluid, and marked by technological advances and organizational changes, among other changes. (Jurtan, 2011; Klehe, Zikic, Van Vianen, & De Pater, 2011). There is more cooperation but also more competition globally due to an increasing dependency among nations (Arthur, 2002). This creates a demand for individuals that have certain competencies to work in this global workplace. TCKs are potentially fitting candidates in this global workplace as they often acquire adaptive characteristics through their TCK lifestyle (Jurtan, 2011). It would thus be helpful to individuals and organizations to gain more understanding about the vocational choices and adaptation patterns of this group of individuals.

Understanding the impact that the TCK experience may have on career choice and career adjustment may provide useful insight to TCKs and organizations in addressing needs and providing the support necessary to help TCKs develop a healthy, fulfilling, and productive career. Organizations can benefit more from hiring TCKs and more fully draw upon their strengths and experiences.

Pollock (1998) noted that the quality of third culture-ness may develop in individuals who live within the confines of a national border but have been exposed to multiple cultures within that nation. This exposure produces experiences similar to that of the international TCK. Thus the study of TCKs and their experiences are relevant to even those who may live in one country but come in contact with multiple cultures. In fact, sociologist Ted Ward has been quoted in saying that a TCK is the prototype for the twenty-first century citizen (Pollock, 1998; Van Reken 2008). The need for more information on them and their experiences will only increase with time and globalization.

Definition of Terms

Third Culture Kids (TCK)

A Third Culture Kid is an individual who has lived in a culture outside that of his parents' for a significant amount of time during his or her developmental years, which is approximately from birth to age 18. TCKs often develop relationships with all the

cultures that they come in contact with, but they do not fully belong to any single culture. Rather than feeling like they belong to a geographic location, often, they experience a sense of belonging in their relationship with others of similar background (Pollock, 1998; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009).

In his definition, Pollock leaves the length of time one needs to spend in another culture unspecified because the precise amount of time needed to develop third culture characteristics varies with each person and is difficult to pinpoint. For the purposes of this research, we limit the criteria for TCK participants to individuals who have spent at least two years living in another culture between the ages 8-18.

Individuals with TCK background are sometimes also referred to as ‘global nomads’ or ‘transculturals’ (Fail, Thompson, & Walker, 2004) and sometimes, they are described as ‘cultural chameleons’ (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009), ‘hidden immigrants’, or as being ‘internationally mobile’ (Gerner, 1992). Sometimes, the term “adult third culture kid (ATCK)” is used to refer to a TCK who is no longer a child. In this study, the distinction is not made, and “TCKs” are used to simply refer to someone with highly mobile and cross-cultural experiences in their developing years.

Career Choice

Career choices are decisions that an individual makes concerning their vocations and vocational development. In the present research, it simply refers to the full-time jobs that one chooses to do for any length of time.

Career Adaptability

Career adaptability is defined as “the willingness and ability to change behaviors, feelings and thoughts in response to environmental demands” in one’s vocational role (Forrier, Sels, & Stynen, 2009; McArdle, Waters, Briscoe & Hall, 2007, p. 248).

In this research, it is simply defined as the willingness and ability to change to adjust to the demands of the workplace.

CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter 2 gives an overview and a summary of relevant literature on TCKs, who they are, what makes them different from their peers, the effect that the mobile and multicultural lifestyle has on them, including benefits and challenges as a result of this lifestyle, common characteristics that TCKs, career theories, adaptability, and Kolb's experiential learning model.

Third Culture Kid (TCK)

The Making of TCKs

In today's world, not only is it common for people of all ages to travel to different countries and regions, but a growing number of people are living in multiple nations for extended periods of time starting early in their childhood years. The reasons for these opportunities to live abroad may include business expatriation, military, missionary work, work in foreign services, technical aid work, humanitarian and development aid, work in media, and work in education (Cameron, 2006; Jandt, 2007; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). These intercultural experiences change individuals in their worldviews, values, attitudes, abilities, and other fundamental ways. They are not true members of their host culture(s) and they are no longer the same person they were before their exposure to new culture(s) outside that of their original country. They have developed a "third culture-ness" (Pollock 1998).

The term Third Culture Kid (TCK) was first coined in the 1950's by anthropologist and sociologist Ruth Useem (Espinetti, 2011; Pollock 1998). Ruth Useem and her husband John Useem worked with families of U.S. business and government who were on overseas assignments. She observed the children in these families and noted their uniqueness; observing different thinking patterns and different points of references for these children (Pollock, 1998).

TCKs, a product of cultural exchanges, have always been around (Gillies, 1998; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). According to Pollock and Van Reken (2009), they are increasing in visibility now for various reasons. Where they were perhaps once

considered anomalies, they have now become a rapidly growing group of individuals. As these TCKs grow up, they give voice to their experiences by forming groups, sharing their experiences on various platforms such as blogs, and websites, forming more awareness in the general public. Public figures who are TCKs have also brought more attention to this group of individuals. Finally, the significance of the TCK experience has increased in today's world. "Looking at the TCK world can help us prepare for the long-term consequences of this new pattern of global cultural mixing." (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009, p. 5)

TCKs Defined

Pollock defines a TCK as someone who has spent a significant amount of time during his developmental years in a culture outside that of his parents. This results in the individual incorporating elements from the host culture(s) and the "home" culture to create a third culture (Pollock, 1998). Pollock goes on to say that rather than finding a sense of belonging in a place, their sense of belonging lies within relationships to others of similar background. He felt inclined to qualify some of the key words within his definition. As each person has different personalities, life experiences, perceptions, attitudes, temperaments, and other characteristics, individuals will respond differently even to similar experiences. Therefore, the amount of time needed in a host culture before third-culture characteristics are developed varies for each person (Pollock, 1998; Selmer & Lam, 2004). Other variables to consider when examining a TCK life include:

disposition, age of entry into the mission context [host culture], amount of time spent as an MK [Missionary Kid], health of family dynamics, sibling separation, degree of social restriction experienced, amount of contact with other expatriates, frequency of visits back to the passport country, access to internet and electronic mail. (Cameron, 2006, p.150)

Finally, the development of a TCK is what distinguishes the experience of a TCK most from that of his or her parents. The experience of living in a mobile and culturally mixed world impacts a person in a profoundly different way depending on whether it occurs during one's developmental years or if it occurs in one's mature adulthood (Pollock, 1998).

Even though each sub-group of TCKs (ie. children of business expatriates, missionary families, military families, and diplomatic families, etc.) has its own distinct characteristics, there are two definitive features at the core of all TCK experiences; TCKs are raised in a cross-cultural and a highly mobile world (Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009).

Two Sides of the Same Coin: Paradoxes of the TCK Lifestyle

TCKs have the opportunity to reap tremendous benefits from their lifestyle. Through their experiences, the particular skills that they have the chance to acquire include cross-cultural, observational, social and linguistic skills. TCKs tend to be more open-minded, socially adaptable, intellectually flexible, resourceful, and are able to reconcile different view points (Cameron, 2006; Dewaele & Oudenhoven, 2009; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009; Yoshida et al., 2009). Yet at the same time, the same lifestyle that allows them to enjoy these benefits also present many challenges. The paradoxical and conflicting nature of the TCK life can be observed in many of the issues that they deal with.

Broad worldview vs. torn allegiance.

TCKs may have a broader worldview, where they have the opportunity to live what others only watch on TV, or read in magazines and books (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). Sometimes though, the breadth in experiences of multiple cultures comes at the expense of depth in knowledge of a singular culture. While they may be knowledgeable about several other cultures, they may sometimes be insufficiently informed about their own to be competent in their home culture after their return (Cameron, 2006; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). While they have the opportunities to learn many languages, they may not be fluent in their mother tongue. Due to their broad experiences and the many places they have lived in and connected with, TCKs are often open-minded and can often quickly relate to different people by finding common grounds (Byttner, 2012). The downside of this is that TCKs may feel a sense of confused loyalties and torn allegiance (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009; Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011). An example of this internal struggle may be observed outwardly in how TCKs often become representative of all the cultures that they have spent time in and find themselves often jumping in to defend different cultures when other people criticize or attack that culture. They may defend their home culture or

host cultures with equal enthusiasm, depending on who is criticizing and which culture is being criticized (Byttner, 2012).

Appearance of cultural adaptability vs. lack of true cultural balance.

Outwardly, many TCKs seem to have high sensitivity to their surroundings and are able to blend in well by adopting culturally sensitive and appropriate behaviors. However, inwardly, they can lack true cultural balance, defined as an “almost unconscious knowledge of how things are and work in a particular community” (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009, p.44). The reason that they may not have true cultural balance is because the nuances of culture are learned through immersion and experience. The level of knowledge and familiarity in a culture is proportional to how much time one actually spends immersed in a culture because culture cannot be learned by studying books (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). While they are able to pick up the outward elements of a culture such as language, appearance, and behavior through their TCK experiences, the subtleties of a culture and a community are not as easily and quickly learned.

Relationships.

In TCK literature, it has been said that TCKs usually define their sense of belonging in terms of relationships rather than a place (Fail et al., 2004; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009; Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009). Pollock & Van Reken (2009) note that because of this, TCKs often will make greater efforts than non-TCKs in trying to maintain their relationships, especially those within the TCK community. On the other hand, because the TCK experience is often riddled with goodbyes, TCKs may be prone to develop protective instincts against the pain of separation by avoiding true intimacy in relationships. As high mobility is a fact of life for many TCKs, they know that a friendship is normally just for a short season in life. Often, TCKs are found to bypass the more superficial levels of communication and start straightaway on a deeper level for their relationships (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). However, even though they may start off at a deeper level of communication, they are often unwilling to move into deeper intimacy. Often, there is also little time for them to develop the relationship any deeper even if they had wanted to. Thus, they lack the practice to do so and this may affect their relationship patterns later on in life. Pollock and Van Reken (2009) speak of the possibility that emotional coldness and distance can become a protective mechanism that

is extended to many areas of life. They have noted that, “Sometimes what is praised as confidence and independence among TCKs may actually be a form of detachment” (Pollock and Van Reken, 2009, p. 139)

Due to the number of people that they encounter in their TCK years, they often have many friends. Unfortunately, the sheer number of friendships can grow so large that it becomes unmanageable, not to mention the difficulties in maintaining relationships that are often geographically apart. TCKs may enjoy friendship from around the world, but they also have to deal with the pain and loss of having constantly interrupted relationships (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009; Smith, 2011). For many TCKs, one of the few constants in their TCK lifestyle is their family (Byttner, 2012), thus TCKs are often very close to their families.

Other Common TCK Characteristics

Education.

TCKs often have highly educated parents and are often sent to study in good schools abroad. In a study examining the educational and career choices of 400 TCKs, nearly 90% have college degrees, and over 40% have completed a graduate degree, while many others within the study are close to obtaining a graduate degree (Cottrell & Useem, 1999). They also gain a rich education simply by living and experiencing life in different cultures (Byttner, 2012).

Delayed adolescence.

TCK literature speaks of an observed phenomenon called “delayed adolescence” which describes how TCKs are so often so busy trying to figure out the outside world every time they are in a new environment that they do not have enough time to explore within themselves to figure themselves out in the time that their peers get to do so. So, it sometimes may take TCKs a little bit longer to discover who they are, what they are good at, and what their passions are. They may settle down later in life in all areas, including marriage, career, and lifestyle. (Cottrell & Useem, 1999; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009)

Perseverance and decisiveness.

In terms of endurance through hardship and finding solutions when encountering problems, Pollock & Van Reken (2009) noted that TCKs are sometimes underdeveloped in their problem-solving skills for long-term issues since their highly-mobile lifestyle often meant long-term problems sometimes disappear on their own when it comes time to move. This meant that sometimes TCKs would consider simply packing up and leaving a situation that they find difficult or challenging rather than confronting the situation and finding ways to deal with long-term problems (Smith, 2011). On a related issue, the unpredictable and transitory nature of the TCK lifestyle prompts many TCKs to seize opportunities when they arise and so they may seem very decisive, albeit impulsive to some. At the same time, the same elements of uncertainty and a sense of having no choice in deciding where they will be and what they will do sometimes make it difficult for TCKs to make decisions and plan ahead for the future, so they may just allow life to happen (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009).

Other Elements of the TCK Experience.

Other elements of the TCK experience may include living with obvious physical distinctions from the locals in host cultures, expectations of eventual repatriation to their home country, privileged lifestyles, and having a system identity, such as being a member of the religious community (missionary kids), being a part of the military community (military brats), or having membership in the expatriate community, in which they take up what Useem calls “representational roles” (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009).

TCKs and the Issue of Identity

At heart, TCKs often struggle with a sense of rootlessness and restlessness. The constant changing of environments in their developmental stages of life makes it difficult for some TCKs to establish an enduring sense of identity and belonging. They have trouble pinpointing where home is, and they develop a “migratory instinct” that urges them to be constantly on the move (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009, pp. 123-127). Establishing a sense of identity and a sense of belonging are the greatest challenges for the average TCK (Isogai, Hayashi & Uno, 1999; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009).

“Identity is the stable, consistent, and reliable sense of who one is and what one stands for in the world” (Josselson, 1987, p. 10; Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009). Erikson

(1963), who is best known for his theory on the psychosocial development of human beings and often considered the founder of the identity theory, asserts that there are eight stages through which a person develops during his lifetime. Within each of these eight phases are psychological and social challenges to overcome. The eight stages that Erikson identified are: basic trust versus mistrust, autonomy versus shame and doubt, initiative versus guilt, industry versus inferiority, identity versus role confusion, intimacy versus isolation, generativity versus stagnation, and ego integrity versus despair. Each stage must be successfully completed and resolved for healthy development; otherwise, unresolved issues will resurface later on in life as problems (Werner & DeSimone, 2009).

The fifth stage in this developmental model, identity versus role confusion corresponds to the general period of puberty and adolescence in a person's life. However, Erikson explains that, though the adolescence stage in life is crucial for the formation of identity and an overt identity crisis takes place during this time, the formation of identity begins in infancy and continues long after adolescence. It is a lifelong development process (Erikson, 1980; Josselson, 1987).

According to Erikson (1980), the feeling of having a personal identity includes two observations: one's own perception of his "selfsameness" and "continuity in time"; and the fact that others recognize that sameness and continuity (p. 22). It happens when a person discovers a "persistent sameness within oneself" and also a "persistent sharing" of important characters with other people (Erikson, 1980, p. 109). This process of defining oneself is significant and does not happen in isolation. Personal identity is defined in relation to the world in which one inhabits; it happens within relationships to others. Downie (1976) asserts that the mobility factor leaves the TCK without a sense of roots and without a web of stable relationships to help them develop their sense of identity (as cited in Fail et al., 2004).

The constant moving may hinder the formation of a complete sense of cultural and self-identity; the identity of a TCK is formed while juggling multiple cultures. Research show that often TCKs either feel like they belong to all the cultures they have come in contact with or none at all. "The TCK frequently builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any" (Pollock, 1989). This is the condition described as "marginality."

Bennett (2004) says that the stage of "integration" in his (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) can be used to describe people who make

frequent transitions between cultural contexts; TCKs certainly qualify. Bennett's DMIS describes people's progression from a state of ethnocentrism (where one believes his own culture to be true and superior to all other cultures) to ethnorelativism (meaning that one believes that one's culture is only one viable way of life among many other options) as they become more culturally competent (Bennett, 2004). The six stages of development in his model are 1) Denial, 2) Defense, 3) Minimization, 4) Acceptance, 5) Adaptation, and 6) Integration. As a person progresses from stage one through to stage six, he moves towards ethnorelativism.

Stage six, "integration of cultural difference is the state in which one's experience of self is expanded to include the movement in and out of different cultural worldviews" (Bennett, 2004, p.72). At this stage, no single culture is central to the individual's view of life. Integration can have two manifestations of marginality, meaning that a TCK may effectively utilize his experiences and draw strengths from each culture and switch between these frames of culture with ease and experience constructive marginality. Or a TCK may outwardly still be able to interact with other cultures, adjusting their behavior as the situation demands, but within, he may feel alienated from and rejected by all cultures, resulting in encapsulated marginality (Bennett, 2004; Fail et al., 2004; Selmer & Lam, 2004). The difference between the two states of marginality is whether or not the issue of identity has been resolved within (Bennett, 2004).

A look into the biracial identity development models can also be enlightening since the issues of multiple cultures are central to the experiences of both biracial individuals and TCKs. Poston's (1990) model describes five stages in biracial identity development. In the first stage, called personal identity, although they may have some awareness of race and ethnicity, individuals experience self separate from his race and ethnicity. In the second stage, called choice of group categorization, individuals choose an identity to take on. Their choices are affected by many factors such as the people in their lives, acceptance by different groups, their appearance, knowledge of language or culture, and personality. In the enmeshment/denial stage, individuals experience a sense of guilt, confusion, and torn allegiance for having to make a choice and deny part of themselves. In the fourth stage, appreciation, individuals start to more fully understand and appreciate their multiracial background and may start to explore the race that they had previously denied. In the final stage of the model, integration, individuals experience acceptance and wholeness concerning their integrated multiracial identity.

Fail et al. (2004) summarizes the findings of different researchers such as Brislin (2000) and Munayer (2000) regarding the effect of mobility on TCKs and the formation of their identity. Brislin explains that culture provides guidelines for specific behaviors. For TCKs, these specific behaviors change as they move from one place to another, often resulting in their cultural values and behaviors and therefore their sense of identity, being challenged when they arrive at a new culture. Munayer says that because TCKs so often find their old pattern of behavior or value from one culture inappropriate or unsuitable in the next culture; to adapt, they develop a chameleon-like quality, which go on to have a long-term effect on their identity formation (as cited in Fail et al., 2004; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). They may never really gain a sense of who they are, and those around them may see them as a fence-sitter, never having a strong opinion or taking a stance on issues (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009).

A poignant passage written by travel writer Pico Iyer describes the predicament of TCKs who are adept at blending into new surroundings but have not fully grasped their own sense of identity:

The Global Soul may see so many sides of every question that he never settles on a firm conviction; he may grow so used to giving back a different self according to his environment that he loses sight of who he is when nobody's around. Even the most basic questions have to be answered by him alone, and when, on the planes where he may make his home, the cabin attendant passes down the aisle with disembarkation forms, it may be difficult for him to fill in any of the boxes: 'Home Address', 'Citizenship', 'Purpose of Visit', even 'Marital Status'. I can answer almost any of these from a variety of perspectives... But though this can be a natural – and useful – enough impulse in response to the question 'Where do you come from?' it becomes more treacherous in answer to the question 'Where do you stand?' (Iyer, 2000, p.25)

While this chameleon-like ability to be highly sensitive to one's surrounds and to change accordingly in order to blend in is a useful skill to possess when adapting to the day-to-day life in different cultures and environments, it may hinder the development of a clear sense of self.

TCKs and Work

The same study mentioned earlier that was done with 400 TCKs which concluded that overall, TCKs have a relatively high level of education when compared with the average non-TCK population also found that TCKs are also relatively high achievers at work (Cottrell & Useem, 1999). In the study, over 80% of TCKs in the study were found to be professionals, semi-professionals, executives, managers, or officials.

From their occupational choices, it could be seen that TCKs value learning, they are interested in helping others, and they long for independence and flexibility within their work. One-fourth of the TCKs in the study worked in education, 17% worked as professionals, and 17% are self-employed. According to the study, not too many TCKs choose to work in corporations, and few enter into the government. Most than half of these 400 TCKs (56%) have incorporated an international element into their jobs (Cottrell & Useem, 1999).

Much of the current literature on TCK is focused on the general TCK experience. In the few articles that discuss TCKs in the workplace, TCKs have been hailed as a particularly suitable workforce for the globalized age. Jurtan (2011) says that TCKs can be an important source of talent in today's globalized workplace and their experiences may provide great value to organizations. Jurtan suggests that TCKs possess the adaptability, experience, and understanding beneficial to spearhead the processes of change in midst of organization changes, which frequently occur in the transience of today's business world (Jurtan, 2011).

Others have speculated TCKs to be the ideal business expatriate to send for assignments abroad, equipped with the linguistic and cultural fluency as well as the flexibility to effortlessly traverse between cultures, languages, and environments (Selmer & Lam, 2004). Commonly cited characteristics of an effective expatriate include good communication skills, openness, low neuroticism, moderate extroversion, interpersonal skills, cultural sensitivity, linguistic skill, ability to handle stress and sociability (Caligiuri, 2000; Jordan & Cartwright, 1998; Selmer & Lam, 2004). This list includes some of the commonly-cited characteristics that TCKs share. Many of these skills and traits cannot be obtained through conventional cross-cultural training (Selmer & Lam, 2004) and yet TCKs often develop these characteristics and abilities as a result of their mobile and multicultural lifestyle. Sending TCKs on overseas assignments as expatriates or even on business trips may reduce the amount of training and development needed (Selmer &

Lam, 2004), thus significantly cutting the costs of an overseas assignment while increasing the likelihood of a successful and effective assignment.

Selmer & Lam (2004) also point to trainers of an organization's cross-cultural training program for expatriates, mentors for expatriates on assignment, or someone who assess the performance of expatriates as potential roles that TCKs could effectively play within their organization while located in their home country.

As one of the most visible and powerful TCKs today, American President Barack Obama is a good example of a TCK well-equipped for today's world (Dewaele & Oudenhoven, 2009; Van Reken, 2008). He also appointed other TCKs to serve alongside him. Van Reken (2008) spoke of the emotional and psychological traits that these individuals share, along with other TCKs that may "exert great influence in the new administration." She highlights some characteristics of a classic TCK profile that may be helpful in work:

...someone with a global perspective who is socially adaptable and intellectually flexible. He or she is quick to think outside the box and can appreciate and reconcile different points of view. Beyond whatever diversity in background or appearance a TCK may bring to the party, there is a diversity of thought as well. (Van Reken, 2008)

While these studies speak of the fit of TCK characteristics in the modern-day workplace, there are few recent empirical studies done on the related topics of TCK career choice process and the workplace adaptation of TCKs.

Career and Career Adaptability

Career Theories

Although Frank Parsons has been widely recognized as the founder of the movement for organized vocational guidance (Jones, 1994; Savickas, 2009), interest and studies in occupation to help individuals select suitable careers can be dated back to the late fifteenth century in literature (Zytowski, 1972).

In 1909, Parsons outlined the first principles and organized framework in vocational choice. In summary, they are: 1) understanding of self 2) knowledge of factors relating to different lines of work and 3) reasoning of the relationship between the two. This idea of

matching individual characteristics with job factors was later developed into the *trait-and-factor theory* and is still a cornerstone in most of today's theories about occupation (Brown, 2002).

In the time since Parsons first developed his ideas into a tripartite model more than a hundred years ago, a comprehensive web of theories and frameworks have emerged in the west, especially in the United States (Leung, 2008). The trait-and-factor theory went uncontested for the first few decades in the development of career theories, and dominated in the practice of career counseling. Even when challenges to the trait-and-factor theory spurred research interests and other theories emerged, it continued to guide practice for the most part.

In 1951, Ginzberg, Ginsburg, Axelrad, and Herma proposed a new theory apart from the traditional assumptions of the trait-and-factor theory. They maintained that career development is a long-term developmental process. In 1972, Ginzberg defined occupational choice as a process that lasts for as long as we continue to make decisions about our career. A person's career is shaped by decisions in earlier career phases, as well as the constant changes in one's work and life experiences. Individuals try to maximize their level of satisfaction by identifying the best alternative to satisfy their needs under the constraints of the employment environment (Ginzberg, 1972; Minor, 2002).

Career Adaptability Defined

Savickas (2005) defines career adaptability as “a psychosocial construct that denotes an individual's readiness and resources for coping with current and imminent vocational development tasks, occupational transitions, and personal traumas” (p. 51). According to Hall (2002), adaptability is a type of metacompetency, that is, a competency that when acquired, will readily enable an individual to pick up other skills, abilities, and competencies. It is an important skill to have in career development (McCarthy, O'Connell, & Hall 2005).

Hall identifies flexibility, exploration, effective performance in various roles over an extended period of time, openness to new things and to accept new challenges, ability to learn from past mistakes, communication skills, and ease with turbulent change as some of the behaviors that characterize this competency (McCarthy, O'Connell, & Hall 2005).

The modern-day workplaces increasingly demand adaptability from its workers; however, it is hard to define what exactly constitutes adaptive behavior. In an effort to bring more clarity to the issue, Pulakos, Arad, Donovan, & Plamondon (2000) began putting together a taxonomy for adaptive performance. Adaptive performance is the newest component that was added by Campbell (1999) to the job performance model originally developed by Campbell, McCloy, Oppler, and Sager (1993). Pulakos et al. (2000) concluded that adaptive performance is a construct consisting of many dimensions. From their research, they came up with eight; 1) Handling emergencies or crisis situation, 2) Handling work stress, 3) Solving problems creatively, 4) Dealing with uncertain and unpredictable work situations, 5) Learning work tasks, technologies, and procedures 6) Demonstrating interpersonal adaptability 7) Demonstrating cultural adaptability, and 8) Demonstrating physically oriented adaptability. They also found that different jobs require different levels of competency in different dimensions of adaptive performance.

Out of these eight dimensions, four dimensions seem particularly relevant to the TCK lifestyle. They are the ability to solve problems creatively, interpersonal adaptability, cultural adaptability, and dealing with uncertain and unpredictable situations.

Career Adaptability Theories

In Career Construction Theory, Savickas (2005) describes adaptability as “the attitudes, competencies, and behaviors that individuals use in fitting themselves to work that suits them...Adaptability involves adjusting to vocational development tasks, occupational transitions, and personal traumas by solving problems that are usually unfamiliar, often ill-defined, and always complex.” (p.45-51).

From the Self-construction perspective, Ibarra (1999) describes how people adjust to new positions and roles at work by negotiating with temporary self-concepts that they take on to serve as potential vocational identities. Ibarra gives the example of individuals who transition to more senior roles by first observing role models to identify potential identities. Then individuals will modify and refine these temporary versions of self-concept as they evaluating them against their own internal standards and feedback from the outside world.

Ibarra (1999) summarizes the findings of socialization researchers who have noted identity changes in people as they make career transitions. The cause of this change is attributed to the necessity of new skills, knowledge, abilities, behaviors, attitudes, and

patterns of interactions within the new roles, which brings about fundamental changes in an individual's concept of self. With time and experience, individuals come to a better understanding of what is required in a new role and of whom they want to be in that new role. They then adapt themselves to fit the demands of their new roles and readjust their self-concepts to adapt to the new situation.

Acculturation

In today's globalized world of work, individuals are likely to come into contact with different cultures within their careers. Acculturation, also known as cultural adaptation, then becomes a part of the adaptation process. It refers to the learning and the adopting of the norms and values in a new culture (Jandt, 2004). In a commonly used model developed by Berry, Kim, and Boski (1987), acculturation is examined in relation to two dimensions: value placed on maintaining original cultural identity and valued placed on maintaining relationship with groups in the new culture. The model describes four adaptation strategies. Assimilation takes place when one gives up one's original cultural identity and fully embraces that of the new culture. Integration is when one becomes an integral part of the new culture while maintaining significant parts of the original culture. Separation (or segregation) is when the individual maintains his original culture and is uninvolved in the new culture. Marginalization happens when one loses his sense of cultural identity and feels as if he belongs to neither the original nor the new culture (Jandt, 2004).

Experiential Learning Theory and Model

In this study, David A. Kolb's Experiential Learning Model is used as the theoretical framework. Kolb asserts that adaptation come mainly through the process of learning (Kolb, 1984). His Experiential Learning Model has four components. The four stages in this cycle are 1) concrete experiences 2) reflective observation 3) abstract conceptualization and 4) active experimentation. Concrete experiences provide the material for reflection and observation. The stage of reflection and observation produces abstract concepts which will have new meanings. These new meanings are then tested out and used as a reference in creating new experiences. ELT can be applied to different

areas of life at the individual level, the organizational group level, and even at the societal level (Kolb & Kolb, 2009).

As one of the most widely-known learning theories, the Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) differs from cognitive learning and behavioral learning theories in its emphasis on the significance of experiences in the learning and development process (Kolb, Boyatzis & Mainemelis, 2001). It is based upon the works of Lewin, Dewey, and Piaget on the experiential learning process (Kolb, 1984).

ELT pulls together the work of the major experiential learning scholars and have a few important propositions about learning (Kolb & Kolb, 2009):

1) “Learning is best conceived as a process, not in terms of outcomes” (p. 4). This means, that rather than focus on behavior, the emphasis should be on a process that enhances learning, which should include feedback to let students know how they are doing with their learning efforts.

2) “All learning is re-learning” (p. 5). Learning is encouraged when one’s beliefs and ideas are drawn out so that they can be evaluated, tested, and then integrated to form new thinking about a topic; it has a cyclical nature.

3) “Learning requires the resolution of conflicts between dialectically opposed models of adaptation to the world” (p. 5). Conflicts and disagreements exist among the different ways to deal with the world. These conflicts are what drive the learning process. When one moves back and forth between conflicting ways and learns to resolve these disagreements, learning happens.

4) “Learning is a holistic process of adaptation” (p. 5). Learning involves the whole person; it calls on a person to feel, think, do, and perceive.

5) “Learning results from synergetic transactions between the person and the environment” (p. 5). Our learning pattern results from the pattern in which we regularly interact with our environment. The choices we make have an effect on what events we will experience, and since these events affect our future, we essentially shape ourselves and dictate our lives through the decisions we make.

6) “Learning is the process of creating knowledge” (p. 5). In ELT, learning takes place in the process when experiences are transformed into knowledge (Kolb, 1984).

The reason that Kolb’s Experiential Learning Model is chosen as a theoretical framework for this study is because of its emphasis on learning as a continual process,

and on the importance of experiences in the process of learning. An important source of information for this study is the life experiences of the twenty TCKs, what they have gained through their TCK experiences, how their reflections and observations have translated their experiences into concepts and their unique interpretations of the world, and how their knowledge and interpretations are tested through encountering new situations each time they move. The learning that they have done earlier in their TCK experiences are now being tested again in a new environment (the workplace). By resolving the conflicts and disagreements between what they have learned in the past and what is happening in their workplaces now, TCKs will have yet another opportunity to learn and adapt. The continuous and experiential nature of learning in the lives of the TCKs are captured in this model.

Summary

In the literature review section, the focus is on the separate issues of TCKs, career theories, adaptability, and the experiential learning model. First, the TCK profile and some of the issues that they encounter were examined. Existing literature on TCKs and work were also presented. A few career theories that focus on career as a lifelong developmental process were then discussed and theories on adaptation were briefly explored, including characteristics of an adaptable person, and also acculturation. Finally, the experiential learning model was explained.

To the best of my knowledge, there are few studies specifically on TCKs and their career choices and adaptability in the workplace. A few studies identified TCKs to be potentially competent expatriates. These studies point to the characteristics, qualities, and experiences of TCKs as their strengths in the increasingly globalized workplace (Selmer & Lam, 2002, 2004). Although Jurtan's (2011) literature review did conclude that TCKs have the characteristics needed to spearhead organizational change processes, I did not come across any empirical research that links the skills and abilities that TCKs have acquired throughout their multicultural and mobile lifestyle to their effectiveness in the workplace.

CHAPTER III RESEARCH METHODS

This chapter explains the research methods involved and the research approach taken to conduct this study. It covers the research framework, research procedure, research participants and sampling, data collection, data analysis, and research quality.

Research Approach

This study takes a qualitative approach because the topic is explorative in nature. I started with the intent to simply examine the experiences of twenty TCKs in the hopes to understand and gain more insight about TCK experiences in regards to their career choice and their adaptation to the work place. The study relies on the TCK participants' own interpretations of their experiences to create a picture of what their career decision and adjustment processes may look like.

A qualitative approach is appropriate here because I am attempting to understand the meaning of the TCK experience in the context of career choice (Merriam, 2009, p.2). Rather than trying to establish a cause and effect relationship between the TCK experience and the path of career development for an individual, or "describing the distribution of some attribute" (Merriam, 2009, p.5) among the TCKs, I was more interested in exploring different aspects of the TCK experiences, unveiling the TCK views of the world, and how TCKs as individuals may view the impact of their past experiences and assign significance to their careers so far and how those experiences shape their current and future decisions. The study is focused on the TCK understanding of their own experiences and the process that they go through as they adapt in their chosen careers. Qualitative research methods allow researchers to generate descriptive data through the participants' own written, spoken, or visual works and observable behavior as a way to get to know the participant as individuals and to find out how they define their world through their personal history, struggles, victories and interactions with the world around them (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975).

This study was conducted from an interpretive or constructive perspective, which is described by Cresswell (2007) as a world view where individuals seek for understanding in the world within which they inhabit. They develop their own meaning for the

experiences they encounter. These meanings are complex and are often negotiated socially and historically, meaning that they are formed through interaction with others and through historical and cultural norms present in the lives of individuals. This type of information are most appropriately generated and analyzed through a qualitative approach to produce useful knowledge.

According to Merriam (2009, p. 24), phenomenology is “a study of people’s conscious experience of their life-world.” It is a suitable approach for studying human experiences that are “affective, emotional and often intense” (Merriam, 2009, p. 26). The TCK experience certainly falls under this category. The desired outcome of the phenomenological approach is to obtain the essence of a phenomenon. (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002) After having read the research, readers should have a better understanding of what it is like to go through the TCK experience or phenomenon (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002).

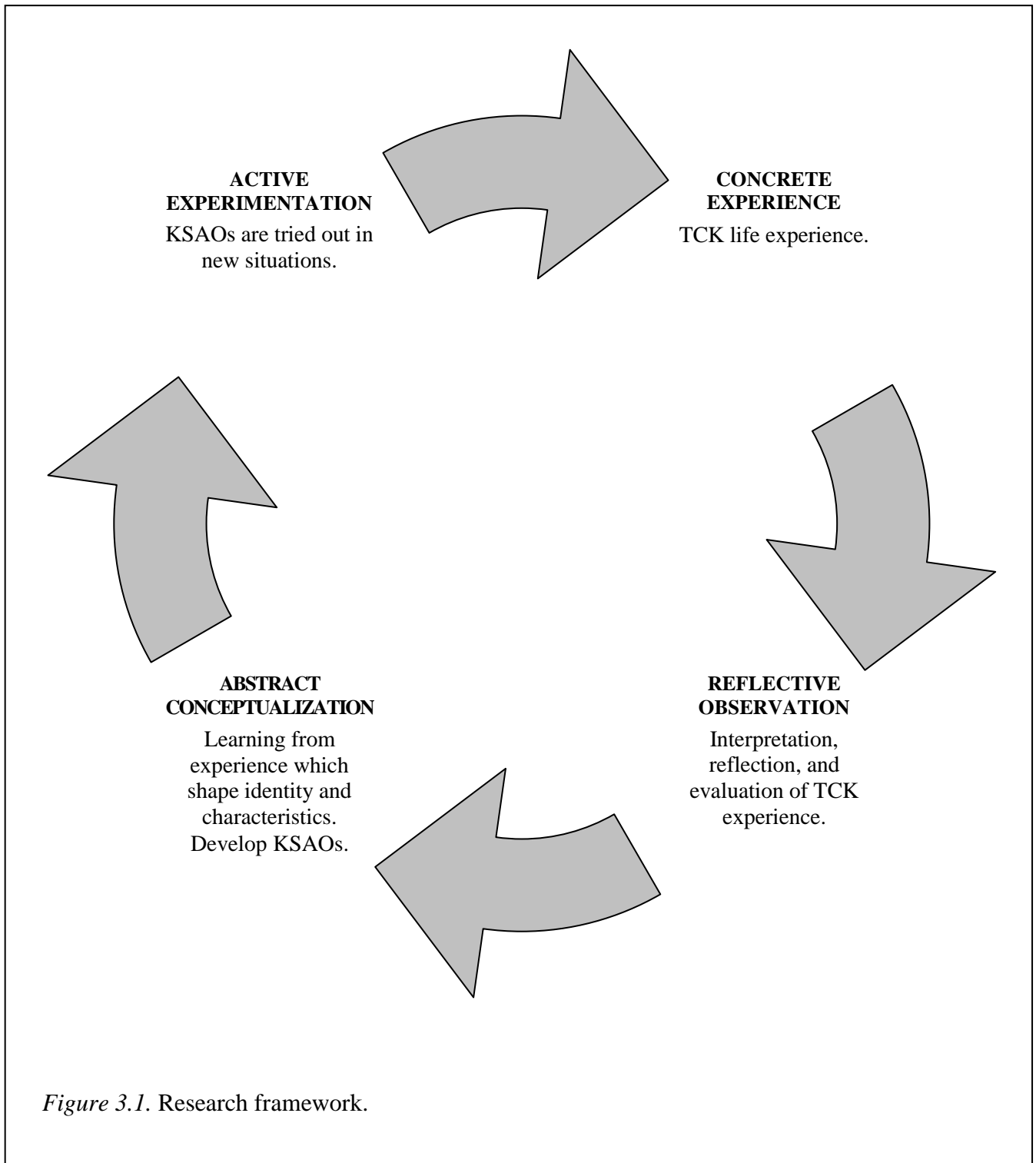
Specifically, this research uses the biographical phenomenology method or life history interviewing, which allows for the sharing of a series of events in an individual’s life through his or her own words (Bakar & Abdullah, 2008; Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009). It allows the researcher to examine the life of an individual, in the context of the world around him. By examining the events that have taken place in a person’s life, one can have a better understanding of how a person came to be at where he/she is currently (Hagemaster, 1992).

Research Framework

The problem identified in the study is that there is a lack of research on TCKs, specifically in the area related to their career choice and career adaptation. This study aims to study the issue by examining how their TCK experiences directly or indirectly affect their career decisions and how they adapt to the challenges at work.

The research framework for this study is based upon Kolb’s Experiential Learning Model. When TCKs go through their life experiences, their experiences are interpreted, reflected upon, and evaluated. After having done that, their experiences are internalized and they learn from what they have gone through. This learning shapes their self-identity and builds certain characteristics. In the learning process, they develop knowledge, skills, abilities, and other capabilities. When they encounter a new experience, learned

knowledge, skills, and abilities are drawn upon and tested. At this point, the cycle repeats itself again. Figure 3.1 is an illustration of this cycle.



Research Procedure

The different phases of the research procedure are described in this section. Some of the steps outlined below occur simultaneously, continually, or repeatedly throughout several phases of the research. For the sake of simplicity however, it is illustrated as a step-by-step procedure in *Figure 3.2*.

The first step in the research was to generate ideas and topics of interest. The viability of conducting the research, the issue of the sampling population and the availability and reach of the participants were considered and discussed at this stage before a final topic was determined.

When the final topic was chosen, literature reviews on TCKs and career choice and adjustment were done to find out what research and information are already done on the subject. This was important in determining an angle from which to discuss the topic as knowledge gaps in the current pool of literature were identified.

The research method and the research framework were then selected based on the literature reviewed, research purpose and research questions. I began the participatory observation stage to help gain more understanding about the participants under study by observing the TCKs around me.

Initial interview questions were drafted according to the research purpose, questions, and literature review. The interview questions were deliberated, refined and reduced through reviews and discussions. The interview questions underwent peer and expert review. The peers were classmates who understood qualitative research methods and have knowledge and experience in the interview process. The questions were also reviewed by two TCKs for clarity of content. Two pilot tests were then conducted. After the pilot test, the list of questions were again revised and finalized. Between interviews, the questions were frequently reviewed and were fine-tuned.

Twelve interviews were done in person and eight conducted over Skype. The interview recordings were transcribed and checked. The collected data were analyzed and interpreted. Results and findings of the research were consolidated and written up.

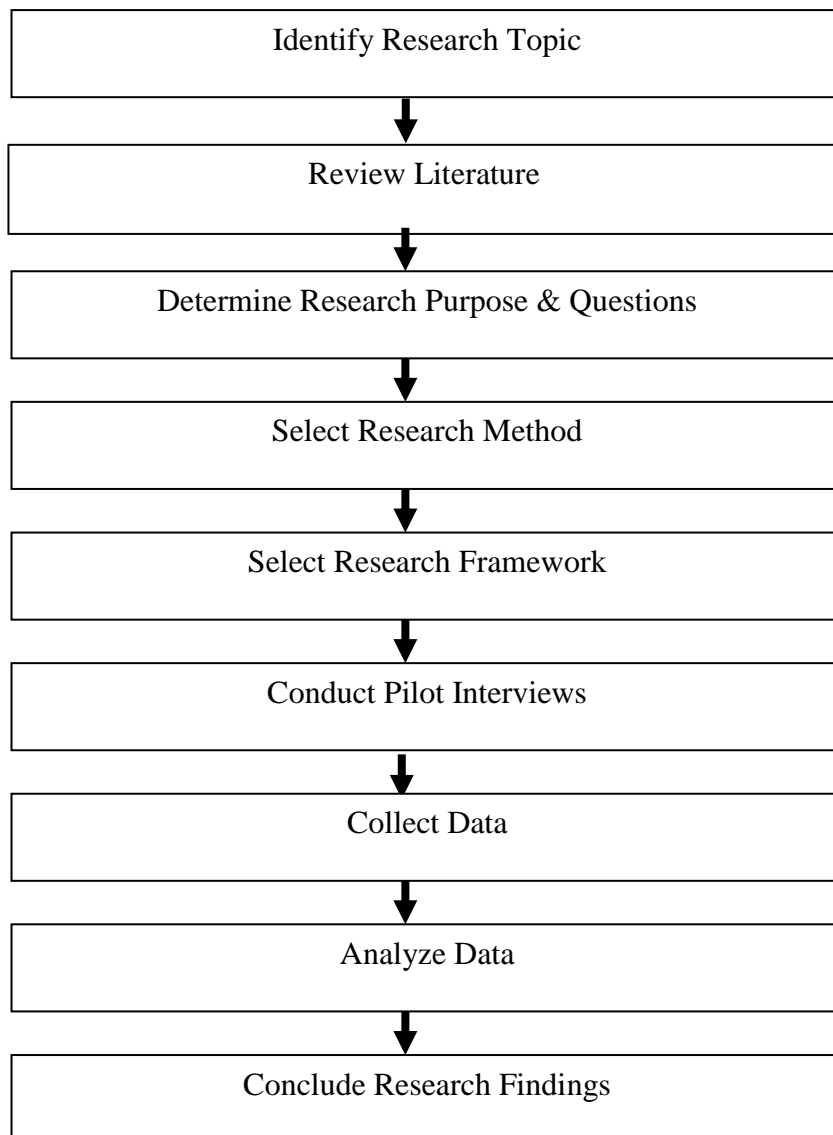


Figure 3.2. Research procedure.

Participants and Sampling

Criteria for Participants

The participants of the study were chosen through purposeful sampling, more specifically, through snowball sampling, also known as network sampling (Merriam, 2009). Initially, the interview list started off with a few TCKs that I knew. Then I asked these participants to recommend other TCKs who may be good candidates, meaning that they fit the criteria and would be willing to share their experiences. Participants mostly recommended their TCK siblings and friends.

The participants of this study are TCKs who have lived in at least one other culture that is different from that of their parent's home country for at least two years between the ages 8-18. Exactly how long it takes to develop third-cultureness, as explained by Pollock (1998), depends on individual characteristics. However, the criteria that they live abroad for at least two years is set to ensure that the participants have had some time to get familiar with and to adjust to living outside of their passport country. Although an individual's developmental years span approximately from age 0 to 18, the criteria for this study is that they have lived abroad between the ages 8-18 because that is approximately when they begin to spend more time in school, where they would be under longer exposure to the host culture and develop the third culture identity (Fail et al., 2004). It is also when they start to have more conscious memory of their experiences.

These TCKs also have at least 1 year of working experience at the time of the interview. This criterion allows for the collection of data on how career choices were made and ensures that the participants have experiences to share concerning the career adaptation process and strategies they employ.

Research Participants

Eight women and twelve men were interviewed (See *Figure 3.3*). The participants were between the ages 25-38 and the average age was 30.7 (See *Figure 3.4*). Four TCKs moved abroad for the first time for educational purposes, without their parents. They lived with host families or in boarding schools. Sixteen of the TCKs first moved abroad with their families because of their parents' occupation. Out of the sixteen, half are from

diplomatic families, one from a military family, and one from a missionary family. The other six TCKs had parents who worked in various jobs and businesses (See *Figure 3.5*).

Eleven of these TCKs have lived in two countries prior to turning 18. The other nine TCKs have lived in three or more countries before the age of 18, and up to as many as eight countries (see *Figure 3.6*). On average, they lived in 3.15 countries before the age of eighteen.

The twenty TCKs in this diverse group work in different fields, ranging from engineering, to education and media, architecture, technology, research, business, finance and more. Based on information provided by nineteen of the twenty participants (one participant wished to keep her work details confidential), the average full-time work experience is 6.1 years. The most experienced participant has been working for sixteen years; the least experienced participant has worked for 1.75 years (See *Figure 3.7*).

See Table 3.1 for a list of participants and a summary of their background information and relevant experiences.

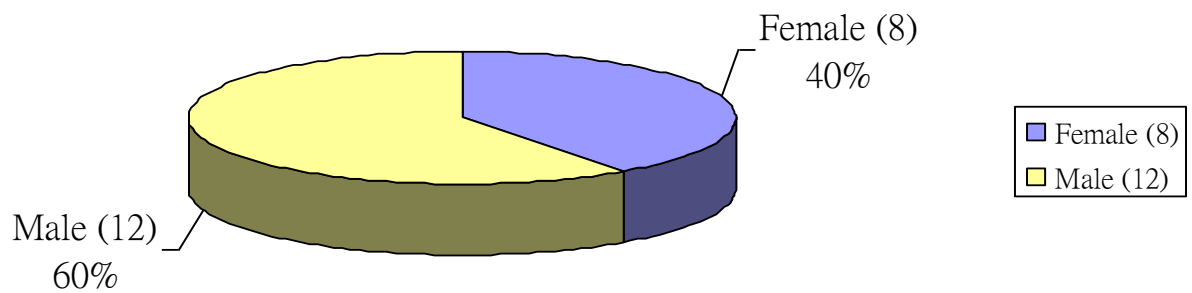


Figure 3.3 Percentage of male and female TCK participants.

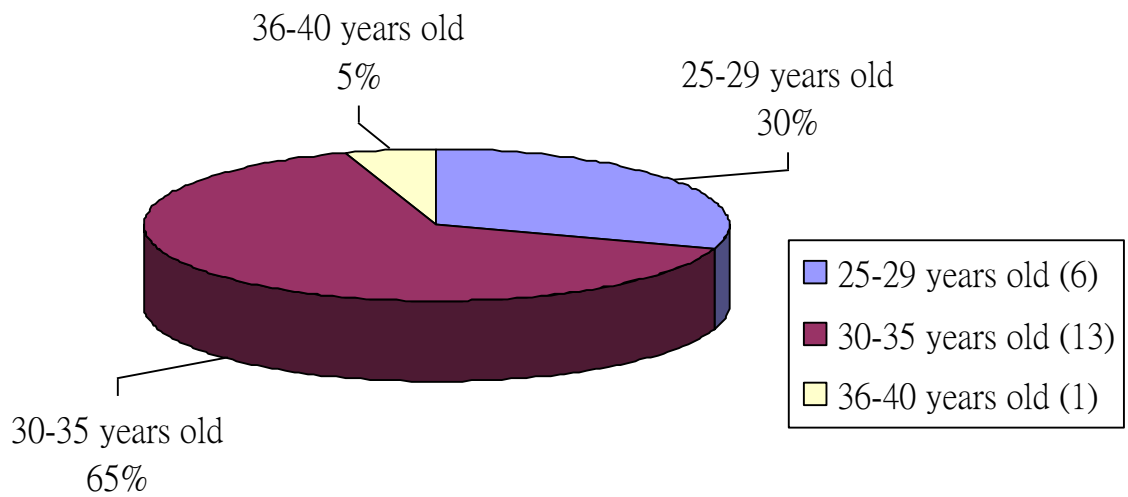


Figure 3.4 Age distribution of the 20 TCK participants.

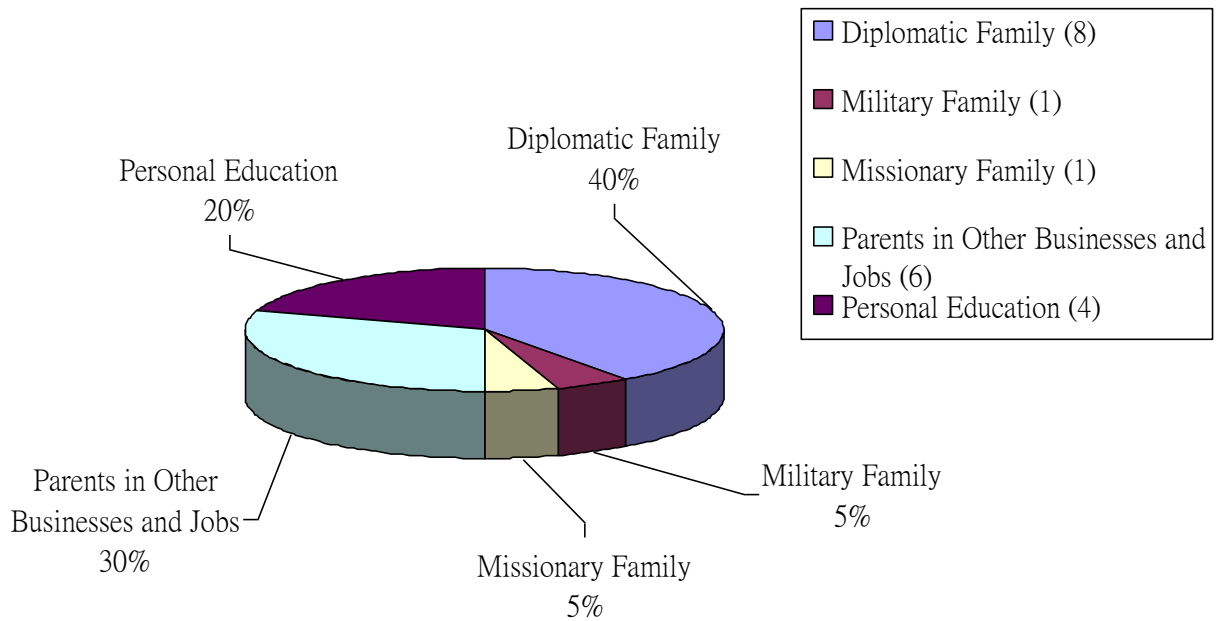


Figure 3.5 Reasons for TCK participants to go abroad.

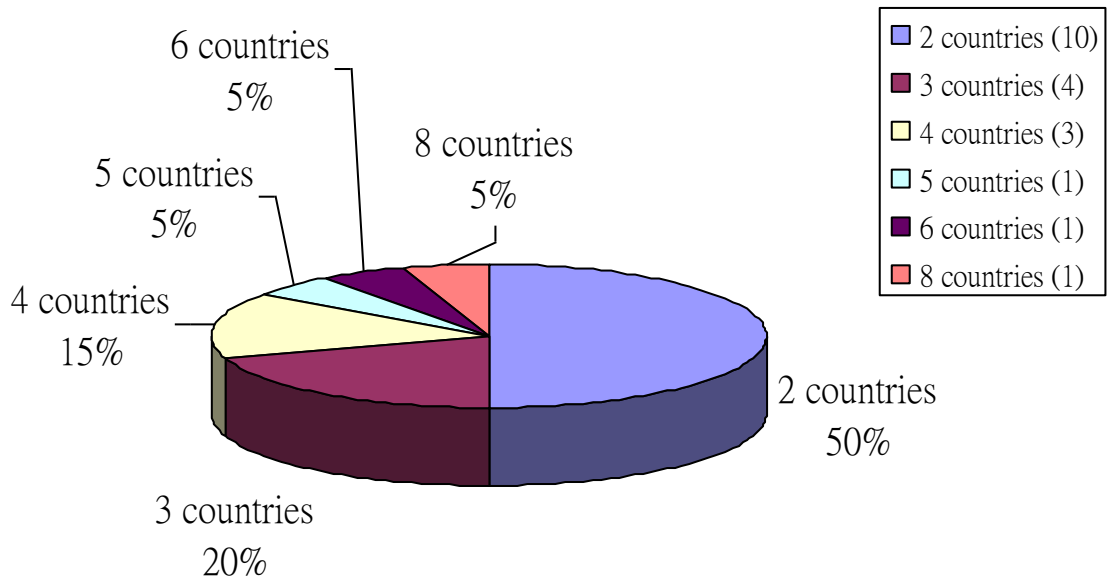


Figure 3.6 Number of countries participants lived in before 18.

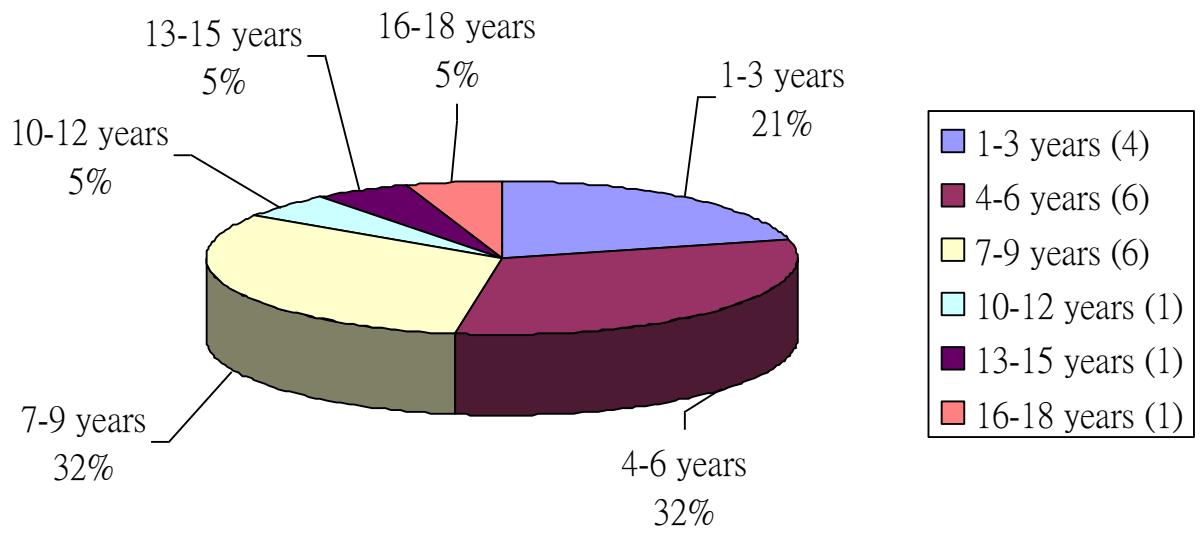


Figure 3.7 Participants and their years of work experience

Table 3.1.

Participant Information

Name	Gender	Age	Nationality	Countries lived in	Years working	Title/Job Content/(Industry)
Adam 1	M	30	Taiwan	Taiwan Belize USA	2.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research engineer (LED Manufacturer)
Beth 2	F	34	Taiwan	Philippines Taiwan	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone operator (Hospitality) • Sales administrator (Electronics) • Account manager (Electronics)
Cecilia 3	F	31	Taiwan	Brazil Taiwan China	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal assistant/executive assistant (Advertising and Media) • Executive assistant (Automation)
Daphne 4	F	31	Taiwan	Taiwan Paraguay Brazil China	7.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Client management/product development/exhibitions (Trading company) • Manage branch office of Spanish firm (Trading company) • Overseas position in post-sales services (Manufacturing) • Factory management (Manufacturing) • Product management (Manufacturing)

(continued)

Table 3.1. (continued)

Name	Gender	Age	Nationality	Countries lived in	Years working	Title/Job Content/(Industry)
Eddie 5	M	30	Taiwan/ Peru	Peru Chile Panama Taiwan Dominican Rep. Paraguay Italy United States United Kingdom	5.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist project management and design work (Design) Teacher (Education) Marketing specialist and designer (Wireless) Marketing manager (Wireless)
Francis 6	M	27	Taiwan	Taiwan Italy USA China	1.75	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyst (Paper manufacturing)
Greg 7	M	38	Korea	Korea Paraguay USA China Taiwan	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purchasing, sales, and management (Supermarket) Business owner (Trade) Purchase Orders, arrangement of goods, delivery (Clothing) Handles production-related issues (Machinery)
Henri 8	M	25	Taiwan	Taiwan Italy United States The Netherlands United Kingdom	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sales engineer/Hosting engineer (IT)
Iris 9	F	32	Taiwan	Taiwan United States South Korea China	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High school Chinese teacher (Education) Boarding school teacher (Education) Consultant (Educational consultant)

(continued)

Table 3.1. (continued)

Name	Gender	Age	Nationality	Countries lived in	Years working	Title/Job Content/(Industry)
Jasper 10	M	31	Australian/ HK	Hong Kong Australia	6	• Architect (Architecture)
Keith 11	M	30	Taiwan	Taiwan Paraguay Nicaragua Philippines	5	• Trainer/operations (Online gaming) • Trader (Finance)
Mitchell 12	M	33	Taiwan	Taiwan Saudi Arabia Italy United States Russia	5.5	• Researcher (Research institute) • Expo organizer (Government-funded organization) • Diplomat (Government)
Lionel 13	M	34	Taiwan	Taiwan United Kingdom	13	• Music arranger (Education and Media)
Natalie 14	F	34	Taiwan	Peru Chile Panama Taiwan Dominican Rep. Paraguay United Kingdom	2.7	• Marketing assistant (IT) • Editor (Publishing)
Oscar 15	M	26	Taiwan	Swaziland Taiwan Israel United States China	3	• Assistant English teacher (Education) • Export sales manager (Paper Manufacturing)
Patricia 16	F	30	Dominican Republic	Taiwan Dominican Rep. United States	8.7	• Assurance and compliance work/lead audit engagements (Accounting/Finance) • Revenue accounting (Media)

(continued)

Table 3.1. (continued)

Name	Gender	Age	Nationality	Countries lived in	Years working	Title/Job Content/(Industry)
Rita 17	F	29	Taiwan	Taiwan The Netherlands Canada United States	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translator/guide/research (Museum) • Secretary (Finance) • Trainee (Media) • Research/consumer retail (Business Consulting)
Stanley 18	M	31	Taiwan	Saudi-Arabia Taiwan Italy United States	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Software developer (Finance)
Theodore 19	M	29	USA	United States Taiwan	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actor, teacher, TV host, writer (Education and Media)
Ursula 20	F	29	USA	United States Taiwan Italy United Kingdom	*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researcher (Research Institute)

Note. All participants have been given pseudonyms to protect their identity.

* Ursula did not wish to give specific details about her jobs for confidentiality reasons.

Data Collection

The data was collected mainly through personal interviews (unstructured and semi-structured) and some supplementary data was obtained via observation.

Personal Interviews

Two forms of interviews took place, unstructured interviews and semi-structured interviews. Unstructured interviews simply refer to interactions outside of the scheduled interviews, including informal conversations, and participatory observations. These types of interactions offered the researcher opportunities to learn about the TCKs and their experiences in more natural settings. Information obtained during these unstructured interviews also helped in the designing and refining of the interview questions (Merriam,

2009). Data from these informal sessions were not audio-recorded. Notes from these informal sessions were jotted down afterwards based on recollection.

For more deliberate and focused data collection, I invited the participants for semi-structured interviews. The participants were asked to recommend others who meet the criteria as participants of this study. The interviews were conducted in person and over Skype as some of these TCKs currently live outside of Taiwan. Interviews were audio-recorded. The interviewees were informed of the recording prior to the interview and their permission to record were obtained. The researcher kept a notepad on hand, but took minimal notes in order to focus on the participant and to observe body language that supplemented an interviewee's words.

The semi-structured interviews were guided by a list of predetermined interview questions (See Appendix A). Certain questions were asked of all interviewees. The order and the wording of the questions differed slightly from interview to interview. When unexpected themes and topics surfaced during the interview, the researcher asked additional questions to explore these issues (Merriam, 2009).

Due to the fact that many of the interview participants spoke more than one language, and the researcher is bilingual (English and Mandarin Chinese), there was no restriction on the language used during the interview. The interviewee spoke in either Chinese or English, depending on whichever language he/she felt most comfortable or most expressive in at the given moment.

A few days prior to the interviews, the interviewees were emailed three documents. The first was a copy of the interview guide, consisting of the list of questions to be asked so that they could preview them beforehand if they so wished. The second document was the participant consent form (See appendix B). This gave the interviewees background and basic understanding of the research study. It also explained the research procedures and what they were expected to do. The participants were informed of the confidentiality and protection of their personal information and how the interview data was going to be managed. Before the interview started, I went over the consent form with them again in person to see if anything was unclear or if they had any questions and concerns. Then they signed the form as an agreement to be interviewed under the guidelines described.

Finally, they were asked to fill out a copy of the TCK Participant information sheet (Appendix C), to provide basic demographic and descriptive information about their

experiences. Table 3.1 is a summary of the interviewee's background and information as gathered from these forms.

Pilot Study.

After I refined my original list of interview questions by aligning them more closely with my research questions and the literature review, I selected two people with TCK background for my pilot test.

Brianna has lived in four different countries outside of her passport country. She has been working full-time for a little over three months, but has also held part-time work all throughout her college years. Kaylee has also moved in and out of Taiwan throughout her schooling years and she has worked for many years in the high-tech industry. While she fits the criteria for a formal interview and was happy to do the pilot interview, she did not wish to formally participate in the study.

I wanted to do my pilot interviews with individuals who have similar background as the formal interviewees to make sure that my questions were clear, and would be able to elicit out the type of responses and information as intended. The pilot interviews also allowed me to test out two different types of interview approaches. The two interviews differ slightly in format. The first interview was more structured. Many more specific questions were asked. The second interview was freer; questions more open in nature were asked and the participant had more control in directing the course of the interview. I tried these two methods to see which would yield more informative answers.

Brianna was asked more specific questions. At times, I also gave her examples to clarify what I was asking. That, along with the more specific questions may have directed her thinking a little more than I would have liked.

The interview with Kaylee was a lot freer. I would prompt by asking a general question, and we touched upon several topics without me specifically asking about them. She also provided some new insight. Although it was informative, the interview was a lot lengthier, and the information was not as focused on the topic.

It is however, difficult to attribute the differences between the two interviews strictly to interview method. Differences in age, the amount of work experience, personalities, openness, and level of relationship with the researcher contributed to the differences in the interview results as well.

However, after an overall evaluation of the two interviews, I decided to revise my interview guide again. I took out some of the more specific questions and revised the wording of the questions so that they were less limiting. After this initial revision, I asked two of my peers and Kaylee to look through the questions. With their suggestions in mind, I revised the questions again. The revisions were minor, mostly to phrase the questions in a clearer way, and in format of the written question guide to make it look more appealing and less intimidating.

After four formal interviews, I evaluated my questions again. It seemed like I was lacking information concerning their work and adaptation experiences. It was easy to get information about their general TCK experience. The answers to the questions I asked about work and adaptation also did not necessarily connect with their TCK background. In order to get the most relevant answers in a limited amount of time, I decided to revise my interview questions again so that the questions were more explicit and direct in asking specifically for examples about how their work and adaptation process related to their TCK background.

Observation

There were opportunities for me to observe two of the participants as they worked. These two participants work with a non-profit organization. Every week, the organization puts together an event where the teachers working for the organization will host an English Bible study open to anyone who is interested in learning English while learning about Christianity. The program consists of singing, games, teaching, skits, and other activities. Some of the teachers have TCK background. Two of such individuals were interviewed and observed.

I sat in on the sessions and observe the teachers as they interacted with other people, such as co-workers and students. I observed them on stage, playing instruments, performing skits, and leading a large group (over one hundred people) in singing, and playing games.

Since I am fairly familiar with the event and attend regularly, it was easy to blend in and not be disruptive. It was also easier for me to focus on observing the participants, rather than having to worry about trying to adapt to the environment. I also had the opportunity to go back to the same setting and observe the TCKs on separate days. On the other hand, it is possible that I may have been so familiar with the setting that some

things were taken for granted and I missed significant data. Another limitation of observing at these sessions is that as Theodore, one of the participants had mentioned in the interview, only about 10% of who they really are come out on stage in a large-group setting like that. Despite these limitations, it still is a good way to gather additional information outside of personal interviews.

Things observed during these sessions include the physical setting, the participants themselves, exchange and interactions with others, conversations, nonverbal communications, subtle cues, and my own behavior (Merriam, 2009). I took extra notice of their effectiveness in the use of different languages, multicultural references, communication patterns, and content of their communication.

Data Analysis

The interviews were recorded, and afterwards transcribed verbatim. Most of the transcripts were sent off to be transcribed by others. In order to ensure the accuracy of the content, each transcript was checked. I read through the transcripts and listened to each of the interviews simultaneously to check for errors and to make corrections. The interview transcripts were then sent back to the interviewees for their review. Any questions that needed clarification were also sent to the interviewees. Revisions to the transcripts were then made. Since the interviews were conducted in either English or Chinese, or both intermittently, portions of the interviews in Chinese that are quoted in this paper were translated into English.

The data analysis phase began after the first set of data was collected and continued alongside the rest of the data collection process (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975). Coding of the interviews began when interview transcripts were finished and checked. The analysis of data included all the relevant information gathered via the interviews, and the observation sessions.

The analysis of each set of transcript started with a general and preliminary scan of the data, which provided a broad idea of what the data set contains. Notes about the data, including relevant theories, observations, and comparisons were made in the margins. This was first done on hardcopies of the transcript. The data was then reviewed again and open-coded. Words and phrases were assigned to each significant unit of data. From the open-coding and onwards, the analysis process was done in Microsoft Excel. Data was

then reviewed again for information relevant in answering the research questions. The codes were later organized thematically into categories that helped to answer the research question. These categories are exhaustive, mutually exclusive, sensitizing, and conceptually congruent (Merriam, 2009, p.185-186). The data and the findings were scrutinized, consolidated, and organized into research findings and conclusions.

Research Quality

Background of the Researcher

In a qualitative study, the researcher is the instrument for data collection. The researcher exercises a great amount of control over how to collect data, what data to collect, and how the data is interpreted (Mertens, 2005). The voice of the qualitative researcher is ever-present in all phases of the research. It cannot be divorced from the content of the study, nor is it necessary to do so because “data do not speak for themselves; there is always an interpreter, or a translator” (Ratcliffe, 1983, p. 149). However, to start the exploration and analysis of the phenomenon under study without a discussion to inform the readers of possible assumptions, values, beliefs and biases (Mertens, 2005) stemming from the researcher’s background would render the analysis incomplete at best. The importance of recognizing and monitoring biases, assumptions, values, and beliefs throughout a study has been widely recognized (Mertens, 2005). The exploration of a researcher’s position helps with what is called “epoche”, which means that judgments are bracketed or suspended for the time being (Merriam, 2009).

I am myself a Taiwanese TCK. My first in-depth exposure to a culture outside of my passport country came at the age of eight when I moved to Rome, Italy with my family. Four and a half years later, I was back in my country of origin where I lived for about five years. I then moved again to Wyoming, USA with my family for one year. Half a year after my return to Taiwan, the family packed again to move to Massachusetts, USA. My stay in Massachusetts lasted five years. After graduating from college, I moved back to my home country Taiwan, where I continue to live today.

As a member of the in-group of people that I seek to study, I have an insider view of the issues at hand. I probably have a better idea of what questions to ask and how to draw information from the participants. I was better able to empathize with and understand the

participants. This helped to establish rapport with the interviewees in a way that outsiders cannot do, and participants were probably more willing to disclose deeper emotions and insights as they were able to get feedback and my own sharing and thoughts on the TCK experience.

I also have my own TCK experiences from which I drew information. This may be a double-edged sword as the experiences may have unconsciously guided my interpretation of the data in a certain direction. There are possibilities of blind spots within the research because I cannot conduct the study objectively.

Validity and reliability measures were taken to ensure the best quality of the research content possible. This will be covered in the next two sections.

Credibility (Validity)

In evaluating the value of a study, an important question to consider is how well do the results of the study reflect reality (Merriam, 2009, p.213)? “In qualitative research, the credibility test asks if there is a correspondence between the way the respondents actually perceive social constructs and the way the researcher portrays their viewpoints” (Mertens, 2005, p. 254). To maximize validity, triangulation is used. It “involves checking information that has been collected from different sources or methods for consistency of evidence across sources of data” (Mertens, 2005, p.255). Denzin (1978) identified four types of triangulation, 1) data triangulation, 2) investigator triangulation, 3) theory triangulation and 4) methodological triangulation.

Methodological triangulation is employed in this study to ensure credibility. Data was collected through multiple methods, achieving “between-method” (Arksey & Knight, 1999, p. 23) triangulation through interviews, and observations (Merriam, 2009). “Within-method” triangulation is achieved in data collection via interviews (Arksey & Knight, 1999, p. 23). Data is collected via semi-structured interviews and unstructured interviews.

A second technique used to increase credibility is member check. This check took place in several places. During the interview, after key questions, I informally summarized what the interviewee had said to make sure that the researcher had understood properly. Transcripts of the recorded interview were also sent back to the interviewee for their review. Preliminary versions of the research results were also shared

with some of the participants to decrease the chance of misinterpretation (Merriam, 2009; Mertens, 2005).

Peer review also helped to ensure credibility (Merriam, 2009). Peers were selected based on their familiarity with intercultural issues and topics in career development and management. Finally, reflexivity, or the researcher's position, including personal background, is explained to help readers understand what the researcher brings to the study and how the researcher's personal experiences, convictions, values, assumptions, expectations and biases may influence the research (Merriam, 2009).

Dependability (Reliability)

Reliability refers to the degree to which the outcome may be replicated if the study was to be repeated. This is an important concept in experimental research. However, in social sciences, reliability is an irrelevant measure because human behavior is always changing. It is more important to measure "whether the results are consistent with the data collected" in qualitative research (Merriam, 2009, p. 220-221). It is referred to as "dependability" here. This simply means that the data collected is aligned with the results and makes sense.

Triangulation, peer review, and investigator's position discussed in the previous section was used to increase dependability of the research (Merriam, 2009). In addition, an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was established to help increase consistency and dependability. The researcher kept a close record of the steps of the research to show in a credible account how the data, interpretations, and results were obtained (Merriam, 2009).

CHAPTER IV FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this chapter, the main findings of the study related to the research questions are presented. A section is dedicated to each of the three research questions raised in Chapter 1. At the end of the chapter is a discussion on how the findings relate to the relevant literature. See Table 4.1. below for a summary of the main research findings.

Table 4.1.

Summary of Research Findings

Research Questions	Relevant Findings
<p>1. What is the process that TCKs go through when making their career choices? What factors do they consider?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Job Search • Factors Considered and Valued <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Autonomy ▪ Who they work with ▪ Variety ▪ Opportunity for growth and development ▪ Other Factors • Changes in Value and Attitude towards Work • Reflection on Career so Far: Less Detours
<p>2. How does the TCK experience help or hinder TCKs in adapting to their workplace?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptability and Confidence • Sense of Responsibility and Trustworthiness • A Broadened Perspective • Functioning as a Bridge between People and Cultures • Access to More Resources and Development of Multiple Interests • Management of Relationships • Identity
<p>3. What strategies, skills, or abilities, developed through their TCK experiences, do TCKs employ to help them adapt to the workplace and overcome challenges that they may encounter at work?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letting Go of the Past and Engaging in the Present • Reaching Out to Others • Observation Skills • The Patience to Allow Others to Express Themselves

Career Choices: Process and Factors

This section of chapter four addresses the first research question concerning the process that TCKs go through when making their career choices and the factors that they take into consideration during this process. The section also gives a brief report on the shifts in values and attitudes towards work as the participants mature in their work life and experience changing seasons in their personal lives.

The Job Search

For the TCKs interviewed in this study, they found their jobs through job banks such as 104, college career centers, job fairs, head-hunters, and opportunities brought to their attention by family and friends. Their job search experiences were subject to the labor market and economic conditions at large. Chance also played a role as well in their job search.

A few of the TCKs mentioned that their first jobs were sometimes chosen out of necessity rather than fit, often settling on the first reasonable job offer, without too much deliberation on job match. These jobs are normally temporary positions before they move on to more suitable and permanent jobs. For others, their first jobs were opportunities that came up unexpectedly and they decided to try them out.

When searching and interviewing for jobs, the majority of TCKs felt that their experiences and their multilingual language abilities were highly esteemed and were beneficial in helping them stand out from among the crowd. This is particularly true for TCKs with little work experience. Cecilia says, "...When you do not have much work experiences, they [employers] focus on your language ability..." Many felt that their English abilities were in high demand, especially in Taiwan. So for many of the TCKs interviewed, they felt that their language abilities and cross-cultural experiences were additional bonuses to their other qualifications when looking for a job and gave them a distinctive edge over their non-TCK peers (ie. Cecilia, Keith, Beth, Eddie, and Natalie).

On the other hand, a few TCKs mentioned that their TCK experiences sometimes seemed more like a limitation because for some, they were non-natives in the country and lacked work visas. Some felt lacking in the general knowledge of the country, or country-specific industry knowledge for the jobs they wanted to work for; still others felt

somewhat limited by their mediocre language ability in the country they wished to work in. The sense that they do not have sufficient knowledge about the country or adequate local language proficiency may be perceived or may in fact be true. Regardless of whether it is real or only feared, it does affect their self-perception, and it does sometimes discourage them from seeking out the jobs they desire. When asked about what she would want to do in her job if there were no restrictions, Beth replied, “I would want to be a manager. Yes, I would like to be leading people...but I just don’t have good enough Chinese”. Due to some of these reasons, a few TCKs in the study feel that their choices were more limited than their non-TCK counterparts.

While having to choose between cultures or countries to work in is usually an optional choice for non-TCKs, for TCKs, it is usually one of the first decisions that they have to make with great ramifications to all the consequent decisions. Often, this decision of where to work geographically can be a difficult choice for a TCK. In the case of Stanley, having only lived in his passport country, Taiwan, for four years, when it came time to make career choices, he felt that Taiwan was not a viable option for him. To work in Taiwan, he would first have to complete the obligatory military service, and he felt that he would not be able to fit into the local culture well enough to do that:

I don't feel like I would have fit in well with the men in Taiwan. I feel that in terms of language, I would not fit in; the culture, I would not have fit in.... It would've been not a great experience for me.

So Stanley opted to stay in the U.S., but that was not an easy option either and it reminded him that he did not quite belong in the U.S. either:

I had to work hard to get my green card. It's not like it's a walk in the park to stay. That's maybe why I don't really feel like United States is my home is that I had to work hard to stay here.

For those who think that TCKs have many opportunities to work in different places around the world, Mitchell, who has lived in five different countries and speaks three languages, argues that:

In reality, I don't think there are that many choices because unless your expertise [is needed] and you know the local language really well... Then my choice would be only work in Italy, or work in English-speaking countries.... And plus, you know, Italy, unemployment rate of their youth here in central or south Italy, it's like almost 50%.

Despite having lived in multiple countries, often, the option to stay and work in these countries is not available for these TCKs.

Factors Considered and Valued

When deciding on a job offer or evaluating current and past posts, the participants do have certain considerations and value different things about their jobs. Some of these factors are presented below.

Autonomy.

Quite a few of the TCKs in the study have mentioned autonomy as something they value. They enjoy freedom on the job, like having the flexibility to dictate their schedule and plan their work.

Patricia, who was trained through her TCK experiences, family upbringing and her first job, to be an independent thinker and worker, is satisfied with her current job in a media company and cites the freedom she has as the reason she enjoys it so:

I'm very happy. Basically you're given free reign....They don't ask you, "What are you doing everyday?" ...For me, it's so easy. I don't have to explain myself. I don't have to say where I'm coming from and why I'm doing that. That's why I'm so happy, I think.

Speaking about one of her jobs where it was a one-person office, Daphne said, "I thought the job was just perfect for working on one's own. I could arrange to use my time in my own way; I could arrange the work in my own way..."

Eddie shared what he enjoys most about his current work by saying, "What I loved most about this job is that for the first time, I can manage an entire department." He considers the possibility of opening his own business a few years down the line and he says this about being the boss, "I think it goes back to the beginning when I said I still feel I can change the world, and I think I can make the most impact when I am the boss."

Iris also stresses how much she loves the freedom and autonomy in her teaching job:

...something that I really enjoy even now is the fact that I have complete autonomy. I've always been in a one-person program....I get to decide how I want to teach my classes, no one tells me what to do.

In her current job as an educational consultant, she again emphasizes how much she appreciates her freedom, "I think the thing about my job now is that I get to decide...when to meet with this client, when to do what...as long as I meet the deadlines. So this is what I really like."

Many participants are comfortable with working autonomously. In fact, they prefer not to have others dictate their schedule and work methods.

Who they work with.

Another commonly-mentioned job factor that the TCKs interviewed consider is the people that they work with, both colleagues and managers. They believe that it is crucial to work in an environment where people have a sense of acceptance and understanding for their strengths and weaknesses and are willing to work with them and to mentor them.

Henri, when giving advice about what other TCKs should do when looking for their jobs, places utmost importance on the people that one works with, even beyond the job content itself. He says, "...I suppose in the end it really doesn't matter what you do at work, it's who you work with; I think that's really important."

Stanley describes the search for his first job and explained what swayed his decision to choose the company:

The reason why I chose them [the company] was because they were quite nice during the interview. And they invited me further to visit their company. That to me was a good indicator of whether I would be taken care of.

From the start, Stanley believed that good work relationships would help to develop his career. Stanley gave advice to other TCKs looking for their first jobs by sharing the same guideline that he himself followed in his own job search:

Always look at the person you're going to be working under. You want to find someone who's willing to mentor you and grow your career, somebody wants to invest in you rather than just use you as another employee.

When asked the same question about advice that he would give to TCKs like himself, Adam says to look for places where people accept, understand, and welcome the fact that TCKs bring different perspectives to the table because "...this way, your time there will go smoother....if the boss cannot accept you, you'll not be able to be effective in your job, and it'll be difficult for you to develop." Adam worked for two and a half years at a local high-tech company where the organization did not have other people who were like him, and did not allow him to bring his TCK experiences and strengths into the work.

When comparing her former job with her current job, Cecilia says that she sees the difference in the work atmosphere created by different groups of people:

For example, with my former colleagues and my former boss, it really is teamwork and you really feel like it's a partnership....I believe that your surrounding environment and the people you work with in a job is really key....

And again, being surrounded by people who are accepting of individual differences made the work so much easier.

...when you come across a supervisor that you can trust, one who can see your strengths and at the same time, accept your shortcomings, I believe that's really important.

There is high priority placed on the people that they work with. Many of the same TCKs who are used to independence and crave for autonomy do not wish to work in a vacuum. They care deeply about who is around them and who they work with.

Variety.

Many TCKs speak of having variety within their work almost as a necessity. Some seem to have strong aversion towards monotony and repetition.

...Another important reason that I stayed so long on the job is that it is constantly evolving....I really fear boredom....If you ask me to keep doing the same thing for a long period of time, I would not be able to do it. (Lionel)

I wanna do something new every time. I just don't like doing repetitive work... (Jasper)

...I get frustrated with work when it's something I've done before. I know I can do [it] better, but one of the reasons I want to switch jobs is because I want to learn something I haven't learned before. (Eddie)

When asked about his favorite part of the job, Francis says:

I guess just the opportunity to explore across functions. I could be with dealing with things on the production side or the sales side or supporting side, the administration, logistics....I'm all across the spectrum...

These TCKs enjoy work that encompass a wide variety of functions and use an array of skills. They like jobs that allow them to see different things and have new experiences.

Opportunity for growth and development.

The desire to be in a career that not only has variety in content, but where they can continually better themselves by learning and growing is a top priority for many participants. Ursula, a researcher whose job content includes field projects and scientific investigations, speaks of her pursuit of work that allow for personal development and growth at this stage in her life:

For me, the most important aspect is self-development. I'm attracted to opportunities that will offer me the possibility to develop myself, and the possibility to work with interesting groups of people or colleagues, opportunities to open my eyes to different part of the world.

Ursula says that this type of project-based work is probably specific to this season in her life, where she feels like she is still relatively young and can afford to live a life that permits more instability. She says that her current choice of work is quite labor-intensive and is probably not something that she can continue to do for the remainder of her career

life. So she takes the opportunity now to work and travel in different parts of the world before she has to settle down into a more stable job.

Natalie speaks of how her job gradually became easier as she got more experienced. While that familiarity was assuring, at the same time, she felt like she had hit a ceiling in her learning. The inability to learn more from her job eventually became a source of frustration and dissatisfaction. Natalie said, "...But I think it also became a source of discouragement because it wasn't gratifying anymore. I mean it paid well, but I couldn't learn more from it by the end of my two years there."

Patricia shares an incident in her former job when she requested to learn to handle the local Taiwanese tax system as she was newly transferred to Taiwan from the United States. When her manager denied her the opportunity to learn new things and insisted that she work with something she was already familiar with and very good at, she was incredulous about the manager's attitude and was deeply upset by how the work environment was so opposed to learning. In her own words she said this about the work that the manager had insisted her on doing:

I already know how to do this. Why should I keep doing what I already know how to do? I want to learn something I can't do yet....I don't think this environment is fostering growth....That [the stifling environment] was the reason I left. (Patricia)

Others TCKs have gotten to a place where they are getting too comfortable and are not able to learn as much. They decide to move on in search of an environment where they are pushed to grow more. Although Jasper admits that he is not naturally a competitive person, nor does he like to be in a competitive environment, he explains his recent choice to quit his job at an older, more established architecture firm where he has already worked for six years for a less stable, and a lower paid job at a newer and highly competitive firm:

I wanted to be in a competitive firm. Because the last job I'm like... I don't need to prove myself anymore. And then I mean I just go to work and do the work that I have to do, I sort of laid back and pretty easy almost most of my time. But this new job I'll be learning something new and I'll be like... I need to show them what I got. (Jasper)

Many TCKs have high expectations to continually learn and grow in their careers. When jobs do not offer the conditions development, despite high pay and ease, TCKs can quickly grow to feel hampered and dissatisfied.

Other factors.

The other considerations for the participants include whether or not the job has to do with their area of study, interests, job security (ie. Keith, Henri), prestige of the organization (ie. Patricia), being able to personally contribute to the job, meaningfulness of the job is also important (ie. Oscar, Adam, Lionel, Cecilia, Mitchell). Pay (ie. Francis, Jasper, Lionel), geographic locations (ie. Francis), and family input (ie. Ursula) were also important. Some TCKs give priority to jobs that allow them more opportunity to travel, to use their language skills, and to work with diverse groups of people, or with people of similar background (ie. Rita, Francis, Cecilia, Keith).

Changes in Value and Attitude towards Work

As they gain more experience on the job, encounter different events, or journey into a new season in their life, TCKs' values and attitudes toward work may sometimes change and they may give more prominence to factors previously not considered. In their first jobs, there may also have been more of the chance factor at play. Necessity, inexperience, and the desire to try new things may have resulted in a looser set of criteria for the first jobs.

In this research, the average age of the TCKs interviewed is 30.7 years old. Many have gone through a few jobs already. As they move between jobs, their rationales, needs, and considerations also evolve as they travel through different seasons in their lives.

They mention that shifts in their values and mentality towards work resulted as these events took place in their lives. A few of the interviewees spoke of the difference in their attitudes toward work before and after conversion to the Christian faith. Cecilia, who became a Christian about two years ago, noticed a big change in herself concerning her perspective on work. Before she accepted Christ and learned about God, Cecilia placed a lot of emphasis on her work, relishing the sense of accomplishment that it brought for her. She worked really hard at her job because:

Through work, I tried to make up for the lackluster performance in school...Your value comes from your status at work, so achievement from work is very important; it defines the success of your life. That was my attitude then [before knowing God]...

But her attitude towards work slowly changed after becoming a Christian. She says that now, she thinks more about how she can use the gifts that God has give her; she has a desire in her heart to help children and other people groups. She also shares how she came to understand that the sense of accomplishment, the acknowledgements and the appreciation given to her from other people are transient, and can quickly disappear without warning.

Similarly, Greg shared about his change concerning his attitude towards work after he became a Christian. “In the past, I thought about how to make more money, how to live a better life; I thought about the easiest way to make money. But now, money is not so important.” Now, what he believes is most important is to enjoy the life that has been given to him by God, even in work.

Daphne also spoke about how her faith and her new values impacted many areas of her work life, starting from the job search process. She says that before becoming a Christian, she would simply look for jobs in trading companies that needed Spanish speakers. Afterwards, Daphne’s faith allowed her to be more open to different types of jobs, regardless of whether or not she felt like she initially had the qualifications to succeed on the job.

After I became a Christian, when I chose jobs, I would ask for God's guidance. Each job was like a door that God had opened. He'd lead me to do certain work and certain companies...and even though I didn't know the specific job content, and I didn't know if I could really do it, but I believe that if God opened the door for you, He'd give you the ability to do the work.

Eventually, Daphne did branch out to take different positions, such as one allowing her to live in Brazil for one year, doing post-sales services there for a Taiwanese company. Then she went on to manage a factory in China for two years and is currently a product manager in a manufacturing firm. Her Christian faith also affected her attitude in doing her day-to-day job.

...when you're doing the work, you just do your best. Work for this company as if it were your own. See it as more than simply a job. Treat it as if it were your own company. A lot of times no one is supervising you when you're doing the work, but I believe that God sees everything.

For Daphne, her faith was a big transformation for her. It had changed her criteria for her job, her way of searching for a job, and also her attitude on the job. After getting married a few years ago and getting ready to start her own family now, she is once again entering into a new chapter in her life and looks forward to more stability.

...because I was single at the time, so I thought I would look for jobs where I had the chance to take business trips frequently....but because now I am married, I feel that family is more important. So the jobs that I look for now are jobs that don't require traveling; I won't consider it otherwise.

Iris, who got married about a year and a half ago, also spoke of the differences in what she looks for in a job before and after marriage. She says, "If you asked me this question two year ago, before marriage and after marriage, I would give very different answers." When explaining why she chose to go to California for a teaching job while she was still single, she mentioned that two of the biggest reasons for the move were the weather and the lifestyle there. She did not consider too many other factors. When speaking about her move to Korea to teach at an international school, Iris admitted that her decisions to change jobs and to move were never too rational. There are usually not too many considerations involved. Now that she is married, she actually does not need to work for financial reasons, thus a job is just something that would make her feel fulfilled. However, when she considers jobs now, she can no longer make quick decisions that meet just her needs. Iris says, "Now, I cannot only consider myself. My job is no longer just about me. I have to also consider my husband." Since she is preparing to start her own family soon, Iris values flexibility and autonomy more than ever.

In some cases, TCKs who have been working for a few years have gotten good technically at what they do and are looking for opportunities to take on more leadership roles. Stanley, who worked in his last firm for six and a half years as a software developer, speaks about a gradual change in the things that he expected out of his job. When he first started out, his top priority was about learning things and gaining

knowledge. Then, as he gradually improved in his technical skills, and gained knowledge, the focus is no longer so much on gaining new skills and new knowledge. He now does more teaching and mentoring rather than learning. He mentioned at one point in the interview that he wished to have more autonomy and more freedom to make some of the leadership decisions in his job, so although he enjoyed his previous company, he recently quit his job at his old company and joined another company because "...as I was saying, I wanted to be the person making those decisions. So my new company offered me a role where I would be making more of those decisions."

Ursula, who has been doing research on the Middle East for some time, is switching her focus back to East Asia as this will bring her closer to home, where her family is. Her decision also has to do with the fact that there are professional limitations:

...Another limitation I have is that I'm a female. Unfortunately, that actually makes it different regarding Middle Eastern studies. So it's not only family reason. It also has to do with the limitation where I can go and how far I can reach.

For some of these TCKs whose stories were mentioned above, this shift in their attitude about work are sometimes accompanied by geographic moves. This would likely imply greater lifestyle changes and adjustments to make when compared to the average job change. For some, it requires making choices to bring a stability that has often been lacking in their past. As they encounter more experiences further down the road, there will no doubt be more changes and adjustments to be made in their career choice process.

Reflection on Career So Far: Less Detours

When some of the participants were asked hypothetically to give advice to someone with a similar background, or to think of advice they wish they had been given when they first started out in their career journey, a few people voiced caution about too much dabbling in too many unrelated careers. Others reflected upon their own career choices so far and similarly wondered if they should have explored so much in the early years of their career and whether or not they would be in a different place, higher up in the company hierarchy, had they simply picked a vocation and remained with it.

Rita, who has had four fascinating but unrelated jobs (in a museum, in an assets management company, in media, and currently in a business consulting firm) since

graduating from college six years ago, wished that she had planned ahead and tried out different things earlier, rather than spend so much time now trying out different jobs to figure out what is most suitable for her:

...I think if I could give someone advice, I would suggest that they use the time in college to explore their options through internships. Once they graduate, they can have more of a career, rather than spending many years searching out what it is that they want to do. (Rita)

Natalie, who is currently studying for her PhD and planning on entering academia, talks about how she is finding it difficult to connect her previous work experiences with the direction in which she is currently heading. Her second job as an editor in a publishing company had nothing to do with her first job as a marketing assistant in a technology company.

And even now I having gone into research again, it still has nothing to do with my previous two job experiences so I was feeling as if I can never....extend or profit as much as possible from my previous career experiences.

Natalie reflects on the reason for her past job switches between unrelated industries, but admits that she is yet to think of a good way to link all her experiences together in a coherent manner to make her experiences marketable to her future employees.

...Basically I like change. I don't like to do the same job for a long period of time....So doing the job from my first job to my second job, even though it wasn't too related...I didn't think it would be a problem. But I think now, because I've gone into academia and it's very important to build that academic CV...I'm still thinking of ways on how to link that...

Keith, who had a difficult time finding a good job in Taiwan following his graduation in 2008 amidst the financial crisis, accepted a job that sent him to the Philippines. It was not in the finance industry, which is his industry of choice as he studied finance in school. In reviewing his past choices, Keith said:

...I was debating before...whether if I should have made the decision to go to the Philippines. It is a tough market, but just say, if I could actually get into my current job three years earlier, then I'd be at another place...

Keith gives an example of times when he wishes he had not gone abroad and could have gone into the finance industry right after graduation.

...I've been having headhunters call me, asking, "So how old are you?" It's the most embarrassing question...[after hearing about my work experiences, they'll say] "Oh okay, this new job is really, really good for you...you're like what, 26?" I'd be like, "No, I am in my thirties..."

Mitchell, who is now a Taiwanese diplomat in Europe, gives this advice to young TCKs:

Yes, basically if you're dedicated towards something, you have to start early...If you want to go into sciences, then in college you should put all your effort and everything and just do your sciences or become a doctor and go... or become a lawyer and.....And stick with it.

Some of the TCKs in the study feel like they have taken too many detours in their career path and wasted too much time. They wish that they had gone straight into the right track and stayed focused on one thing.

Summary

In this section, the findings that correspond with the first research question concerning the process of making career choices and the factors involved were presented. The job search process for the TCKs in this study is described and factors for consideration were presented. Specific factors include autonomy, who they work with, variety, and opportunity for growth and development. Other factors were also briefly mentioned. Then changes in value and attitude towards work were briefly explored. The last part of this section describes the reflections of a few TCKs on their career lives so far.

Impact of the TCK Experience in the Workplace

This section of the chapter presents the findings that are related to the second research question, which is about how the TCK experience may help or hinder TCKs in adapting to their workplace. Here, characteristics, qualities, and behavior that seem to stem from the TCK experience are presented. These include adaptability and confidence, a sense of responsibility and trustworthiness, having a broadened perspective, being able to serve as a bridge between people and cultures, access to more resources and development of multiple interests, the management of relationships, and the issue of identity.

Adaptability and Confidence

Many of the TCKs interviewed have mentioned how difficult it was for them to deal with having to move around when they were younger. For some, the anxieties have changed into an attitude of quiet confidence over the years with the passage of time and the practice of having moved so many times.

Lionel remarks, “I am not as fearful of unfamiliar environments. Really. Not that I love and embrace unfamiliar environments, but I am not afraid of them.” Keith, who grew up in a military family and lived in Paraguay and Nicaragua when he was young, says that his TCK experiences prepared him for dealing with changes. Now, when faced with uncertainty or changes, he takes it in stride. He says, “I just feel like, ‘Ok, let's deal with this....’ You kinda have this sense like, ‘I can do this. It's just another small change. Whatever.’ You see it as a no big deal.”

When speaking about his choice to take a job abroad, Keith says that he probably wouldn't have taken that job if he has not had the TCK experience behind him. He speculates that he would probably be more reserved and shy, not really considering the opportunity to leave and work outside of Taiwan. With all of his multicultural and mobile experiences behind him though, Keith says, “...for me, it was like, ‘Ah, I've been in Latin America, I've seen third world countries. This one shouldn't be that bad, I am used to that.’” That assurance gave him the courage to consider the job and eventually take the job.

The adaptability that she has developed gave Daphne a sense of confidence about the unknown:

...no matter where I go, I won't be afraid. I won't be afraid of challenges because I feel certain that I would be able to overcome because after all, I've lived in different places and I've been okay...

For Henri, an engineer in an IT company, he feels like the TCK experience has prepared him to meet the challenges in life. When he encounters new things, his attitude is, "...okay, I know it's new, but it's not so daunting." He gives an example of how great an asset it was in his job to have that confidence. Part of his job in the beginning was to drop in on new clients. His TCK trainings made him feel that it is okay that he does not really have any information to go on before he makes the visit. He does not get anxious about the unknown and the new. He then draws a parallel between the situation in his job and his past TCK experiences. He says:

...I know I am pretty good at going there and finding out what's wrong and I proceed to fix it without feeling too worried about the fact that I don't know anything to start with because in a way, I didn't know about living somewhere else, but it has all worked out....

When speaking about his natural inclination towards certainty, Henri say, "I crave certainty; I don't seek out adventures and put myself in situations where that is the case. But if the situation is thrown at me, I guess I don't feel too fazed."

Ursula describes herself as a very adaptable person, "I'm pretty good at surviving in different environments. I definitely have things that I'm more comfortable with, but it doesn't mean I cannot survive in other circumstances." Iris believes that TCKs all probably have better tolerance and acceptance for new things that enter into their lives because they have all had the experience of living in different places and dealing with different people and different situations.

Other TCKs interviewed have developed a sense of fearlessness and a love for challenges and they actively seek opportunities to challenge themselves. When asked about the type of environment that he thrives best under, Stanley says, "Fast-paced environment for me personally, and some place I'm constantly being challenged."

Patricia describes her love of challenges by saying, “I love the challenge.... The more you tell me it's impossible, the more appealing it is to me. I hate it when people say it's impossible. Nothing is impossible.” Eddie, who has lived in eight countries before he turned eighteen, feels empowered by his rich TCK experiences. He says, “I feel like I have the... not the potential...but like there's really no way stopping me for doing anything I want.” Oscar speaks on what he enjoys about his job, “It is kind of hard to describe but I enjoy the challenge, because a lot of the projects assigned it's something that is new, like new as in no one has done it before....”

However, not all feel the same confidence and optimism about dealing with the unknown. One participant describe how unappealing the idea of change and the threat of the unknown is to her even now as an adult because of the unpleasant feelings that she associates with changes from her past experiences.

For Rita, who has lived in four countries, moving to new places seems to be associated with painful feelings of being alone in unfamiliar environments. Fears and uncomfortable emotions are what surface when she is confronted with situations that call for her to be in a new and unfamiliar environment. Rita describes the struggle and the turmoil in her heart as she juggles the desire for new things, and the fear of the unfamiliar. She has lived in Taiwan for five years now, and she says, “I feel like, “Oh, I want to go somewhere else. But then, I am actually really afraid of changes.” She speaks of the fears that surface when she actually starts to plan for changes in her life, “I will be really afraid that it's another new place, with no friends, with no family...” These fears and childhood recollections keep her in the realm of the known. She says, “I think I am even more afraid than normal people...” because it conjures up unpleasant and frightful feelings from her TCK experience.

There are different responses to the reality of the mobility element in their TCK lifestyle. One of the TCKs developed a deep aversion for changes; others discovered that the experience of having endured the process of change multiple times since early on in their lives gives them the confidence to know that they can survive anything and come out okay.

Sense of Responsibility and Trustworthiness

Another observation concerning the study participants is that many describe themselves as responsible. Daphne gives an example of her responsible attitude at work in

one of her past jobs even when she did not physically work in the same office as her bosses:

What you must achieve is to do your best. Because the owners of the company were all in Spain, they were very trusting. So everything must be done well. I wanted to do the best I could. Even when they couldn't see, I would always start work at 9 a.m. until the end of the work day and I never slacked off during work.

Her sense of accountability and responsibility is the same regardless of her work and where her superiors are located. Commenting on her current job, Daphne says:

[My manager] trusts me with work. In my current job, he allowed me to work on six projects at once. Even if there were six more, I could continue to take them on [if I want to]. If I don't say anything, [the manager] would continue to allow me to take on more work. I think it's because he feels like he could trust me.

The TCKs in this study do not simply display a sense of responsibility and accountability passively. They consciously place a lot of effort and emphasis on making themselves trustworthy and credible in their workplace. It is important for them to have others view them as individuals who can be trusted.

...I put more emphasis on the trust between people and also my credibility. My words must carry weight; and allow others to trust you. They can have the security in knowing that, "because Daphne said so...so we believe that she's getting it done." (Daphne)

Daphne believes that credibility and mutual trust must be part of a working relationship with others.

Cecilia explains how she feels when she feels that there is mutual trust between her and her boss by saying, "If your superior treats you with trust and affirmation, including their praise, etc, then it makes you feel like what you do is valuable". She continues to speak:

For me, mutual trust is very important. I really care if he [my superior] trusts me. I don't wish to give him a sense of distrust, as if he couldn't trust me with the work he has entrusted to me...(Cecilia)

Patricia speaks about her work ethics. She believes that when work is assigned and entrusted into your hands, you better complete the assignment and do a great job, as it reflects who you are. She says that sometimes she takes work so seriously that she cannot enjoy it, but on the other hand, she has earned the trust of her bosses because they never have to worry because she always produces excellent work.

Many TCKs seem to have a strong sense of accountability and personal responsibility. Supervisors and colleagues respond to the quality of their trustworthiness by returning that trust and sometimes assigning them work with much autonomy.

Functioning as a Bridge between People and Cultures

TCKs often find themselves as an effective mediator between different people groups and different cultures. They often provide language interpretation, explaining, and filling in missing gaps in knowledge between people. Their knowledge of multiple cultures has a way of helping them bringing people together and bringing them closer.

I think I can set the work environment as I please. I've joined several teams while I was at [my former company]. If I joined the team that seemed to be a bit disconnected, as in you have this group of people that don't talk to this group of people, I think I can go ahead and get everybody to talk together. (Stanley)

Stanley gives another example of his ability as a mediator on the job:

A lot time, I do notice that people have a lot of hard time communicating with each other. So I would see two guys, talking over the phone. I'd have to step in just to clear things out a bit.

When speaking about how part of her job is about her bringing information from one culture and transmitting it to another culture and how sometimes she is able to fill in the missing link between two people groups, Iris enthusiastically agrees and says, "I think Korean parents really like me 'cause...I kinda know their culture and I know American culture." She gives a simple illustration of her effectiveness as a mediator:

I think I'm the only teacher in the whole school that understands their [Korean parents] expectations for their kids....sometimes when a bunch of us teachers get together for a meal, the western teachers will say, "I don't get what's the big deal about going to Ivy league?" but I say, "To those Asian parents, it's...they spend 90% of their savings on their kids. They themselves can be very frugal so that their kids can enter elite schools.

In a similar type of situation, Jasper says that he does fulfill that role of a bridge to minimize the gap between the local and the foreign:

I sort of understand where they [local architects from Hong Kong] come from. Why they have that idea, so I could like make some compromise and sometimes you will explain to them why I have to do that. 'Cause I'll say [to my local colleagues]... the people from overseas they wouldn't understand why... that kind of thing. (Jasper)

When explaining about his effectiveness as an architect in a culturally diverse workplace and why his bosses like him, Jasper describes himself as a hybrid between cultures. Local Hong Kong architects normally have excellent technical skills but can lack creativity, and his western counterparts are often imaginative and creative, but sometimes get too carried away and are unable to generate practical solutions, so he becomes an alternative, a middle ground for his managers that represents a good balance between the two:

...I'm like a bit of half like...I'm okay, not as good as the local one, like in terms of the technical background. But ideas-wise, I wouldn't be like that out of box. I wouldn't like put a toilet in a kitchen that kind of thing. But I would certainly go outside of box sometimes...

Jasper continues to say that he has learned to "compromise". Due to his understanding of the eastern and western culture, he is able to put himself in the shoes of the client and make good judgments to assess what a client may need and how open the client may be to his suggestions before deciding on the approach to take. As a way to summarize, he says, "I kind of make compromise for some area. So I guess that's the difference between me and the local or foreigner, like the pure ABC." When I made a

remark about him being a good in-between, Jasper replied, “You can say that, or you can say that I'm not good at either.”

Access to More Resources and Development of Multiple Interests

Another commonality between many of the TCKs in the study is how their exposure to different cultures have given them more options in their way of thinking and have created a reservoir of knowledge that they could draw on which allows them to be more resourceful. Keith gives an example, “...if this culture wants you to do this, I tend to think more. I tend to compare what is the best so it's like taking the best out of each culture and then creating your own culture...”

Keith and Lionel mentioned the usefulness of knowing English. It allows them to access a large pool of information that may not be available to their colleagues due to language barriers. Keith says something as simple as the ability to Google in English allows him to learn and find solutions. Lionel also says that being able to read original English instructions for the equipments that they use at work is a skill that he is thankful for.

For the TCKs interviewed who worked in the area of music and the creative arts, simply being exposed to different cultures and languages gave them access to a broader world for more creative input. Theodore who is an actor says, “...simply just being part of a multilingual background, I think that feeds creativity”. Lionel who is a musician says, “In Taiwan, we didn't have the opportunity to be exposed to many other types of music. But my British friends will introduce me to new music. It did make a very big influence.”

For Theodore and Lionel, who are both involved in a Bible study program held by a Christian TV and radio organization, it is evident that their exposure to more than one culture and more than one language gives them additional creative material to work with. While leading and interacting with the approximately 100-plus students on stages in games, singing, and skits, it is evident that their familiarity to the western culture and the Taiwanese cultures helps to close the distance between the students and teachers. Elements from both western and Taiwanese cultures, and languages like English, Taiwanese, and Mandarin are often incorporated into their jokes, skits, and conversation. Their in-depth knowledge of these cultures and languages helps them to weave these

elements naturally and seamlessly into their material to create understandable, yet unique and fresh material that resonate with a diverse group of people.

Their rich mix of exposure also allows TCKs to develop multiple interests, which can be potentially helpful in making career transitions. Ursula spoke earlier about her desire to shift the direction of her studies from the Middle East to East Asian studies. She explains that this shift is an option available for her, but not necessarily for everyone else:

Thankfully I've also taken enough courses to do this shift.... Some people weren't given the opportunity to make the career shift because they do not have a foundation for it...I have multiple areas of interest. It's not that difficult for me to make this type of shift. (Ursula)

Expanded knowledge and experience of the world adds nutrient and substance to what TCKs could draw upon later on in life. Knowledge of multiple languages and cultures become useful tools from which they can continue to form more knowledge and to generate alternative solutions to the challenges that they seek to overcome.

Management of Relationships

Many of the TCKs interviewed spoke of their ability to get along with everyone and their ability to move in and out of different groups with apparent ease. A personal principle that a few of the participants follow in dealing with different types of people is treating everyone with equality. Oscar says, "I try to have this standard that I treat everyone the same, like, even if you are young or you are old...I try to treat everyone with the same manner and respect." Stanley, speaks of how he builds his relationship with people at work, and again, fairness and equality is evident in his logic and strategy. He says, "I spend an equal amount of time with everybody..." and later on he reiterates, "...I do spend an equal amount of time with everybody whether it be going together for lunch or just being able to talk about work."

When talking about leading other people at work, Stanley brings up how he is able to get along with everyone and how helpful that is to him in the workplace. He credits his TCK experiences for these skills:

...I do get along with everybody, and that makes it easier to talk with people and to convince people to do things or be able to tell them why certain things are important, or tell them how to do these things.

Stanley speaks of how he is able to quickly build rapport with everyone in a new environment:

I actually make friends quite easily...well, I don't know if they're called friends, but I can get close to people pretty easily, especially people from different cultures or backgrounds. I always find something that I can relate to. I've been to quite a few countries. I've always been in an international environment...a lot of my colleagues are from international places, Russia, Europe, UK, India. I'm probably one of the few guys that can relate to everybody on the team. I can joke around with everybody.

Ursula speaks about why she was one of the few chosen for a field campaign. Her professor explained to her that:

...one of the reasons she chose me is because that I have an easy personality to deal with...It seems like I get along with everyone...I think that adaptability definitely has to do with my growing-up background.

Mitchell describes how others perceive him as being a people person, "...people do think that I get along very well with people. There are a lot people [who] think that I'm a people person or I just like to hang out with people..." but he also agrees that people sometimes comment on how good of a friend the TCK might seem to be to another person, when the TCK may hardly feel like he/she knows the other person. Mitchell also agrees, "Yeah, actually that's the sort of what's happening to me here. But it's a problem in that, then at the end you don't really belong to any group, and so you're a group by yourself."

The above quotation illustrates the point that sometimes, this ability to get along with everyone may include only the breadth of having a wide social network, but not necessarily the depth of relationships to ground them in particular groups. Eddie speaks of how he seems to have the ability to be involved in different groups:

I feel like there are groups in the workplace where I can take part in or that I could have a say. But there isn't really a group where I could say, "Oh, I belong to this group," that I

would go to all their activities. If actually there was such a group, I don't think I would be willing to submit myself so willingly....I think internally, I want to [belong to a group], but I wouldn't let myself.

He explains that it is because he just did not want to be permanently labeled as belonging to a specific group; he wished to remain a free spirit. This example once again illustrates that conflicting desire to experience belonging, and at the same time the need to hang on to their freedom.

Stanley describes a similar situation when asked if he belonged to a certain group, "No, definitely not. I like to get along with everybody. Obviously within the company, there are groups that tend to form and I'm probably not part of any of that." When asked if he ever wanted to be part of a group, he replied, "No, cuz I get along well....Especially at work, it's better to get along with everybody, rather than be part of some group. If you're part of some group, you'll isolate other people I am sure."

This ability to get along with everyone and maintain a friendly relationship to all co-workers and a desire to remain free are not necessarily beneficial in helping TCKs develop relationship outside of work. Ursula, who earlier spoke of the ability to get along with everyone, then goes on to speak about her difficulties in personal relationships:

The most challenging I think will be developing a strong personal connection....I will say that I do have the ability to be friends with everyone, but on the downside, I hardly ever feel like I am in a group. Normally people have their own social group. I am part of everyone's social group but I don't feel like I belong to any particular group. It's like I have enough to share in common, or to talk about with everyone, but not exactly... It's easy to find friends, but it's very difficult to have good friends. (Ursula)

Earlier, she described the group of people she works with:

...So within my immediate colleague group, and people in my age range, they are mainly Americans and in fact, over 50% Europeans. They definitely have their own way of social life, the kind of food they like, the kind of language they like to talk when they're together. There's a kind of feeling that I can be easily left out because I don't belong to the general stereotype or I don't belong to any of the social group. (Ursula)

Stanley speaks about his ability to be friends with everyone from a different angle:

I would get along well with people very superficially and have fewer closer friends maybe....I do have some trouble getting closer to people. Especially at work, people you work with for a long time, they'll ask to hang out outside of work as friends. And I tend to be more hesitant about that.

Although they seem to be good at getting along with people, sometimes, friendliness and sociability do not come naturally to TCKs. Ursula says, "...If I try, I can be very sociable. The problem is I use the word 'try'. It's just not the most comfortable thing."

Iris speaks of her experiences in pushing herself to be friendly and social:

Most people when they see me think that I'm pretty friendly, and I tried really hard to make friends. I tried very hard to get to know every teacher, every kid in school. I think that is how I protect myself...I present myself as a people person...but actually, I am not.

While many of the TCKs interviewed acknowledged and others around them often marveled at their ability to establish rapport quickly and to get along with everyone, they themselves acknowledge that it often comes with a sense of detachment. Nevertheless, TCKs often find themselves playing an effective role as a mediator, bridging the gap between different people types, or different cultures.

Identity

Identity has been cited as the most troublesome issues to resolve for many TCKs (Isogai, Hayashi & Uno, 1999; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). While describing their general TCK experiences from their childhoods, many TCKs recall the confusion and the pain of being unrooted from their homes and having their relationships constantly interrupted. The frequent moves and the inconsistency of relationships have not been conducive for many of them in terms of allowing them to build a strong sense of identity. Some struggle with their hybrid identity even into adulthood, while others comfortably identify themselves as being international.

When we were talking about cultural identity, Natalie says she sometimes envy people who are sure and definite about their identity. She says, “I am not that confident in defining myself as being...so specific [to a culture]. I see myself a more of a hybrid person in terms of cultural identity. But I think sometimes I envy people who can just not deal with that...”

As a contrast to Natalie’s slight uncertainty and discomfort with a hybrid identity, Oscar, who also sees himself as a hybrid, is confident and sure of that identity. He says, “I really identify myself as an international kid. Like, I identify myself with kids growing up in a foreign country and spending a lot of time outside their home.” He appears to have no qualms concerning this identity.

Although Henri, who had lived in five countries before the age of eighteen, did not explicitly discuss how he defines himself in the sense of cultural identity, he expresses a connectedness to the global world around him and exudes an ease about being friends with people around him, whatever their cultural affiliations may be. Having lived in Italy for seven years and the Netherlands for four, he spoke of two current events that took place in Europe some time prior to the interview. He mentioned Pope Benedict’s retirement, “...I mean for most people around me, they’ll be like oh that’s something happening far away but for me it was like... yeah we were part of that and we understand it ...” Henri then continues to say that he felt a sense of affinity in reaction to the news about the Dutch queen’s abdication. He describes it this way, “It’s the type of joy you get when you hear something about somebody once close to you. Like your old family, friends....”

In terms of relationships, he does not necessarily find it easier nor harder to interact with people of any particular culture. Neither does he gravitate towards hanging out with people who has similar experiences as him. He says, “I think it’s down to personality and outlook, not really the experience you had.”

Henri remembers back in university where there were many national and cultural groups on campus for people to join. He said that he never felt the pull to join, “But I don’t think I’m averse to it, I’m happy to join in. But that’s not something I feel like I have to join....I find people who socialize with me and I’m happy with that, I don’t feel like I need to find people who speak my language, or do what I used to do.” He interprets it as “laziness” that keeps him from to making the extra effort to hang out with people like him

when he could be perfectly happy making friends with the people around him. He explains:

“...I don't get hung up on what was the past I suppose....I just go with the stuff people do here and join in. And in a way be happy to be a chameleon and change what you do. Although I do get criticized by people for forgetting my roots and whatever...”

Henri seems content and comfortable to be connected with world at large, rather than with a specific culture.

Summary

In this section, I presented the characteristics, qualities, and behaviors that TCKs bring into the workplace. These characteristics, qualities, and behaviors have been acquired through the TCK experiences. This corresponds to the second research question which is about how the TCK experience may impact TCKs in the workplace. The characteristics presented include adaptability and their level of confidence, a sense of responsibility and trustworthiness, having an expanded perspective of the world, being able to reach out as a bridge between people and cultures, having access to more resources and thus developing multiple interests, the management of relationships, and identity.

Strategies, Skills and Abilities for Adaptation

The third section in the chapter discusses the final research question, which concerns strategies, skills, or abilities that TCKs have honed through their TCK experiences, and how they employ them to help them adapt and overcome workplace challenges. The most prominent findings are presented and they are: the ability to let go of the past and engage in the present, reaching out to others, observational skills, and the patience to allow others to express themselves.

Letting Go of the Past and Engaging in the Present

A number of TCK participants reflect upon their ability to relinquish the past and embrace the present. Cecilia shared about how she had to let go in order to really adjust to a new environment. She says that the degree that you adjust to the new environment is dependent on how much you are able to let go of the past. If one still continues to carry the old ways, old values, and old baggage around, previous expectations and values become hindrances because these standards will be used to measure the current situation.

...you'll find that the tighter you hold onto the past, the harder it is to adjust. However, if you come to this new environment, and you say, "Okay, I accept this fact. I am here in this new environment and this is a completely different environment." You put away your past, then and only then are you able to accept the new environment. (Cecilia)

Henri speaks of his ease and comfort with letting go of the past and taking advantage of what is available in the present. Giving an example from his past of what he would do when he was young, he said:

I wouldn't try to hang on to the past, so for example, I wouldn't try to find people who do what I used to do in my old place. So when we moved to Taiwan, I would join in and play with people who played basketball, I wouldn't look for people who used to play baseball in America. I wouldn't seek that out. When we moved to Holland, where everyone plays football, I would join in that rather than say, "Does anyone want to play basketball with me?".... I don't find that I have to find people who speak my language or do what I used to do.

Stanley had recently quit his job and was due to start his new job in a few days at the time of the interview. When asked if he finds it easy to let go of things in the past, and get himself oriented, involved, and participating in whatever is happening in his current environment, Stanley replies:

Yeah, absolutely. Leaving my last job was very easy. I've already gotten involved with the new team at my new job. We've had drinks and everything. That part to me is extremely easy.

Stanley spoke of his last day at his former job with a sense of numbness that so many TCKs experience, “Friday was my last day, a lot of people got emotional about it, but I did not really feel that emotional....and I personally quite like my old company.” Many of the TCKs in the study mentioned that the hardest part about moving around so much in their earlier years was switching environments and switching friends, but after a few moves, it got easier and they felt a little numbed towards the experience. Stanley admits that keeping in touch when people move is difficult:

I talked about how great I am at maintaining relationships at work. There are also people that left work to pursue other opportunities or they’ve been laid off. And I’m not good at maintaining those relationships. If they are far away, it just feels like I have to just let them go. (Stanley)

Mitchell also has similar challenges in keeping relationships going once he or the other person leaves. So while he is happy to make friends now, he knows that the friendship is only usually for a short season in life. Although there are exceptions for him, he says, “So usually I come to a place...I make friends with the colleagues here, but usually once they leave, they leave. It’s not like I keep in contact with them.” While to the non-TCK, it may seem a little callous for TCKs to give up friendships and things of their past so quickly, it is a coping mechanism that they have developed over the years in their earlier TCK life. And this lack of continuity is perhaps why he describes all of his experiences in all the places where he has lived as being fragmented, “...So all of my experiences are like pieces of a puzzle I guess, and then if you put them together, it comes out a little distorted, but you know...that’s me.”

Another illustration of this ability to let go of things can be seen in Adam’s example. When Adam moved from one state to another in his university years for an internship, he packed up everything he had in a car and had to leave the rest of what had been his life behind because he could not take it with him. That of course was not his first time moving, but it is a clear illustration of the story with many TCKs. Each time they leave, they also leave behind parts of themselves and their lives (Smith, 2011). Adam says that even now, he does not accumulate many things because he is always aware of how much of a burden it is to have too many things around when you have to leave a place. He

moved a couple of months back and was happy to report that he was able to move all by himself.

Reaching Out to Others

One of the ways that TCKs may get involved with the present is by reaching out to others in their environment. It is also a way that they build relationships and sometimes gain useful information for work. Mitchell, who is a Taiwanese diplomat, says:

I mean you go meet people from the international community, or people from other embassy. Some of the information that you cannot get from newspaper or anything, and this is the sort of valuable information that can be used.

Henri recalls how he would explore his neighborhood and get involved when he was young:

...I remember that within a month or two of moving to our new house, I would actually, after school, kind of walk around the house, the neighborhood. And just see people playing around and I would basically ask whether I can join in, that sort of reaching out and saying can I do stuff with you kind of thing...

That is a strategy that he has continued to use in his life today:

...also compared to lots of my colleagues, I find myself knowing all my neighbors....I know people who live next to me because I would say hello and I would invite them over for tea and that sort of reaching out ...(Henri)

When Stanley first moves to a new place, he would learn about his surroundings so he could make connections:

I've lived in different countries. I know that the first thing you do is to learn about the culture and so you can relate.... We talk a lot about sports with the Americans, even though I may not be as interested. I put in the effort.

At the time of his interview, Stanley was a few days away from starting his new job. He was then asked about what he normally does as he arrives to a new place, and starts off with a new team:

First thing I do is to develop some sort of relationship with them, whether it's just being able to talk.... A lot of times, you get into this team of eight, maybe a team of five....I spend an equal amount of time with everybody...one on one....Developing a personal relationship is always the first step...I do make a conscious effort to make sure these relationships don't wane. I do spend an equal amount of time with everybody whether it be going together for lunch or just being able to talk about work.

As a way of getting involved in a new environment, TCKs often actively reach out to those around them. They have learned the skill in their TCK experiences and continue to use that strategy on the job to build work relationships and to get oriented in the new environment.

Observation Skills

Another approach that some TCKs take in adjusting to new situations was mentioned in the interviews. Some TCKs say that observation is a strategy that they frequently employ. Instead of rushing to participate, they first stand back and make observations of the people around them, to be alerted to what is going on around them.

When Daphne was sent abroad to manage a factory in a new country, she had a management issue where people in China viewed the concepts of getting a raise and getting promoted in a different light compared to workers in Taiwan. She was at first not aware of the difference and was confused when people reacted in unexpected ways. Daphne said that, "I felt frustrated, but then later I just slowly observed what everyone thought."

A concrete example of how observation was useful not just in adjusting to work, but advancing in work can be seen in Patricia's case:

Before, when I was in America, my team leader was very detail-oriented. This is how he reviews your work. He'll put two pieces of paper together and hold them up to the light.

He'll say, why is the spacing between these two paragraphs off by 0.5 spacing...so I [learned that I] have to catch it [mistakes] before he does. He actually has a checklist that I've secretly observed and took notes on because he always go through the same questions. If I can catch 99% of this [myself], the less time I have to spend with him in review. Later on, I was down to spending as little as 15minutes reviewing with him because everything has been checked...so I learned slowly. The manager also thinks, "Yes, I want to keep you. I don't want to have to change because only you know exactly what I want." Somebody is actually observing him.

Francis speaks on what he does when he starts in a new place:

...It's just about looking. Looking out for what other people do around you; having that awareness. Don't go too far off from what they're doing. Understand that some of the things that they're doing is because they've been there longer... I think at the beginning it's just about observing and then trying to figure out what is acceptable for you and what is not and then the longer you're there, the more comfortable you are and you start to know what you can do and what you can't. So I think it's very simple. It's just about observing and not doing anything too crazy and then afterwards you can, when you have the place figured out, you pretty much won't have to worry about fitting in. (Francis)

Sometimes, this tendency to refrain from jumping in and getting involved right away can be interpreted by others as being passive, aloof, or unapproachable. Rita shares a comment made by her colleagues concerning her behavior when she first started her job.

I think I am a people person, that I can make friends easily...I think that I am pretty friendly, but after I became more acquainted with my colleagues, they said, "When you first started working here, we were afraid to speak to you..." because they felt that I didn't really approach them to chat or anything...I needed some time. After a month or two, after I became a little more familiar with the environment, I would take the initiative to go and talk with them.

When asked if she is usually pretty quiet in an unfamiliar setting and whether or not she was taking the time to take in her surroundings and to observe the people around her, Rita replied:

Yes, a bit...when I am in an unfamiliar place where I am not yet comfortable, and this probably has something to do with how I grew up, but when I was young and I would first get to a school where I knew no one, I would sit there by myself and observe everyone and try to figure out which group I would probably be able to fit into.

For Natalie, it influenced more than simply her colleagues' perception of her at the start. In her interview, she shared how she was a bit upset when her manager gave her low marks in one part of her performance management evaluation because he felt that she was not involved enough, and not giving enough suggestions during meetings. Later on in the interview, as we discussed the TCK tendency to observe before getting more involved, Natalie made the connection between her tendency to watch from the sidelines before plunging into the game, and how that may have resulted in her manager mistaking her behavior as being uninvolved and not contributing to the discussions. Natalie explains:

...because you sort of don't want to stand out too much too soon in case people get the wrong idea about you or to avoid being attacked without you perceiving that as an opportunity for attack....And I think maybe that's why...one of the reasons why...that my boss at times felt that I wasn't participating enough. Probably one of the other factors is because you kinda wanna see what everybody else is doing before you make a fool of yourself.

The TCK participants shared about the usefulness of observation. However, as some of them had found, this cautiousness can sometimes be misinterpreted by others as them being passive or uninterested.

The Patience to Allow Others to Express Themselves

Another ability that TCKs have developed and polished from their exposure to multiple cultures, and their experiences with different types of people is the ability to allow others to fully express themselves before forming a judgment. TCKs may have their initial impressions, but they are willing to give people time, and a chance to fully express who they are. This has become a strategy that they use in helping them understand different types of people around them.

Oscar, who is used to dealing with all types of people as he has lived in five countries by now and is accustomed to the international setting, speaks about how he deals with different types of people.

I think my background must have helped...when I talk to people I meet the first time I tend to have a very open attitude as in like I am not judgmental, I am open to his opinion and I respect his opinion even though his position might be very different from mine.

Oscar then explains where he believes he developed the abilities to appreciate people, value diversity, and to empathize with others:

Because like one thing I got out of this living abroad thing experience is that you have to appreciate diversity, and appreciate, you know, whatever background they come from, even though your ideologies or values conflict a lot, but you have to think in other people's shoes. That is my default strategy when I speak to a new person. (Oscar)

When Francis shared about how he deals with people on the job whom he does not initially like, but is someone who he has to work with, he said:

...Then it's just about spending time, trying to figure out what they are like. And then eventually, I think they get better because you get more of an understanding of where they are coming from. (Francis)

Despite an initial dislike, Francis is aware that people are different and each person has their own story. He finds it a helpful strategy to take the time to understand a person on a deeper level while maintaining an open mind. That understanding often improved Francis' relationships, and can actually change his initial negative feelings towards someone.

Iris spoke of her experience in dealing with an angry parent. The parent came in to complain about the way another teacher handled an issue. The parent and this other teacher were arguing very loudly outside Iris' classroom first with poor English, then in Korean. Iris was asked to help resolve the problem:

So I sat down and communicated with the parent, using very slow English. I smiled the whole time. Later, this parent was very pleased [with the way the situation was handled]. I realized that she just wanted an explanation of what had happened, but the other teacher was unwilling to provide the explanation. It was such a simple matter... Actually, I discovered that these Korean parents, if you spoke to them politely in a soft tone, they are quite willing to listen, but you must first allow them to finish talking. (Iris)

This ability to allow others to express themselves has set Iris apart from her non-TCK colleague, and has given her favor with parents at school.

Summary

In the third section in the chapter, the ability to let go of the past and engage in the present, the ability to reach out to others, observational skills, and the patience to allow others to express themselves are presented as skills, abilities, and strategies that TCKs draw upon to help them adapt to their workplaces and overcome job-related challenges.

Discussions

A Broadened Perspective

One of the hallmarks of the TCK population is their broad worldview (Cameron, 2006; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). This expanded and multi-faceted perspective of the world is a significant outlook. The multicultural experiences widen their scope of vision and deposit rich resources and ideas about the different ways of life in the world in which they live. Their immersion in different cultures gives them the opportunity to develop a more ethnorelative worldview (Bennett, 1993), and provides cultural currency and fluency for them to interact with and reach out to different types of people. As described in Bennett's DMIS (1993), exposure to different cultures enlarges one's horizon and helps a person realize that his culture is only one way of living. Their cross-cultural experiences help TCKs recognize that there may not just be one right way of doing things, but many different ways.

Being a Bridge between People and Cultures

The awareness and acceptance of differences in ways of living, being, and thinking tend to make TCKs more open-minded, tolerant, flexible, and diplomatic (Cameron, 2006; Dewaele & Oudenhoven, 2009; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009; Yoshida et al., 2009). Their exposure at young ages to different environments teaches them how to handle themselves in different situations and with different people. The more ethnorelative worldview and training in diversity probably explains why TCKs are more able to be patient in allowing others to express themselves fully before forming conclusions (interviewees Oscar, Francis, Iris) because they are aware that different perspectives are often equally valid. These are all likely to be reasons why they often seem to get along so well with different types of people and why they are able to move among different groups as they are fluent in the “language” of different group dynamics and cultures. Even if they are not already familiar with the “language,” they can often pick it up relatively fast from so much practice fitting in. TCKs can often find commonality quickly with others (Byttner, 2012). These characteristics, broadened outlook, and knowledge base allow them to serve effectively as a mediator between people and cultures, and enable them to stand in the gap to bridge differences between people.

The emphasis that interviewee Stanley makes about spending an equal amount of time and energy in getting to know everyone on the team, and his conscious effort on not leaving anyone out seems to reflect how TCKs try to straddle the various cultures and relationships that are in their lives, juggling to accommodate and include everyone and every culture.

Large Number of Relationships but Shallow Roots

While on the surface, it looks like they have a large network of friends and they have the ability to get along with everyone and join any group that they wish, they are often not truly affiliated with one single group on a deeper level. Many of the participants in this study do not feel a sense of belonging in any single group, and often, they prefer not to be identified with one particular group (interviewees Eddie, Stanley, Ursula).

From both TCK literature (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009) and the interviews, there is evidence of these struggles that TCKs may have in their relationships. This issue can be examined from two angles; one from the perspective of work effectiveness, and the other

from the perspective of personal relationships. In the workplace, the fact that they do not belong to any single group, either willingly or unwillingly, is actually conducive to their credibility as an unbiased party (as is the case for interviewees Stanley and Eddie). In the workplace, this may be a particularly good stance to take, as the TCK may be viewed as fair and trustworthy, and their words may carry more weight. Their position as the third-party or an outsider naturally allows them to see more clearly than those who are within the circle and in close relationship with each other.

Watching as bystanders from the side, freely gliding between different groups of people, getting along with everyone, but not establishing deep connections may be effective behavior in the workplace, but this may increase their sense of not belonging anywhere (interviewees Eddie, Stanley, Mitchell, Ursula). In their personal lives, not being able to really identify with any group on a meaningful level is likely to make them feel lonely and disconnected from their surroundings. Their surface friendliness with all groups may sometimes give the illusion that they have strong social support, and others may not realize that sometimes TCKs can suffer from a sense of disconnection in their relationships.

Identity

A challenging aspect of having experiences with many different cultures and being exposed to diversity of people in one's developmental years is the possibility of confused identity, as the development of a strong sense of identity is a core issue for many TCKs (Fail et al., 2004). "Identity is the stable, consistent, and reliable sense of who one is and what one stands for in the world" (Josselson, 1987, p. 10).

The way that TCK can seem to participate in all groups and get along with everyone can also be examined in regards to their sense of identity. Although their experiences with many different cultures may sometimes cause identity crises, their hybrid identity, regardless of how much they have been able to come to terms with it, seems to be what allows them to remain fluid and flexible.

Regardless of their internal state, many TCKs in the study have mentioned the ability to blend into many groups and get along with everybody as their strength (interviewees Stanley, Mitchell, Eddie). There should be little debate that that group dynamics differ from group to group. For people who have strong stances and more ethnocentric views, it

can be difficult for them to get along with a group of people who espouse different views; conversely, it is usually difficult for groups to accept other people who are different from them. The fact that TCKs can amicably participate in many different groups stands to testify their chameleon-like quality.

Those observing TCKs may wonder how TCKs can adjust their outward behavior to match each group without seeming to have internal conflicts, or feelings of discomfort for betraying one's own sense of identity. It is likely that for TCKs, operating at the margins of different cultures (Bennett, 2004) has given them the ability to switch between various frames of culture easily. Depending on their environment, they can easily shift their perspectives and see from a different cultural frame, without the restrictions of having one central culture (Bennett, 2004), or sometimes a strong sense of self-identity, thus the TCK himself may not see any inconsistencies or contradictions in his behavior. While they switch between cultural references, either they are genuinely expressing a part of themselves (constructive marginality), or they are so confused about who they are and where they stand, that they can easily vacillate between different views without any more internal conflict than what is already in there (encapsulated marginality). Whether a TCK switches his frame of reference and adjusts his behavior with ease and truly embraces each culture, or a TCK switches his frame of reference to fit into a situation with a sense of rejection, confusion, and a sense of being an outsider, can sometimes be hard to discern as their outward behavior may not give away their internal state of mind.

The paradox with this ability to keep switching between different frames of cultural perspectives is that it may be useful for playing the role of a mediator, and may generally be helpful in workplace relationships. There is however a possibility that TCKs may appear to be inconsistent or elusive in their dealings with people and others may be left to wonder what the TCK's true feelings or intentions may be. This may result in doubt about their sincerity and credibility which may cancel out their effectiveness to be a mediator as a "third party" as mentioned in the above discussions.

Apparent Freedom but Lack in Choices

Interviewees Stanley and Mitchell's experiences of feeling like they were limited in where they could work despite having lived in multiple countries illustrate the plight of TCKs who ideally should be able to work in any of the countries that they have inhabited

before, but in reality, may face obstacles difficult to overcome in each of these places. Despite their apparent freedom to travel between countries and cultures with ease because of their often multilingual skills, wide knowledge base about different cultures, and their ability to deal with different types of people, they can experience a sense of being trapped. The decision concerning where to work geographically sometimes forces them to choose between a rock and a hard place and can intensify their sense of not belonging to any one place as Stanley noted. In this sense, they are limited physically where they can work as well as a sense of being trapped in the psychological sense (marginality).

Well-Educated and with a Curious Mind

Not only does the cross-cultural TCK lifestyle provide stimulation for the TCK, many TCKs are also privy to attend top schools (Cottrell & Useem, 1999) and have been immersed in environments that foster love for learning surrounded by elite students and demanding teachers that push for growth and self-development in their schooling years. With the many opportunities to learn and environments to support learning, TCKs do tend to obtain post-secondary degrees more than the average (Cottrell & Useem, 1999) and it is evident that in their careers, they continue to feed that inquisitive mind and retain their passion for learning (Eddie, Patricia, Ursula).

The Need for Variety in Work

The need for variety and constant change within their jobs, as expressed by several TCKs in the study (interviewees Lionel, Jasper, Eddie, Francis), is a probable result of a lifestyle of constant exposure to new experiences coupled with a love for learning. In these stimulation-rich settings, TCKs often live a fast-paced life, where they have to absorb quickly as change is always imminent. They are used to constantly processing changes and new stimuli entering their lives, so it is perhaps difficult for them to work for a long time on the same things without new stimulation coming in. This may have established a pattern for their lives, where they quickly lose interest with the routine and the monotonous and have to constantly be exposed to a variety of different things. They also want to have opportunities to continue learning and growing. This desire is not surprising considering that this lifestyle has been enforced since their developing years and they do seem to carry it into their work lives. While this characteristic does seem to

be a good fit for today's fast-paced, ever changing workplace (Jurtan, 2011; Klehe et al., 2011), the possible downside of this constant need for new stimulation may be a sense of rootlessness or impatience. Also, the skills and abilities that require constant practice and refining for mastery to take place may elude the efforts of TCKs as they get bored doing the same things. Many jobs are also unable to provide new things for the TCK to learn at a pace that is satisfactory to them.

Independence and Autonomy

In the study, many of the TCKs learn to be independent when they moved abroad. For TCKs who went abroad with their family, often they learned to be independent and took care of themselves to avoid adding additional burdens to their families who are themselves stressed in a new environment. In some cases, the interviewees are the older of the siblings, and they shouldered the responsibility of taking care of younger siblings (interviewees Greg, Daphne, Patricia, Keith). Some grew up with financial hardship at home (Daphne and Greg) or had to deal with family crisis such as the death of a parent (interviewees Greg and Keith). Other TCKs lived with host families or in boarding schools (interviewees Jasper, Iris, Adam, Ursula). As helpful as the people around them may try to be, TCKs quickly learn that some things can only be tackled alone. Thus they become good at taking care of themselves, solving their own problems, and becoming more self-reliant. Being independent at a young age also meant that they had to learn to take responsibility for their own decisions and actions. Several TCKs mentioned their responsible and trustworthy characteristics (interviewees Daphne, Cecilia, Greg, Jasper, Patricia). Being used to independence in early life, TCKs tend to also enjoy autonomy in their careers (interviewees Patricia, Daphne, Beth, Eddie, Iris).

Being able to work independently and autonomously is a valuable asset in today's workplace where organization structures are becoming increasingly complex. It is not uncommon for employees to have their direct reporting supervisors stationed in a different part of the world. Geographic distances and time zone differences often leave the employees in a position to have to make many decisions for their organizations on their own. When managers are unable to supervise the work of a subordinate closely, employees who can work independently, direct their own progress, take responsibility for their work and remain trustworthy are invaluable to an organization.

The results illustrate another interesting paradox in the TCK view of relationships; the TCKs in the study seem to place such high emphasis on work relationships and people that they work with (interviewees Henri, Stanley, Adam, Cecilia, Daphne) despite their observed independence and preference for autonomy. Perhaps this is again a reflection of their conflicting struggles in the boundaries of relationships; the desire for freedom and independence tied with a somewhat contradictory yearning to be connected and part of a community.

Adaptability and Confidence

Most TCKs have struggled with fear and anxiety concerning their lifestyle of mobility early on in their youths. Many of the participants interviewed recalled viewing the TCK childhood with more pain than joy while they were growing up. Even though most have been able to see the value in their experiences as they matured into adults, reactions to change and uncertainty still differ from person to person.

For a few of the TCKs, their fear and concerns about the unknown have given way to a sense of confidence and assurance (interviewees Lionel, Keith, Daphne, Henri, Ursula, Patricia, Eddie, Oscar). For these TCKs, they are less prone to fear about going to new places, meeting new people, or facing the unknown because they have experienced it many times before and have come through each time. This group of TCKs have learned that though they may not necessarily be enthusiastic about change, nor do they necessarily enjoy the process, they are nonetheless adaptable. Experience has taught them that everything would eventually work out even in the midst of the unfamiliar and the unknown. This assured confidence has driven some to embrace challenges (interviewees Oscar, Patricia, Stanley).

However, different people respond differently, and the experience of many moves does not necessarily transform into confidence concerning new environments no matter how many times a person has had to move. For interviewee Rita, her TCK experience in early life may still ring up painful memories of being alone and helpless in an unfamiliar place. This keeps her somewhat psychologically “bound” and she says that she is even more fearful than non-TCKs about being in unfamiliar places.

We can discuss this in terms of the experiential learning theory. In Rita’s case, having to move between four different countries, she has had the opportunity to reflect

upon these experiences and have formed certain concepts about dealing with changes. From her explanation, it can be seen that these past experiences and the concepts that she have developed from these experiences dictated some of her choices later on in life. In the case that she mentioned, she had the opportunity to study abroad. Even though everything was in place, she decided not to go in order to avoid being in a situation where she could potentially be alone, without friends or family. This was a result of what she had learned from her previous experiences that changes and moving to a new place is associated at least in part with the pain loneliness and difficulty of being in an unfamiliar environment

On the other hand, for TCKs that are fearless in the face of change, similar situations have brought about different outcomes from the individual because of the different interpretations and conceptualizations that have resulted within the individual after their TCK experiences.

Letting Go of the Past

Similar to the TCK's ability to develop friendships quickly but not necessarily deeply, the ability to quickly disengage from the past and fully engage with the present is also a valuable skill to have in the quick-paced and ever-changing workplace today. In each of the moves throughout their childhood, TCKs deal with constant losses whether it be tangible or not. As they move, the ability to let go of things in the past becomes crucial in their adjustment to the new place.

This ability to not get trapped in your past and by your past is helpful in the business world as well according to Eugene O'Kelly, a former CEO of KPMG. He speaks about this ability to quickly abandon something when it was no longer relevant or useful:

Like it or not, that was my reality. I adjusted. As I got older, I learned to adjust faster. I cultivated an ability to make big shifts quickly, almost instantly. When something in my life no longer worked, I could abandon it with little sentiment. I did not look back, nor did I digress from my new path. It seems to me that no good came from pretending that what used to be true was still true when clearly it wasn't, or that what really was true, no matter how unpleasant, really wasn't. The quicker one got on with it, the better. It was a particularly useful skill in business, a world at least as fast-moving and unforgiving as the larger world. (O'Kelly, 2008, P. 9)

While the ability to let go of the past is an important skill for the TCK in their times of moving around, and may help them to adapt quicker to the changing workplace, but as they settle into their adulthood, the willingness to let go of things too quickly and too easily may again leave them with a sense of disconnection from their past as there is no continuity from their life before. Leaving the past behind with a clean break makes it easy to deal with at the time, but may intensify that sense of a rootless and fragmented life.

Observation Skills

Although observation is not a skill that is particular to TCKs, it has played a crucial role in the adaptation process of many TCKs. In literature (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009) and from the sharing of many participants, observation is almost a survival tool. Through experience, many TCKs are trained to be sensitive and alert in new environments.

TCKs learn to develop and rely on their observation skills as they continually moved to new places where rules and regulations are different from those in the last place they were in. Ignorance and brashness can lead to embarrassment or result in them being ostracized for not knowing the cultural norm. Therefore, they have learned to become careful observers (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). In this sense, observation skills become important in helping TCKs develop the chameleon-like characteristic. This habit to first lay dormant, until they have had a chance to watch and see what everyone is doing and who they can trust and what is going on before they start to open up and become a little more alive, visible, and involved is as helpful to the TCK in the workplace as it is in their TCK experiences and it is a strategy that they readily employ (interviewees Adam, Francis, Patricia, Daphne, Rita, Natalie).

Observation skills has also been mentioned in career adaptation literature as a adaptation strategy for people who are moving into new roles, such as an employee who has been promoted and now needs to adapt into his new role (Ibarra, 1999). Ibarra asserts that individuals adapt by choosing and observing role models and choosing temporary identities to try out for his new role. From internal and external feedback, individuals continually adjust themselves until they have adapted to the new position. This is similar to the way that TCKs observe others to determine how to respond in the new environment and adjusting their behavior accordingly.

Less Detours

In the earlier section titled “Reflection on Career so far: Less Detours,” some of the TCKs seem to express regret for having tried so many different jobs and wish that they had gone directly on track and started building their career right away with relevant experiences. Some TCKs may feel like they are still exploring and wandering around when their peers seem to have settled in a fairly fixed career paths. This may be the result of “delayed” or “prolonged adolescence” (Cottrell & Useem, 1999; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009), which describes a phenomenon when TCKs settle into life later than their non-TCK peers. Since they didn’t have the chance to discover themselves while they were moving through different cultures and busy trying to adjust, they may need more time than their peers for the journey of self-discovery. So while their peers seem to have settle into their careers, some TCKs may still be exploring different career options available to them.

There may also be a second possibility to account for the frequent job changes among this group of TCKs. As is mentioned in the literature review, TCKs sometimes develop a migratory instinct (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009) in which they simply cannot stay put in one place. There is a sense of restlessness that prompts them to constantly move from one place to the next, never settling down. They continue this habit at work, always feeling the urge to get a new job after a period of time.

To explore this issue more among the TCK participants, the work data of nineteen participants were analyzed (one participant preferred to keep her work details undisclosed). The average age of the nineteen participants is 30.8 years old and the average work experience is 6.1 years. The average number of jobs held is 2.5, with an average of 2.4 years on each job, and the average number of job switches is 1.58.

In order to compare the data of the TCK participants with the data of average Taiwanese laborers, statistics were obtained from Taiwan’s Council of Labor Affairs website. It is found that the average number of job switches for the TCK participants (1.58 times) is actually the same as the average number of job switches for Taiwanese laborers between the ages 25-29 (1.58 times) and lower than Taiwanese laborers between the ages 25-34 (1.9 times). See Table 4.1 for a chart comparing the statistics. Although this is not a totally precise comparison as there can be too many variables involved, and a comparison of the average number of years in each job would probably be a more accurate indicator, however, it does give a rough idea of how the TCK participants

measure when compared with the average Taiwanese worker of around the same age group. From these statistics, it doesn't not seem that the average TCK participant for this study really switch jobs any more than the average laborer in Taiwan.

Although a few of the TCKs in this study do work for an average of less than 1.5 years in each of his or her job, out of the group, there are two individuals who have been on the same job for more than ten years. There are also several others who have stayed in the same job for more than five years. So although a few individual TCKs in the study may feel like they may take longer in exploring career possibilities, it is not a common experience shared by everyone.

Table 4.2.

Work Statistics of TCK Participants & Average Taiwanese Labor

	TCK Participants	Taiwanese Labor (Ages 25-29)	Taiwanese Labor (Ages 25-34)
Age	30.8 (Average age)	25-29 (Age Group)	25-34 (Age Group)
Sample Size	19 ^a	2966 ^b	1295 ^c
Average Accumulated Years of Work Experience	6.1	4.23 ^b	7.0 ^c
Average No. of Jobs Held	2.5	No Data	No Data
Average No. of Years in Each Job	2.4	No Data	No Data
Average No. of Job Switches	1.58	1.58 ^b	1.9 ^c

Note.

^a Numbers calculated based on 19 participants because one participant did not wish to provide the specific details for her jobs.

^b 2012 Statistics of Taiwanese laborers, age group 25-29. Provided by Taiwan's Council of Labor Affairs. Website: <http://statdb.cla.gov.tw/html/svy01/0107menu.htm>
Report Titles: 1) Young Laborers and their Job Change Statistics 2) Young Laborers and their Total Years in Work

^c 2012 Statistics of Taiwanese laborers, age group 25-34. Provided by Taiwan's Council of Labor Affairs. Website: <http://statdb.cla.gov.tw/html/svy01/10102menu.htm>
Report Title: 1) Laborers and their Average Years of Work, their average number of Job Changes, and the average year of work in current job.

CHAPTER V FINDINGS REVIEW, IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

In this final chapter, a summary of the main findings of the research is first reviewed. Implications for TCK individuals and organizations are discussed. Suggestions for future studies are then given. The limitations of this study are then noted before a conclusion is given.

Findings Review

The main findings of this research are summarized Table 5.1. In response to the first research question, a brief description of the TCK job search process is described, highlighting several issues that pertain specifically to TCKs. The factors that TCKs consider and value in a job are then presented. Some of these factors do appear to relate back to their TCK experiences. These factors include the desire for autonomy and control in their jobs, who they work with (colleagues and supervisors), variety in the job content, and opportunity for growth and development. Then the changes in value and attitude towards work that took place as TCKs moved into different seasons of their lives were presented and the section ended with some of the TCKs' reflection on their career life so far. A few of them mentioned that they wish they had less detours in their careers.

The second research question is regarding how the TCK experience has helped to shape certain qualities and traits that may help or hinder TCKs in adapting to their workplace. In this research, participants are found to be mostly adaptable and the assurance of their ability to continue to be adaptable brings them confidence. TCKs tend to be responsible and trustworthy; they have a broadened perspective which allows them to be a bridge or mediator between people. TCKs often have access to more resources and as a result, may be prone to develop multiple interests. In this research, many participants have the relationship tendency to maintain a large number of relationships that are more on the surface level, which is an effective strategy in work relationships, but not so effective in personal relationships. Finally, the results show that different participants have different levels of comfort and acceptance concerning their hybrid

identity. Some are sure and comfortable with their identity as an international individual, while others are not so comfortable with the idea of being a cultural hybrid.

The last research question concerns the specific strategies, skills, and abilities that TCKs employ to help them overcome challenges at work and to adapt to the workplace. Some TCKs let go of the past and focus on engaging in what is before them now. They do that sometimes by reaching out to others. Others TCKs take time to observe to find out what is appropriate and what is not. Finally, in dealing with people and problems, TCKs will often allow others to fully express themselves before jumping to conclusions.

In Figure 5.1, the findings are presented to show the paradoxical nature of the many issues that TCKs deal with.

Potentially Beneficial	Potentially Problematic
A broadened perspective	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to tolerate, acceptance of differences • Ability to have the patience to allow others to fully express themselves • Ability to embrace international identity • Access to more resources, more resourceful • Development of multiple interests and connections • Chameleon-like • Serves as a bridge between people and cultures • Good at Reaching Out to Others • Can get along with many types of people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confused Identity • Discomfort with hybrid identity • Confused loyalty • Sense of being trapped in the margins • Compromise/Vacillating views • Others may view them as inconsistent
Developing large number of relationships but shallow roots	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective mode for work relationship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not as effective for personal relationships • Lack depth in relationships • Lack sense of belonging
Need for variety & opportunity for growth and development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to handle new things well 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constant need for new stimulants
Independence / Sense of responsibility & trustworthiness	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoys autonomy • Ability to work independently • Not afraid to not belong in a group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No need to belong to a group • Sense of belonging
Experience with changes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptability and Confidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling even more fearful than non-TCKs
Letting go of the past and engaging in the present	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective strategy for work, helpful for adaptation and facing changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can easily throw away the past • Lack the sense of connection to past • Sense of fragmented life
Use of observation skills	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helpful for adaptation • Help to develop chameleon-like quality (Useful at work) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help to develop chameleon-like quality (May hinder development of personal identity) • May compromise personal feelings, values, and patterns of behavior to fit in

Figure 5.1. Summary of findings and related TCK characteristics as potentially beneficial or problematic.

Implications

In this section of the chapter, implications for individual TCKs and implications for organizations working with TCKs are given separately.

For TCKs

Building deeper relationships and continuity into their lives.

As seen earlier in the discussion, TCKs and their skills such as the ability to mix with diverse groups of people while managing to retain a sense of detachment are fairly effective in the workplace, where relationships do not necessarily need to be deep, but can remain casual and friendly. However, in their personal lives, it is important for TCKs to remember that they need to develop a healthy balance of different types of relationships. So while they should draw upon their strengths, and continue to build work relations, they should also learn to allow themselves to go a little bit deeper and get a little more involved with those around them.

A related suggestion for TCKs to build some continuity into their lives may help to establish a deeper sense of connection to one's past. One way to do that may be making a conscious effort to keep in touch with a manageable number of friends from the past, even if it is just one or two. Having connections to the past may better help TCKs to link their present with their past and to see it as a coherent experience, rather than have loose pieces here and there.

It may be helpful to keep in mind that skills needed at work can sometimes be a little different from skills needed in one's personal life. It would probably be wise to think about where best to apply certain skills and where it is necessary to make some adjustments to old habits from the past.

Being aware of the “migratory instinct.”

When considering exploring job options, TCKs should remember that while it is good to explore, they must have the wisdom to discern whether it is a reasonable exploration of different career possibilities, or whether they have simply fallen prey to the migratory instinct and are making choices based on their sense of restlessness without

realizing the harmful effects it can have on the development of one's career. A constant craving for change and a longing for newness may not necessarily be beneficial for the development of a career.

For new TCK employees.

Many participants describe the tendency to first observe and stay low-key before getting involved in a new place. And although observing is generally a good idea, it is also important to communicate a sense of genuine interest in what is going on around you to avoid misunderstandings from colleagues and managers.

For Organizations Working with TCKs

Working with new TCK employees.

Understand that some TCKs tend to error on the cautious side when they first start out in a new place, preferring to stay out of the limelight and spend some time watching and observing others to get their bearings. It may be helpful to give them some time to adjust before interpreting their aloofness as a sign of disinterest or arrogance. It is likely that these TCKs are simply taking some time to figure out how they can best ease into the situation and will start to participate and be more involved after they grow more comfortable with the new environment.

TCKs as bridges between different groups of people.

Managers may consider TCKs for positions where they have the opportunity to work with different kinds of people. TCKs tend to be good at being the lubricant and being the mediator between different groups of people within an organization. As employers who are interested in the holistic well-being of their employees, managers can encourage TCKs to develop deeper relationships in their personal lives as well as within the organization so that it helps them get a sense of belonging and a sense that they are rooted and grounded. This will likely increase their desire to stay with the organization as well.

TCKs and their love for variety.

TCKs may perform well in positions where they have a chance to work with a variety of projects so that they are kept excited about learning new things. Job rotations

in different functions and departments across the organization may also help them to stay fresh and enthusiastic about their jobs.

TCKs and their ability to work independently.

TCK employees tend to handle autonomy in a responsible way because many are used to working independently. Their conscientiousness, sense of responsibility and their desire to prove themselves trustworthy helps to keep them accountable in their work. On the other hand, TCKs who are managers may need to realize that not everyone is as comfortable with autonomy as they are and that at times, they may need to offer more guidance and support for those that need more direction within their work.

TCKs in an uncertain work environment.

The ability for TCKs to remain confident and fearless in the face of the unknown makes them particularly suited for the fast-paced and uncertain work environment of today. This fearlessness, when combined with the patience to observe and to allow others to fully express their views, gives them the prudence needed to make informed and wise decisions. Thus organizations may consider sending TCKs to set up new offices, work on new projects, or develop new clients as they are not often threatened by changes and the unknown.

TCKs as individuals.

It would be wise to know that TCKs, just like any group of people, consist of different personalities, different backgrounds, different cultural mixes, and different attitudes. While they may share certain characteristics, each TCK is nonetheless a unique individual and should be known as one. So the traits and characteristics described in the research are to be used only as a reference. Each organization still should allow for individual differences in each of their TCK employees and find out what their strengths and shortcomings are, what their preferences and dislikes are, and the roles that they should play in order to most effectively contribute to the organization.

Suggestions for Future Studies

Comparisons between siblings and different genders.

Direction for future studies includes the comparison of the experiences of TCK siblings. Even though they lived in the same places, often attended the same schools, and had grown up with the same family upbringing, their interpretation of these experiences can be vastly different. A few pairs of siblings were interviewed for this study. When they spoke of their general TCK experiences, they shared different sentiments, attitudes, and perspectives. These studies could raise issues concerning birth order, and the age(s) at which move(s) are made. This may be helpful for parents of TCKs to know how to help each of their kids, understanding that the adjustment process may differ between siblings. A comparative study using gender as a variable may also yield interesting results.

Study of long-term TCK career processes.

Examination of TCKs and their career choice process and adaptation at different ages can also make fascinating research studies. For the most part, TCKs in this research are fairly young still and are in relatively early stages of their careers lives. It would be interesting to see what picture may emerge when the career choices and career patterns of TCKs are studied over a lifetime to get a long-term view of their careers and career choice process.

Studies comparing TCKs in different host cultures.

Further studies could explore the combinations of cultures that a TCK may experience and the effects that this specific mixture of cultures may have on his or her career choices and adaptation. For example, TCKs who had lived in several East Asian countries that share similar Confucian influence may choose careers and adapt to the workplace differently from someone who has had to straddle a combination of very different cultures such as African culture and Asian culture. The distance that a TCK has to negotiate between his or her home cultures and host cultures may greatly affect a TCK experience.

Other studies can make comparisons between TCKs who live in host nations that are economically developed and relatively prosperous versus TCKs that grow up in nations

that are not as developed. Another variable for future studies could be the TCK's choice of country or countries in which they decide to work and whether or not that makes a difference to their adaptation and the strategies they choose to use.

In this research, I have intentionally tried to look for two types of participants. A little over half (11) of the participants have lived in two cultures before the age of 18, while the rest (9) have lived in three or more cultures before the age of 18. Although in answering the research questions using data collected from these two groups of people, I did not find obvious differences between the two groups, there may very well be significant differences between the two types of TCKs. Differences in the number of cultures that one experiences imply differences in the amount of time spent in each culture and the differing level of familiarity with each culture. Continued research more focused in comparing the differences between these two groups of TCKs may yield further insight on the issue of identity.

Comparing TCKs of different family background.

The family background of TCKs can also be used as a variable to compare the experiences of TCKs and their career choice process and adaptation. The values and upbringing of a military family would be very different from that of a missionary family, or the family of a business expatriate. TCKs from missionary families probably socialize with a different set of people than TCKs from diplomatic families. The level of contact with the local host culture also differs for TCKs of different family background. These factors all affect the TCK experience and may thus impact subsequent career choices and adaptation.

Limitations

This is a qualitative study based on interviews done with twenty individuals. The findings of this research can only speak for the experiences of these participants for no two TCKs have the same experience, not even siblings within the same family, and even if they did, no one interprets an experience the same way. Although the results cannot represent the experiences of anyone else, the findings from the interviews do give great richness in details that cannot be collected from quantitative studies. Knowing the

details about the lives of these TCKs is useful to further understand and explore the TCK phenomenon.

The interview participants are overwhelmingly Asian in ethnicity, with the exception of one American who has lived in Taiwan for the majority of his life. Although host countries represented in the study are diverse, these TCKs are still deeply influenced by Asian culture and are likely to interpret their experiences through Asian values and filters, which may create a bias different from other cultures. This however is useful because this constant variable can provide some control and stability to the study so that more focus can be placed on comparing other variables.

Most of the data is gathered through interviews, which are the interviewees' interpretations of their experiences. And as is the case with all qualitative studies, the data collected and the analysis of the data is also subject to the personal bias of the researcher. However, as long as these possible biases are pointed out, and readers are made aware, the insider understanding of the topic under study may be helpful and may bring a deeper perspective than if the researcher was not part of the in-group. Again, the results of this study are not representative of all TCKs, and should not be flippantly generalized to the rest of the TCK population.

Conclusion

A Variety of Experiences

The present study, with twenty TCKs, again testifies to what has already been observed about the TCK phenomenon, and that is the fact that the TCK experience is complex and can hold many paradoxes and extremes.

While they appear to enjoy freedom traversing between nations, cultures and people groups, sometimes there seems to be the sense that TCKs are trapped in cultural and social margins physically and psychologically. They enjoy many opportunities to learn about the world in which they live in, they often have access to more resources simply because they have been able to experience more, and yet all that they have been exposed to may become overwhelming and create confusion in identity and allegiance for them. On the issue of identity, some of the TCKs comfortably identify themselves as an

international person, while others are still trying to come to terms with their hybrid identity.

For some, the transience of TCK experiences pushes them to dive into the present and immediately take full part in what is happening now without lingering on the past. For others, the unfamiliarity of each new environment moves them to be cautious and to stay out of the limelight when first entering an unfamiliar setting.

While TCKs crave for freedom and autonomy, there is also a cry for belonging and for connection to others. In their relationships, their ability to be partially involved in all groups allows them to enjoy different types of people, but to be attached to none. They walk in the margins of cultures, and of social groups within their personal lives, sometimes afraid to be pinned down. They try to straddle all; they enjoy variety, but sometimes lack the depth and the intimacy of full-heartedly belonging to any one culture, or social group.

These qualities may help TCKs to be relatively successful in work relationships. TCKs often find it easy to communicate with many kinds of people, to identify things in common with others, and are thus able to quickly build rapport. Although they express confidence in the management of their work relationships, these same TCKs often admit the inability to get close to others in personal relationships.

TCKs are often trusted and have the credibility to have a say among many groups, but their desire to accommodate everyone and their tendency to be diplomatic may hinder their ability to freely express themselves. These phenomena demonstrate the intensity and the complexity of the TCK experience and demonstrates how each individual responds to their experiences in different ways.

Theoretical Contributions

The contributions of this study are to mainly support and confirm existing literature on TCKs. The study also points out that some characteristics troubling to the TCK individual in their personal lives are sometimes very effective in the workplace.

Existing literature often point to the difficulties of TCKs in establishing deep, personal relationships. While that challenge is evident even in the data collected, this study also shows that TCKs often manage their work relationships quite successfully. Similarly, their ability to quickly let go of the past and move into the present may not

always be helpful in their personal lives in terms of establishing a sense of continuity, yet that trait is advantageous in today's fast-paced and ever-changing work environment.

Learning from Their Experiences

In accordance to the cycle described in Kolb's Experiential Learning Model, TCKs have taken their experiences, reflected upon them, and abstracted concepts, principles, and meanings from them. Through that process, they are able to form new ideas to add to their previous knowledge. Some of these skills and abilities that were learned from early on in their TCK childhood, were taken and applied to what is now their work environment to help them adapt. The insights that they have gotten from their experimentations of these concepts are refined and will no doubt continue to be refined to serve them in their future endeavors.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Please share about your TCK experience. What was it like for you?
 - What was most enjoyable about your TCK experience?
 - What was most unpleasant or challenging about being a TCK?
 - In what ways has the TCK experience impacted your life overall?
2. What is your general attitude toward career? What do you hope to gain from work?
3. What is the process that you go through when choosing a job? What factors do you consider most important when deciding on a job?
 - Do you think your TCK experience has had an impact on your career choice?
4. How would you describe your work-related experience so far?
 - Do you think your career-related experiences are significantly different from that of a non-TCK peer?
5. Can you briefly share about each experience so far? (If more than one, we'll speak about each job, one at a time)
 - Work environment
 - Organization culture, industry characteristics
 - Job content
 - Is it a good match for you?
 - What aspect(s) of work do you enjoy most?
 - What aspect(s) do you least enjoy?
6. Based on self-knowledge and previous experiences, what type of work environment do you thrive under?
7. Based on self-knowledge and previous experiences, what type of work do you think is most suitable for you?
8. What do you think are some of your greatest strengths and weaknesses on the job (especially those relating to your TCK background)?
9. What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses that your co-workers and managers see in you (especially strengths and weaknesses relating to your TCK background)?
10. From 1-10, how would you rate yourself as an adaptable person? Please share your experiences in adapting to the workplace, especially in terms of culture, interpersonal relationships, and dealing with uncertain and unpredictable situations.
11. How confident do you feel about your ability to solve problems that arise at work?
 - What are examples of specific challenges that you have encountered on the job?
 - How did you handle these challenges? Please feel free to share examples of success as well as failure.
12. What advice would you give to a TCK who is looking for his first job?

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Research title: Career Choice and Adaptability of Third Culture Kids

Researcher: Annie Hsu, graduate student at Graduate Institute of International Human Resource Development (IHRD) at National Taiwan Normal University

Purpose: To contribute to the understanding of the TCK experience and how the experience may impact career choices and adaptation processes in hopes of providing useful insight to help TCKs develop healthy, fulfilling, and productive careers.

A Third Culture Kid is defined as a person who has spent a significant period of time outside of his parents' passport culture during his or her developmental years.

Criteria for interview participants of this research: A TCK with at least one year of work experience who has lived abroad (in at least one other culture outside that of the parents' home culture) for at least two years during the period of time between the ages of eight and eighteen.

Procedure:

- Participants will be asked to participate in an interview lasting approximately 60 minutes long.
- General topics of discussion will include the TCK experience, career choices, and adaptation in the workplace.
- Additional interaction with participants is expected only for clarification purposes. Should they be necessary, they will occur within one year of initial contact.
- The interview will be recorded (audio-only) and the researcher will take handwritten notes.
- The content of the interview will be transcribed and coded after the interview.

Confidentiality: Content of the interviews, conversations, and other interactions with the researcher regarding this research is confidential. Only the researcher and the research team (committee members, advisor, and interview recording transcribers) will have access to the raw data.

Records of this study will be kept confidential. Writings that result from this research will not include information that will identify the individual participant; participants will be assigned a pseudonym or a code to protect their identity.

Participant rights: Participation in this research is voluntary and you may choose to discontinue your participation at any given time without reprisal or penalty and none of your data will be used.

Contact information of researcher: If you have any questions about this study, please contact Annie Hsu via email at anyshoe@gmail.com.

Contact information of research advisor: Should you have further concerns about this research, you may contact the research advisor, Dr. Vera Chang, Professor and Director of IHRD at National Taiwan Normal University via email at changw@ntnu.edu.tw, or call at +886-2-7734-1620.

I have read and fully understood the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy of this form has been given to me.

Signature of the Participant

Printed Name

Date

I hereby confirm that I have personally explained this document to the participant before requesting him/her to sign.

Signature of the Researcher

Date

APPENDIX C: TCK PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

Name	Gender	Age	Nationality
Country you were born in		Year of Birth	
Reason(s) for living abroad			
List of countries that you have lived in with the corresponding age and length of time			
Moved to:		Age:	Year(s):
Moved to:		Age:	Year(s):
Moved to:		Age:	Year(s):
Moved to:		Age:	Year(s):
Moved to:		Age:	Year(s):
Moved to:		Age:	Year(s):
Moved to:		Age:	Year(s):
Moved to:		Age:	Year(s):
Moved to:		Age:	Year(s):
Moved to:		Age:	Year(s):
List of job(s) that you have worked in and the length of time in job			
Organization:			Years:
Job content:			Industry:
Organization:			Years:
Job Content:			Industry:
Organization:			Years:
Job Content:			Industry:
Organization:			Years:
Job Content:			Industry:

APPENDIX D: SAMPLE TRANSCRIPT ANALYSIS

Name	Line	Category L1	Category L2	Category L3	Category L4	Transcript Lines	Translation	Notes
Patricia	236	worked harder than anyone else for survival	persistence	Traits	TCK Experience: Helpfulness/Hindrances	因為時差，我會算時差。它什麼時候有營業，趕快打電話。所以人家可能要花五天做的，我一天就可以做完了。可是我沒有睡覺。差別就是這樣。可是 I want it so bad. 因為別人可能有 choice. 我沒有 choice. Either this way 或是我找不到工作。I'd go home and just find a job in Dominican Republic. 但是 Dominican Republic 對我來說，是沒有未來的。	That's the difference. But I wanted it [the job] so bad. Other people might have had a choice, but I had no choice. Either that, or I won't have a job. I'd just go home and find a job in Dominican Republic. But for me, there's no future in Dominican Republic. (Patricia, Line 236)	
Eddie	180	feel like need improvement working on people	relationship	challenges		我覺得人與人之間的關係要加強，因為每個人畢竟都不一樣。		good with ppl...but also feel like need more improvements
Adam	59	Can choose how involved to be in new culture	Keeping a distance	Relationships	Workplace Adatpation: KSAOs	各有優缺點，但是像我在國外那段時間，喜歡的是悠閒，簡單，清境。我想也是因為還在讀書。雖然在 Belize 聽到一些雜七雜八的，but you don't have to deal with it. It's not my problem. 唯一要做的就是 focus 在功課上，讀好時，其實也是好好玩。		This sense of aloofness: you can choose how involved you want to be

Name	Line	Category L1	Category L2	Category L3	Category L4	Transcript Lines	Translation	Notes
Adam	65	不定感	Letting go	Strategy	Workplace Adatpation: KSAOs	我後來學到...東西不要弄那麼多。如果你知道要搬來搬去，東西就 keep everything down. 我不需要 furniture....不需要什麼...		the throwing away of things (relates to the theme of letting go)
Adam	81	cultural differences : going dutch	Cultural Differences	Culture Switch		(41:10)然後像做事情方面，很多不太一樣。我現在還在 struggle 的一點是，出去吃飯，我們在國外都習慣 go Dutch. It's totally normal and fine for us. 回來我非常不習慣說，這餐你請這餐我請。我覺得...就 split it. 我覺得國外很好的...就是他們會幫你 split the bill...會給你每一個人一張 bill...這邊...		The idea of not wanting to 麻煩人家/or owe anything to anyone...prefer keeping boundaries clear!
Eddie	70	Takes part with all groups, but fully belonging to none.	Gets along with others/makes friends quickly/ communicates well with different ppl	Traits	TCK Experience: Helpfulness/Hindrances	I feel like there are groups in the workplace where I can 參一腳 or that I could 說上幾句話. But there isn't really a group where I could say, "Oh, I belong to this group," that I would go to all their activities. If actually there was such a group, I don't think I would be willing to submit myself so willingly. To say, "Oh, 我就是屬於這個團體的。”		Others have noted this: Mitchell, Jasper, Stanley

Name	Line	Category L1	Category L2	Category L3	Category L4	Transcript Lines	Translation	Notes
Eddie	72	Takes part with all groups, but fully belonging to none.	Sense of belonging	culture switch	TCK Experience: Helpfulness/Hindrances	I think internally I want to, but I wouldn't let myself. [I think I just didn't want to be permanently labeled as belonging to a specific group, sorta like a free spirit haha. (Eddie explained over FB when I asked him about why.)]		Conflicting feelings, ambivalence
Mitchell	15		Repatriation	Culture Switch		Basically...Most of the kids there have that in common ...which is their experiences in the States. And if you come back from Europe it's a little different. And I guess I had a hard time mixing in there. And then after a couple of years we moved to Italy back again and basically... For example, in the future maybe if my Chinese has like this Taiwanese accent to it...maybe then I would blend in in Taiwan. It's just like which place is more convenient right? I think the States is very convenient, and of course Taiwan is very convenient as well.		Depends on where everyone else comes from Interesting, Ursula says the same thing about her accents and being mistaken for a foreigner in TW.
Mitchell	63	Blend in best in US	Sense of belonging	Culture Switch	TCK Experience: Helpfulness/Hindrances			
Mitchell	135	fragmentation	fragmentation	Culture Switch		Yeah, for me it's fragmented from the place that...For example, from the time I spend at the place, like Italy or Taiwan or the States or Russia, it's fragmented it...to each place I've been to. Like the time frame I've been in this place or this... So all of my experiences are like pieces of a puzzle I guess, and then if you put them together, it comes out a little distorted, but you know... That's me.		Great quote!

APPENDIX E: CODING LIST

Advice

1. Less Digression
2. Learning
3. Keep an open mind
4. Attitude is important
5. Knowledge of TW

Challenges

6. Relationship
7. interaction with superiors
8. need to make an impression
9. pleasing clients
10. work communication with ppl
11. Fears
12. Group Work
13. Interrupted Relationships
14. Not so smooth at leveraging work relationships

Culture Switch

15. Academics
16. Moving to New culture
17. Lifestyle
18. Cultural Differences
19. Simplicity
20. Communication
21. Language
22. Repatriation
23. Appreciation for experience
24. Sense of belonging
25. fragmentation
26. hardship
27. difficulty with local culture

Diversity

28. Freedom to express/explore
29. Lack of diversity in TW
30. open-mindedness/ Broadened perspectives

Faith

31. sense of consistency
32. openness
33. God's plan
34. Faith

Others' perception

35. lack patience
36. lower standards
37. writing
38. Western
39. Stereotypes

Job Aspiration

40. Manager/Leader/Boss

Job Content

41. Research
42. Music
43. Works with computer
44. Advertising & Media
45. Variety
46. Least favorite part of job
47. International trade
48. autonomy
49. Uncertainty/Routine
50. Communication
51. Engineer
52. Academia
53. Creative process

Job Criteria

54. Who you work with
55. Linked to college major
56. Contribution & meaning
57. Autonomy
58. enjoyment/fulfillment
59. future prospects
60. open-minded
61. Language
62. Opportunity to travel
63. international
64. variety
65. Where family is
66. Pay
67. diversity
68. Stability/security
69. Gain experience
70. medium large company
71. company reputation/prestige
72. Passion
73. Learning & Self-development

Job Search

- 74. Job Search input: Family expectations
- 75. Try new things
- 76. Comparison
- 77. Exploration
- 78. Unplanned
- 79. geographic location
- 80. Change in value/attitude
- 81. First offer
- 82. Necessity
- 83. Trusting God's guidance
- 84. Illusion of having many choices
- 85. Stepping Stone
- 86. job switch

Motivation to work hard

- 87. TCK background creates worries and anxieties

Outlook on Job

- 88. Ups and down
- 89. Job loyalty
- 90. Still lots to learn
- 91. Do your best
- 92. job is an anchor

Relationship

- 93. Family
- 94. Solitude
- 95. Work Relationship
- 96. Friendship
- 97. Host Family
- 98. Keeping a distance
- 99. Staying in touch
- 100. People with similar background
- 101. temporary
- 102. shallow
- 103. office politics
- 104. clear boundaries

Self-concept

- 105. work represents who I am

Strategies

- 106. Letting go
- 107. Get involved with the present
- 108. Not think about it (Focus on positive things)
- 109. Communication
- 110. Open-mindedness
- 111. Learning what not to do
- 112. humour
- 113. Persistence
- 114. Connecting with others
- 115. Attitude: that there's still more learning to do
- 116. Learning & Development
- 117. Prioritize
- 118. Acceptance
- 119. Research
- 120. Tries to blend in
- 121. Observation
- 122. Practice
- 123. Friendliness
- 124. stroke ppl's ego
- 125. look for good in ppl
- 126. preparation
- 127. integration
- 128. self-protective
- 129. plan
- 130. Don't see self as so different

Traits

- 131. Adaptability
- 132. Big picture vs. detail-oriented
- 133. Global awareness/Cultural Sensitivity
- 134. open-mindedness/Broadened perspectives
- 135. Resourceful
- 136. Independence
- 137. direct/indirect
- 138. Organization/Structure/Discipline
- 139. Planning
- 140. Prefer harmony /unity
- 141. Confidence
- 142. Enjoys challenges
- 143. Trustworthy/ conscientious/responsible
- 144. Hide emotions/weaknesses

- 145. Gets along with others/makes friends quickly/ communicates well with different ppl
- 146. Funny sense of humor
- 147. good leader/teacher/manager
- 148. language - tool for learning
- 149. language
- 150. impulsive
- 151. mobility
- 152. lack endurance/persistence/ patience
- 153. aloofness
- 154. Being a bridge
- 155. Not so good in a large group/Better in small groups
- 156. Change to perseverance
- 157. reconcile different view points/a good balance
- 158. having voice
- 159. Dislikes Ambivalence

Values

- 160. Prefers stability/predictability
- 161. Diversity

- 162. Work-life balance
- 163. Enjoys having choices
- 164. Aims for excellence
- 165. Negative/pessimistic

Work Environment

- 166. Differences in Work environment btw countries
- 167. Management Styles
- 168. Communication Style within company
- 169. competitiveness
- 170. individual/team work
- 171. Colleagues
- 172. Org Culture
- 173. TCK not an advantage
- 174. size of company
- 175. Restrictive

Miscellaneous

- 176. Own choice
- 177. Hardship
- 178. Sense of helplessness