

A STORY TO TELL: THE IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN GROWING UP
AS THIRD CULTURE KIDS

by

KATE A. WALTERS

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
GRADUATE COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY PROGRAM

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

.....
Faith Auton-Cuff, Ph.D., Thesis Supervisor

.....
Judith Toronchuk, Ph.D., Second Reader

.....
José Domene, Ph.D., Thesis Coordinator

.....
Allyson Jule, Ph.D., External Examiner

TRINITY WESTERN UNIVERSITY

July 2006

© Kate A. Walters

ABSTRACT

This study explores the identity development of women who have grown up as third culture kids (TCK). A TCK is a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside of the parents' culture. One of the greatest challenges faced by TCKs is their sense of identity. Moving back and forth between cultures affects the development of identity in complex ways. One aspect of identity is gender, and this study explored how women growing up in multiple cultures navigate their way through emerging adulthood and develop a sense of identity. The voices of womanhood were also explored through a qualitative research method called biographical phenomenology, or life story interviewing, which allows participants to express themselves in their own words and through their own stories. An interview with guiding questions was conducted with eight women between the ages of 18 to 25, and the interviews were analyzed utilizing the feminist, voice-centered method known as the Listening Guide (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). The following themes, or voices, of identity development emerged through analysis: (a) *the disruption of transition*, (b) *the stability of spirituality*, (c) *the voice of the outsider*, (d) *the necessity of a future international lifestyle*, (e) *the silencing of voice*, (f) *the power of normalization within the common group*, and (g) *the value in establishing independence*. The voices of womanhood represented a wide spectrum of perspectives, making it difficult for one common theme to emerge.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	6
Third Culture Kids.....	6
Background.....	6
Sense of Belonging.....	9
Identity.....	10
Identity Development.....	11
Identity Defined.....	11
Stages of Development.....	12
Cultural Identity.....	14
Multiple Dimensions of Identity in College Women.....	17
Women’s Identity Development.....	18
Summary and Research Question.....	25
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY.....	27
Biographical Phenomenology.....	27
Rationale.....	29
Procedure.....	29
Selection of Autobiographers.....	29
Profile of Autobiographers.....	31

Data Collection.....	35
Transcription.....	36
Follow-up Interview.....	36
Analysis.....	37
Trustworthiness.....	41
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS.....	44
Listening Process.....	44
Identity Development.....	44
The Disruption of Transition.....	45
Stability of Spirituality.....	46
The Voice of the Outsider.....	47
The Silencing of Voice.....	48
The Necessity of a Future International Lifestyle.....	50
The Power of Normalization Within a Common Group.....	52
The Value in Establishing Independence.....	54
Womanhood.....	55
Voice of the Researcher.....	57
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION.....	61
First Listening.....	61
The Context of Identity Development.....	61
The Disruption of Transition.....	70
The Stability of Spirituality.....	75
Second Listening.....	78

The Voice of the Outsider.....	79
The Silencing of Voice.....	85
The Necessity of a Future International Lifestyle.....	94
Third Listening.....	96
The Power of Normalization within the Common Group.....	96
The Value in Establishing Independence.....	105
Womanhood.....	108
Fourth Listening.....	114
Woman Poems.....	114
Carol’s Woman Poem.....	115
Grace’s Woman Poem.....	116
Pam’s Woman Poem.....	117
Violet’s Woman Poem.....	118
Miriam’s Woman Poem.....	121
Kristy’s Woman Poem.....	122
Sarah’s Woman Poem.....	124
Jeannette’s Woman Poem.....	126
Conclusion.....	128
Strength and Limitations of the Study.....	129
Future Research and Practice.....	132
REFERENCES.....	134
APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT.....	140
APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT.....	142

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.....144

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am forever changed by this study in more ways than one.

First of all, I am extremely grateful for the eight amazing women in this study. Their stories have deeply affected me and have accompanied me during this research journey. Their voices have assisted me in finding my own voice as a woman. I obviously could not have accomplished this research without their willingness to share their stories and their lives.

I also deeply appreciate the honesty, inspiration, and support of Dr. Faith Auton Cuff. She inspired me to study women in the first place and stirred in me my passion for women's issues. Modeling womanhood in so many remarkable ways, she inspires me in my own womanhood all while pushing me and challenging me in my research. I am grateful for my experience to work under such a brilliant woman, therapist, and researcher.

My thesis committee has been so supportive and helpful throughout this process. I am grateful for Dr. Judith Toronchuk and Dr. José Domene and their willingness to be involved and their valuable input.

I would also like to acknowledge my wonderful husband for his faithful love and support throughout this journey. He never nagged me, but always encouraged me. He always made sure to celebrate the small mile markers of the study, and for those celebrations, I am so grateful.

Finally I thank God, my redeemer and creator, who gave me life and the strength to complete this task. In some moments, it was purely "divine inspiration", to borrow the words from a friend, which got me through the difficult parts of this journey.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The flow of ideas, goods, and people across cultures is not new, but has significantly increased due to technology and media (Jensen, 2003). Diverse people are interacting and exposing each other to various ideas, beliefs, and cultures. The interface of cultures has created a multicultural world where increased immigration, bicultural marriages, and international adoptions have contributed to our world becoming a global village. Emerging from these cultural exchanges are people who have spent a significant part of their developmental years outside of their parent's culture due to a parent's occupation. These people are often referred to as "Third Culture Kids" (TCKs) or "global nomads" (McCaig, 1994). Pollock and Van Reken (2001) explain that, "the TCK builds relationships to all cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture are assimilated into the TCK's life experience, sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar background" (p. 19).

Growing up among several cultures brings both benefits and challenges for TCKs. One benefit of the TCK lifestyle is sensitivity to culture and cultural adaptability. They are able to adapt quickly to different situations with relative calm. Change is one of the only constants in the lives of TCKs, and they learn to adjust to change (Schaetti & Ramsey, 1999). Most TCKs are able to "think on their feet" and are flexible (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001). In a sense TCKs become "cultural chameleons" (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001; McCaig, 1994), changing colours to fit where they are in the moment. Although this can be a great strength of TCKs, this adaptability is also a challenge. Pollock and Van Reken (2001) suggest that TCKs "may never develop true cultural balance anywhere" (p. 93). Due to the constant changing to fit in, TCKs may struggle in

figuring out their own value system and question if anything is consistent across cultures (Fail, Thompson & Walker, 2004; Pollock & Van Reken; Schaetti & Ramsey).

TCKs have an ability to make friends quickly, and consequently will likely have connections all over the world. They develop strong cross-cultural skills and are comfortable among diverse people. As a result of frequent good-byes and moves, TCKs tend to move quickly beyond the surface level of relationship because they do not know when they will leave next. Not usually satisfied with small talk about the weather, TCKs want to move to deeper issues, yet at the same time they are careful not to allow people to get too close (Schaetti & Ramsey, 1999). This guardedness potentially poses a problem in developing intimacy with a friend or significant other. People may not understand TCKs' resistance and guardedness in developing deeper relationships.

One of the greatest challenges that TCKs face is sense of identity (Bennett, 1993; Pollock & Van Reken, 2001; Schaetti & Ramsey, 1999). When people travel to different cultures as adults, they may experience culture shock, but they already have a sense of who they are and where they belong (Pollock & Van Reken). Adult sojourners already have their value system in place and have established relationships at home with friends and family. The difference between adults who travel and TCKs is that TCKs move between cultures before they have had the opportunity to complete the critical task of personal or cultural identity development (Pollock & Van Reken). This moving back and forth is happening in their formative years when the foundation of identity and sense of belonging is laid. TCKs form a sense of personal and cultural identity the same way everyone else does – by “catching it” from their environment and cues around them (Pollock & Van Reken; McCaig, 1994). However, for TCKs, they catch many different

cues, cultural rules, behaviour, and values from the various cultures they have experienced. Finding a sense of identity becomes a difficult and confusing task.

Developing a sense of identity is not a task limited to TCKs; it is important for all of us. Identity is our sense of who we are and guides our interests and our life choices. When uncertain of whom we are, we may struggle with decisions and relationships. Commitment to an idea, a value, a behaviour, or even a person becomes a tricky task. Identity gives us a point of reference or a ground to stand on in our ever changing, complicated world. We take who we are wherever we go, and when this is ambiguous or uncertain, confusion moves in. With so many changes in geographic locations, relationships, and cultural norms and rules, TCKs may especially question who they are. Although they have handled transitions and new experiences well, they may still ask, who am I really? Where do I fit? What is my place in this world?

Our identities are complex, and as TCKs question and explore identity, they may examine different aspects of who they are. One dimension of identity is gender. Cultures vary greatly in the way men and women are viewed and their roles in society. TCKs may have experienced several cultures that hold contradictory views of gender. With multiple cultural influences how do TCKs come to view themselves as men or women? TCKs may struggle to come to terms with the diverse definitions of male and female.

Women often receive mixed messages about their gender, and this can be especially confusing for women growing up in multiple cultures. As girls, TCKs have likely observed women in many walks of life. The host culture may believe one thing about women, while her parents may model something completely different. Women look to culture for cues in behaviour, attitudes and values, and one cannot deny the role

culture plays in how one views self as a woman and how women are treated by men.

With multiple cultural influences on TCK women, what does it mean to be a woman who has grown up as a TCK? How do these TCK women come to form their identity? How do TCK women define womanhood? For TCK women, is their TCK identity more salient than their gender identity?

This present study explores how women between the ages of 18 to 25, who have grown up in multiple cultures, navigate their way through emerging adulthood and develop a sense of identity. The study examines the literature concerning identity development in women and in particular, identity development in women who are TCKs. Due to the complex and dynamic nature of identity, exploration of a person's sense of identity becomes complicated, and a research method that is open to uncertainty and ambiguity, yet captures the complexity of identity is necessary (Chaitin, 2004).

Biographical phenomenology, or life story interviewing, is a qualitative research method that allows the participants to express themselves in their own words and through their own stories (Chaitin, 2004). The purpose of phenomenology is to describe the "lived experience" of the participants (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Life story interviewing assumes that to understand the meaning that participants give to their life experiences, it is necessary to elicit their stories about their life experiences, and then through systematic interpretations of their stories uncover their meanings (Chaitin). This method is relevant and sensitive to the exploration of identity, especially for those who may be grappling with their personal sense of identity (Chaitin). It is necessary to listen to the voices and stories of TCK women in order to better understand how TCK women form identity.

This study will be described in five chapters consisting of an introduction, review of the pertinent literature, an outline of the research design and methodology, findings from the interviews, and a discussion about the findings, strengths and limitations of the study, and ideas for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Third Culture Kids

Background

The term TCK was coined in the 1950's by Drs. John and Ruth Hill Useem, social scientists who studied Americans living in India, such as foreign service workers, missionaries, educators, businessmen, and others (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001; Useem, 1999). The Useems observed that the Americans residing in India lived differently than they did in America and lived differently than the people in India, but among themselves they shared a lifestyle based on their common experience of being expatriates. The Useems defined the first culture as the culture of the parents or the home culture, or passport culture, and the second culture was defined as the culture where the family resided, the host culture. They named the third culture for the shared, created, and learned lifestyle of the expatriate community, the "culture between cultures" (Pollock & Van Reken; Useem). Pollock & Van Reken (2001) have defined a TCK as "a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents' culture" (p.19).

For some, the term TCK may appear to stem from a western ethnocentric attitude and only refers to the specific experience of westerners going to another country and then later returning home. Although the term TCK itself may reflect a specific experience and may not be the most accurate term to use in the highly mobile 21st Century, it is the term that is often used in the literature; therefore it is the term that is used for the present research.

Living in between cultures produces unique circumstances for children.

According to Pollock & Van Reken (2001), there are two unique realities that shape the formation of a TCK's life: being raised in a genuinely cross-cultural world and being raised in a highly mobile world. TCKs are exposed to various cultures and ways of thinking. Not only are they exposed to the culture of the host country, but they are likely to come in contact with other foreigners from around the world. Generally speaking, children learn basic cultural rules that give guidelines and principles on values and behaviour and these are used as a basis for how one lives as an adult (McCaig, 1994; Pollock & Van Reken). This may not be an easy task for TCKs living in a culture different from their parents' culture. They are constantly expected to change and adapt their cultural rules.

TCKs experience major transitions in life more frequently than those born and raised in basically the same area (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001; Schaetti & Ramsey, 1999). They move to a new country and may live there for a few years, and then may move to another country or return home. Due to the nature of work, some families are granted extended leave or furlough and may return "home." Not only are TCKs coming and going, but it is likely that their friends living in the culture between cultures are also coming and going. Even if TCKs stay in one place for awhile, their friends may leave, contributing to the experiences of major transitions.

Being raised cross-cultural and highly mobile are common characteristics of TCKs. In a study by Gerner, Perry, Moselle, and Archbold (1992), other TCK characteristics were explored and TCKs were compared with their US counterparts who had always lived in the US. Gerner and colleagues found that TCK adolescents rated

themselves more open to culture, travel, language, and having an international lifestyle than their US peers. However, the hypothesis that TCK adolescents would be closer to their families was not supported, implying that the travel and mobile lifestyle of TCK families did not necessarily make adolescents more dependent on their families than their US peers. Although the study hypothesized that TCK adolescents would be less close to their peers, the findings of this specific study were inconclusive due to poor reliability according to the authors, but this is an area that should not be neglected. Other exploratory research (Downie, 1976 as cited in Gerner et al.) suggests that when TCKs return to their home country as university students, they become socially marginalized. Their peers do not understand their unique experiences and lifestyle and TCKs are often forced to put that part of their identity to the side. They may feel socially isolated and have no social group to belong to (Downie, 1976 as cited in Gerner et al.). More research about TCK characteristics and peer relationships is needed.

Another study compares missionary kids (MKs) and non-MKs on a variety of adjustment issues, such as parental attachment and college adjustment (Huff, 2001). The findings reveal that due to diverse cultural experiences, parents of MKs tend to facilitate independence and autonomy more than parents of non-MKs (Huff, 2001). Huff reminds her readers that although MKs may be more equipped to be independent, their ability to connect with others may be lacking as MKs tend to experience more interpersonal distance from others than non-MKs. MKs tend to learn at an earlier age how to act independently. From this study and other literature we learn that independence is another common characteristic in TCKs (Huff; Pollock & Van Reken, 2001). This demonstration

of independence can affect peer relationships, emphasizing a need for further research in this area.

After recognizing the omission of gender differences in their original study, Gerner and Perry (2000) reanalyzed their data with gender difference as the central focus. In general they found that females across the entire sample were more open to other cultures and less stereotypic, more oriented toward international careers, and more open to travel and new languages (Gerner & Perry). They found that there were a significant number of male-female differences in the non-TCK sample, with the general direction being that non TCK females were more positive on characteristics associated with an internationally mobile lifestyle. These differences led the authors to conclude that gender differences should be included in any TCK study (Gerner & Perry). There is a paucity of research that looks at gender differences in TCK identity development. Currently, most TCK research has been devoted to two common challenges faced by TCKs: sense of belonging and sense of identity.

Sense of Belonging

“...The hardest question still to answer is where I am from. What is my place of origin?” (response to a TCK Survey, cited in Pollock & Van Reken, 2001 p. 121).

Through the research, we find that TCKs either have a multiple sense of belonging or no sense of belonging at all (Fail, Thompson, & Walker, 2004). While for most people the question “Where are you from?” is a simple question with a simple answer, for TCKs this question can be answered in multiple ways. They have moved so many times, attended so many different schools, and lived in so many different places that they feel at home everywhere and nowhere (Pollock & Van Reken; Schaetti & Ramsey, 1999). They feel

rootless. Fail and colleagues suggest that a TCK's sense of belonging may be connected to relationships with similar people rather than a geographical place. It is likely that a TCK feels most at home when they are with people that have had similar experiences. There is a camaraderie and understanding that may not be present with non-TCK people.

Sense of belonging, or place attachment, can be viewed in several ways.

Gustafson (2001) explored the relationship between place attachment as *roots* or *routes*. In the roots theme, place attachment is associated with security, home, continuity and community, while in the routes theme, attachment to place is related to mobility, places away from home, and adventure (Gustafson). Both may mean different things to different people in different situations. One is not more valuable than the other.

Sense of belonging is obviously a subjective experience that elicits differing emotions among different people, making sense of belonging difficult to predict or prepare for, although we may safely assume that sense of belonging is an issue that most TCKs will face at one time or another (Fail et al., 2004). Sense of belonging affects our sense of who we are. It is during the formative years that a sense of belonging and a sense of identity are developed. These two concepts are closely related.

Identity

Sometimes I think the cement of my being was taken from one cultural mold before it cured and forced into other molds, one after the other, retaining bits of the form of each but producing a finished sculpture that fit into none (Sophia Morton as cited in Pollock & Van Reken, 2001, p. 145).

This quote reflects the challenge of moving between cultures and the necessity to adapt self and identity to the new environment. For TCKs, identity may come from being a

TCK (Pollock & Van Reken), but the concept is relatively new and many may not even be aware of the definition or the growing population of TCKs; so, they are left on their own to develop their sense of identity (Fail et al., 2004). In order to gain a better understanding of a TCK's sense of identity the construct of identity will be further explored.

Identity Development

Identity Defined

“Identity is the stable, consistent, and reliable sense of who one is and what one stands for in the world” (Josselson, 1987, p. 10). Identity defines our values, beliefs and behaviour, and influences our interactions with others. Our core identity, or “inside self” consists of personal attributes and characteristics, and our “outside” identity or facts of identity are easily named by others, such as race, gender, and nationality (Jones & McEwen, 2000). It is the part of us that may appear obvious to onlookers, while the inside identity may be more protected and less apparent. This aspect of identity is considered our personal or individual identity, which stresses the person as a unique individual. Most western cultures operate from and place emphasis on individual identity. Another aspect of identity is group or collective identity, which is based on social aspects such as group membership (Chaitin, 2004). There are many social groups with which to identify based on various factors of our identity and these factors become salient at different times and in different ways (Chaitin). TCKs represent a social group in which the members may strongly identify with each other and may even feel more comfortable in this group than in other social groups. When an emphasis on group identity is present, the individual may be operating as a representative of the whole group. The borders

between individual identity and collective identity are not clearly defined (Chaitin). The borders are constantly moving, at times with an emphasis on individual identity and at others a stress on collective identity, which contributes to the dynamic, fluid nature of identity. In sum, there are many ways to examine identity. One way to look at the formation of individual identity is through Erikson's (1959) stages of development.

Stages of Development

Many discussions of identity begin with Erik Erikson (1959), well known for his formulation of eight psychosocial stages of human development. Successful movement from one stage to the next is by overcoming a task or crisis. Usually occurring in adolescence, the fifth stage's task is identity achievement, and according to the theory, the crisis is identity vs. identity confusion. It is during this stage that the adolescent seeks an answer to the question "Who am I?" Adolescents are often encouraged to explore who they are and it is considered a crucial time of development. It is the time that "society grants permission to the adolescent to play at adulthood, to try on roles, to experiment selves" (Josselson, 1987, p. 14). If the task of identity is successfully resolved, then one moves to the next task of overcoming the crisis of young adulthood; intimacy vs. isolation.

Josselson (1987) suggests that although identity is a life-long process, late adolescence is key in identity development and will lay the foundation for adult identity. Adolescents in industrialized societies, however, may experience prolonged adolescence, which is referred to as emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000). This is seen as a period in time that is neither adolescence nor adulthood. It is a time where adulthood commitments and responsibilities are delayed and the exploration of self during adolescence is prolonged

(Arnett). College years typically imply an exploration of self, values, beliefs, and goals, and could be considered emerging adulthood. Prolonged adolescence is also found in TCKs (Useem & Cottrell, 1999). The research suggests that TCKs feel out of step with their peers, and this is particularly noticeable in late teens and early twenties when many are making decisions about occupations, relationships and lifestyle (Useem & Cottrell). Some emerging adult TCKs are seen by their parents and relatives as self-centered and indecisive, unable to make decisions about their future. TCKs may change their majors in university or even transfer to different universities several times or they may quit a good paying job to teach overseas. Useem and Cottrell say that this prolonged adolescence is generally a marker of TCKs trying to bring order to the chaotic nature of their lives. Emerging adulthood is a time when identity is still being negotiated and it is important to examine people in this age group as they face the task of identity vs. identity confusion.

Marcia formulated four possible ways to resolve Erikson's identity vs. identity confusion crisis; foreclosure, diffusion, moratorium, and identity achievement (Marcia & Friedman, 1970). Foreclosed individuals have made a commitment to their values, beliefs, and ideas without going through a phase of exploration or crisis. These individuals typically accept what they were taught as children and accept it as their own value system. Diffused individuals have experienced neither crisis nor commitment; they may typically hold the opinion to take it "one day at a time" (Collins, 2001). Those individuals in moratorium have not made a commitment to an identity, but are actively exploring and trying on different roles. Finally, identity achieved individuals may have gone through an exploration process and made a commitment to their values, beliefs, and

ideas. Generally, this is not a linear process where one status precedes another; it may actually be more cyclical.

According to one study using Erikson's theory of developmental stages, adult children of missionaries (who are adult TCKs) have not resolved the developmental crises as successfully as their mono-cultural counterparts (Wrobbel & Plueddemann, 1990). The study has reiterated that social adjustment can be difficult for TCKs returning from abroad, but it is important to note that those who move between cultures may not follow the same developmental pattern as those who never live abroad. The cross-cultural TCK may approach the developmental crises differently, not necessarily have a better or worse resolution (Wrobbel & Plueddemann). This finding may also indicate that the returned TCK may struggle for an extended length of time between the tensions of their overseas experience and being home. This study raises important issues about whether or not developmental models are appropriate ways to study TCKs, however, there is a paucity of recent research in this area and further work in this area would be beneficial for learning more about TCK identity development. Other TCK research examines the potential responses to being raised multicultural.

Cultural Identity

Although our world has become more aware of diverse cultures through interactions with people and media, such as television and internet, TCKs experience diverse culture in tangible ways. They experience culture by living in it. There is something unique in living abroad and experiencing different people and different cultures first hand. Movement between cultures is a typical experience for TCKs. One advantage of this lifestyle is cross-cultural enrichment (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001). Not

only have TCKs experienced the surface aspects of a culture such as food and clothing, but they have lived in a place long enough to gain deeper, more valuable lessons from the culture (Pollock & Van Reken). They may have a greater understanding and appreciation of different cultures and become truly cross-cultural. Awareness that there is more than one way of looking at things becomes a reality for TCKs (Pollock & Van Reken; Schaetti & Ramsey, 1999).

On the other hand, what most cross-cultural individuals (TCKs included) have in common is “a sense of grappling with issues of self-concept and identity” (Bennett, 1993, p.11). Despite their experience with various cultures, they are “on the margin of each culture, but a member of neither” (Goldberg as cited in Bennett, p.11). There exists an internal conflict when an individual has accepted two or more cultural frames of reference (Bennett). In a sense they are living on the edge of two or more cultures. This struggle is more internal and can be contradictory and confusing for the individual. According to Bennett, there are two ways a person can respond to this cultural marginality. When a person is unable to establish boundaries and make judgments, the person is trapped by their marginality, and would be considered an “encapsulated marginal” (Bennett). The encapsulated marginal is blinded by confusion and unable to construct a unified identity. They become trapped by their marginality and struggle with shifting between the cultures, which may lead to a sense of alienation – feeling so different from others, that they feel no one can relate to them.

However, a person who is able to construct boundaries and maintain control of choice and is able to apply this to and create identity is considered a “constructive marginal” (Bennett, 1993). The experience of the constructive marginal suggests

“continual and comfortable movement between cultural identities such that an integrated, multicultural existence is maintained, and where conscious, deliberate choice making and management of alternative frames prevail” (Bennett, 1993, p. 118). The key to constructive marginality is a commitment within relativism. They have made a commitment to values and identity and make their own decisions within ambiguity (Bennett). Often, constructive marginal TCKs will use their marginality to their advantage and become a part of a global community. “The resolution of multicultural identity requires an integration of both the psychological and social aspects of self and society” (Bennett, p. 121).

Another component of the TCK identity, as it relates to culture, is summarized by Pollock and Van Reken (2001): Wherever a TCK lives, whether in home or host culture, “at both the superficial and deeper levels of culture, TCKs either appear similar to and/or think like members of the surrounding dominant culture or they appear different and/or think differently from members of that culture” (p. 53). There are four possible ways of relating to the surrounding culture: (a) foreigner (look different, think different); (b) adopted (look different, think alike); (c) hidden immigrant (look alike, think different); and (d) mirror (look alike, think alike). Although all people may relate to one of these patterns at one time or another, whenever a TCK moves, their relational pattern changes and they may find themselves in a different category. When a TCK returns to their home country to attend university, they often find themselves to be hidden immigrants. They may look and dress like most of their peers, but as a result of their unique experiences and perspectives they may feel very different. This sense of being different may be an

aspect of their identity that they deny and try to hide or that becomes salient, helping to constructively shape who they are.

Multiple Dimensions of Identity in College Women

Jones (1997) explored the multiple dimensions of identity among college women focusing on the concept of difference rather than sameness. Using the grounded theory approach to qualitative research, Jones interviewed 10 diverse women between the ages of 20 to 24, mostly junior and senior college students. Through the interviews, Jones found the core category of “the contextual influences on the construction of identity” (p. 383) with 10 key categories falling under the umbrella of the core category. Participants felt that identity could not be understood “without examining the interactions of these dimensions and the contexts in which they were experienced” (Jones, p. 383). Sometimes dimensions of identity overlapped with certain dimensions being more or less salient at different times.

Identity development is often a complex process influenced by many factors. Several dimensions of an individual’s identity interact with each other and cannot be taken out of context or separated. The participants of Jones’ (1997) study understood that no single label could ever capture them as a whole due to the complexity of identity. The women in this study felt that the experience of difference shaped their identity. Their individual experiences of difference varied across dimensions such as race, culture, sexual orientation, and religion, but where there was difference they experienced that aspect of their identity more intensely. In other words, they were more connected to this aspect of their self. In applying this idea to TCKs, it may be their TCK identity may be experienced more intensely because it is different. From this research, Jones and

McEwen (2000) developed a model of multiple dimensions of identity. “The model reflects an acknowledgement that different dimensions of identity will be more or less important for each individual given a range of contextual influences” (Jones & McEwen, 2000, p.411). The model also presents identity as a fluid, dynamic process rather than a linear and static stage model. Different aspects of identity may be more salient at different times and in different ways, depending on the context of the individual. This reveals that identity is not a straightforward, easy to measure concept. It is complex; a journey rather than a destination. One important dimension of identity is gender and the development of identity as it applies to women.

Women’s Identity Development

While she places herself in relation to the world and chooses to help others...he places the world in relation to himself as it defines his character, his position, and the quality of his life (Gilligan, 1982, p. 35). Erikson’s theory as discussed previously was based on men’s development, and women’s development was not addressed until his later writings (Tryon & Winograd, 2003). He believed, however, that for women the fifth and sixth stages of development were fused, while separate tasks for men. Chodorow (as cited in Tryon & Winograd, 2003) believed that in all societies women define themselves in relation to and connection with others more so than men. More theorists began to question and criticize traditional developmental theories due to their masculine focus and disregard of women’s experience. In response, over the past 25 years a body of work focusing on women’s development has emerged with an emphasis on women’s healthy development taking place within the context of relationship.

Carol Gilligan (1982) paved the way in exploring women's development. Like Erikson, Gilligan also believes that for women the developmental tasks of identity and intimacy are fused (Tryon & Winograd, 2003). Yet while Erikson recognized the difference in male and female development, he did not change his life cycle model to reflect the difference. It remained a male life cycle, excluding women. This unchanged life cycle implies that men's development is "normal" while women, when they do not follow, are a deviation from the norm. In her studies, Gilligan found that women defined themselves in terms of relationship and connection while men defined themselves in terms of separation and achievement. She also found that while women may be more comfortable with intimacy and connection than men, they feel threatened by separation and achievement, while men are comfortable with separation and achievement. Gilligan emphasized listening to the *voice* of women in order to gain insight into the way they make decisions and form their identity. Her work has prompted much discussion and research. Some of the discussion has come from critics of Gilligan who believe that her theories only reinforce the stereotypes that women are nurturing and emotional and men are logical and clearheaded (Lips, 1997).

Like Gilligan (1982), Josselson (1987) saw women's development taking place within relationship. Relationships rather than work provide the anchor for women's identity, yet she viewed identity on a continuum of separation-individuation. In women, the original relationship anchor is their mother, and development is seen as the process of separating from the mother and becoming different, while maintaining relational connection at the same time. It is finding a balance of being different, yet remaining attached. Using Marcia's (1970) well-known potential outcomes of the identity stage,

Josselson (1987), in a longitudinal study, examined how women proceeded through Marcia's stages, and found that foreclosed women showed the greatest attachment in relationships, moratorium and diffused show the least attachment, and achieved exhibited the ideal balance on the separation-individuation continuum.

Although many women's experiences resonate with the relationship theories of women's identity development (i.e., Gilligan, 1982; Josselson, 1987), Carolyn Zerbe Enns (1991) has suggested caution on overgeneralizing and oversimplifying these models. She reminds us that these relationship theories describe continuities and experiences of the internal self and spend little time exploring how external events influence identity and life choices. Enns has also suggested that an exploration of how external, social events are linked with personal, internal lives is important. Often events that we cannot predict are turning points and greatly influence values, beliefs, behaviour and even identity, which may not necessarily be captured by these relationship models.

Another way to explore women's identity is through feminist and womanist identity stage models. Tryon and Winograd (2003) suggest that one aspect of achieving healthy identity as a woman is a positive assertion of self in a culture dominated by men who consider women to be inferior. For some women this may be taking a political action and actively working against oppression, for other women it may be disregarding society's definition of woman and using internal standards to define womanhood.

Downing and Roush (1985) developed a model of feminist identity development, believing that any "model that attempts to describe accurately events in women's lives must acknowledge the prejudice and discrimination that are a significant part of their life experience" (p. 696). They felt that women's identity development may follow a similar

pattern as minority identity development; hence their model reflects a black identity model, demonstrating a process of recognizing oppression and discrimination and moving toward taking action against this oppression. Stage one is passive acceptance of traditional sex roles and the white male system. Women in this stage may be unaware or in denial of discrimination against women. Stage two, revelation, is usually precipitated by a series of events that leads to questioning of self and feminine roles. Feelings of anger and guilt may be present, and men are perceived as negative. Stage three, embeddedness-emanation, is characterized by emotional connection with other similar women and an open embrace of feminist views. There is eventually more relativistic thinking and cautious interaction with men at this stage. Stage four is the synthesis stage where women become more flexible with feminist views and evaluate men on an individual basis. Finally, stage five is active commitment. There is a commitment toward elimination of oppression and building a nonsexist world. Men are considered equal, but not the same as women.

According to Downing and Rousch (1985), the purpose of their model was to offer women a blueprint to integrate both personal and social identity into a whole. It offers a framework in which women come to terms with their role in society. However, a limitation of this model is that it has been primarily researched on white, middle-class, educated women. This model was developed 20 years ago and although helpful research has been conducted since then, more work is still required (Hansen, 2002). One area of recommended study is the exploration of relevance for women from diverse backgrounds.

Similar to the feminist identity model, but without the emphasis on social activism is the four stage womanist identity model developed by Helms (as cited in

Ossana, Helms, & Leonard, 1992). It was hypothesized that development of healthy identity in women involves a movement from external societal standards of gender to an emphasis on a women's internal evaluation of self and of womanhood, and that this process would be the same for all women (Ossana, Helms, & Leonard, 1992). The primary purpose of this model is to overcome the tendency to define self as a woman in terms of expectations of culture and society, but to personally define what it means to be a woman.

The stages of the womanist identity model as described by Ossana et al. (1992) include pre-encounter, encounter, immersion-emersion, and internalization. In the pre-encounter stage, the woman conforms to societal views of gender and unconsciously thinks and behaves in ways that devalue women and view men as the reference group. This includes accepting traditional female roles. Stage two, the encounter stage, begins with questioning the values and beliefs held in the pre-encounter stage, and is often accompanied with confusion about gender roles. Stage three, immersion-emersion, is characteristic of idealization of women and rejection of male-dominated definitions of womanhood. The latter part of the stage includes the search for a positive affirming definition of woman as well as strong affiliation with other women. In the final stage, internalization, the woman develops an internally defined positive definition of womanhood and refuses to be bound by external definitions. She comes to terms with her own definition of what it means to be a woman.

The main differences between the feminist and womanist identity models are that the feminist model assumes that healthy development for a woman requires that she adopt a political orientation and work toward societal change, but the womanist model

views healthy development as flexibility in personal and ideological views that may or may not include feminist beliefs (Ossana et al., 1992). The womanist model places emphasis on how the woman comes to value and define self regardless of position or role, while the feminist model emphasizes changing women's perceptions of women in terms of men (Ossana et al.).

Several studies have further explored the womanist identity model as it relates to concepts such as mental health symptoms, racial identity development and self-esteem (Carter & Parks, 1996; Ossana et al., 1992; Parks, Carter, & Gushue, 1996). In one study that explored the relationship between racial and gender aspects of identity in Black and White women, it was found that for Black women there is a significant relationship between the racial and womanist identity development (Parks et al.) This indicates an interaction between the processes, but not necessarily a simultaneous process. It is suggested that for Black women, the process of racial identity development begins before womanist identity development. Race may be a more salient aspect of identity than gender in Black women living in a white-dominated society. On the other hand, for white women there is no significant relationship between racial and womanist identity development. Racial and womanist development are completely different tasks for white women and may actually be conflicting. For TCK women, if the TCK dimension of their identity is more salient, they may follow a similar pattern to the Black women in this study and develop a womanist identity after their TCK identity. The results from this study suggest that there are differences in the developmental tasks of Black and White women, which is contrary to the original hypothesis that womanist development would be consistent for women across race and class (Ossana et al.).

In another study, Carter and Parks (1996) again examined the differences in womanist identity development between Black and White women in the context of mental health symptoms. They found that racial identity, not womanist identity attitudes, was predictive of mental health issues for Black women, while White women in the first three stages of the womanist model demonstrated a wide range of symptoms. The patterns of responses to womanist identity attitudes and mental health symptoms were very different between the Black and White women. Black and White women appear to have unique experiences of womanhood. The results from this study again remind us that there are racial differences in womanist development, which implies that this process may be different for different women. Carter and Parks believe that it is necessary to recognize the difference not only between men and women, but also among women.

While the feminist and womanist identity stage models are helpful in understanding the stages of identity development and provide a model for understanding, they do not always recognize the influence of external events and other factors in women's development, and these theories fail to reflect women's complex lives (Tryon & Winograd, 2003). Current research on the womanist identity development model has not addressed whether the definition of womanhood is in fact consistent across women of various ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic status (Moradi, 2005). The samples used in the research have not extended beyond Black and White women, and only one study has been conducted on women outside of the US (Moradi). These theories are often based on the experiences of white women, and may not reflect the experiences of girls and women from other races, let alone other cultures. Research is needed to examine women's definition of womanhood and explore the multiple dimensions of identity that

realistically reflect the complex lives of women (Moradi). There seems to be a need to study the process of womanist identity development with women from diverse backgrounds.

Summary and Research Question

TCKs are raised in cross-cultural and highly mobile environments. They learn at a young age to become adaptable and independent, yet struggle with their sense of who they are. Identity can be a confusing issue for TCKs. TCKs come from various backgrounds and have unique experiences, and as a result may not easily fit into an identity stage model. A model which explores the unique identity development in TCKs is needed.

In recent years there has been more attention and research focused on the identity development in women. Through Gilligan's (1982) and Josselson's (1987) research, readers learn that women define themselves in relationship and relationship is essential in forming identity as a woman. Identity development stage models such as the feminist identity model (Downing & Rousch, 1985) and the womanist identity model (Ossana et.al, 1992) provide other methods to examine the development of identity in women, but lack the research with women from diverse backgrounds.

Throughout the literature review, it has been established that identity is a complex, nonlinear concept and there is a paucity of research in how TCK women form identity. The primary purpose of this present study is to hear the stories of TCK women, and explore how their lived experiences have influenced their sense of whom they are, and secondly to explore how they view themselves as women. Listening to the voices of TCK women may contribute rich information in how some women form their identity.

How do women who have grown up as TCKs in highly cross-cultural and mobile environments come to develop their identity as women?

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Biographical Phenomenology

Biographical phenomenology, also called life story interviewing, is used when “attempting to understand the meanings that individuals give to their lives and the social phenomena that they have experienced” (Chaitin, 2004, p. 3). As one type of phenomenological method of qualitative research, biographical phenomenology attempts to understand what the individual has experienced and how he or she understands life in light of their life story (Chaitin). Phenomenological research is not intended to test a hypothesis, but it is intended to describe a lived experience of the individual (Osbourne, 1990). The phenomenon, or lived experience, under examination in the present study is identity formation within the context of movement between multiple cultures, specifically in TCK women. The purpose of the present study is to explore TCK women’s lived experiences and how they understand who they are in light of their experiences.

Chaitin (2004) discusses three assumptions of biographical phenomenology. The major underlying assumption is that “each individual has a unique story to tell and a unique understanding of that experience” (p. 3). In order to learn about a woman’s experience, she should be allowed to express herself as fully and openly as possible without an agenda or framework guiding her story. The second assumption is that while the life story of the individual is unique, it is also rooted in a social and cultural context. When we look at these stories, we not only learn about the individual but also the context of the individual; her social structures and cultural dynamics. The final assumption is that the individual chooses what to say and how to say it; she is not speaking in random and unconnected sentences. Overall, biographical phenomenology assumes that in order to

understand the meaning that individuals give to their life experience, we must first give them an opportunity to tell the stories of their life experiences, and then as we are guided in our listening the meanings of their lived experiences begin to emerge (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Chaitin).

Because the focus of this approach is on the life story of the individual, the research participants will be referred to as autobiographers because the life story is told with their own voice. It is through the stories of the autobiographers that lived experiences and meanings are described. A story is “an articulation of life that gives it a new and richer meaning” (Widdershoven, 1993, p. 6). Stories present life how it is understood and it is through the stories that one tells that one’s sense of identity can be formed or understood (Widdershoven). The process of telling the life story is a construction of the lived life, and the story includes both the experiences of the autobiographer and the meaning of those experiences (Chaitin, 2004).

Chase (1995) discusses the importance of inviting others to tell their stories to the researcher rather than just report facts to the researcher. “If we want to hear stories rather than reports then our task as interviewers is to *invite* others to tell their stories, to encourage them to take responsibility for the meaning of their talk” (Chase, p. 3). Rather than directing the autobiographer to the research topic, as researchers we should direct them to their life experiences (Chase). By allowing the autobiographer to tell their story, they take responsibility of the meaning and they will be allowed to reveal what is important to them. I believe that it is through life stories that rich information about the experiences of TCK women and the meaning of their experiences can be found.

Rationale

Biographical phenomenology was chosen as the method because of the complex topic under study – identity. Chaitin (2004) suggests that a person’s identity is based on their life story. Exploration of identity is complex and it requires a method that is open and flexible to complexity. The method does not attempt to guide the story of the autobiographer, but allows them to talk about their lived experience in their own words. Emerging adults are still navigating their way through identity and are often seeking to understand who they are, and this method is relevant and sensitive to those who are still exploring identity (Chaitin). Due to the paucity of research on the identity development of TCK women, exploratory research is essential in gaining a deeper understanding of the phenomena before reliable models and theories can be developed. Biographical phenomenology as an exploratory, flexible research method will allow the researcher to explore young women’s identity formation in the context of movement through multiple cultures as a foundation for future research and theory development.

Procedure

Selection of Autobiographers

In order to learn about the phenomena, autobiographers should be people who have experienced the phenomenon first hand (Osborne, 1990). The research is seen as a collaborative effort between the researcher and the autobiographer, and is voluntary in nature (Osborne). The researcher was interested in the lived experience of TCK women who are currently navigating their way through emerging adulthood, and sought women who are TCKs and in the stage of emerging adulthood. Although traditionally identity development has been considered a task of adolescence, research has revealed that

identity development continues past the teens and into the twenties, demonstrating a need for a term, such as emerging adulthood, to describe the stage between adolescence and young adulthood (Valde, 1996; Whitbourne & Tesch, 1985 as cited in Arnett, 2000). Emerging adulthood roughly occurs between the ages of 18 to 25 and is the period of life where identity exploration primarily takes place (Arnett).

To learn about the phenomena of identity formation in the context of movement between multiple cultures, TCK women between the ages of 18 to 25 were recruited at a small Canadian Christian university. Using Pollock and Van Reken's (2001) definition of TCK, the criteria for inclusion in the study were women who have lived in at least one other culture outside of their parents' home country for at least three years between the ages of 8 to 18. For participants to be included in the study there had to be an intention or possibility of the family or the participant returning to the home country at some point in time.

Recruitment for the study began through email and word of mouth through staff and students on campus, in addition to an advertisement posted in the weekly announcement publication on the university campus (see Appendix A). Potential participants were selected to obtain some variation, in terms of their parents' occupations, home countries and host countries. This method for recruitment is called purposive sampling, which is a non-random sampling method used to identify the most suitable participants, who have had experiences in the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2003; Groenewald, 2004). In order to find additional participants, the researcher also employed snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is a method used to gain access to other potential participants by asking one participant to recommend others to the study

(Groenewald). By nature, TCKs have many connections and usually know others who have had similar experiences, and so snowball sampling was helpful in recruiting 3 autobiographers for this study.

Phenomenological research requires as many participants as it takes to illuminate or saturate the phenomena (Groenewald, 2004; Osborne, 1990). Up to 10 people are recommended for a phenomenological study (Groenewald). The aim of the research is to gain an understanding of the phenomena and to study it until new perspectives cease to emerge (Groenewald; Osborne). Fourteen women contacted me regarding the study and 10 were asked to participate. After interviewing seven women, the researcher felt that saturation had been reached and new themes had ceased to emerge. Eight women were interviewed because two of the participants backed out for different reasons.

Profile of Autobiographers

This study includes eight women who met the inclusion criteria and were available for one in-depth interview and one shorter follow up interview. One autobiographer's father was a businessman and her parents later became missionaries, four autobiographers were children of missionaries, and three autobiographers were children of businessmen. Home countries represented by the autobiographers included Canada, USA, Korea, China, and Germany. Host countries represented included Singapore, Indonesia, Philippines, Japan, Costa Rica, Kenya, Democratic Republic of Congo, Pakistan, China, Argentina, England, Poland, USA, and New Zealand. Following is a brief background on each autobiographer. The pseudonyms were chosen by each of the autobiographers and the specific names of countries were not used for confidentiality purposes.

Jeannette is 20 years old and was born and raised in Latin America. Although her parents are both North American, they also grew up in Latin America. Jeannette holds passports from both countries. When she was 7 years old her family moved to North America for 2 years. Although her parents are not missionaries, her family was very involved with church and her father ran a business. She graduated from a bilingual school and is the youngest of eight children. In university, she is currently majoring in international studies and is considering teaching English abroad.

Miriam is 20 years old. Her parents are European missionaries in Asia, where she was born. She attended local schools in Asia for kindergarten and grade 1, and when she was 7 years old she went to boarding school in another Asian country. In grade 3, she went back to her home country with her parents on furlough for 1 year and then returned to boarding school. Her parents moved to the city of her boarding school when she was in junior high, so she lived with her parents but continued to attend the same school until she graduated, although her family went on furlough again for 1 year during high school. She came to North America to attend university and is studying psychology and hopes to teach overseas.

Carol is 23 years old. She was born in East Asia and around age five moved to another East Asian country because of her father's job. She attended a local school there and right before she was to graduate from grade 6, her family moved back to their home country. During this time in her home country, she became a Christian. Her family was there for approximately 3 years and then moved to a different Asian country where she attended two international schools. Upon graduating high school she came to North

America to study. She plans to be a missionary in an Asian country utilizing her language and cross-cultural skills.

Sarah is 21 years old and was born in East Asia. When she was about 10 years old, her family moved to South America where her father started a business. She attended a public elementary school and a private secondary school while there. Before her last year of high school there was an economic crisis in the country she was living in, so her parents decided to send her to another country to finish high school. It was an English speaking, western country. She lived there for 18 months and then came to North America for university. She is an only child and her parents still live in South America. She is in her second year of university majoring in international studies.

Violet is 18 years old and was born in North America. She lived in three different areas in North America and in high school moved to Europe because of her father's occupation. She attended an international school and for her last year of high school her family moved to another European country. She is the oldest of four children and is studying modern languages at university and hopes to one day become an interpreter. Her family currently lives in North America, but may return to Europe in the future.

Grace is 20 years old. She was born in an East Asian country and as an infant moved to Central Asia with her family due to her father's employment. When she was 5 years old her family returned to their home country for 2 years and then moved to Africa where she attended an international school. Her family lived in Africa for 3 years and then moved to another country in East Asia. At age 11 she was given the choice to move to another city with her parents in Asia and attend a local school or to move to North America to live with her aunt (her older brother was already living there). She chose to

go to North America and attended junior high and high school there. While living in North America, her parents became missionaries but remained in the East Asian country where they currently live now. She is in her third year of university studying fine arts and teaching English as a second language.

Kristy is 22 years old and was born in North America. When she was an infant, her parents moved to East Asia as missionaries. She lived in East Asia off and on until she came to university. When she was about 10 years old, her family returned to North America for about 5 years for her father to return to school. During that time she attended a Christian school, a public school and was home-schooled. Her family returned to East Asia where she graduated from a Christian international school. She will graduate from university this year with a degree in psychology and hopes to someday be a cross-cultural counselor.

Pam is 21 years old and was born in North America. When she was about 7 years old her parents became missionaries and after a year of training in Europe, her family moved to rural Africa where she home-schooled and later attended boarding school. She and her family returned to North America for one year in junior high and one year in high school. Before high school her family moved to a larger city in Africa and she attended an international Christian school and graduated from there. This is her final year in university and she will graduate with a degree in nursing. Her parents still live in Africa.

As the researcher, I am 28 years old and was born and raised in North America. Although I moved several times as a child and have traveled overseas, I am not a TCK. I am a woman who is Christian and who is married.

Data Collection

Women interested in the study were originally contacted through email and if they remained interested they were contacted by telephone. They were told about the purpose of the study and the time requirement. If interest still remained, a few demographic questions were asked to confirm criteria inclusion. A time and place were decided for the interview and the majority of the interviews took place in the researcher's office, however one interview took place in a library study room and another was in the home of an autobiographer. At the beginning of the interview, the autobiographer was asked to read and sign a consent form (see Appendix B) and the researcher took some time to build rapport. The autobiographers were given an opportunity to ask any questions before the interview began. The interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes and were tape-recorded using a small digital voice recorder that was placed between the researcher and the autobiographer.

Biographical phenomenology is very open-ended, allowing the participant to freely choose how and what to talk about (Chaitin, 2004). I began the interview by asking the autobiographer, "In your own words, please tell me your life story, whatever you feel is significant." The role of the researcher is to sit quietly and listen to the autobiographer without interruption (Chaitin). I asked some intrinsic follow-up questions (Chaitin) that arose from the interview, for clarification or elaboration both during the life story and after the autobiographer was finished with the life story (e.g., "Okay, and tell me a little bit more about Kenya, when you said that was one of your favorite places, what was that like for you?"; "Can you tell me a little bit more about kind of moving around and what that was like for you?").

Upon completion of the life story, extrinsic questions were asked in order to further understand the phenomena (See Appendix C). Chaitin (2004) defines extrinsic questions as questions that are of particular interest to the study. In this study, the extrinsic questions explored how identity is formed through the movement between multiple cultures which also includes identity development as a woman (e.g., “How would you be different if you had not grown up the way you had?”). Following the interview with the second autobiographer, I noticed that spirituality appeared to be important, so in the remaining interviews, I added the question “What role does spirituality play in your life?” At the end of the interview, autobiographers were thanked and given a 10 dollar gift card to their choice of Chapters or Starbucks.

Transcription

The interview was audio taped and transcribed as advised by qualitative research methodology (Chaitin, 2004; Groenewald, 2004; Osborne, 1990). The transcribing of each interview was done by the researcher soon after the interview took place and was transcribed verbatim, including significant pauses, laughter or sighs.

Follow-up Interview

Upon completion of the interviews and the initial analysis, the researcher contacted each autobiographer and requested a brief meeting to review the initial findings. A written summary of the findings along with a brief biographical description of the autobiographer was given to each woman, and they were given an opportunity to share their thoughts and provide feedback regarding the findings. This meeting took approximately 30 to 45 minutes and, although it was not audio recorded, the researcher took written notes to capture the comments from the autobiographers. Seven of the follow

up interviews took place in the researcher's office and the final one was conducted over the phone due to the autobiographer being in another country. The findings were emailed to her to read and then we set up a time to discuss the findings over the telephone.

Analysis

There are many ways to analyze transcribed narrative interviews (Osborne, 1990). For this study, Brown and Gilligan's (1992) voice centered method, known as the listening guide, was chosen as a method of thematic analysis and guided the researcher in the readings of the transcriptions and was adapted to fit the topic of the present study. The listening guide is described as a relational, feminist method that listens to the many layers of voices that run through the narrative or the life story of the woman and is typically used with groups who have traditionally been silenced (Brown & Gilligan; Woodcock, 2005). It is a method that emphasizes the importance of human relationships and is responsive to the different voices throughout the interview, at the same time acknowledging the relationship of the interviewer and interviewee. As a feminist method it recognizes the influence and effects of patriarchal societies on "girls and women as speakers and listeners, as knowers and actors in the world" (Brown & Gilligan, p. 24).

In this voice centered approach of analysis the act of reading the transcripts is transformed into an act of listening, enabling the reader to listen to the different voices that resonate throughout the interview. The method acknowledges the relational complexity of not only the woman's life and experiences, but also the complex interaction of the researcher and the autobiographer.

I was aware of the intimate nature of the invitation to share one's life story, and at times I noticed a hesitation in the autobiographer especially at the open-endedness of the

invitation. I could sense her internal debate (i.e., “How much do I share?” “What do I share?”). My desire as a researcher was to handle the woman’s story with gratitude, sensitivity, and respect, and the listening guide encourages the researcher to engage in self-reflection as a reminder of who is the listener and who is the speaker and self-reflection is actually built into and part of the analysis.

There are multiple ways of talking about voice. Women, when talking about their lives, often talk in metaphors of voice and silence: “‘speaking up,’ ‘speaking out,’ ‘being silenced’ . . . ‘feeling deaf and dumb’” (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, Tarule, 1986). Consciously or not, women know the importance of hearing their voices. For women, the development of a sense of voice and identity are often intricately intertwined. Through the act of voicing one’s feelings and thoughts, authentic identity is “created, maintained, and recreated” (Jack, 1991, p. 32). When the autobiographers voice their stories they are in essence also revealing aspects of their identity.

Brown and Gilligan (1992) suggest four *listenings* of the transcripts. In the first listening, the objective is to attend to the story or the “geography of the psychological landscape” (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p.27). What is the setting or context of the story? What is happening and who are the characters? I listened for significant events and recurring words or images. This first listening involved the big picture and the context of identity development. Following the first listening, Brown and Gilligan (1992) reflect on themselves as “people in the privileged position of interpreting the life events of another and consider the implications of this act” (p. 27). After the first listening I reflected on my own feelings and responses to the story, and asked myself the following questions suggested by Brown and Gilligan (1992): “Do I identify or distance myself from the

autobiographer?” and “Am I confused or delighted?” Writing my responses and reflections of the listening allowed me to consider how my own thoughts and feelings may influence the way I interpret the story and write about the autobiographer (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). Following are a few excerpts from my field journal in response to the first listening of two of the transcripts:

From my own experience, I know that seeing the world changes you. On one hand it gives you an extended worldview, opens your eyes, and helps you see the larger picture. On the other hand it makes you critical of people who haven't traveled particularly at home when others have never left and are so stuck in their own world...I remember being so frustrated and annoyed with my classmates (after I had traveled overseas). I had matured and changed, but they were still the same...

I could identify with the women as they discussed returning to their home countries and not being able to relate to others around them because of my personal experience of traveling overseas as a teenager and again as an adult. I felt my worldview had expanded and I had a better understanding of the world than others. In a way this produces an attitude that can come across as arrogance. At times, I really understood what the autobiographer was sharing because of my own experience, and at other times I could personally not relate to their stories and experiences. Regardless if I related to their experiences, I was deeply moved more often than not:

I am drawn in to her story – it is so authentic, genuine, and real...my heart can't help but feel her pain. I don't know what it's like to be forced to move, to feel weird your whole life and to never fit in any place. I have compassion and

understanding, yet at the same time it doesn't necessarily resonate with my own experiences...

One part of me felt relief that I did not know what it was like to feel this pain of moving and always feeling as an outsider and another part of me was sad that this woman experienced this kind of pain. I was reminded of the times in my own life where I did not make the effort to reach out to those who were different or "weird" and even at times made fun of the stereotypes of missionary kids. Hearing their stories and perspectives as an outsider was a powerful experience for me as a researcher.

In the second listening, I focused on self and identity, listening for the voice of "I" (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 27). How does she speak about herself before I speak of her (Brown & Gilligan, 1992)? I listened for feelings and emotions and for words she used to describe herself, including how she sees herself as a woman. I wanted to use her words, not mine, to speak of her. Throughout the second listening, I continued to journal my thoughts and reactions to the voice of self.

The third and fourth listenings are a way for the researcher to further explore the research questions and the emerging themes and voices in the study (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Woodcock, 2005). In the third listening, I was attuned to how the autobiographer experiences herself in the relational landscape. How does she speak about relationships? I listened for authentic relationships, and relationships that silenced her voice, whether it was cultural or institutional. I also listened for the way she views women and how she spoke of women in general, and in the fourth and final listening I constructed woman poems.

The woman poem is a variation of the “I poem” developed by Brown and Gilligan (1992). The purpose of the I poem is to listen closely to the autobiographer’s voice and to attend to any distinctive patterns in it and to provide the researcher opportunities to hear how the autobiographer speaks of herself (Woodcock, 2005). This is done by following the pronoun of I or me with the descriptive phrase behind it. In the woman poem I pulled out important descriptive phrases in the autobiographers’ answers to the question from the interview, “What does it mean to you to be a woman?” and put it into a stanza form like lines from a poem (see Chapter 5: Discussion). Constructing the woman poems provided me the opportunity to listen closely to the voice of each autobiographer as a woman and gave me an understanding of how the autobiographer grasps the idea of womanhood.

As I listened to the story of the autobiographers four times, I was aware of the question driving my research: How do TCK women come to form their identity? From the four listenings, common themes of how these TCK women develop identity began to emerge. As the researcher searches for connections between the themes, she/he is always checking with the original transcript to ensure that the themes are a true reflection of what the autobiographer said (Groenewald, 2004; Smith, 1999). I would go back to the transcription to ensure that the voices and themes were a true reflection of the autobiographer. This process involved a close interaction between the researcher and the text (Smith).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness, or establishing the legitimacy of this study, is seen as an important part of any qualitative research, and there are many strategies to validate the

findings and research process (Creswell, 2003; Osborne, 1990). One way to increase trustworthiness is to engage in *bracketing*. Phenomenological research recognizes that the researcher cannot be completely objective, and so it is important for the researcher to clarify her/his biases and assumptions regarding the phenomenon. This is referred to as bracketing (Creswell; Groenewald; Osborne). It is important for the researcher not only to clarify her/his assumptions and beliefs regarding the phenomenon before the research begins, but also to continue to be aware of biases and assumptions throughout analytical process. This self-reflection from the researcher allows the reader to understand the researcher's interpretations of the data (Creswell; Osborne). I have included excerpts from my field journal and other thoughts and reactions throughout the findings and discussion section as a way of bracketing (see Chapter Four: Findings)

Another strategy to increase the trustworthiness of the findings is through member-checking (Creswell, 2003; Osborne, 1990). This gives participants an opportunity to examine the interpretations and themes for themselves in order to determine whether or not they are accurate (Creswell; Osborne). In the follow-up interviews, the autobiographers were given an opportunity to provide feedback on my interpretations of their narratives. In general the autobiographers agreed with the themes and findings, although one autobiographer initially did not agree with the theme the silencing of voice because she felt that it had a negative connotation. After explaining the theme to her in more detail and through discussion, she did come to agree with it. Other autobiographers commented on the silencing of voice theme as well, expressing that they had never thought of the findings in this way and that it was a new idea for most of them. Another autobiographer pointed out that, although establishing independence during

university is important in the development of identity, TCKs may be more independent to begin with. I agreed that this was indeed true and as a result included her point in the discussion.

The final strategy employed in this study to ensure accuracy of findings was through the use of an independent, or external, auditor (Creswell, 2003). An independent auditor is someone outside of the research who is given a portion of the collected data (i.e., interviews) and themes and asked to audit the findings. The faculty supervisor of this study, who has experience in qualitative research, acted as the independent auditor. Following the completion of the initial analysis, two transcribed interviews were chosen randomly and given to the auditor. The themes were also given to the auditor to verify the fit between the themes and transcripts, and to determine whether or not I had overlooked any other relevant themes. The independent auditor confirmed the themes and concurred that no themes or other relevant pieces had been overlooked.

In the findings and discussion chapters that follow we learn more about the life stories of the autobiographers, how identity is developed, and how they view themselves as women.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

The Listening Process

Identity Development

Through listening to the transcripts of the interviews four times, each time with a different emphasis, seven major themes emerged about the process of identity development. Some of the voices became louder through each listening and in some cases it took multiple listenings for a theme to emerge. Some voices were heard throughout most of the listenings, such as the voice of the outsider and the silencing of voice, but the second listening about self allowed the best place for these voices to be heard. Following is a summary of the findings that reflects only the themes that are common to most interviews and does not necessarily represent all of the autobiographers. The themes are listed below with brief descriptions and examples from the interviews and will be explored further in the discussion.

Some of the autobiographers' quotes contain the frequent use of words such as "like" or "um". These words were included in the quotes intentionally because the way that the autobiographers speak can also provide insight into their personal identity. According to Lakoff (1973), in appropriate women's speech strong expression of feeling tends to be avoided and expression of uncertainty is favored. There could be several ways of exploring the language of hesitancy in the autobiographers and how women are expected to speak, however, it will be left to future research to explore this topic further.

The purpose of this study was to explore how TCK women come to form who they are as women in light of their experiences. During the process of listening, it became apparent in the first listening that identity development for the autobiographers in this

study occurred within the context of moving, place, and education. Almost every autobiographer began her story with "...and then we moved there." Moving refers to physical mobility between neighborhoods, cities, and countries. For the purposes of this study, place refers to a physical geographical location most often being a specific country. All of the autobiographers also included their educational experiences in their life stories which ranged from home-schooling to private boarding school to public school. Moving, place, and education provided the story or the context of identity development.

The disruption of transition. In listening to the context, story, and significant events, I began to understand not only the context of identity development, but I also heard stories of important influences in development. One of these influential stories was transition. Every time they moved to a new country or attended a new school or returned home to visit relatives they experienced transition. Transition can be a disruption in identity development because they had to focus on surviving and adjusting rather than gaining a sense of who they are. The following quotations are from some of the autobiographers:

...so like I knew this culture but actually living here was a totally different thing right, so about a month in I just kind of completely broke down like I have no idea what I'm doing here I don't know how people think and I was just I was completely overwhelmed... (Jeannette, age 20)

...just this sheltered little Christian kid who had like you know grown up on the other side of the world and I felt it and people let me know that I didn't fit in and um so yeah that was hard... (Kristy, age 22)

It was hard at first, but I think I was still young enough that things weren't that big of a deal... (Pam, age 21)

Stability of spirituality. Another influential story of identity development was spirituality. Spirituality was considered a source of stability and comfort in the lives of most of the autobiographers. For seven of the eight autobiographers spirituality was understood in the context of a relationship with God through the lens of Christianity. The other autobiographer understood her spirituality through the lens of Buddhism. One autobiographer referred to spirituality as one of the few unchanging aspects of her identity. It played a significant role in the identity development of all of the autobiographers. Consider the following quotations from some of the autobiographers:

“...well you know along with my family, God's been like the stable thing in my life, even though often it doesn't feel like that...” (Kristy, age 22)

“I'd say that that's how I got through all these years, like I feel like if I didn't know God, I don't know where I'd be sometimes...” (Pam, age 21)

“So like I think God was there for that a lot, and if I hadn't been saved in sixth grade, I don't know what I'd be doing...” (Grace, age 20)

Um, I would say pretty much like the essential, most important thing in our family has always been God...when I was moving around a lot, um even though everything else was gone, I knew that God was still there and I think that's helped me um, it's made God a little more tangible to me... (Violet, age 18)

The voice of the outsider. Although I heard the voice of the outsider in the first listening, it became louder in the second listening, as I listened for the voice of self and "I". These women described themselves as different and in fact do feel different from others. There was a general sense of feeling on the outside regardless of where the autobiographer was living. There seemed to be an expectation that normalcy would return with the return to the home country, but they still tended to feel like an outsider. For example, consider the following quotations:

So I like my youth like all I remember like I was always the one that stuck out like a sore thumb. Um yeah, so I think I always yeah had this subconscious thought of maybe there's something you know innately different and like wrong with me, maybe I'm from I don't know Mars or outer space (laugh), I'm just weird that's what I thought, I don't go with like the general flow of society or culture I guess. (Carol, age 23)

...that's the very first incident that marked like my differences from people...
(Sarah, age 21)

And like another conclusion is that just because we are always different like if we were living in a Latin or African country right where our very appearance just totally makes us stick out, there's no point in trying to fit in as far as like fashion goes cause we'll never fit in right... (Jeannette, age 20)

You know my church experiences have always been I've never fit in either, either way and different reasons for each place or maybe similar ones too but um, yeah so that's been pretty significant... (Kristy, age 22)

I think a lot of TCKs respond by being kind of being as different as possible here like because and they know they're not going to fit in so they are just really go really like the other way and then they take refuge in the fact that they are like, they they're identity becomes the country they came from more than when they were there and because that's that's where they can escape to... (Jeannette, age 20)

...like our identity is an anti-identity like the only way we can define ourselves is how we not are. (Violet, age 18)

The silencing of voice. Often as a result of feeling like an outsider in their experiences of transition, the autobiographers had to learn how to cope with their situation. Through the second listening, I gained a deep sense that they have just had to “deal/live with” their experiences. For some of them it was denying their true self to try

and fit in or silencing their emotions about what was happening. For most of them this lifestyle was not their choice, although for the one person who did choose to live away from her parents, it was her choice, so to have any emotions about it would be her own fault. In general there didn't seem to be room to have emotions about the way they grew up. Most of them spoke about their past in terms of facts and remained very neutral in the way they shared. Most of their stories lacked emotion and feeling words. To me it seems that a silencing of voice had occurred – by either the situation, others, or self as a protection from overwhelming emotions and feelings. In a way they recognize that their voices have been silenced, but at the same time they see no other alternative but to just “suck it up” and live with it. This struggle again can be seen as a hindrance to identity development. Consider the following quotations:

I sometimes think I'm emotionally dead (laugh)...I'm so used to like leaving people and not looking back so much... (Grace, age 21)

I think I also have developed the ability to be yeah be immune to pain for um, uh just uh not to be too dependent, to fight that dependency. (Carol, age 23)

I am very sentimental like normally but I've had to learn to not be so sentimental especially toward things...so I had to learn how to let things go which probably if I didn't move so many places that's not really necessary, you can keep whatever you want forever. (Violet, age 18)

I know that there is going to be a lot of moving back and forth and there is always going to be good-byes and there like for everybody in life there's always good-byes, right, but for some reason like when you have to deal with saying good-bye to two different countries right or like to people from all over the place...you have to learn to deal with that and the way to like deal with that is to be independent and not really need people... (Jeannette, age 20)

...so I just feel like okay so that's gonna be the rest of my life like either you get out yourself or you cry, there's no way to get out there or except you, you can help yourself and that's it, it's a very self-interest world... (Sarah, age 21)

The necessity of a future international lifestyle. Also through the second listening, it became apparent that although these women felt different they also possess wonderful personal characteristics that were developed through their unique life experiences. Many of them spoke of how their experiences have made them more adaptable and flexible, observant, increased their awareness of the world, and gave them compassion for other cultures, languages and people. With these strong skills and characteristics, a majority of the autobiographers plan to use their background in their future careers. They do not just hope or wish to travel and live overseas someday, this type of international, mobile lifestyle almost seems a necessity for these women.

I think that really struck me like that's kind of what got me interested in nursing, and also working with um, at this orphanage, at the baby orphanage with children who were HIV positive and abandoned. (Pam, age 21)

I have a gift for languages and like through moving I've found that out a little bit more. I do really love languages and but I can't see myself being happy doing anything that didn't involve languages. (Violet, age 18)

...overseas missions, like, for no particular reason I just sensed deep down in me that I just wanted to cross-cultural, cross cultures, and minister... (Carol, age 23)

I would really love to do that just kind of go to other countries and just actually live there not just visit right, live there and learn different cultures and stuff. (Jeannette, age 20)

My career goal, I want to do something international um for sure...I think it's because um I really want to talk with people, well it's not like I want to, I feel like because I been I have experiences for sure and I can understand how people suffer... (Sarah, age 21)

I specifically want to get into cross-cultural counseling, so...so I think it's interesting how like personality and experiences come together, cause I think personality has encouraged me to go for being a counselor...and then my experiences has you know given me a heart for those who struggle between cultures or in another culture... (Kristy, age 22)

The power of normalization within a common group. By the third listening, in which I listened for the voice of relationship, it became clear that the autobiographers have had some normalizing experiences that have been crucial in their development of identity. This normalization has come in the form of a peer group who the autobiographer can relate to, whether other TCKs or internationally minded people. I will refer to this peer group as the common group. The common group is a place where feelings and experiences are normalized and understood. In some cases normalization also came in the form of research or literature about TCKs. This normalization, whether through peers or literature, is where the autobiographers began to develop their identity as TCKs, and it is very significant in the formation of identity. They often find their identity in being a TCK:

I remember people being pretty friendly cause it it was a school that where a lot of people coming and going all the time, so that was really common and so it was like oh, normal for you... oh it was just like yeah this is normal, everyone comes and goes, and then you know a bunch of other people come and go... (Pam, age 21 talking about international school)

And then it's just like that somebody researched that was kind of amazing to find out like wow I didn't realize that this was like not a condition but like a actual real thing. There's other people who define themselves [as TCKs] so that was kind of I guess a little bit reassuring to know that it was like that other people sort of felt the same thing as me I suppose. (Violet, age 18 talking about book about TCKs)

...and when I read that book I was like 'oh wow', I was in tears a lot just because it was like oh that was that explains why...why you know I acted certain ways in the past...like there are reasons for my weird, why I was always different. (Carol, age 23)

...being together with other TCKs makes me feel like I belong, and it makes me feel normal... (Miriam, age 20)

When I read through the David Pollock book and that definitely changed my whole...reading the book was just totally eye-opening you know it's just like I was reading about myself. (Miriam, age 20)

...like it's just such a strong tie there and I'm just really close to a lot of my friends like that and and that's just like that's been that's been kind of a refuge or obviously a lot of my friends here aren't TCKs but there's many like they were in the international dorm last year with me so um like they're definitely open-minded... (Jeannette, age 20)

...there are so many girls from so many countries different countries and we all have different problems and we all struggle and I see how they struggle and I learn how to communicate with them...we share, we have fun together... (Sarah, age 21)

The value in establishing independence. The importance of establishing independence became noticeable by the third listening as well. This occurred either right before university or while attending university. It is a breaking away from parents' and beginning to explore identity as an emerging adult. Although often not an easy process, establishing independence is important in normal identity development for all emerging adults. For most autobiographers the first year at university was difficult and the majority of energy was spent on recovering from culture shock and adjusting to cultural issues. For some, it was the first time away from their family. Upon adjusting and finding a group of similar peers, their university experience improved and they were able to explore independence and identity.

...well that first year wasn't really that great...it was different being so far away from family... I kind of went really low, and then after that it got better, like it's like it took that you know feeling awful...to make it, to like where it got better, and I, I think it's kind of a time thing, like I finally had time, like it had been several months until I knew people in my dorm better, and like that's, that's probably when I connected most with people in my dorm... (Pam, age 21 talking about adjustment to university)

...so I mean it was really when I came to [university] it was like I was on my own now like now it wasn't am I going to make my parents mad, it was it was like I need to figure out what God wants me to do... (Jeannette, age 20)

...it's been, it's been amazing like I know I've changed a lot since coming to [university], just mostly because of my friends and because of the classes...

(Jeannette, age 20)

I don't know quite why but the major changing point was definitely this summer, when I was all on my own in [country] and didn't have my parents...I could say was my personal faith now and not my parents'...so it was just me and I had to deal with it on my own and I couldn't rely on my parents, and so that was good...

(Miriam, age 20 talking about personal spiritual journey)

Through the first three listenings, seven themes about identity development emerged. We learned about the ways that identity development is hindered and encouraged, and we begin to unfold the multiple layers of voices of these women who have often not been heard. In the third and fourth listening, voices of womanhood are explored.

Womanhood

The second focus of the study was on exploring what it means to be a woman who has grown up as a TCK and how TCK women define womanhood. The third listening consisted of listening for relationships and how the autobiographer views herself in the relational landscape, and it also included listening to how the autobiographer speaks of women in order to gain an initial understanding of her views of women. From the listening it became apparent that views and beliefs around women were extremely varied among the autobiographers. Some themes include equality/inequality issues, image and

outer appearance, and roles of women in the church; however these themes are only representative of a few autobiographers. Following are some of the ways in which the autobiographers spoke of women:

I strongly think that ideally in any culture women should be respected and also as long as she not the overall one in charge... (Carol, age 23)

I think that it is an important thing for women I think, to strive for things and to go for things, um, like it's, yeah, like it's important for women to like that have certain, have their own ideals. (Pam, age 21)

I don't know, it seems like I don't know sometimes it seems like women got the short end of the stick but cause there are so many expectations not that there isn't on guys there is a lot of expectations but yeah. (Violet, age 18)

...like girls act differently everywhere but there's always there's always um there's there's codes that I think is hard for us to switch back and forth...I think a lot of it is just like trying to figure out what's acceptable in each country...I don't know I think it's harder for girls than for guys...girls are a lot more caught up in in appearance and in like following codes and behaviours...girls are always more worried about identity and appearance and about being accepted... (Jeannette, age 20)

I think the world do not expect that much from a girl so that actually women have more freedom to do what they whatever they want to do... (Sarah, age 21)

In the fourth and final listening, I listened for the voice of the autobiographers as women and constructed “woman poems”. How do they speak of women? What do they have to say as women about women? How do they view women? Utilizing Brown and Gilligan’s (1992) concept of a voice poem, I created woman poems in order to follow and emphasize each autobiographers’ voice and views in response to the question from the interview, what does it mean for you to be a woman? I followed pronouns, such as I or me, as well as any phrases that refer to women. Each poem is different, reflecting a variety of views on womanhood. The purpose of the woman poems is to further explore the voice of TCK women. The woman poems are helpful in focusing on the voice of the autobiographer as a woman. The voices of the autobiographers become clearer and some of the struggles, issues, and tensions experienced by these women are better understood. The poems ranged in length from 2 paragraphs to 2 pages, and will be examined in greater detail in the Discussion chapter.

Through hearing the voices of the women throughout the four listenings, as a researcher I was able to explore and listen to my own voice as well.

Voice of the Researcher

Due to the nature of qualitative research, it is important for the researcher to engage in reflexivity (Russell & Kelly, 2002). Reflexivity is the process of self-examination, honoring oneself and others by recognizing the personal experiences and pre-existing perspectives that are brought into the research (Russell & Kelly). Russell and Kelly suggest the completion of self-reflective journals as one way to engage in

reflexivity. Because the present research included so much about voice, self-reflection and examination of my own voice was essential. I was faced with the reality of my own voice while listening to the voices of these eight women and reflexivity is one way to recognize my voice as separate from the autobiographers.

This research has been a powerful experience for me personally. Not only have I been faced with my own thoughts and feelings about my identity, but also I have been forced to examine my own views on what it means to be a woman. Adding the second part of the research on womanhood came from my desire to learn more about women. It came from a place of questions about my own womanhood.

As I listened to the women's stories, I wondered how I would tell my own life story. What would I include? Would my story focus on the facts and events of my life or would I include emotions and experiences? I have thought about the times when I have silenced my own voice for the sake of pleasing others and not wanting to create a fuss. At times I silenced my voice intentionally, but most of the time I simply did not know my own voice. I think that is the case for some of the autobiographers as well. They are just coming out of the often turbulent years of adolescence and beginning to know and recognize their voice. I am not surprised by the variety of voices about womanhood because I hardly know my own voice as a woman. As I listened to the stories of these women, my own voice became more recognizable at times. After one of the early interviews, I wrote the following in my journal:

I found myself to be a little sad in her acceptance of the church's view of women and how she cannot be fully heard as a single woman. She appears to be a strong, passionate woman and I found myself disappointed that that is being stifled by

church leaders...It is interesting that as I listen to her speak, my own perspective of womanhood becomes a bit more clear...women don't need a man to tell them who they are or to give them their identity.

As a woman who grew up in the church and as a person quite familiar with the culture of Christianity, I understand the tension that women experience, but at the same time I am deeply affected when people are not given the freedom to be who they are. Through this research and my own personal exploration and reflection, I have come to believe that each woman must grapple with her own womanhood. What it means to be a woman will vary slightly from woman to woman, but the important part is that each woman embarks on the journey of womanhood for herself. My hope is that through this research, each autobiographer will begin to and continue to think about their personal womanhood. If they end up with different beliefs from each other, that is fine as long as they know who they are and what they believe.

Another reason that this research has been so powerful for me has been just the sheer honor and privilege of listening to the life stories of these women. I was moved by their experiences and so grateful for all that they shared with me. In the discussion I have taken great care to honor their voices and their experiences. At times it was difficult not to let my own voice get in the way of the autobiographers' voices, but I hope that their voices will be heard as a result of this study. They each have an amazing story packed with unique experiences and adventures, and often they are not given a safe place for their voices to be heard. I truly believe that we have much to learn from these women. It has challenged me to evaluate my own stereotypes about TCKs and MKs and has given me a greater understanding and compassion for this mobile, cross-cultural population. A

more in depth listening of the voices that emerged throughout the interviews will be addressed in the discussion chapter following.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

First Listening

The Context of Identity Development

When listening to the story the first time, I was attuned to the story or the plot of the autobiographers' life story. In response to the first question of the interview, "Tell me your life story", the general initial response was "...and then we moved there." One autobiographer's response was "Um, it will be and then we moved and then we moved and then we moved." The stories consisted of moving and places. Events and recurring words had to do with moving or the places they lived. This is the life story of most TCKs – moving and transition. The places and the countries moved to were different from story to story, but mobility was the common theme in each story and is the essence of the TCK lifestyle. Contextual influences on identity are important to understand and a significant piece of the construction of identity (Jones, 1997).

These autobiographers were moving from place to place as children. Sometimes it is within a country, sometimes it is to another country or another school, but the moving is from place to place. A unique relationship with place is developed. Violet talked about place in this way:

...I look at a map, I, it's not just paper like it's I can see these places well obviously not all of them...I have sort of idea when you look at a picture like I, it's someplace you've been, it's like not a picture it's like all around you and so when I would get pictures of places I haven't been, I imagine like what it's so exciting, what would it feel like to actually go there and see what it's like.

Because she has traveled to so many places, she can visualize places she has never even experienced. The world and the map have come alive and she is a part of it. Violet continued:

I guess now I just want to go everywhere. I don't know if I would, I don't know if that was something it's like that you're born with and you want to travel, but if I hadn't lived other places I don't know if I would want to explore as much like...I can't even imagine what it's like to live in one place.

The desire to explore and travel was consistent among the autobiographers. Being exposed to new cultures and worldviews, they are not unchanged or uninfluenced by the moving. In this sense moving and place entails excitement and adventure and for many moving and traveling becomes a necessity. They cannot imagine life without it.

Although moving is exciting and essential for many of the autobiographers, it was not always a pleasant experience. For most of them it was not their choice to move. It was their parents' occupations that caused them to move from place to place and as children, they did not necessarily understand the implications of moving. Parents make the decision about their occupations and what opportunities to pursue. This does not mean that they do not consider their children's desires or needs, but usually children do not have a choice about moving. For Carol, her transitions were very difficult and she did not want to move:

...I have a bad memory of airports, just because that was my crying, you know my heart out, like that was as a kid my last chance to just say NO don't take me. You're tearing me away from what meant the world to me, and you're putting me

in a yeah, it was my last cry to like say no I'm not going, but obviously I had to go, right.

Likewise, Sarah did not like the country she moved to with her parents and did not want to stay: "I didn't have a very good impression at all but I couldn't say anything because it hard, it is hard, if it's gonna be hard for me it's gonna be hard for my parents."

Finally a year later, she begged her parents to let her return to her home country: "Let me get out of this country, I don't like it anymore, I hate this country, it's not gonna be, it's not my, for me, and if you wanna stay okay fine, but I want my life back".

The idea of mobility in the lives of TCKs is often discussed in the literature.

Pollock and Van Reken (2001) recognize two formative realities in the life of a TCK. The first is being raised in a cross-cultural world, and secondly being raised in a highly mobile world. Mobility is normal for TCKs and it is actually what makes them TCKs. They are interacting with and between two or more cultures and are moving between them. Although the level of mobility may look different for each TCK and indeed we see the variations of mobility among the autobiographers in this study, they encounter not only their own personal mobility, but as Pollock and Van Reken suggest, every third culture community is filled with people who continually come and go. As we continue to listen to the stories of these women, it is important to keep in mind that mobility is the story or the context within which the women in this study are developing their identity.

The other story or context of identity development is their attachment to place. A unique relationship, or attachment, is developed with place. For some it is with the home country, and for others it is an attachment to the host country. Sarah's family sets a high value on tradition from their home country:

...my parents like we talk about we like, we value more about the tradition more than trad, more than [Asians] somehow. That's what I heard, like actually like [Asians] believe in overseas, they are more traditional than the real [Asian]...

There is a desire to hold on to values and beliefs more tightly when away, because of an attachment to the values and beliefs of the place from whence they came. Sometimes after leaving a place, the attachment to it is stronger and the desire to connect to that place is stronger. Another autobiographer Jeannette, suggests, "...identity becomes the country they [TCKs] came from more than when they were there...you know like um I feel more [Latina] here [North America] than when I am in [Latin America]..."

Jeannette may feel different from place to place and may desire for people to understand where she came from.

Place becomes a challenging issue when one transitions to university, for example. The question, "Where are you from?" is complicated to answer. How do you describe your relationship with so many places to other people? Grace answers it this way, "...I always tell them, I don't have a home, so um yeah my home is where I am at the time, so yeah, so that'd be [North America]for now." Place helps to put people into categories and gives a point of reference, but numerous relationships with different places complicates issues for TCKs.

In a study about place attachment and mobility, Gustafson (2001) defines place as a spatial entity that is perceived and experienced as meaningful by an individual or a group of people. The spatial entity can range anywhere from a room, to neighborhoods, or even countries. Attachment to a place refers to the affective, cognitive and behavioural bond between individuals and one or more places and the attachment is often with present

or former homes. Mobility, when discussed with place attachment is often referred to as a change in permanent residence although it can also include temporary forms of mobility. Theoretical perspectives about place attachment and mobility tend to regard them as opposite or mutually exclusive phenomena with some researchers placing value on place attachment as a necessity for an individual's well being, while others emphasize a globalized world where mobility is a basic human condition (Gustafson). If these phenomena are mutually exclusive, then highly mobile individuals, such as TCKs, are supposed to experience little or no place attachment and vice versa. However, Gustafson discusses a more general perspective of the relationship between place attachment (roots) and mobility (routes) and supports the idea that rather than in opposition, place attachment and mobility are more complementary and intertwined. They can be seen as two different ways of regarding relationship between people, culture, and place.

In his qualitative research, Gustafson (2001) explored the relationship between place attachment and mobility. He found that while the participants did differ in regard to place and mobility, the difference was not that some preferred mobility and other preferred place attachment, but that "they regarded the relationship between place attachment and mobility differently" (p. 679). Some did see them as opposites, others saw them as opposites but tried to find the balance, and still others saw them as complementary and enjoyed both. Overall, the geographical mobility of individuals does not necessarily contradict the importance of place attachment. They may mean different things to different people, but the results from the study indicate that both place attachment and mobility "may contribute to individual well-being and life satisfaction"

(Gustafson, p. 681). Neither one should be regarded as more important or relevant than the other.

Place can be seen as either roots or routes, depending on the person. When talking about roots, participants in Gustafson's (2001) study referred to place primarily as place attachment, security, home, continuity, and community. For others, place was seen more as routes. "The roots theme favors one or a few specific places, whereas the routes theme favors a multitude of places, in some cases also the specific collection of places reflecting an individual life path" (Gustafson, p. 674). An example of the routes theme from the present study from Grace is as follows:

And I was like, like every time I answered the question [where are you from?] it was different. I was like um I'm [Asian], and then I'd be like I'm from [North America], I'm from [Asia], or would just, I don't know it would always vary, so um that's when it started hitting me, like I don't know where I'm from...I'm a nomad.

All of the places that she has been and lived have impacted her and she feels attachment to more than one place and feels that she is not just from one place.

Thinking about Gustafson's (2001) study in light of TCKs can lead us to believe that mobility and place attachment are equally important to development, one is not better than the other. Just because these women are highly mobile and are accustomed to moving does not mean we can assume that place attachment is not important to them or that they may not experience healthy well-being because they have moved so frequently. The concept of roots may be different for the autobiographers than for people who grow up living in the same place their whole lives. Although the autobiographers alluded to

relationship with place, most of them do see themselves as continuing to move around the world. They do not see themselves as settling down in North America. As they finish university, they envision staying in one place for a few years and then moving to the next place. The women in this study may be more comfortable seeing place as routes rather than roots. For the respondents in Gustafson's (2001) study, mobility between places represented personal development, freedom, and independence whereas immobility was equated with routine, boredom, and narrow mindedness. The women in the present study described themselves as open-minded, flexible, and independent which corresponds with the general associations of mobility.

The autobiographers have stories and memories of the places that they have lived. Pam recalls the place where she spent part of her childhood:

...and then we went to [Africa] and that was a really good place for a kid to grow up cause it was in the middle of nowhere, and there was nothing, like it's funny cause now I look back and think that it's some, something I still don't understand cause I lived in this place where...for three years like you didn't see roads and there weren't any stores, there weren't any restaurants, there's nothing, but we didn't, I didn't really think about that when I was there, you know, you just get up and run outside and play...

These places and the movement between these places are at the heart of the TCK experience and are extremely influential in the development of identity.

Although place and mobility are the background and the setting in the story of identity development for TCKs, the life story of each autobiographer also included their experiences with education. Their schooling was very important in development,

although educational experiences were quite varied among the autobiographers. Shifting from school to school and from place to place can add significant confusion to the development of a TCK (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001). Miriam went to six different kindergartens. For some of the autobiographers, school is where they found their common group, people with similar backgrounds and experiences. For others, school was difficult because of learning in another language or being very different from the other students to the point of being bullied. School experiences were not always pleasant and the autobiographers frequently transitioned to new schools. Kristy recalls the years she was back in North America: “I went to a smallish public school, um probably the worst school experience I’ve ever had, yeah it was, it was hard...” School can be a place of community or a struggle with not fitting in and feeling that there is no place for you. Returning to the home country and attending school was often difficult for the autobiographers. It was expected that when they are living abroad they will be different, but it was not expected upon returning home. The expectations to fit in as if they had never been away can be either internal or external (i.e., relatives or peers). When Carol returned to her home country, she read and spoke her native language differently after attending local schools in another country. Those differences were amplified upon returning home.

Education is part of life and development in the majority of children, especially in developed countries. Hours, days, and years are spent in the education system and it is an integral part of an emerging adult’s life story, because it is likely that school and education have occupied the bulk of their life. For TCKs, however, school is more than just about education, for many it is also their community. This was the case for Pam:

“...the school kind of was like my whole community, and like pretty much everything I did was with kids from school...”

The type of education may affect the way relationships are viewed. Violet was grateful that she did not go to boarding school because it would be difficult being separated from family, while on the other hand, Miriam enjoyed her boarding school experience and she believes it made her appreciate her parents more. She recognizes that her relationship with her parents may have been different if she hadn't attended boarding school. Grace, who also spent time away from her parents, also talked about appreciating her parents and not wanting to take them for granted.

Violet speaks to the international school culture and the advantages of attending: “I guess we were spoiled too like private international schools are very, very nice and usually new like state of the art technology, the teachers are usually very good because they love being there...” Pollock and Van Reken (2001) refer to the international school community as a subculture, recognizing that what and how they are taught may be different from school to school. Teachers come from various cultures and likely teach from their value and belief system and it may not always correspond with the familial values and beliefs. There can be a bit of elitism at these schools as well. A principal of an international school wrote:

We interpret all other cultures through the frames of reference of our own culture, it is no wonder that most of us living internationally never truly live as an integral part of another culture but rather spend our time living ‘with’ or, more often than not, ‘next’ to another culture (Poore, 2005, p. 354).

Those who attend boarding school experience still another subculture in which they are raised by and with their peers and learn independence quite early. These schools become communities for TCKs because they are safe. Everyone understands each other and has similar backgrounds. Often they are protected from the host culture and may be in a “bubble.”

We can see that type of education is an important element in the story of identity development. Education, along with mobility and place attachment, make up the story of identity development in the autobiographers, and give us a context in which we can begin to understand the process of identity development in TCK women who are often found in transition.

The Disruption of Transition

Transition is what happens when you move between places or schools. Every TCK experiences transition in some form or another. Some experience it occasionally, others experience it frequently. Jeannette’s early experience of transition was confusing for her:

Yeah, um I look back on those years and it was just a nightmare, like I didn’t, nobody really explained to me what was going on so here I am this little seven year old I didn’t really know English...I like I did not know what was going on I didn’t really know why people were acting the way they did. Um that whole period is just kind of hazy for me, I just look at it and like I just feel like I was kind of lost the whole time.

A transition implies learning a new language, a new way of dressing, and a new way of acting and interacting with people (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001). The autobiographers often have to balance several cultures at once.

Transition often occurred for autobiographers at a time in adolescence that is infamously recognized as turbulent. Miriam shares her experience of transition:

So I was there [home country] for a year in a normal public high school...that was probably like the most horrible year I've ever had, and um yeah like it was an awkward age, I was 14, and they like it was in a small town and they all had, my classmates, all grown up together since like kindergarten and so they were totally not used to having an outsider come in, and so I was the new girl for the whole year.

This may prolong the process of identity development because Miriam and others have to focus on adapting, surviving, and coping with the changes of the transition. They do not have energy to focus on normal developmental tasks such as identity. Kristy also experienced transition during early adolescence:

...it was just junior high too which is such an awful time anyways and here I was absolutely no clue about styles, nothing I know nothing about like popular music, movies, nothing like that at all, just this sheltered little Christian kid who had like you know grown up on the other side of the world and I felt it and people let me know that I didn't fit in and um so yeah that was hard...

Pam returned to her home country a couple of times, the first time was in grade six after being away since she was seven:

It was hard at first, but I think I was still young enough that things weren't that big of a deal, you know like you can still run around and you don't think about it all that often, but it was a little bit hard, just the whole like my parents were doing like support building and stuff and so like every weekend almost we would be traveling somewhere or going somewhere and so I felt like that in some ways it was a little bit hard to feel connected...

Lack of continuity makes it difficult to settle down and develop relationships or be involved in activities. Connection is important in order to feel a sense of belonging, but it is difficult to connect when one is always moving. Violet speaks on moving to another country in this way:

I was excited because I had never lived in a country that didn't speak English and I really love languages, but I was excited to be in [country], but it was my last year of high school and I didn't want to leave my friends, I wanted to graduate with them.

There are so many mixed emotions associated with moving for TCKs, sadness about leaving, but anticipation for the future. One autobiographer in our follow-up interview talked about how because she is so accustomed to leaving that it is easy to become numb to the emotions and instead she prefers to look ahead to the future and to where she is going rather than dwelling on leaving people and places behind. Grace has learned to transition well:

I actually think my personality is more adaptable to change or something like that...like whereas I know like a lot of different TCKs like have trouble transitioning and stuff, um, I never have that problem. I always, always had this

thing where leaving people behind wasn't a problem, like even my closest friend, I would be like, 'yay, I'm going to a new country' and um it was never a problem and so um transitioning and meeting new people was really, yeah, like I, I transition pretty well.

She recognizes that transitioning is part of a TCK's life and feels like she is able to handle transitions and actually has come to enjoy transitioning to new places although it seems difficult for others.

Transitioning can cause a disruption in identity development. When they moved to a new place the autobiographers had to switch gears and begin adapting to the new cultural norms and rules. They had to adjust to the changes in school and had to make new friends. The question, "Who am I", changes to, "How do I act and behave?" The setting of identity shifted and had to be reconsidered in light of the new place. This frequent transitioning can slow the process of identity development because what may have been a point of reference for them before is no longer there.

Every autobiographer experienced transition in coming to university. Many of the autobiographers had a difficult start to university. Jeannette describes her experience in coming to university this way:

I was in a new culture, but it's not that new like I know the language and I've read the books and seen the movies...so like I knew this culture but actually living here was totally different thing right, so about a month in I just kind of completely broke down, like I have no idea what I'm doing here, I don't know how people think and I was just I was completely overwhelmed...

Pam talks about her first year at university as follows:

Well that first year wasn't really that great. Like, I started out like the first semester, everyday I'd be like read through where's another school I can go, and but I don't you know I have no idea but it could've been any school I went to...

She indicated really missing Africa and continued:

...it was different being so far away from my family because there was like mail but not much phone contact, and it was kind of strange because I hadn't really connect with them and much, and I felt like then I couldn't really explain what things were like...

The transition to university has been different than other transitions for Violet. She is accustomed to moving with her family and having her siblings around to adjust with and be friends with, and so this is the first time she has transitioned without her family. Although the transition to university may have initially been difficult, for many of them, this was the first time they chose to move and it represents a decision that assists in establishing independence. In a study comparing MKs and non-MKs, Huff (2001), found that in college adjustment there were no significant differences among the two populations, so this may imply that while for some it is a bit difficult adjusting to the culture, other students, non-MKs, may be experiencing transitional issues as well. During the college years, emerging adults, whether TCK, or non-TCK, are faced with the task of individuation from parents and are adjusting to the adult world (Huff). This task is common to this age group and everyone may be experiencing transition issues, although the specifics may vary. Transitioning is typical in this developmental stage of life, but TCKs arrive at university experienced in transitioning more so than their peers. While multiple transitions caused a disruption in the identity development of the

autobiographers, they often found stability through their personal spirituality during these times of transition.

The Stability of Spirituality

Several of the autobiographers discussed the role of spirituality in their lives. Originally I did not include a question about spirituality in my interview questions, but after interviewing two of the women, I realized that it was significant for them in their development and since many were saying the same things about the role of spirituality, it was worth including in the interview questions. Spirituality has been a source of stability and comfort in the ever changing lives of several autobiographers. Kristy says, "...well you know along with my family, God's been like the stable thing in my life, even though often it doesn't feel like that..." Pam's faith is also important to her, "I'd say that that's how I got through all these years, like I feel like if I didn't know God, I don't know where I'd be sometimes..." Grace echoes those feelings, "So like I think God was there for that a lot, and if I hadn't been saved in sixth grade, I don't know what I'd be doing..."

Violet says:

Um, I would say pretty much like the essential, most important thing in our family has always been God...when I was moving around a lot, um even though everything else was gone, I knew that God was still there and I think that's helped me um, it's made God a little more tangible to me...

In this way, spirituality is an important component of identity development for these women. Their faith in God gave them a ground to stand on, and through that they were able to know who they were as Christians. It gave them an identity.

Kristy also talked about the distinction between her experiences with God versus her experiences with the church. They were not consistent: “Um, along with everything else that’s been unstable in my life, you know church experiences have been very unstable...I don’t know how many churches I’ve been in just for like on Sunday...” She often felt on the outside at church, never completely fitting in or being fully accepted. In North America, her family would visit churches and she was just the missionary kid, and in church in Asia:

I’ve always kind of been the center of attention cause you know I’m just a little cute little white girl...I mean I never fit in very well there either cause I don’t blend in, I’m still the missionary’s kid...

Her church experiences, whether in her home country or host country, caused her to feel on the outside. “So you know my church experiences have always been I’ve never fit in either, either way and different reasons for each place or maybe similar ones too...”

Violet also distinguishes church from her faith. She hated being the new girl at church. Along with the moving and new schools, switching churches was also part of the moving and the changes. Although God may have provided stability and continuity, church experiences were just as unstable as moving.

Missionary kids seem to experience tension between their personal faith and the expectations that go along with their parents’ occupations. Pam shared about this tension:

I find that sometimes because my parents’ job is kind of connected to ministry, but sometimes it was frustrating when people like ‘oh you’re gonna be a missionary just like your parents,’ or these kind of expectations that you have to be like a Christian, like stuff like that was kind of annoying...

She also says, “it’s hard to differentiate if this for the job or is this for you know spirituality, or you know there’s really no line because it’s your job and your, it’s your personal life...”

Autobiographers also establish independence through their faith. Several discussed the significance of making it their own faith, separate from the church or from parents. Violet talked about making her faith her own and more and more as she grew up, it did become her own faith and not just her parents’. Jeannette came from a conservative church background and it was not until university when she was able to own her faith more “...it [being in a new place] just let me develop my own relationship with God that wasn’t, that wasn’t dependent on my parents, that wasn’t dependent on my background...” After a summer away from her parents, Miriam experienced a major turning point in her faith:

...I could say it was my personal faith now and not my parents’ faith, and I guess a huge part of that was that my parents weren’t there, so it was just me and I had to deal with it on my own and I couldn’t rely on my parents, and so that was good.

Carol did not grow up in a Christian home, but in junior high she became a Christian. She felt acceptance from the church and her faith is now a very important part of her life. Becoming a Christian has helped in her identity formation: “I guess being in Christ really helps remind you who you really are...” Miriam also talks about her identity in terms of spirituality: “I would definitely say that I’m a TCK and then like I’m God’s daughter or a Christian like those are definitely the two aspects that are at the core of who I am.”

Theory and research points out that religion can potentially offer ideologies, relationships, and spirituality necessary for identity formation (King, 2003). Religion provides a context for identity development, helping to trigger considerations of identity issues as well as suggesting resolutions for identity concerns. It gives meaning, order, and purpose as well as offers opportunities for relationship and connection with God and with others. King offers a framework that suggests that religion “may offer opportunities for identity exploration and commitment through providing an ideological, social, spiritual context” (p. 201). For the women in this study who profess faith, their spirituality has given them a ground to stand on and they have found it to be a source of stability and it has consequently influenced their identity development in positive ways.

In summary, through the first listening moving, place, and education provided the story or the context of identity development. The voices of transition and the stability of spirituality were also established. Transition is very typical in the lives of the autobiographers and it often emphasizes difference and can be a disruption in identity development because they have to focus on surviving and adjusting rather than gaining a sense of who they are. However through frequent transitions, the autobiographers gained independence and learned to adjust relatively quickly. Finally, spirituality has been a source of stability for the autobiographers and has been a positive influence on identity development.

Second Listening

When listening to the story the second time, I was attuned to the way each woman spoke about herself. Before I can speak of her, I need to know how she speaks of herself (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). I listened for emotions and feelings, and the words she used to

describe herself, highlighting important words and phrases. Through the second listening, we learn how the autobiographers feel different from others and how they have silenced their emotions for the sake of relationship and as a way to protect themselves.

The Voice of the Outsider

Through the first listening, I heard the whispers of the voice of feeling on the outside, but as I listened to the voice of I or self, I heard the word different again and again. This voice became stronger. The experiences were different, they felt different, and the places were different. If the word different was not directly used, it was implied: “I just felt like, I had a hard time relating to people...”; “I didn’t fit in...” And as Jeannette shared, “I’m scared of like people who lived in North America all their lives, like I’m not scared, it’s just I don’t know how to identify with them.” The autobiographers generally feel different from other people. They often feel like outsiders.

Through being different, TCKs learn more about who they are not, rather than who they are. Violet refers to this as an anti-identity. “...like our identity is an anti-identity, like the only way we can define ourselves is how we not are.” Identity exploration becomes a process of elimination: “What am I, I don’t fit into like the [home country] community...and I’m not [from host country]. Who am I?” Sarah says “I’m not [Asian], so but I need a concept, I need an identity to make me feel more comfortable with, which everybody looks for their identity, so TCK is good.”

Jeannette admits the conscious effort to be different and explains:

I think too much of the time I’m focused on making my identity as different as possible like as unique as possible and like if I can be unique and different then I’ll have my own identity and I won’t be like following the crowd and so I don’t

know, but I don't think it is about that, like it's just about being genuine and being yourself and accepting like who you are and accepting the things that do make you different but not forcing anything or trying to make your own identity...

No matter where TCKs go, they feel different. Jeannette continues:

...we [TCKs] are always different like if we were living in a Latin or African country, right, where our very appearance just totally makes us stick out, there's no point in trying to fit in as far as like fashion goes cause we'll never fit in right, and then we come here [North America] and it's like we blend in perfectly so now we have to like kind of make our appearance blend in too so that we can at least be acceptable that way, right.

Although they may look the same as people in the home country, they may not act the same or know what is appropriate in the culture. She goes on to explain that, "...like my identity back home [Latin America] was in in standing out right like I've stuck out my entire life, now what do I do, now I'm blending in..." She was accustomed to getting attention because she was different and now back in North America people don't know she is different until they start talking with her.

When TCKs return to their home country for university, they may cling to the country that they just came from, or find their identity in being from that country.

Jeannette explains:

I think a lot of TCKs respond by being kind of being as different as possible here like because and they know they're not going to fit in so they are just really go really like the other way and then they take refuge in the fact that they are like,

they they're identity becomes the country they came from more than when they were there...

Once at university, Pam felt a desire to connect and learn more about the country she had just come from.

...but I found that that like just thinking about it [Africa], I'd do all kinds of research about Africa...and so that was probably like, somehow, sometimes I feel like I learned more about it like when I moved away.

Most of the autobiographers in this study do not relate with their home or passport country. They do not have loyalty toward any one country. Once it came time to choose a university, most did not necessarily feel that they had to go home. Pam says,

I was like far away anyway and so it was kind of like my chance to go anywhere I wanted...I didn't have a particular need to go to [home country] because I hadn't lived there that much anyway...

When Kristy's family went on furlough when she was in grade 5, it seemed to be the beginning of what she referred to as her "anti-North America bitterness."

...um everything was just so different, nothing that I knew, and yet people looking at me you know thought that I should just fit in there, here's this little fifth grader you know, why should I be any, you know, different on the inside and yet I didn't know how to articulate that either...

Feelings of rootlessness are also common among TCKs (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001).

Kristy does not really have a place to go back to when she graduates from university which gives her a great deal of freedom and flexibility in deciding where to go. This

however is not always a welcome decision. TCKs often struggle with where to go after graduation and what to do:

While Kristy wants people to know that she grew up in another country, she doesn't want to be completely defined by that.

Sometimes I find that when I meet someone, I usually don't realize this until after but I really want them to know that I grew up in [Asia], like that is so important to me and, and I think it's more like a safety thing like if they know that there's something different about me when I, you know, make a cultural blunder.

She goes on to say that "while that's [growing up in another country] at the core of my identity, it's not everything and I don't know just certain personality differences and different likes and dislikes..." There is something more to identity than just experiences alone. Although culture and moving plays a large role in shaping the identity of a TCK, there may be other personality characteristics that may have stayed the same regardless of how or where one grows up. On one hand, growing up in another country can define a TCK, but on the other hand they recognize that there is more to them than just where they lived. Kristy wants to be seen as a whole person not just her experiences.

Grace feels different even from other TCKs. She never considered herself a TCK and she felt that her experiences were different than most TCKs. She moved more times, experienced more transitions and cultures. "My dad jokes around and says I'm like a six culture kid, not a third culture kid..." Grace feels that there is no category for her, she is alone in this and although she has friends they do not necessarily understand. "...even in that category I just feel like I'm still different kind of." Upon arriving at university,

Grace was forced to face those issues of identity and sense of belonging the first week when a common question asked is: “Where are you from?”

Every time I answered the question, it was different. I was like um I’m [Asian], and then I’d be like I’m from [North America], I’m from [Asia] or would just, I don’t know it would always vary, so um that’s when it started hitting me, like I don’t know where I’m from, yeah so from then on it was like...I’m a nomad.

She does not belong in her home country (e.g., “...every time I go I’m, I feel like a tourist...”). She feels different right off the bat and stands out and in the host country in which she spent her teenage years, she is struggling with visa issues, her request for a visa has been denied four times. She is literally between countries.

These feelings of being different can be extreme in some situations. One autobiographer seriously considered suicide due to the lack of acceptance she felt, and another autobiographer was terribly bullied by peers in a local private high school because she was different. These experiences were painful for these women which led to bitterness and hopelessness, but through positive interactions with similar minded people, they were able to enter a growing process which gave them a hope for their future.

Sarah remembers the first time that she felt different from people. Her dad traveled and people assumed her family must have money. She says, “that’s the, I don’t know that’s the very first incident that marked like my differences from people...” Then she moved to South America and was the only foreigner in her school and she could not speak the language well. This difference led to Sarah’s experience of being bullied in her high school. A small group of girls who she thought were her friends began to target Sarah and make fun of her. They asked her to cheat for them in the language that was

their mother tongue, but was Sarah's additional language. The bullying included many incidents from late night phone calls, to putting chewing gum in her hair, to being pushed down the stairs. "I guess that's the problem 'cause I'm different to them, so they start to make fun of me..." She goes on to describe more of her experiences in school:

I really hate going to school at that time because they're always making fun of you all of the time and other students they just they don't like them but they won't say anything because they just won't want to get into trouble...

There is a sense of helplessness in her story, because there just was not much she felt like she could do. Her trust in people declined and she describes herself as mean and bitter at that time. Near her final year in high school, the host country where she lived with her parents experienced an economic crisis and Sarah's parents decided to send her away to a safer place. Sarah did not really want to go, "I was scared somehow like what happened is gonna happen again, the same thing to me in high school and I don't know, it's like I wasn't ready, I wasn't even asking to go." This contributed to her bitterness. Her experience of new places told her that it was not safe and that people will treat you bad for being different. She was finally adjusting to this country and things were going better at school. Again she felt dislodged and tossed into a new place. However this new place resulted in restored hope in people and in life. She found a group of international students that she related with and experienced love from her host family.

Carol also vividly recalls feeling different:

So like my youth like all I remember like I was always the one that stuck out like a sore thumb. Um yeah, so I think I always yeah had the subconscious thought of maybe there's something you know innately different and like wrong with me,

maybe I'm from I don't know Mars or outer space (laugh), I'm just weird that's what I thought, I don't go with like the general flow of society or culture I guess.

When Carol returned to her home country in late elementary school, she knew she was different:

And looking back, I think I almost had to deny myself just to be like one of them. And I would model, I would pick, I remember picking somebody that I liked like as like my model. You know, okay this girl is sort of like the one that I would like to be because she's accepted, and I would follow like her speech patterns, I would follow her like yeah idiosyncrasies, like her body language and I would try to fit in like I would, but that's not me, and I think that like looking back I still acknowledge those years as my darkest part of my life.

This desire and longing to fit in and be accepted led Carol to deny herself for the sake of relationship. She learned that the best way to fit in was to silence her own voice. As I listened to the autobiographers, I realized that this silencing was not unique to Carol. I sensed it in the stories of the other autobiographers as well.

The Silencing of Voice

Women describe themselves in terms of relationship and connection with others, and as a result, psychological crisis occurs in disconnection, but through the work of Brown and Gilligan (1992) and other research, a fundamental paradox is uncovered. While connection and relationships are essential in women's development, there is a silencing that occurs around adolescence. Adolescent girls and women give up their voice and abandon their sense of self "for the sake of becoming a good woman and having

relationships” (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 2). They sacrifice their voice in order to be pleasing and to avoid conflict or raise a commotion.

Just as there are multiple ways to speak of voice, so are there multiple ways to speak of silencing. Silencing may come from cultural norms and mores, or from institutions that invalidate women’s experiences (Belenky et al., 1986; Jack, 1993). When a woman’s voice is silenced, she may discount herself and her unique experiences. Others may reinforce the silence by not asking and not listening. Silencing can come from within a woman and sometimes it can come from external sources.

Brown and Gilligan (1992) describe adolescence as a time of disconnection and disassociation:

We observe girls struggling over speaking and not speaking, knowing and not knowing, feeling and not feeling, and we see the makings of an inner division as girls come to a place where they feel they cannot say or feel or know what they have experienced – what they have felt and known. (p. 4)

The casualties of this inner struggle are feelings about self, relationships with others, and the ability to act in the world (Brown & Gilligan). This may be the cause of the lack of emotion in some of the stories of the autobiographers in this present study. It appears that girls across cultures are encouraged to be good girls and not to make a fuss. They do not want to be problems for their parents who may also be struggling with the effects of moving, transition, and place. Sarah tried not to make a fuss when her family moved to a new country:

...I didn’t have a very good impression at all, but I couldn’t say anything because it hard, it is hard, if it’s gonna be hard for me, it’s gonna be hard for my parents.

So my parents said I was like my best, like they really liked me at that time. They say, 'you never complained about anything' ...

She was praised for being so good and for never complaining about the new country and new family situation. She disconnects herself from her true feelings for the sake of relational harmony with her parents. This silencing seems to be common among female adolescents, and women who have grown up in multiple cultures seem to experience it as well. They are not immune to it.

Mary Pipher (2001) in her book, *Reviving Ophelia*, discusses the split between true self and false self that occurs in adolescence for girls. She believes that culture is the cause of this split that forces girls to abandon their true selves and put on their false self. Popular culture, media, school and peers put pressure on young girls to split into the false self in order to fit in and be socially accepted. They choose the culturally scripted self over the authentic self, and Pipher says that girls suffer enormous losses when they stop expressing certain thoughts and feelings.

Pipher (2001) is referring to North American culture, but girls who are growing up in other cultures may also face the same pressure to split between the false self and true self. Is the pressure coming from pop culture? I am not sure, because some TCKs pride themselves in not being with the pop culture. Is it from their peers? I think this may depend on the peers. They may not have this pressure when they are with other TCKs. The autobiographers seemed to experience authentic relationship with their TCK peer group, which may imply that they are able to experience their true self in these relationships.

Carol felt like she had to change who she was to fit in with the other children, but in denying herself she lost touch with who she really was and that caused a great deal of sadness and depression. Those years were really empty for her. Carol said:

So those years I was really like I would feel empty...cause maybe I was getting more accepted , getting more culturally like accepted by others, but because that's not the real me, I would come home empty...I think it was because I felt empty because people accepted me for not being myself. If I show interest, I'll, I'll be totally denied, like that was, yeah so it was a fake me.

She put on a fake self to be accepted and to fit in at the cost of her true self. Young girls often choose relationships over self, because in order to be accepted by others they must put on a false self and to be true to themselves may mean to not be in relationship or to be an outcast. As an adult, Carol can look back now and recognize what was happening, but as a child she only knew that she wanted to fit in and did not understand why she felt so empty and so depressed.

From Carol we get a glimpse of what it is like to be an Asian girl who feels very different than her peers. As outsiders, we can begin to understand the pressure from the Asian family to study and excel, while what she longed for was love and acceptance. She felt that she had more emotional needs than her brother, and felt like those needs were not being met. She was embarrassed by her parents, who did not get along, and embarrassed that she was so different. At one point she decided to take her life, "...because of my embarrassment I just couldn't bear it and yeah, um...I was standing at the edge of my apartment building, you know, thinking life is not worth it..." The thought of church and

her new relationship with God is what brought her off the building. She had experienced acceptance through the church and God and thought:

What if there's something better waiting for me that I'm gonna miss out if I take my own life right now. So, that was the only thing that like...I was hanging on the, on the edge and I was like no, okay well we'll just give it a try, and yeah I'll give Jesus a try...

Listening to the stories of these women, I began to sense from some of the women an emotional numbness or the necessity to put strong emotions away. This numbness looked like a way to cope with so many changes in life. It also was used to protect oneself from hurt or the possibility of future pain. Perhaps they never had an opportunity to share about their emotions and so were inexperienced in giving voice to these emotions. There was also a sense of helplessness, like there is nothing that can be done about this situation or experience. Carol articulates her experience:

I had to know how to be independent although I'm a very emotionally dependent person I think, by nature, um I had to just suck it up and you know like okay you have to deal with this by yourself...I think also have developed the ability to be yeah be immune to pain for um, uh, just uh not be too dependent, to fight that dependency, I guess...

Grace is so accustomed to change: "I actually think my personality is more adaptable to change or something like that...I always, always had this thing where leaving people behind wasn't a problem, like even my closest friend." Leaving people has been a significant part of Grace's life and she has learned to be independent and not let her emotions get in the way. At age 11 she had the choice to move to North America

and live with her extended family or stay with her parents in East Asia. She chose to go to North America. When I questioned her feelings about being separated from her parents she responded:

...I couldn't really blame them like because they did give me a choice...so it would've been my fault, but um yeah, but it really did um kind of help me learn like at a younger age than most people to like really appreciate your parents, cause they're not there...

Many of the autobiographers also chose to focus on the more positive side of their lives, perhaps at the expense of acknowledging other painful emotions. Here Grace believes that any emotional response to her situation would be her own fault. She would just have to deal with it and not have emotions about it. It's better to be positive and future oriented.

In a study comparing MK and Non-MKs, it was found that MKs experience more interpersonal distance from others than Non-MKs (Huff, 2001). TCKs tend to be more cautious in relationships, and this may be a result of numerous transitions and loss of multiple relationships. Pollock and Van Reken (2001) discuss the way that multiple relationship losses affect TCKs. One common response is the fear of intimacy because of the fear of loss. Through frequent transitions, TCKs have learned to protect themselves from the inevitable loss of relationship. They have said too many good-byes. Violet explains the importance of playing it safe in relationships:

...people are in a ways more important and less important like more important because you have to hang on to people you do have and it's important to have relationships that you can depend on like when just everything else is changing

but at the same time you also learn how not to attach yourself too far, cause then it just you miss person more so why bother like you're just hurting yourself more so I guess sometimes you don't make as much effort as you should...

Another common response is refusing to feel the pain (Pollock and Van, 2001).

This may appear to others as unemotional or even cruel. Grace continues:

I sometimes think I'm emotionally dead [laughs], just cause like I've um, I'm so used to like leaving people and not looking back so much, I mean like yeah I do miss them, but not terribly...not to sound mean or anything, I'm just used to it, so, I guess that kinda made me more like emotionally independent...

Sometimes this flat emotional response of avoiding painful farewells can be transferred to other areas of life as well (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001). In order to protect themselves from the pain of loss, TCKs are perhaps more cautious of emotions and are careful with their feelings getting too involved. I noticed in many of the interviews, there was a lack of emotion and feeling in the life stories. Was it because they had a relatively good life and had no emotional responses or was it because they are used to sharing facts and information and not entertaining the emotive side of themselves? According to David Wickstrom (1998), common emotional and behavioural patterns of MK include being detached and aloof and emotionally repressed. Detached emotions can spill over into other areas of life besides leaving or good-byes. It may affect commitment to things or people and it is also likely to affect intimate relationships. However, I think it is important to emphasize that there may be a range of silencing of voice. This silencing may look different for different TCKs. While some women may experience silencing,

others may not know it is happening, and still others may not experience it. Care must be taken in not assuming that every woman experiences silencing of voice in similar ways.

Violet handled change and transition by not getting too attached to people or things. As mentioned earlier, she explained the importance of being cautious in relationships and she has also learned to set aside her natural tendency to be sentimental:

I am very sentimental like normally but I've had to learn to not be so sentimental especially toward things...so I had to learn how to let things go which probably if I didn't move so many places that's not really necessary, you can keep whatever you want forever.

In essence, she has had to silence those parts of herself in order to adapt to the lifestyle of mobility that her parents chose for her.

Jeannette has learned from experience that leaving is easier if you do not get too attached to people. In this way pain or grief can be avoided. Consider the following:

I know that there is going to be a lot of moving back and forth and there is always going to be good-byes and there like for everybody in life there's always good-byes, right, but for some reason like when you have to deal with saying good-bye to two different countries right or like to people from all over the place...you have to learn to deal with that and the way to like deal with that is to be independent and not really need people...

This response to moving or becoming independent and avoiding depending on people can be positive or negative. In one sense personal independence is established in TCKs earlier than non-TCKs but on the other hand, they seem to have to deal and cope and numb any emotions that come when leaving people.

From Sarah's experiences, she feels that she has to rely on herself to make it anywhere in the world. Being dependent on people only brings pain:

...so I just feel like okay so that's gonna be the rest of my life like either you get out yourself or you cry, there's no way to get out there or except you, you can help yourself and that's it, it's a very self interest world...

I find it interesting that women often put on a false self to be accepted in relationship, but at the same time it is often in relationship that women discover their true selves. For example, several of the girls have found more confidence and comfort in themselves in the context of the TCK peer group. It gives them people to relate with and a place to belong. A friend of Jeannette's recognized the change in her this year:

She's just saw that I was so much more comfortable within myself this semester, it's it's been like a culmination of a lot of things that led to it but... I'm okay with who I am and I'm okay with with my background and stuff...it's definitely like the confidence in that that it's okay is a newer development.

It was in a supportive environment that Jeannette was able to come to this realization. It seems as though many of the autobiographers begin to find their voices through authentic relationship.

As I listened to the stories and the frequent lack of emotion, I wondered what was happening. Were these women's voices silenced or were their voices just not heard? The autobiographers often are not heard because they are different and on the outside, but the more I thought about them and relevant research, the more I realized that these women may not even know their own voice yet. Although both failing to be heard and the silencing of voice are simultaneously occurring, I think silencing of voice is more fitting

especially in light of Brown and Gilligan's (1992) research. Silencing and disconnect is unfortunately typical in female adolescents and does not seem to be different for these women. Fortunately, however, as they begin to connect with similar minded people and experience authentic relationships their confidence grows and they become more comfortable with whom they are.

The Necessity of a Future International Lifestyle

In describing themselves, autobiographers did not just describe themselves as different. They also discussed the positive characteristics that they have developed as a result of their lifestyle and expressed the desire to pursue careers that have an international component. These attributes positively contribute to identity development. Many of the autobiographers described themselves in similar ways: open-minded, culturally understanding and compassionate for people who cross cultures, observant, independent, and adaptable or flexible. Several also alluded to being spoiled or bratty before they moved overseas and the moving around made them realize what was important in life and what was not as important.

I also found in the interviews that when the autobiographer saw purpose and meaning in her background, it was helpful in establishing identity. This can be anything from feeling comfortable with themselves to wanting to use their language and cultural experience in their future careers or in helping people. They love adventure and traveling and are aware of and interested in international matters. They have a desire to give back and this is helpful in reaching "achieved identity." For Carol, realizing how she can use her background to benefit others has been helpful in her personal development:

...maybe I shouldn't deny myself as I have done in the past, like oh I just have to be someone else so I can fit in. Um but no I don't have to do that, but make the most out of who I am...I guess this vision [of being a missionary] and obviously with my faith like it's all making sense. And it's really helped, it really helped with my um my identity.

When the autobiographers spoke of future plans or career options, almost all of the plans had an international or cultural twist as a result of their background. For example, Violet shares about her passion for language, "I have a gift for languages and like through moving I've found that out a little bit more. I do really love languages and but I can't see myself being happy doing anything that didn't involve languages." Learning about culture is a natural part of life for Jeannette: "I would really love to do that just kind of go to other countries and just actually live there not just visit right live there and learn different cultures and stuff." Sarah wants to use her experiences to help people and she feels that she understands the struggles that people encounter:

my career goal, I want to do something international um for sure...I think it's because um I really want to talk with people, well it's not like I want to, I feel like because I been I have experiences for sure and I can understand how people suffer...

As the autobiographers speak about their future careers, we discover that their international and mobile lifestyle has become ingrained in them. Many of them see themselves traveling and never really settling down. They feel compelled to utilize their skills and characteristics that were developed through their experiences for the benefit of others. This way of living is more than a daydream or a wish, it is almost a necessity.

They cannot imagine any other way of life. Their identities have been shaped through their experiences, and future career plans continue to be instrumental in shaping their identities. With the cultural and language skills that the autobiographers possess, they have the potential to contribute to our world in very unique and valuable ways.

In summary, listening to the voices of self and I in the second listening revealed powerful voices and silenced voices. We learn the impact of always feeling like an outsider, and on the other hand we see how the autobiographers desire to use their experiences to benefit others. We also hear that one way of coping with frequent transitions is to remain unattached to people and things. These women have learned not to be emotional, but to “just deal with it” and through that have consequently silenced their voices, often without even realizing it. In the third listening we begin to hear about the authentic relationships that assist them in finding their voices.

Third Listening

The third listening consisted of how the autobiographer experiences herself in the relational landscape (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). Throughout the listening I listened for the voice of authentic relationships, as well as relationships that limit or silence (Brown & Gilligan). The themes that were heard in this listening were the power of normalization within the common group, and the value in establishing independence. We heard hints of these voices in previous listenings, but by the third listening they both became more powerful.

The Power of Normalization within the Common Group

The idea that women develop their identity within relationship (Gilligan, 1982) may seem problematic for TCK women at first glance because they experience multiple

losses of relationship. However, through interviewing the autobiographers, I learned that through relationship with other TCKs, most autobiographers have found their sense of belonging or a common group in which they can relate and feel at home. Through interactions with peers who have had similar lifestyles, autobiographers' experiences have been normalized. It helps them to not feel so different or on the outside. These normalizing relationships powerfully contribute to a stronger sense of identity and confidence in being a TCK. It is a place where they feel like insiders.

The common group consists of peers who the autobiographers can relate to, whether the peers are other TCKs or internationally minded people. This common group is a place where feelings and experiences are normalized and understood. For the autobiographers, normalization has come not only through peers, but through literature and research as well, and it has been very significant in the formation of identity. Their identity is often found in being a TCK.

The common group, whether literature or peers, reinforces that the autobiographers are not aliens or sick with some disease. Violet expresses her relief when she read a book about TCKs that normalized her experience:

And then it's just like that somebody researched that was kind of amazing to find out like, wow, I didn't realize that this was like not a condition but like a actual real thing. There's other people who define themselves (as TCKs) so that was kind of I guess a little bit reassuring to know that it was like that other people sort of felt the same thing as me I suppose.

Carol had read the same book and made the following remarks:

...and when I read that book I was like 'oh wow', I was in tears a lot just because it was like oh that was that explains why...why you know I acted certain ways in the past...like there are reasons for my weird, why I was always different.

Likewise, Miriam had a similar reaction to reading the book:

When I read through the David Pollock book and that definitely changed my whole...well that was just a time when I was struggling with many things and I couldn't pinpoint or couldn't put words to pinpoint what it was and so reading the book was just totally eye-opening you know it's just like I was reading about myself.

For these three autobiographers, reading this book made them realize that they were not alone. It named what they were feeling and experiencing and perhaps did not have words for before. It also normalized their experiences and assured them that they were not weird or abnormal.

The common group also provides a safe place for the autobiographer to explore identity and a safe place where they are understood and do not have to explain themselves. A common understanding, a common ground, and a common culture are shared. Miriam loves being identified as a TCK, "it's just a huge part of who I am" and "...being together with other TCKs makes me feel like I belong, and it makes me feel normal..." This group is often considered a comfort zone or a refuge. Kristy finds her sense of belonging with others who are similar to her: "So now I would say this year my friends are all people like pretty well all people that are um involved with [on campus international program] or, or what not, and that's what I find, where I fit in...". Jeannette has also found authentic relationship in this common group:

...like it's just such a strong tie there and I'm just really close to a lot of my friends like that and and that's just like that's been that's been kind of a refuge or obviously a lot of my friends here aren't TCKs but there's many like they were in the international dorm last year with me so um like they're definitely open-minded...

It is through these authentic relationships that Jeannette begins to feel proud of her TCKness and realizes that she does not want to change who God has made her. This is an example of development taking place in safe, authentic relationship.

It was in authentic relationships where Sarah also began to grow and develop. Years of bullying in high school left Sarah bitter, and then she had to move to yet another country to finish high school. She feared the same thing would happen again, but she arrived in the country and began to meet other girls who were also international students. She could relate to them:

...there are so many girls from so many countries and we all have different problems and we all struggle and I see how they struggle and I learn how to communicate with them...we share, we have fun together...

Sarah also had a supportive home-stay family, "they love, they keep hug they just hug me tell me nice stuff, give me hug and just love me. They just they I think they really unconditionally they love me...they treat me as part of the family..." These relationships restored hope in Sarah that the world is a decent place. She feels that these relationships were integral in her personal growth and development.

Violet went to an international school for a couple of years in high school. She enjoyed the relationships in her school:

...the girls and the guys would interact a lot, like we were a small class like 17 people in the grade so you have to and we were just like one big happy family, everyone mostly got along most of the time...

She was involved in the international community and felt comfortable with these relationships with her classmates. Her classmates were similar to her and came from countries all over the world. There was a common understanding. Pam also experienced community and a common understanding in her school setting:

I remember people being pretty friendly cause it it was a school that where a lot of people coming and going all the time, so that was really common and so it was like oh, normal for you...yeah this is normal, everyone comes and goes and then you know a bunch of other people come and go...

It was understood at Pam's school that people come and go. Her classmates were used to it and everyone was familiar with transitioning. Although everyone shares similar experiences with coming and going, it still may not be easy to establish deep relationships in the midst of that.

In response to the question I asked, "How would you be different if you had not grown up the way you had?" Miriam's answer reflects the relational paradox or tension that a TCK is faced with:

I would have grown up with the same people and same friends; I would have never had to go through the painful process of losing friends. At the same time, all the different unique short-term friendships I've had, have definitely enriched my life experience and how I view myself. They shaped me and thus, I would certainly be different today if I had grown up in one place.

She recognizes that the numerous relationships that she has had have shaped her and influenced her identity, and she probably would also acknowledge that leaving those relationships and saying good-bye has equally influenced her. For TCKs, numerous relationships go hand in hand with leaving and saying farewell.

Grace did not experience a common group the way some of the other autobiographers did. It appeared that there was an absence of the common group or normalization:

...I mean there were like times when I was hanging out with my friends and I feel like really alone because they never have to experience like 'I don't know who I am type of thing.' I never actually met another TCK like or have a really close friend who is a TCK, so I never like got the chance to I don't know get their point of view, but I feel like even as a TCK, my experience is a lot different from other TCKs, cause I moved around a lot and um whereas I know some a lot of MKs would usually end up spending most of their lifetime in one place.

Because she has never experienced a common group, she often feels isolated and alone. She feels different from everyone. This autobiographer seemed to struggle with her identity, and does not seem to know where she fits. She did not really talk about her plans for the future and described herself as "emotionally dead." She explained that her past has really shaped her, but could not articulate how. Grace has not had the common group around her to normalize her feelings and experiences. Most of the friends she hangs around with are North American and do not necessarily understand her background. Although she has friends, she lacks the common group or a normalizing experience which may contribute to her loneliness. She may feel like the odd one out and her identity

develops from a state of who she is not. She has not experienced a sense of belonging in a group like several of the other autobiographers have experienced. There appears to be something very important about the common group for TCKs. These authentic relationships seem to be very significant in the development of identity. Another important relationship for the autobiographers was their families.

The family relationship is where relationship is first experienced, and each autobiographer talked about her family. For most of the autobiographers, family was a constant in their lives and a source of stability. Violet recognizes the impact of mobility and transition on her family. Initially during a transition, her family was the only relational contact she had:

Yeah, I think our family would be very different if we hadn't moved, we wouldn't I don't know if we would be as close as we are. I think we are very close, um and you appreciate your family a lot more I think too just the fact that you've experienced all that with them is something more too which I think that's, I'm glad I didn't go to boarding school cause it would be harder not to have your family with you.

Miriam who spent most of elementary school at boarding school, also talks about the closeness of her family:

My family, well those are the only two people that I have, and we're pretty close, we've always been close, obviously, obviously, um yeah, the whole boarding school experience definitely made them closer to them in a sense, and it definitely helped me appreciate them a lot more...

Regardless of educational experiences, the dynamics of moving and transition tended to bring the families together.

Generally, the autobiographers' families were the people that the autobiographers moved with and experienced transition with. There is a shared understanding of a place or a situation. Violet and her sister are able to connect over their shared experiences: "So when I talk on the phone to my sister, we can be like 'oh don't you miss like that' or we both have this favorite candy from [country] and we're always wishing to get it..."

Although family was likely one of the few constant relationships in the lives of the autobiographers, the common peer group was where most felt at home. They feel comfortable with people like themselves. Exploring identity with peers is a normal developmental stage. Family is important and our first interactions with relationships, but in adolescence peers are an important part of healthy identity development.

For adolescents, identity is often negotiated through their peers (Erikson, 1968; Tarrant, 2002). Peers help one another through the discomfort of identity confusion by forming groups (Erikson). In an attempt to arrive at a definition of one's identity, they project their blurred identity on another to have it reflected back and therefore gradually clarified. Peer group affiliation is important to identity development and positive relations with a peer group have been linked to a sense of well-being among adolescents (Brown & Lohr, 1987). Due to the instability of peer relationships in TCKs during adolescence, the common group at university has become essential to the identity development of the autobiographers in this study. These peer relationships have assisted the autobiographers in discovering more about who they are.

While TCKs seem advanced in many areas such as cultural experiences, communication skills and early autonomy, in other ways they are more behind when compared to their peers (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001). Some of the tasks typical of adolescence such as identity formation may take longer for TCKs, therefore delaying or prolonging adolescence into the twenties: “Children who have to learn to juggle many sets of cultural rules at the same time have a different developmental experience from children growing up in a basically permanent, dominant culture that they regard as their own” (Pollock & Van Reken, p. 152). For most in western culture, adolescence is the time that critical tasks take place such as establishing a personal sense of identity, establishing and maintaining strong relationships, developing competence in decision making and achieving independence (Pollock & Van Reken).

Pollock & Van Reken (2001) suggest that one way of developing a personal sense of identity is by taking the cultural rules learned in childhood and testing them in adolescence. However, for TCKs the cultural rules are constantly changing and they spend much of their time just figuring out what the cultural rules and expectations are. It is difficult for one to explore his or her personal sense of identity when he or she is still trying to figure out what behaviour is and is not appropriate and adapting to the new culture. The first part of university is still a time to adjust and adapt for the autobiographers. Initially they spent their energy learning or re-learning the culture of the university and they often functioned in survival mode. Once the autobiographers understood that they will be returning to this university for 4 years, they began to get involved and many of them have interacted with the common group which gives them a safe place to explore their personal identity.

TCKs may be faced with delayed adolescence, but it is also becoming more of a trend in highly industrialized or postindustrial countries (Arnett, 2000). Rarely do adolescents reach identity achievement by the end of high school, instead identity formation continues into the early twenties. Emerging adulthood, suggests Arnett, is a time of exploration and is not quite adulthood or adolescence. Therefore when compared with their peers in coming to university, the prolonged adolescence observed in TCKs may not be unique to their situation. When other peers are also navigating through identity development it may normalize the exploration of identity for TCKs. When everyone around them is also going through similar issues, this may no longer contribute to TCKs feeling different in this area of life. Identity exploration is a critical developmental task of emerging adulthood along with establishing independence.

The Value in Establishing Independence

We have established that a TCK peer group has been a positive influence in the personal identity development in the autobiographers and research has shown us that peers are a healthy part of development and growth and contribute to a personal sense of well-being (Brown & Lohr, 1987; Erikson, 1968; Tarrant, 2002). Another important component of identity development that the autobiographers discussed was the establishment of their personal independence. Developing independence may contribute to the emerging voices of the autobiographers. In the first listening, we got a glimpse of the importance in establishing independence as far as spirituality is concerned. In this listening we look more closely at the value in establishing independence.

Many TCKs, including the autobiographers, describe themselves as independent. Due to the nature of the lifestyle they have lived and cultures experienced, they become

comfortable in new situations, meeting new people, and getting around by bus or airplane on their own. This contributes to what Pollock and Van Reken (2001) refer to as early autonomy, or independence at an early age, that non-TCKs may not possess. In this way the autobiographers arrived at university a bit ahead of their peers. However, as they share their life story, part of their story of identity development is establishing independence in exploring their identity apart from their families and in making their own choices. Jeannette began to see changes in herself after arriving at university:

...so I mean it was really when I came to [university] it was like I was on my own now like now it wasn't am I going to make my parents mad, it was it was like I need to figure out what God wants me to do...

This time was important in her spiritual development as well as personal development.

When Carol went to university, it was the first move where it had been her choice and not her parents. Upon attending university she has experienced personal healing and growth in her life. It seems that when the autobiographers entered university, the initial adjustment was difficult for several of them, they considered transferring or experienced loneliness, but it gave them an opportunity to reflect upon their lives and begin formulating how they wanted to live their lives in the present and the future. They make decisions about careers and relationships and lifestyles. They decide if they want to associate with other TCKs or leave their mobile and cross-cultural life behind them. This time, although difficult for some of the autobiographers, has been very beneficial in their identity development especially when they have a support system, which typically has consisted of other TCKs. University was also an important time of establishing independence in personal faith for Miriam. As the daughter of missionaries she struggled

with her faith being personal rather than the faith of her parents, and after a summer away from her parents she felt like her faith finally did become personal.

My...relationship [with God] is definitely changed and that I could say was my personal faith now and not my parents' faith, and I guess a huge part of that was that my parents weren't there, so it was just me and I had to deal with it on my own and I couldn't rely on my parents, and so that was good...

This is a reflection of not only spiritual independence, but also independence in other areas of her life as well:

I am proud that I grew up in [Latin America] like I'm proud of my TCKness and if that's a problem for anybody like I'm not gonna change like that's who God made me and that's who I am and I, I am completely okay with that but it's been a process like there's been times when I wish I wasn't and times when I wish I had just lived in North America my entire life...

Through the common group and establishing independence, Jeannette has come to be okay with who she is. She identifies herself as a TCK and is proud of that. It has been a process of good support and having the opportunity to explore herself outside of her family and religious background. There is a sense of confidence and being comfortable with who she is as a TCK.

Jeannette highly values her independence and for her it is a way to define herself as a woman:

If I can be independent then I can have, then I'm my own person and that means I have an identity you know like if it's, I have to have some sort of identity, right, like if I'm not so reliant on everybody else then that means there must be

something here that's not going to fall apart because it's not being held up by everything and so I guess it's when I feel most you know most feminine and most powerful and and womanly is when I can do that and yeah...

The autobiographers value their independence and consider that to be part of who they are. In one sense they arrived at university independent, but they continue to develop that independence in multiple areas of their lives. From the third listening, we learned more about the identity development of the autobiographers. For most of them, normalization within the common group has been significant in developing who they are and at the same time that they enter authentic, normalizing relationships with peers, they establish their independence from their families and begin the process of becoming adults. The third listening also allowed me to explore the voice of the autobiographers as women and I gained insight into how they view themselves as women.

Womanhood

The third listening of the interview transcripts also included listening for the voice of womanhood and the thoughts and views of women from the autobiographers. Included in this listening was how the autobiographers as women experience relationship with people, cultures, and roles. How does she define women and their roles? What has she observed about women in the various cultures she experienced? How does she describe herself as a woman? However, due to variability and diverse perspectives from the autobiographers, it was difficult for a common theme to emerge.

The voices between the women in this study represent a wide spectrum of perspectives. Some of the topics covered by a few of the autobiographers included

equality/inequality issues, image and outer appearance, and roles of women in the church, however these thoughts are only representative of a few autobiographers.

These women seem to still be forming and developing their opinions of women and women's roles. According to the womanist identity model (Ossana et al., 1992), the women in this study may be in the pre-encounter and encounter stages of the model. The model represents the process of development in which women move from external, societal definitions and values of womanhood to personal, internal definitions. The women in this study either have never considered the way women are viewed in society or are just beginning to question and think about issues around womanhood. They are sorting through many value systems; the cultural values of their host country and most of the autobiographers were in countries where women were often inferior to men and men were the dominant gender in the society; the value system of their home culture which they may have only observed through the mother and other relatives while visiting the home country; the traditional religious value system that tends toward the belief that women should not be in leadership roles in the church; as well as the international community which tends to value education, independence, and travel, and the general trend in western societies to marry later and have children later. I think that the assortment of views, beliefs and observations reflected in this study reveal the confusion around the roles and expectations of women. There is a tension between the traditional views of women as the caretakers of the home, often inferior to men and uneducated, versus other expectations of women such as pressure to pursue an education and career before family and holding value in career. It is no wonder that women are often confused about what it means to be a woman. It is a difficult question to answer even without

including the influence of multiple cultures. Women are viewed so differently in every culture, that it should be no surprise that the responses from the autobiographers are varied. Several cultures and combinations of cultures are represented in the life stories which would make it difficult for answers to be similar.

Even among the common issues mentioned, opinions were varied. When speaking of equality issues Violet talked about women having expectations placed on them:

I don't know, it seems like I don't know sometimes it seems like women got the short end of the stick but cause there are so many expectations not that there isn't on guys there is a lot of expectations but yeah...

However, Sarah believed that women actually have less expectations: "I think the world do not expect that much from a girl so that actually women have more freedom to do what they whatever they want to do..." This is one example of the varying degree of opinions.

When asked about their observations of women in various cultures, they tended to compare North American women with the women in the other cultures they had lived. North American women were often viewed as independent or dominant, whereas in other cultures, specifically Asian, women have less power and are inferior to men. Grace says:

...in North American society, I always like, I always laugh because even though it's kind of not directly spoken, um, I just still feel like the women have like control over men, like even if it's not directly shown, like we tend to manipulate guys...

Appearance and image issues are more important in North America than Europe or Asia and being thin and looking young are emphasized in North America. The

autobiographers talked about how image was emphasized in some cultures, but not in others. Jeanette talked about how girls in general tend to be more caught up in appearance and identity issues than boys:

I don't know I think it's harder for girls than for guys...girls are a lot more caught up in appearance and in like following codes and behaviours...girls are always more worried about identity and appearance and about being accepted...

Further research comparing male and female TCKs in adjustment and identity development is needed.

There is also the influence of the church on the views of women. Carol is really involved in her church and has realized that as an unmarried woman she is still treated as a child:

If you're single you don't have authority, you're still viewed as a kid, even if you're thirty and you're single, that's what I've been told over and over again, Carol you're single you may, they always tell me you may have talents, qualifications, but you're only single, you're a woman.

As a single woman she does not have the same respect as married women and is still considered a child despite her age and education. Kristy has also observed the status of women in the mission: "I've watched my mom um struggle with the notion that she is the missionary's wife, not the missionary..." Kristy's mom did not have some opportunities, such as funding for language lessons because she was the wife of a missionary, not the missionary. However, Kristy is encouraged to see that it has changed over the years, and upon coming to university she was surprised by the views of her roommates and others

who believed that women “should just listen to their husbands and definitely can’t be um pastors and what not and that totally shocked me...”

For Miriam, she had a hard time seeing herself as a woman: “I myself, honestly, um often...still have troubles thinking of myself as a woman, like I definitely sometimes I still think I’m a girl...” She partly contributes it to being an only child and being spoiled by her parents, as well as language and culture. In her mother tongue, women her age would not be referred to as women but as girls. Language is important in words we use to identify ourselves with. The words that we know help us to name and understand our experiences. Kristy’s cross-cultural experiences have given her an awareness of language. She comments, “...language really controls what you are able to communicate, I mean what you are able to communicate, how you even think...” Language can often be taken for granted.

Growing up in an African society, Pam observed women doing much of the work of daily tasks and considers women to be tough, “...you know they’re the ones who go out and do it and get it done, you know...” She recognizes the paradox, however that although women are “supposed to you know be tough and yet because it was a still a male dominated society, then in some ways it’s like you’re not tough...” There is some tension in women being tough, strong, and capable, yet the men are still in charge and dominant in culture. Pam believes the following:

...it is an important thing for women I think, to strive for things and to go for things, um, like it’s yeah, like it’s important for women to like that have certain, have their own ideals, and yet also, I don’t necessarily think women that have to be super dominant to have those ideals either...

Pam has come to believe through her own mother's modeling that it is okay to stand up for what you believe in. Role models are very influential in how we view women.

In Violet's international school and in her other school experiences, emphasis was placed on women getting an education. She was pressured to apply to Ivy League universities and it was not that she did not want to go, she just felt external expectations to be educated and to not waste her life:

...I got really, really frustrated sometimes with them because they're always telling me what to do like with my life and they're like oh if you don't go to Oxford you're wasting all this time and all this whatever, you know like it's a waste of your life, like they never said that in so many words, they said that it would be a shame or whatever, but so there was a lot of pressure to like have a career and develop yourself...

The pressure was hard on Violet and she did not feel that she was given room to make her own decisions. As she goes on to discuss other issues around womanhood, it becomes clear that she is still developing her own thoughts and sorting through parental and religious influences. There are some contradictions in how she speaks. Although she feels women should be able to do everything men can, she feels that there are a lot of expectations on women.

In summary of the third listening, TCKs find meaning and identity in the relationships fostered within a common group. However, they approach relationships cautiously which may result in them appearing less emotional or more independent. If women define themselves in the context of human relationships (Gilligan, 1982), then it is no different for these women. The main difference is that the relationships that they

have experienced as children have included many farewells. Issues of femininity are wrapped up in attachments and relationships (Gilligan) which may be another reason that the autobiographers' views and observations of women are so different due to the constant change in relationships and attachments.

Attachment to the common group has been beneficial for identity development in these women. At first glance identity and intimacy seem less fused for the autobiographers, but on the other hand it is within the common group and other relationships that the autobiographers begin to feel comfortable with their identity.

The majority of autobiographers began to experience authentic relationship outside of family only recently upon attending university. Identity is defined for women in the context of relationships and they judge themselves in terms of their ability to care and to be responsible for others (Gilligan, 1982). It is perhaps through this care and responsibility to parents, family, mission, that they silence some of their feelings about their experience. They do not want to create a fuss and are more concerned with harmony, which may have been influenced by cultural or religious values or it may be an experience common to women as they struggle to learn their own voice.

Fourth Listening

Woman Poems

In the fourth and final listening woman poems were constructed. The woman poems were used as the final listening, as well as a way to answer a question from the interview. Through these woman poems we begin to see the struggles and confusion these autobiographers' experience as women. The woman poems are in essence the answer to the interview question, "What does it mean to be a woman?"

Carol's woman poem.

I think men should be the overall head

But I strongly think

In any culture women should be respected

Also as long as she not the overall one in charge

I think she should be able to have freedom of speech

I think you should be able to make suggestions

I think they should be respected for their qualifications

Even if they're not married

I do sort of understand now

Why they would view you as a kid

Even if you're like thirty but then you're not married

She may not have enough life experience

I guess yeah because if you're by yourself

You only take care of yourself

You don't really know what it's like to be responsible for like other people's lives

I guess perhaps

I'm seeing

I'm trying to understand that

I see the value of it

I think I agree with it

But then because I'm single now I'm not really happy with it

They will view me as being young and immature and have no life experience

In Carol's woman poem, we see her personal struggle for her voice to be heard in the church context. She is currently participating and involved in an Asian church in North America and she finds herself at times having to relearn the Asian culture after being in North American culture for so many years. In the Asian culture, men are dominant and she is finding that women are heard and respected only when they are married. Carol believes that she has views and perspectives that she can offer to the church and to the church leaders, but she is not heard because she is still single. On one hand she believes that this is appropriate, yet at the same time she wants to be respected and valued because of her qualifications and life experiences. This appears to be a struggle with traditional Biblical views as well as cultural views. Traditionally women's voices have not been acknowledged in many churches as well as in Asian cultures, and while that is changing there is still resistance to change and Carol seems to be in the middle of that struggle.

Grace's woman poem.

I think in [Asia]

Women are less,

They still have less power

Women do have jobs

But I think the men still see themselves as pretty macho and as the dominant people

I think that's how it still is

I think it's in North American society

I just still feel like women have like control over men

We tend to manipulate guys

Men don't like to admit it

We do have power over them

Something I really enjoy

Although Grace has lived in many different cultures, the two most influential cultures for her are Asian and North American. Before she talks about her own views and beliefs, she looks to culture and how the cultures view and treat women. She does not speak of her own beliefs but speaks of culture as a whole. Her response may be influenced by a more collective way of thinking or she may not be in a place where she has examined her identity as a woman. She is still developing her identity in general and is likely still in the pre-encounter stage of the Womanist Identity Model (Ossana et.al. 1992).

Pam's woman poem.

Women are like really tough

They're the ones who go out and do it and get it done

I think I'm a little bit like that

I don't really know what that's from

Could be from growing up there or from something else

It's kind of a dichotomy

They're supposed to

Be tough and yet

It was a male-dominated society

Then in some ways it's like you're not tough

But then they do all the hard work

I see them as like really tough women

You kind of go out and do it

I think that it is an important thing for women

I think to strive for things and to go for things

It's important for women to

Have their own ideals

But I don't necessarily think women have to be super dominant to have those
ideals either.

I think through my mom

I found out about like not letting

Not being intimidated

I think it's important

To have something you believe in and be okay with what you believe in

Pam acknowledges the tension between a patriarchal society and women's role in that society, yet she does not seem to be afraid of it or intimidated by it. You get the sense that Pam is grounded in her womanhood and that her mother has modeled the value of standing up for what you believe in. She considers herself tough and is confident in her own beliefs, but does not feel compelled to dominate those around her because of her beliefs.

Violet's woman poem

I personally feel

I've learned

I read a book

I thought like that book

Made it all clear like how women should be

We were made in the image of God

I've always sort of struggled

The Bible makes it like women are not on an equal level to men

I guess

I have a bit of a feminist streak

I've always had a problem with that

But in the book it really explained

God has two sides

Men are um made in the image of one side of God

Women are made in another image

You can't say one side of God is inferior to the other

So how can you say that women are

That's the way

I would define women

I resent it a little bit

I always have this little bit

Women can do everything men can do which isn't always true

I don't know

I guess

For me I would never initiate a relationship

That's just something

That's so ingrained in me

I could never

I could never change that

I guess in some ways you want the guy to initiate the relationship

I would want

I don't know

I don't know

Sometimes it seems

Women got the short end of the stick

There are so many expectations

Violet's woman poem is an example of a young woman navigating her way through the beliefs and views she grew up with and figuring out for herself what she wants to take with her and what she wants to change. Again we see a woman greatly influenced by Christian culture and the traditional beliefs that accompanies that culture. She is learning and exploring what it means for herself to be a woman, and through that she is thinking about how she wants to be in a relationship with a man. On one hand she resents the way women are viewed, but on the other hand some ideas are so ingrained in her that she believes she would never change it. She recognizes and acknowledges the difficulty in being a woman. In a way she is afraid of her own voice and apologetic for her "feminist streak", but the more she speaks and explores, the more she will find her voice.

Miriam's woman poem.

I myself

Still have troubles thinking of myself as a woman

I definitely

I still think

I'm a girl

I don't know why

I hear the term woman

I would definitely think of someone like a thirty, forty year old woman

Not as a twenty year old

I don't know why

I still don't call myself a woman

I'm an only child

I was pampered to a certain degree

I was spoiled

My mom definitely

My dad calls me

His little girly

He still does it

It kind of doesn't seem

They don't want me to grow up

That of course doesn't help

Me finding an identity of being a woman

I have struggled with many facets of identity

I've always been a typical girl

I absolutely loved playing with dolls

I was never tomboyish

Never wanted to be a boy

Miriam acknowledges that she does not feel like a woman, and is aware of why this may be. As an only child, she has been pampered by her parents and that may have prevented her from discovering her identity as woman, but at the same time she is aware that she has struggled so much with identity in general that her identity as a woman has not yet been considered. For Miriam the struggle lies between girlhood and womanhood. How does that transition from girlhood to womanhood take place and for that matter does she want it to take place?

Kristy's woman poem.

I've watched my mom

Struggle with the notion

She is the missionary's wife

Not the missionary

My mom wanted to be a missionary ever since she was little

She went to have an interview

She wanted to go

She got the feeling that she had to have a husband before she went

So frustrating to her

She met my dad

Things worked out

She struggled

My mom is so much of a missionary

Like that is her

That is her job

She's amazing on top of being a mother

Incredible.

I came here

People

Have these views of women within the church

They should just listen to their husbands

Definitely can't be um pastors

That totally shocked me

I had never really thought about it that much

It was such a hot topic here

I think within the Christian sub-culture

Women feel as though they are supposed to be submissive

Not supposed to be pastors

They find pride in that

They find that that's the godly thing to do

I find it very frustrating

I try to say

Maybe there is something to

Women being pastors

Maybe there is something to

More of an equal standing in marriage

I just always feel like they think oh well she's being a rebel

I think what bothers me

All these women

I feel

They don't really think through what they believe necessarily

In Kristy's woman poem we see the struggle of women's role in the world of work, specifically as a Christian. Kristy has grown up seeing women undervalued, although her mother modeled an example of a woman with a voice. I think it is through Kristy's woman poem, where I myself struggle as well. Kristy's voice has represented my own voice and feelings on this topic. As a Christian within an evangelical tradition, these are issues I have experienced. Women in the church often do find pride in being the submissive wife and find their identity as a woman in that. Kristy, from my perspective speaks well, when she says "what bothers me...these women...don't really think through what they believe necessarily." Often women have been given a role in the church and have accepted it without question. They let others think for them. As Christian women there is often a struggle between career and family and the women's role in the home and the church. Kristy does not just want to accept things the way they are, she wants to think through things and come to her own conclusion.

Sarah's woman poem.

I think

Women are more easy to adapt in the society

I think the society

Not that hard on women

They don't require

If you don't study

Well it's okay

I just kind of feel like girls

They don't

I think the world do not expect that much from a girl

Women have more freedom to do what they whatever they want to do

I think

We have more freedom

If the woman in the world have the chance

If the woman have a chance to go out

They will be more encouraged to do whatever they want to do

I think women have less expectations in society

They do a lot of stuff

I don't know

I think girls and women are allowed dream

Allowed to try even if fail

Sarah's woman poem represents a different voice from the other poems. It is a carefree voice, one that appears without struggle and tension. She has accepted her role and value in society. However, if less is expected from women, does that also mean

women are less valued? Perhaps Sarah's perspective is influenced by her age and also her culture. This age tends to be a time when people are allowed and even expected to explore and try things, and Sarah believes that women have less pressure because they do not have to worry about supporting a family one day. Men experience more pressure because likely they are going to working all their lives to support their families, while women once they get married are responsible for the household. On the other hand, I think that if this is Sarah's experience of womanhood, then I hope that she will take advantage of that freedom to dream and explore.

Jeannette's woman poem.

I think for me

Independence is really important

There's always good-byes

You have to learn to deal with that

Be independent and not really need people

For me

It's challenging just becoming independent

Not making my identity based on people

I feel

If I can be independent

I can have

I'm my own person

I have an identity

I guess

I feel

Most feminine

Most powerful

Womanly

When I can do that

Jeannette's voice of independence is very evident in this poem. To her that is what it means to be a woman: to be independent. She has learned from her life experiences that it is beneficial to be independent, because if you are dependent on others, every time you move or experience a transition the rug is pulled out from under you. I do not believe that she is saying that she does not want to be dependent on people at all, but she wants to be confident in who she is. Being independent seems to give her a ground to stand on when she moves from place to place. She describes the times when she feels most feminine, powerful, and womanly are when she is independent. This voice of independence is likely to be influenced by her TCKness. Her life experiences taught her to be independent and not to depend too heavily on others. Jeannette's response to this question affected me personally. Following the interview, I reflected on my own life and questioned my own independence. Would I consider myself independent or am I dependent on my relationships? Do I value independence and is this a way that I define women? I was impressed with her confidence in her independence and the way she spoke about how it is tied in with her femininity.

The woman poems have allowed us to listen more closely to the voices of the autobiographers. We see their unique struggles and perspectives. Some have put a great deal of thought into womanhood, while others have yet to engage their identity as

women. Although there is little research about TCKs as women, we know from other literature on the development of women (Gilligan, 1982; Ossana et.al., 1992) that these women are not necessarily unique in their development. Although being in different cultures has both influenced and confused the voices of the autobiographers, it appears that they are not that different from their single culture counterparts.

Conclusion

The primary purpose of the present study was to explore the identity development of women who grew up as TCKs and secondly to explore their views of womanhood. From this qualitative study of eight TCK women, we hear their life stories and gain more insight into the development of identity. Through the findings, we discover that the context of identity development is influential in the process of identity development, and the autobiographers in this study have a unique context, or life story, when compared to non-TCK counterparts. They have grown up in and out of cultures and have moved multiple times. As Pollock and Van Reken (2001) state, the most prominent characteristics of TCKs are being highly cross-cultural and highly mobile. In some ways identity development of the autobiographers in this study is hindered by the transitioning and the coping with change, but in other ways these women have gained skills, such as independence and flexibility, that promote identity development. From this study, we learn the great value and importance of associating with others who have had similar life experiences or who are more internationally minded. This is one area that is relevant for those who are TCKs, are educators of TCKs, or associated with TCKs in any way. In a university setting, it may be extremely important for the development of identity if TCKs are allowed to live together in a dorm or support groups are in place to assist in the

transitioning and culture shock. The women in this study found great comfort and refuge in their other TCK friends and it was very helpful in their personal development. I would encourage TCKs who are struggling with their identity to find others with whom they can relate, and to read books and visit websites about TCKs that are helpful in the development of identity. It was interesting to note that the autobiographers preferred the term TCK over other terms. While it may not be the perfect term, it was the term that seemed to resonate the most with their experiences.

Another important finding in this study is the importance of giving TCKs, especially women, an opportunity for their voice to be heard. Although the women in this study did not have a choice in their international lifestyles, it is important that their voice be heard and that they are given an opportunity and are encouraged to share their emotions. Issues of womanhood can cause confusion for TCKs and having a safe environment to explore views and beliefs about women would assist them in finding their voices.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

When evaluating the transferability of the findings, the life contexts and experiences represented in this study must be considered. Four of the autobiographers are MKs and the other four are children of businessmen, and seven of them identify themselves as Christians and grew up within a Christian worldview. This study is limited by the specific Christian worldview of the researcher and the autobiographers. Further research could include military kids or other TCKs who did not grow up with a Christian worldview. For example, would spirituality be as stable and important to them as it was to the autobiographers in this study?

Another limitation of the study was that the research consisted of only one interview with the autobiographers. A second or third interview may have extracted richer stories and other themes may have emerged.

Findings of this study may have been different if the inclusion criteria of the autobiographers were changed. For example, the autobiographers had to have lived in at least two countries, one of which was their passport country, and findings may have been different if the autobiographers had to have lived in at least five countries. If the women had been older, such as in their late 20s, their voices regarding womanhood may have also been different. Emerging adults are still navigating their way through identity, and if the autobiographers were all past emerging adulthood age, the stories about identity development may have been different.

My voice of a therapist as well as a researcher is a limitation as well as a strength of the study. The interview process was very comfortable and natural for me as a therapist and it was important for me to establish rapport with each autobiographer before beginning the interview. At times I was tempted to put my therapist “hat” on during the research process, but I continually had to engage in a self-monitoring process to remember that I was a researcher not a counselor. In the first interview, I had determined that I would not interrupt the life story of the autobiographer as suggested in the methodology by Chaitin (2004). However, I found this very difficult and feel like I missed out on the story going deeper. I changed this by the second interview, and allowed myself to query the autobiographer for more information or emotion during the life story. At times I was tempted not to follow the research questions at all, but I had to remember the purpose of the interview.

In the first few interviews I was very self-conscious of myself as a researcher. I was nervous and intimidated by the process and often critiqued the process of the interview rather than my own voice and feelings. Following is an example from my journal:

This interview was very different than the first one. She got done telling her life story in less than 10 minutes. I had a difficult time probing and asking questions. It felt like we were both all over the place...I can't tell if she has really thought about these issues or not. Our conversation felt very surfacey compared to the last interview...again, I felt frustrated and inadequate as a researcher. Am I asking the right questions and getting the right information? In the interview, I wish I could turn my head off, because I'm already thinking about themes and comparing with the previous interview.

There were times when my own voice got in the way and I expected certain voices of the autobiographers to emerge based on literature or past interviews. When I recognized themes I would be tempted to ask about them in the interview instead of allowing them to emerge. Recording my thoughts and feelings after each interview helped me keep this in check. Being both a researcher and a therapist was both a strength and a limitation of this study. At times it was beneficial, while at other times I would get the voices confused. It was difficult to keep the roles of researcher and clinician separate. The researcher in me knew that I needed to follow the prescribed guiding questions, while the clinician in me continually battled the urge to ask for clarification and expansion and offer validation in an attempt to deepen that which was expressed. I

resolved the dichotomous dilemma by continually reminding myself of my role as a researcher.

Future Research and Practice

The present study in its exploratory nature has laid the groundwork for further research and practice. Further research that may be interesting would include comparing TCKs and non-TCKs and their development of identity as well as comparing male and female TCKs. Studying the experience of male TCKs would also be a valuable contribution to the research. Another idea would be using Gustafson's (2001) study of roots and routes and exploring TCKs' attachment to place.

Future practice is relevant particularly to universities who have many TCK students. One way to assist TCKs in development as well as retain TCKs who may be prone to change schools many times (Useem, 1999) would be to offer housing specifically geared toward internationally minded people, such as TCKs or international students. Many of the autobiographers in this study lived in international dorms at one point and this experience was greatly beneficial in connecting with others and finding a place to be involved within the larger university community. Another important practice would be to facilitate opportunities for TCKs to connect with one another. This could be through a support group type setting that is more structured around topics such as identity, transition, and adjusting to the culture, or an informal group that encourages relationships in the form of fun outings and social events. TCKs have much to offer to a university setting and it would be beneficial for a university to spend the time and energy to foster the development of TCKs and to engage them in intellectual and social levels. TCKs are likely to represent the university all over the world and with their acquired

skills will potentially be global leaders in one setting or another. TCKs, specifically as seen from the women of the present study with their language and cross-cultural skills, adaptable personalities, and compassion for people, are a worthwhile investment for universities and organizations.

REFERENCES

- Arnett, J. J. (2000). Emerging adulthood: A theory of development from the late teens through the twenties. *American Psychologist*, *55*, 469-480.
- Belenky, M. E., Clinchy, B. M., Goldberger, N. R., & Tarule, J. M. (1986). *Women's ways of knowing: The development of self, voice, and mind*. New York: Basic.
- Bennett, J. M. (1993). Cultural marginality: Identity issues in intercultural training. In M. R. Paige (Ed.), *Education for the intercultural experience* (pp. 109-135). Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.
- Brown, B. B., & Lohr, M. J. (1987). Peer-group affiliation and adolescent self-esteem: An integration of ego-identity and symbolic-interaction theories. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *52*, 47-55.
- Brown, L. M., & Gilligan, C. (1992). *Meeting at the crossroads: Women's psychology and girls' development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Carter, R. T., & Parks, E. E. (1996). Womanist identity and mental health. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, *74*, 484-489.
- Chaitin, J. (2004). My story, my life, my identity. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *3*(4), 1. Retrieved September, 2005, from http://www.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/backissues/3_4/pdf/chaitin.pdf:
- Chase, S. E. (1995). Taking narrative seriously: consequences for method and theory in interview studies. In R. Josselson & A. Lieblich (Eds.), *Interpreting experience: The narrative study of lives* (Vol. 3). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Collins, D. (2001). *Feminist identity*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Virginia. Retrieved June 15, 2005, from <http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/theses/available/etd-04262001-194845/unrestricted/front.pdf>
- Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Downing, N. E., & Roush, K. L. (1985). From passive acceptance to active commitment: A model of feminist identity development for women. *The Counseling Psychologist, 13*, 695-709.
- Enns, C. Z. (1991). The "new" relationship models of women's identity: A review and critique for counselors. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 69*, 209-217.
- Erikson, E. H. (1959). *Identity and the life cycle*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc.
- Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity, youth, and crisis*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc.
- Fail, H., Thompson, J., & Walker, G. (2004). Belonging, identity and third culture kids. *Journal of Research in International Education, 3*, 319-338.
- Gerner, M. E., & Perry, F. (2000). Gender differences in cultural acceptance and career orientation among internationally mobile and non-internationally mobile adolescents. *School Psychology Review, 29*, 267-283.
- Gerner, M., Perry, F., Moselle, M. A., & Archbold, M. (1992). Characteristics of internationally mobile adolescents. *Journal of School Psychology, 30*, 197-214.
- Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a different voice*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

- Groenewald, T. (2004). A phenomenological research design illustrated. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 3(1). Retrieved August, 15, 2005 from http://ualberta.ca/~iiqm/backissues/3_1/pdf/groenwald.pdf:
- Gustafson, P. (2001). Roots and routes: Exploring the relationship between place attachment and mobility. *Environment and Behavior*, 33, 667-686.
- Hansen, N. D. (2002). Reflections on feminist identity development: Implications for theory, measurement, and research. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 30, 87-95.
- Huff, J. L. (2001). Parental attachment, reverse culture shock, perceived social support, and college adjustment of missionary children. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 29, 246-264.
- Jack, D. C. (1991). *Silencing the self: Women and depression*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Jensen, L. A. (2003). Coming of age in a multicultural world: Globalization and adolescent cultural identity formation. *Applied Developmental Science*, 7, 189-196.
- Jones, S. R. (1997). Voices of identity and difference: A qualitative exploration of the multiple dimensions of identity development in women college students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 38, 376-386.
- Jones, S. R., & McEwen, M. K. (2000). A conceptual model of multiple dimensions of identity. *Journal of College Student Development*, 41, 405-414.
- Josselson, R. (1987). *Finding herself: Pathways to identity development in women*. San Fransico: Jossey-Bass.

- King, P. E. (2003). Religion and identity: The role of ideological, social, and spiritual contexts. *Applied Developmental Science, 7*, 197-204.
- Lakoff, R. (1973). Language and woman's place. *Language in Society, 1*, 45-80.
- Lips, H. M., (1997). Sex and gender: An introduction (3rd ed.). Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Company.
- Marcia, J. E., & Friedman, M. L. (1970). Ego identity status in college women. *Journal of Personality, 38*, 249-263.
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (1999). *Designing qualitative research*. (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- McCaig, N. (1994). *Growing up with a worldview: Nomad children develop multicultural skills*. Retrieved August 6, 2005, from www.kaiku.com/nomads.html:
- Moradi, B. (2005). Advancing womanist identity development. *The Counseling Psychologist, 33*, 225-253.
- Osborne, J. W. (1990). Some basic existential-phenomenological research methodology for counsellors. *Canadian Journal of Counselling, 24*, 79-91.
- Ossana, S. M., Helms, J. E., & Leonard, M. M. (1992). Do "womanist" identity attitudes influence college women's self-esteem and perceptions of environmental bias? *Journal of Counseling and Development, 70*, 402-408.
- Parks, E. E., Carter, R. T., & Gushue, G. V. (1996). At the crossroads: Racial and womanist identity development in black and white women. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 74*, 624-631.

- Pipher, M. B. (2001). *Reviving ophelia: Saving the selves of adolescent girls*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Pollock, D. C., & Van Reken, R. E. (2001). *Third culture kids: The experience of growing up among worlds*. London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing.
- Poore, P. (2005). School culture: The space between the bars; the silence between the notes. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 4, 351-361.
- Russell, G. M. & Kelly, N. H. (2002). Research as interacting dialogic processes: Implications for reflexivity. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 3(3). Retrieved May, 10, 2006 from <http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs/fqs-eng.htm>.
- Schaetti, B. F., & Ramsey, S. J. (1999). *The global nomad experience: Living in liminality*. Retrieved August 6, 2005, from <http://www.transition-dynamics.com/>
- Smith, J. A. (Ed.). (1999). Semi-structured interviewing and qualitative analysis. In R. Harre & L. Van Langenhove (Eds.), *Rethinking methods in psychology* (pp. 9-26). London: Sage Publications.
- Tarrant, M. (2002). Adolescent peer groups and social identity. *Social Development*, 11, 110-123.
- Tryon, G. S., & Winograd, G. (2003). Developing a healthy identity. In M. Kopala & M. E. Keitel (Eds.), *Handbook of counseling women* (pp. 185-197). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Useem, R. H. (1999). *Third culture kids: Focus of major study: TCK "mother" pens history of field*. Retrieved August 6, 2005, from <http://www.tckworld.com/useem/art1.html>:

Useem, R. H., & Cottrell, A. B. (1999). *TCKs experience prolonged adolescence*.

Retrieved August 6, 2005, from <http://www.tckworld.com/useem/art3.html>:

Wickstrom, D. (1998) Emotional and behavioural patterns of adult MK's. In J.M. Bowers

(Ed.), *Raising resilient MK's: Resources for caregivers, parents, and teachers*.

Colorado Springs, CO: Association of Christian Schools International

Widdershoven, G. A. M. (1993). The story of life: Hermeneutic perspectives on the

relationship between narrative and life history. In R. Josselson & A. Lieblich

(Eds.), *The narrative study of lives* (Vol. 1). Newbury Park, CA: Sage

Publications.

Woodcock, C. (2005). The silenced voice in literacy: Listening beyond words to a

“struggling” adolescent girl. *Journal of Authentic Living*, 2, 47-60.

Wrobbel, K. A., & Plueddemann, J. E. (1990). Psychosocial development in adult

missionary kids. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 18, 363-374.

APPENDIX A

Email Recruitment

Volunteers Needed for Research

If you have spent a significant amount of time in two or more cultures before age 18; consider home everywhere and nowhere; call yourself a Third Culture Kid (TCK), a global nomad, military kid, or missionary kid; and are a woman between the ages of 18-25, I want to hear your story!

I am a counselling psychology graduate student at Trinity Western University conducting research on the life experiences of TCK/global nomad women. I am looking for women between the ages of 18-25 who have lived outside of their parents' culture for at least three years before the age of 18. These women may be the daughters of missionaries, military officers, foreign service workers, or business executives. The goal of the study is to explore how women growing up in multiple cultures navigate their way through emerging adulthood. There will be two interviews with each participant. The initial interview will be approximately 90 to 120 minutes and then there will be one brief follow-up interview, lasting about 30 minutes. You will be given a small gift as compensation for your time and involvement.

If you are interested or have any questions about the research project, contact Kate Walters at kate.walters@twu.ca or 604.534.5205.

Verbal Recruitment

My name is Kate Walters and I am a graduate student at Trinity Western University. I am conducting research on the life experiences of Third Culture Kid (TCK)/global nomad women. The goal of the study is to explore how women growing up

in multiple cultures navigate their way through emerging adulthood. I am looking for women between the ages of 18-25 who have lived outside of their parents' culture for at least three years before the age of 18. There will be two interviews with each participant. The initial interview will last approximately 90 to 120 minutes and then there will be one brief follow-up interview, lasting about 30 minutes. You will be given a small gift as compensation for your time and involvement. Do you have any questions? If you are interested, can we set a time and place for the initial interview? Also, do you know of anyone else who fits these criteria who may be interested in participating in the study?

APPENDIX B

Consent Form

“A Story to Tell: Growing up as Third Culture Kids”

Primary researcher

Kate Walters
Graduate Student of
Counselling Psychology
Trinity Western University
604-534-5205/604-513-2017
kate.walters@twu.ca

Faculty Supervisor

Faith Auton-Cuff, Ph.D.
Trinity Western University
604-513-2121 ext. 3837
faith.autoncuff@twu.ca

September 15, 2005

Dear Potential Participant;

Thank you so much for your interest in this research project. In this study, I want to explore how women growing up in multiple cultures navigate their way through emerging adulthood. I first became familiar with Third Culture Kids (TCK) last year during my internship at Trinity Western University. I met several people who grew up in cultures different from their parents' culture, and I developed a fascination with their lives and stories. I have decided to devote my thesis research to learning more about this unique population. The goal of my study is to explore how living in multiple cultures influences your sense of who you are.

Procedure

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be invited to share your life story with the primary researcher. The open-ended interview will last for approximately 90 to 120 minutes and will be audio taped and later transcribed. Shortly after the interview (2-4 weeks), I would like to contact you for two follow-up interviews. Each follow-up interview will take approximately 30 minutes and you will be asked to verify that the analyzed information is an accurate reflection of your life story.

Confidentiality

Your privacy and confidentiality are very important. Any identifying information will be removed to assure confidentiality. All interview materials (audio tapes and transcripts) will be stored securely by the primary researcher. Only non-identifying information will be reported in the final project. Upon completion of the study, any identifying material will be destroyed.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time for any reason from the study without penalty. You are under no obligation to answer any questions or aspects of this study that you find invasive.

Other Information

Benefits from participation in this study include an opportunity to reflect on your life experiences and how they influence who you are, and an opportunity to help others who are in similar life circumstances. Risks involved in this study are minimal. However, talking about your experiences may be distressful or traumatic, and if you experience this, I will refer you to professional counseling.

As appreciation for your participation in this study you will be given a \$10 gift certificate to Starbucks or Chapters.

Contact

If you have any questions regarding your participation in this study please feel free to contact the primary researcher or faculty supervisor. If you are interested in the findings of this study please contact Kate Walters.

If you have any questions about *ethical issues* involved in this project you may contact Ms. Sue Funk in the Office of Research at 604-513-2142.

I have read and understand the description of the study and I willingly consent to participate in this study.

I acknowledge that my responses may be put in an anonymous form and kept for further analysis after this study is completed.

Participant Signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX C

Interview Questions

1. In your own words, tell me your life story.
2. How would you be different if you had not grown up the way you did?
3. How do you feel about being identified as a TCK?
4. What role does spirituality play in your life?
5. What have you observed about women in the cultures you have lived?
6. What does it mean to you to be a woman?