Summer 7-2014

Adult Third Culture Kids: Does their Concept of Home Have an Impact on Their Career Paths?

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PIM 72

A Capstone Paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Arts in

Intercultural Service, Leadership and Management at the Graduate School for International

Training in Brattleboro, Vermont, USA.

20 July 2014

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Date: July 18th, 2014

Acknowledgments

I would first like to thank Karen Blanchard, for being such a kind, understanding advisor throughout this process. I would not have settled on this topic had she not gently suggested it, and it has been a truly meaningful experience for me. Warmest thanks to Karen for being such a bright light, a wealth of understanding, and a provider of excellent guidance throughout my time at the SIT Graduate Institute.

I question whether or not I would have pursued a Masters degree without the enthusiastic encouragement from my parents, Barbara Brown and Steve Wisecarver. I would like to thank them especially for their constant support throughout this Capstone process and in my *life*. I am a lucky kid. Thank you for always letting me follow my dreams, travel to beautiful, far-away places, and for bringing me up in such a unique way. I am lucky to have inherited your gypsy, adventurous spirits and am overcome with gratitude for all that comes with being a global nomad. Thank you for helping me be the person I am today.

Thank you to my second family: my wonderful friends, without whom I would be truly lost. A very special thanks to my SIT family for inspiring me, believing in me and making me so proud to be part of the SIT community. Karin, Devin, Sanna, Rebekkah, Jeannie, Allie, Scheller, Christophre, Lisa, Ian & Adam, Jeremy, Jess, and Nora: You have quelled my worries, offered feedback and advice in most dire times of need, and provided an irreplaceable support system. I am forever in your corner, as you have been in mine since day one.

And finally, thank you to SIT for helping me grow in unimaginable ways that will undoubtedly continue to emerge for many years to come. It was a unique and authentic experience that has enriched my life and allowed the world to unfold in a new light.

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List of Abbreviations and Definitions

Third Culture Kids: (**TCKs**) Children who spend a significant portion of their formative years living (and attending school) in multiple places and multicultural environments due to their parent/s' profession.

*Adult Third Culture Kids: (***ATCKs***)* Third Culture Kids who have entered adulthood

*Cross Cultural Kids: (***CCKs***)* Another term applicable to TCKs, however, encompassing a wider variety of children growing up in unique circumstances (not limited to growing up abroad)

Global Nomads: term used interchangeably with TCKs

Sponsor: The employer (organization, government agency, business, school etc.) of a TCK's parent/s, responsible for a family's global mobility.

First Culture: A child's place of birth/country of citizenship/country of passport and typically country of parents' birth

Second Culture: The host country in which TCKs live for a significant amount of time during their upbringing

Third Culture: The in-between state/culture that is created when combining both (first and second) or all cultures

Abstract

For decades, social scientists have been conducting studies about *Third Culture Kids* (TCKs). TCKs are children who have been raised outside of their passport countries as a result of their parents' professions abroad. One sociologist refers to TCKs as "prototype citizens of the future," citing their backgrounds a playing a role in today's increasingly globalized world. How have TCKs' multicultural backgrounds and experiences shaped them? What types of professions are they prone to? What qualities and characteristics do they commonly share and why are they an important group to study? My capstone aims to address these questions.

The combination of my *Third Culture* upbringing and my recent practicum in New Orleans inspired the focus of this paper. In the pursuit of understanding my own professional interests and the effects that a multicultural childhood can have on career choice, I will attempt to look at connections between Adult Third Culture Kids' (ATCKs) definitions of *home* and their career development. These themes will be explored using studies and data from leading sociologists in the field, in addition to my own survey results, interviews and reflections.

Typically mobile in nature, TCKs are not the easiest group of people to study. I will also discuss challenges, limitations and recent additions/changes in research. As a TCK, myself, I believe that I bring experience, insight and the careful considerations necessary to explore these unique citizens of the world.

Introduction

When I drove down to New Orleans in June, 2013 for my practicum with a small non-governmental organization (NGO) in the Lower Ninth Ward, I kept thinking, "This is it. I know it. This is going to be the city in which I can settle. I'm headed towards my new *home*!" I had visited New Orleans for the first time in 2006 after Hurricane Katrina to help muck out houses for a week. I had fallen in love with the sincerity and honesty of the people, the rich culture of a unique melting pot of history and the diversity of traditions, food and music. Ideally, it made perfect sense at that time to imagine that such a place would meet all my expectations and needs. It made perfect sense; except the reality of living there did not match my inflated expectations.

What did I encounter that solidified my conclusion that this would not be a long-term *home*? I was doing challenging, meaningful work with the small nonprofit and meeting fun, interesting young people from all over the world who were flying in to volunteer for the cause. I found that I still loved the culture, the music, and the food. I was slowly making friends with many locals. On the surface it would seem the perfect environment for me and for a time I was very content. But as my six-month internship came to an end -- even though I had been offered a full-time position -- I felt very strongly it was time for me to leave. This move revealed that perhaps there was a more deep-rooted reason I felt it was time to depart. Perhaps what was necessary to examine were those elements I needed in order to feel "at home." I realized I have conflicting ideas of what the very term means to me, and perhaps by examining and reflecting on my own thoughts and experience as well of those of others like me, I might find some resolution in my search for "home."

So what is the reason for my obsession with finding a place to call "home?" The short answer is that I have been seeking such a place my entire life without any concrete assurances that it may actually exist. I have moved over fifteen times in the course of my twenty-nine years,

with six of those major transitions taking place during my formative years (before the age of 18).

Over the years I have adopted a label for myself that would explain this mobile lifestyle: I am a, "Third Culture Kid" (or TCK, for short).

At first glance, the term *home* seems like such a simple concept but I find I'm torn between the notion of home being an actual physical place and the idea of home being an abstract and intangible concept. According to *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, home is "the place (such as a house or apartment) where a person lives," or "a family living together in one building, house, etc." Traditionally, home is considered a physical place, but even for a non-Third Culture Kid I feel that this definition lacks a bit of creativity. By the age of 18, I had lived in Mali, Yemen, Cote d'Ivoire and Kenya while bouncing back to the United States between posts. The experience of growing up abroad has contributed to my confusion over this concept, as I have had numerous places to call *home* over the years.

"Where are you from?" This may be one of the simplest questions a person can ask or be asked. Yet for a person who has grown up in so many difference places, it is a dreaded topic. My answer varies significantly depending on who is posing the question or how I am feeling. Truthfully, it can depend on whether I feel like I should try to fit in or stand out from the crowd. Going into the details of where I grew up sometimes requires more time and effort than I am willing to spare. There are instances when I simply can't find the words and awkwardly stammer. I am well aware certain responses I give can be met by any combination of responses, positive or negative, and these responses are commonly followed by a myriad of invasive and probing questions. It is because of this that I usually prefer to divulge this part of myself in one-on-one conversations. The friends that I made in college would often introduce me as their, "friend who grew up in Africa," which often made me feel like I was being thrown into the spotlight and

expected to perform tricks. Though they had only the best of intentions, advocating for me in times when I struggled, these moments were very uncomfortable for me.

The question that seems to be even more difficult to answer is often the follow-up, "Well, where is home, then?" If ever I stumbled over the first question, so common in polite, introductory conversations, the second question is one for which I have yet to come up with a standard answer. This is a typical reaction for most TCKs. Sociologist and TCK expert, Ruth Van Reken, writes, "'Where is home?' is the hardest question of all. *Home* connotes an emotional place – somewhere you truly belong. There simply is no real answer to that question for many TCKs. They may have moved so many times, lived in so many different residences, and attended so many different schools that they never had time to become attached to any." (Pollock & Van R, 2008, p. 125).

I may always harbor some small jealousy for people who can unequivocally name the one place on this earth that is so deeply a part of them, one they have the privilege of calling *home*. People claim, "It's a small world that we live in," but after being exposed to various corners of it, I think it can often feel intimidatingly huge, with endless places to venture. Though I perhaps had not given it much thought, it now occurs to me that, with each passing year and with each place I move to for extended periods of time, I am always subconsciously searching for a physical place to call, "home." This could very well be because I never constructed a definition or sense of *home* during my various re-entries into the United States. Sociologist, Kathleen Finn Jordan, states that this should be the main task for TCKs in order to assist with the transition (Jordan, 2002, p. 218).

Until now, I feel I've never given myself a proper chance to reflect on my third culture upbringing, how it has shaped me, and how it has affected my career decisions in the past as well

as my career aspirations for the future. As I finish my Masters degree, I intend to use this Capstone paper as a means to analyze my own background and how it may have shaped my professional interests as well as those of my peers. By asking other TCKs some of the same questions I have asked myself I hope to draw connections between the concept of *home* for TCKs and the impact it may have on their professional lives and their eventual choice of career path.

Influencing Factors for this Research

As stated above, the theme of *home* influenced my choice of New Orleans and my subsequent internship with a small organization in the Lower Ninth Ward (see Appendix A for map of New Orleans). The sole mission of the organization was to rebuild homes for original residents of the neighborhood so they could return to their homes and their heritage, in what historically had been a very close-knit community. Deemed the "Ninth Ward" in the mid-1800s, this flood-prone back-swamp territory became the first area in which freed people of color could afford to buy land. Residents built their "shotgun" style homes from the discarded cedar wood that would fall from river barges. Throughout the decades, this region of New Orleans grew into a working class farming community. The building of the Industrial Canal (1918-1923) and its proximity to the Mississippi River created numerous work opportunities for its residents. During the 1940s and 50s, the Lower Ninth Ward's residents were extremely proactive in the desegregation of New Orleans public schools during the civil rights movement (Landphair, 2007).

Some sources indicate that the Lower Ninth Ward saw its first sign of infrastructural and economic decline following Hurricane Betsy in 1965. The category three hurricane left the neighborhood under six to twelve feet of water after a storm surge breeched the walls of the

Industrial Canal. By the year 2000, the population of 14,000 people living in the Lower Ninth Ward was 98.3% African American (GNOCDC, 2014). Following the catastrophic events of Hurricane Katrina and the ensuing levee breeches in 2005, the residents of the historic Lower Ninth Ward once again experienced the devastating effects of a neighborhood engulfed by water. By 2010, census results reported that a meager 2,842 residents had returned to rebuild and live in their community (GNODC, 2014). The Lower Ninth Ward is one of the slowest recovering neighborhoods in New Orleans.

Since my first visit to New Orleans post-Katrina in 2006, I have become very much interested in disaster recovery and preparedness. I am passionate about this field of work because it directly relates to people and families who have lost their homes due to some natural or man-made disaster. Working in the Lower Ninth Ward for six months during my practicum in 2013 afforded me a first-hand opportunity to work on what has become my passion. On a daily basis I was able to speak and work with homeowners who had dealt with the devastating effects of Hurricane Katrina on their neighborhood. I learned of all of their subsequent struggles in restoring their homes and their beloved culture in the face of numerous obstacles that, for many, seemed impossible to overcome.

This experience and work in the Lower Ninth Ward brought into sharp focus how the desire for *home* strongly influences peoples' lives and choices. It also afforded me the chance to study and analyze my own background and learn how it may have contributed to my nomadic tendencies and my career path. As stated in the Introduction, rather than solely focus on my own journey, I felt it would be more meaningful to survey and interview fellow TCKs and examine how their similar experiences may have contributed to their professional paths. By comparing these surveys, combined with my own experiences, as well as a literature review and data from

experts in the field, I hope to glean some insights into the question of how TCKs' experiences growing up and their concepts of *home* influence their career decisions and eventual choice of career path. Perhaps my findings and conclusions will also prove helpful to fellow Adult Third Culture Kids (ATCKs) and anyone who is interested in raising their children abroad.

Literature Review

For decades social scientists have studied Third Culture Kids. In this literature review I will discuss what this term means and why this group of people is worth learning more about. By looking at major contributions of sociologists studying this topic, I will highlight the themes shared by most TCKs. It is important to note that, because these studies pertain to a group of people with such diverse experiences and backgrounds, any over-arching framework or descriptions of TCKs are often accompanied by exceptions to the rule. Based on the nature of the topic, social scientist David C. Pollock writes, "It is important to say that since we are dealing with people, we are writing about process and progress, not a fixed entity." (Pollock & Van R., p. xi). Indeed, this body of research appears to be changing and shifting as frequently as the people it aims to study!

As mentioned above, it is difficult to accurately define such a diverse group of people. However, most would identify with Pollock's following definition as it has become widely used in researchers' and TCK circles alike:

> A Third Culture Kid (TCK) is a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents' culture. The TCK frequently builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership of any. Although elements from each culture may be assimilated into the TCK's life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar background (Pollock & Van R., 2008, p. 13).

The concept itself does not describe children who have been raised in the "Third World." Ruth Hill Useem and her husband John Useem, both social scientists, coined the term *third culture* in the 1960s after living in India for a year with their children. The meaning behind this term refers to the *first culture* as the parents' country of birth, the *second culture* being the host-culture in which the family lives and the *third culture* as the in-between state of both or all cultures. After observing her children and other expatriate children in India, Hill Useem uses the term, "third culture" as a generic term to discuss the lifestyle, "created, shared and learned" by those who are from one culture and in the process of relating to another one. It is the idea that this multicultural group of children, coming from various backgrounds and having lived in different countries, share, "remarkably important and similar life experiences through the very process of living in, and among, different cultures." (Useem & Useem, as cited in Pollock & Van R, 2009, p. 15). In reference to my own life, my first culture is the United States and my second cultures have been Yemen, Cote d'Ivoire and Kenya.

Author and Adult Third Culture Kid (ATCK), Ruth Van Reken, co-wrote *Third Culture Kids: Living Among Worlds* with David C. Pollock in 2009. In her introductory chapter, she cites Pollock's opening statement from his original work, *The Third Culture Kid Experience* (1999). In it he states:

> Third culture kids (TCKs) – children who spend a significant period of their developmental years in a culture outside their parents' passport culture(s) – are not new, and they are not few. They have been a part of the earth's population from the earliest migrations. They are normal people with the usual struggles and pleasures of life. But because they have grown up with different experiences from those who have lived primarily in one culture, TCKs are sometimes seen as slightly strange by the people around them (Pollock & Van R, 2009, p. xi).

Oftentimes, these children move abroad with their parents at a very young age. Because of this, many of them do not have a solid grasp of their *home* culture, and quickly begin to absorb the

culture or setting in which they placed. If they do seem a bit strange to people, it is undoubtedly because they project multicultural characteristics, traditions and habits as a result of living in many different countries and meeting many types of people.

Per Ruth Van Reken (2009), certain aspects of TCKs' lives are typical for most. TCKs are raised in a cross-cultural world, meaning that, rather than studying, observing or analyzing other cultures, these children actually grow up in different countries, usually traveling back and forth between their passport and host cultures. They have often been exposed to and interact with (often) four or more cultures during their formative years. Mobility is a common thread, as either they or the people they interact with are constantly coming or going. People and physical surroundings for TCKs are in constant motion.

Yet another sociologist, Ted Ward, claimed that Third Culture Kids were, "the prototype citizens of the future," in his book, *Understanding and Nurturing the Missionary Family* (as cited in Pollock & Van R.). The accuracy of his prediction is borne out by the fact that what was once considered to be an oddity, has now become a more widely accepted phenomenon. Given the world's rapid technological advancements and methods of transportation, the globalization of markets and expanding foreign interests, families moving outside of their countries of origin are becoming much more the norm. In an article written by Brian Knowlton for the *International Herald Tribune*, more than an estimated four million American federal workers and their families were living abroad by 2007 (as cited in Pollock & Van R.). This number only accounts for that relatively small number of American citizens. Thus the total number of U.S. expatriates world-wide (including military, non-governmental and private sector workers and their families) is undoubtedly a much larger figure.

Studies of Third Culture Kids help better understand how diverse and constantly-changing childhood experiences can shape a person's character, sense of identity and worldview. What the literature reveals is that these experiences are clearly different for each individual, and therefore the topic of research is a challenging one. Studies reviewed herein are heavily qualitative in nature. However, there are many quantitative measures that would suggest some commonalities and general similarities among TCKs. In looking at some of these notable skills and traits that are shared by most TCKs, hiring professionals would do well to study the numerous advantages and pluses of employing "global nomads."

Norma McCraig, founder of Global Nomads International, an international nonprofit whose mission is to promote dialogue and understanding among the world's youth, very eloquently describes the advantages of harnessing the qualities and skills of a TCK:

> The benefits of this upbringing needs to be underscored: In an era when global vision is imperative, when skills in intercultural communication, linguistic ability, mediation, diplomacy, and the management of diversity are critical, global nomads are better equipped in these areas by the age of eighteen than are many adults….These intercultural and linguistic skills are the markings of the cultural chameleon – the young participant-observer who takes note of verbal and nonverbal cues and readjusts accordingly, taking on enough of the coloration of the social surroundings to gain acceptance while maintaining some vestige of identity as a different animal, an "other." (McCraig, as quoted by Van Reken, 2008, p. 99)

Previous Works and References Related to the Research Question

In 1993, sociologists/anthropologists Ann Baker Cottrell and Drs. John Useem and Ruth Hill Useem published a study of American Adult Third Culture Kids (ATCKs). The respondents of the study had spent their child/teen years outside of the United States during the post-WWII/Cold War period and were living in the United States at the time of the study (Ender, p. 227). These 603 subjects were broadly grouped by their parents' organizational sponsors; 30%

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military, 23% government, 17% missionary, 16% business and 14% "other" (educators, NGOs, media, etc.) (Cotrell, p. 230). In the earliest stages of Dr. Ruth Hill Useem's research, it was these types of expatriates who were studied and who are now referred to as, "traditional" TCKs (as cited in Pollock & Van R, 2009, p. 15).

In this study, subjects were asked a broad range of questions on topics regarding values, identity, professional development, the concept of "home," education, and grief/loss, to name just a few. In 2002, Morton G. Ender published *Military Brats and other Global Nomads*; a compilation of articles by expert sociologists and psychologists in this field of research. In this book Ann Baker Cottrell writes a chapter titled "Educational and Occupational Choices of American Adult Third Culture Kids." I found Cottrell's insights and findings to be most applicable to my own research, as she includes statistical data to support how a third culture childhood has influenced these ATCKs' professional choices. I will summarize Cottrell's findings regarding relevant educational and professional patterns of ATCKs in this study.

Of the 603 respondents, it is interesting to note that 45% were abroad for at least 10 of their first 19 years, 60% lived in more than one country outside of the United States, and nearly one third (31%) had lived in three or more countries outside of the U.S (Cottrell, 2002, p.230). In terms of educational achievement, 81% of the sampled ATCKs had at least a bachelor's degree (which compares to only 21% of the U.S. population over age 25 at the time of the study) and 11% had completed doctoral level or Ph.D. programs. Of those who pursued higher education, 73% reported that their third culture childhood had affected their choice of pursuing an advanced degree. These ATCKs also stated that the most significant influence their upbringing had on them was their chosen field of study in school. Nearly one-third of those who had completed (at a minimum) a bachelor's degree had an internationally-oriented major or minor. For example,

many ATCKs hold degrees in international relations, anthropology, foreign language, and education, among others (Cottrell, 2002, p. 233). Several ATCKs report that choosing such degrees was consciously connected with the desire to pursue a career abroad.

According to Cottrell, "consistent with their high educational achievement, these ATCKs were likely to have careers involving expertise, leadership, and independence." Seven out of ten ATCKs occupied top-ranked positions in their profession and over half of the educated ATCKs were in human service-related positions (and 25% of the 603 participants). Such professions included medicine, teaching, social work, clergy, or counseling. The majority of these ATCKs also agreed that it was important to have, "an international dimension" in their lives and 88% claimed that they "would like to live abroad again" (Cottrell, 2002, p. 240).

These patterns would also suggest that TCKs -- in terms of choosing professions in the humanitarian field -- follow their parents' example to a certain degree. This, combined with being exposed to various cultures and socio-economic settings and populations, indicates that a TCK upbringing generally molds socially-conscious individuals who have an overall desire to contribute in the humanitarian field.

According to an article in *The Daily Beast* by Ruth Van Reken (2008), the classic profile of a TCK is, "...someone with a global perspective who is socially adaptable and intellectually flexible. He or she is quick to think outside the box and can appreciate and reconcile different points of view." She also states that TCKs have diversity of thought and would be well suited for today's global challenges. Indeed, all of these positive qualities contribute to an overall well-rounded, open-minded individual who could be "a force for good on the world stage" (Van Reken, 2008).

Issues Pertinent to Further Study of TCKs

The biggest challenge in trying to study TCKs is the simple fact they are literally located all over the planet. It's difficult to study a body of people who are constantly on the move. Additionally, there are few norms or commonalities which would encompass or comprehensively describe TCKs. Though many may share certain qualities, traits, beliefs, and professional choices, there is no single description or mold that fits all. Just as Useem, Useem and Cottrell chose to study American TCKs, I also decided to focus on this demographic because it is most relevant to my own background and (not insignificantly) because they were the easiest individuals to contact. Even with today's technological advancements, there are time zone differences to overcome, poor internet connections and schedule conflicts.

However, before presenting the analysis of my research, which focuses primarily on American TCKs, it is also important to note that countries around the world approach this demographic group and this topic in very different ways. For example, in Japan TCKs are known as *kaigai/kikoku-shijo* -- Oversees/Returnee Children (Pollock & Van R., 2008, p. 279). These children, when returning from abroad to Japan, were actually studied by decree of the Japanese government. The goal of these studies was to explore alteration in school structures to assist these TCKs to assimilate back into Japanese culture, as there was a general concern that they could be a threat to the collective, largely homogeneous, society (although currently, in a globalized world, *kikoku-shijo* are generally seen as assets). This illustrates the difference in cultural attitudes and value systems regarding TCKs. The Japanese are more concerned with how these children could impact society; whereas American researchers have focused mainly on

individual TCKs and how a third culture upbringing impacts their lives (Pollock & Van R, 2008, p. 281).

As stated in the Introduction, there have been several changes over the decades of research on TCKs. The term, *global nomad* was coined by Norma McCaig in 1984 and has become commonly and interchangeably used with, "Third Culture Kid." This term would also describe a person of any age or nationality who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years living outside their passport country (Schaetti, 2014). Ruth Van Reken has also created another term which, as she describes, "...enlarges our language and makes room under one umbrella for all types of cross-cultural childhoods." (Pollock & Van R, 2009). The term, "Cross-Cultural Kid" has opened the door for studying many other types of children with diverse backgrounds, including, but not limited to, the 'traditional' TCKs, bi/multicultural children, bi/multiracial children, children of borderlanders (children who grow up on borders between countries/states), educational cross-cultural kids, "domestic" TCKs, international adoptees, children of minorities, children of Immigrants and children of refugees. Though more inclusive, the new term, Cross-Cultural Kids, could also hinder researchers' abilities to compare and contrast these experiences, given all of the implied differences (Pollock & Van R, 2009). Researching the 'traditional TCK' has paved the road for the exploration of many other types of multicultural development in children.

The study conducted by Anne Baker Cottrell, Drs. Ruth Hill Useem and John Useem with Kathleen Finn Jordan, in particular, is very pertinent to my topic of research. As I am focusing on the concept of *home* and how this affects a TCK's professional development, I found many interesting connections in the research results and statistics they gathered at San Diego State

University in 2002. The themes they explored with TCK subjects relate directly to my own research and explorations.

Research/Inquiry Design

In order to look deeper into the themes I wished to explore, especially the concept of *home* as it relates to the professional development and career paths of TCKs, I looked at many forms of research. When I initially began the research process I reviewed numerous articles on the subject of TCKs. This in turn, led me to the works of the most prominent researchers in the field. Pollock and Van Reken's book, *Third Culture Kids: Growing up Among Worlds*, provided the foundation for my Capstone. I later discovered the collection of articles, edited by Morton Ender, entitled *Military Brats and Other Global Nomads*. This served as my framework and a source of statistics, which I will discuss and compare with my own findings.

Kathleen Finn Jordan has written a chapter entitled, *Identity Formation and the Adult Third Culture Kid* in Morton G. Ender's *Military Brats and other Global Nomads* (2002). Jordan completed her doctoral dissertation from Michigan State University entitled, *The Adaption Process of Third Culture Dependent Youth As They Re-Enter the United States and Enter College* (Ender, p. 262). In this chapter she explores the concept of *home* more deeply as it pertains to character and identity development. These themes are also extremely relevant to my explorations and examination of fellow TCKs. In the search for my own definition of *home* the insights, testimonies and feedback from the participants of this study, in addition to responses from my own surveys and interviews, will be extremely useful.

One of the discoveries I made early in the process was that there are a number of online forums designed specifically for TCKs. These websites, chat rooms and Facebook groups attempt to offer channels for TCKs to connect and discuss feelings, observations and difficulties

in transitioning. A website, *TCK World: The official Home of Third Culture Kids* offers the opportunity to post academic surveys, provides definitions and resources, and describes the history of research in the field. Another website and online magazine, *Denizen for Third Culture Kids,* established in 2008, is focused on a sole purpose: "to celebrate the modern global nomad experience with attitude, expression and creativity" (Denizen, 2014)." I also became a member of a Facebook group entitled *Third Culture Kids Everywhere,* which offers a space for TCKs to post articles, upcoming events, and pose questions to the online community.

In addition to gathering existing research, I wanted to incorporate a more personal element which took the form of my own survey (see Appendix B). Using Facebook as the means to reach out to participants, I developed a 10-question, Google survey focusing on the themes of *home* and professional choices and patterns. The group of people I reached out to comprised of individuals I knew from the various places I grew up abroad, ranging in ages 25 to 40. I sent 54 individual messages, as it seemed the most personable method of contacting those with whom I had lost touch. These 54 potential participants were people I knew to be connected principally to the United States, either having been born here, currently living here or holding a U.S. passport. Of these 54, I received answers from 30 respondents -- coincidentally 15 men and 15 women.

One major limitation I found regarding my own survey design and subsequent interviews is that I wrote and sent out the questions prior to finding the study discussed by Anne Baker Cottrell and Kathleen Finn Jordan in *Military Brats and other Global Nomads.* Had I been able to analyze the themes and results that Cottrell and Jordan describe in the final two chapters of Ender's book prior to creating my own questionnaire, I feel that I could have made my survey more consistent with their line of questioning. That being said, my research is distinguishable from Cottrell's in that my questions are different.

In my initial proposal, I indicated I would be conducting interviews with a few TCK peers in order to supplement my survey. In actuality, due to a conflict in schedules and challenges in connecting with these individuals, I was only able to obtain one interview with a TCK. Additionally, I had originally felt that interviewing some parents of TCKs would contribute to my research. Upon further reflection, I felt that this would be outside the scope of my study and decided against it, with one exception: I was intrigued to ask my own parents what their definitions of *home* were, which I will discuss in my findings. Finally, I should note that I spoke with a number of non-TCK peers regarding their concepts of home, in an effort to informally compare responses between TCKs and non-TCKs.

First and foremost I wanted to create a survey that was simple and user-friendly. I had intended for the survey to take little time to fill out which would ensure a maximum of responses. I was also looking for direct, specific answers that could be easily analyzed. In my attempts to do this, I think the opposite actually occurred for many of the answers. Certainly part of the challenge was conducting a survey that dealt with a rather intangible theme, *home*. Though I provided definitions for participants to choose from, this may have been limiting for some, and many additional responses were included. In the end, I was unable to make the number of solid connections between respondents' definitions of *home* and their professional choices that I would hoped to make in the beginning, but I did find some interesting correlations.

Presentation and Analysis of Data
Survey Question #1

A Third Culture Kid (TCK) is defined as: "a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents' culture. The TCK frequently builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture may be assimilated into the TCK's life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar background." Given this definition, would you identify yourself as a 'Third Culture Kid'?

In order to establish that the respondents were indeed Third Culture Kids (or considered themselves TCKs) and were therefore relevant to the nature of my inquiry, I began my survey with this question. My aim was also to limit assumptions and to give participants the chance to negate this statement should they not identify themselves as a TCK. Based on the fact that 100 percent of respondents did, in fact, identify with this definition validates the respondent base for information collected from these surveys. The unanimous response would also suggest that Pollock's definition is as widely accepted, as previously stated. One respondent clarified that he preferred the term, "Global Nomad:"
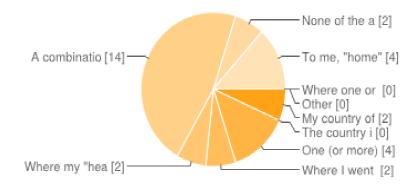
> I really think the term global nomad helps describe who I am. I have always instantly identified with people who were born one place, of parents from another place, and who have grown up in yet another place. I find comfort and solace in evenings talking with people whose backgrounds are confusing. I love the ambiguity of conversations with people from all over the world.

Survey Question #2

What is the closest definition of what you define/consider to be home?

Please refer to 'Other' if none of these apply and provide your own definition. If multiple answers apply, please explain in question #3.
- *Where one of both of my parents was/were born or grew up/lived*
- *My country of citizenship, where I hold a passport, or nationality I claim*
- *The country in which I was born*
- *One (or more) countries in which I grew up abroad and to which I have an emotional attachment or cultural affinity*
- *Where I went to high school/international school or university*
- *Where my "heart" lies; a certain culture or set of values or ideas which draws me to think of certain places or regions as home*
- *A combination of one or more of the above*
- *None of the above (I am a Global Nomad who considers no one place to be home)*
- *To me, "home" is not a physical place*
- *Other:*

The most common choice for this question, for 47% of respondents, was, "A combination of one or more of the above." Of the 30 responses, two respondents (7%) identified most with their country of citizenship/passport/nationality. Two more respondents identified with where they attended high school or university. Another two claimed that where their "heart" lies applied most to them, and an additional two respondents preferred none of the choices given; they identified most with being Global Nomads who consider no place to be *home*. Furthermore, 14% of participants determined that *home* is one or more of the countries wherein they grew up and maintained emotional attachment/cultural affinity. Finally, another four (14% of participants) do not believe that *home* is a physical place. Of particular interest from these responses, 22 of 30 (73%) did not identify home as a single place, a physical place, or a place at all (global nomads). This suggests that the vast majority of respondents (like me) have trouble identifying what constitutes, *home*. Another interesting finding, when tabulating the responses, was the fact that none of the thirty respondents felt that *home* was primarily where their parents were born/grew up.

The above findings would appear to square with a major study conducted in 1993 in which Ann Baker Cottrell found, "...74% (of respondents) see themselves as "outsiders" to the *home* culture or "very different" because of their experience. They perceive themselves as persons

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having "other status" both at home and abroad" (Jordan, 2002, p. 221). Though I was unable to

obtain a record of the specific questions Drs. Useem, Useem and Cottrell asked their participants,

I must assume that at least one of them was related to the concept of "home." As only 7% of

respondents in my survey stated that their country of citizenship was *home*, I can similarly

conclude that the majority of participants in my study also feel like "outsiders" in their own

country, in one way or another. One respondent perhaps stated it best:

> I strongly identify with my TCK upbringing. When I returned to Davis, CA for college I
> felt incredibly unprepared to integrate into US society. I was basically a foreigner with a
> US passport. College was a terrible struggle for me socially and culturally. I had so many
> experiences as a young person with so much freedom that I felt much older than my
> classmates. I was too young to understand that having lived outside of the US for so long,
> returning was actually going to feel like moving somewhere foreign and I was going to
> need to adjust to life in the US just like I had adjusted to life in other countries.

Many TCKs experience feelings similar to this when moving back to their first culture. It

is so common that sociologists have re-framed the term as "re-entry" when referring to TCKs.

Cottrell writes that re-entry for TCKs is realistically more like regular "entry," as *home* is not

perceived as *home*. She states, "It is another new place, but one that has a force about it (because

of parents' history) that cannot be relegated to the passing-through formula." (Cottrell, 2002, p.

218). It is common for TCKs to feel more pressure to fit in with their first culture, therefore

making the transition even more difficult than moves to foreign countries. It is important for

parents of TCKs to be aware of this fact and to understand that, like the ATCKs from my survey,

most of them do not primarily identify with their first culture country as *home*. As one TCK

described it:

> This is a very big question. It really hit me more when I first went to college and felt that
> I did not fit in with anyone. I could not talk about anything that happened without feeling
> wrong. I remember for instance when talking about the embassy bombing which had a
> massive impact on our lives, and no one knew about it. I was in shock, but now that I am
> older I look back and think, why should they have known? Connecting with people has
> been hard. Leaving my third culture home was and is the toughest moment of my life.

One of the flaws in the structure of this question is that I gave respondents the choice of several, multi-faceted options. For example, option four states: *One (or more) countries in which I grew up abroad and to which I have an emotional attachment or cultural affinity*. Respondents who chose this option could be identifying with one country, or multiple countries, and could also be either emotionally attached or have cultural affinity for one or both. The way I worded this option makes it nearly impossible to distinguish the specific intent behind their responses. Therefore, this makes it difficult to draw specific conclusions. My intent in providing options to participants (rather than leaving it open-ended) was to limit the variance of responses. However, I found that it became a challenge to interpret. An added complexity arose with my follow-up question, number three. I had originally hoped to look at correlations between responses for the concept of *home* and respondents' current professions, however, I discovered that the way in which I structured my questions made this very difficult to do.

Survey Question # 3

If you feel that your definition of home included more than one of the options from question #2, please list them below in order of relevance to you.

Half of the participants (15) gave responses to this question. Though some listed the definitions that I provided in question 2, I became more interested in the respondents who took the opportunity to tell a story or give their own definitions. Two options that I neglected to offer, which immediately became evident, were: *Where my parents are currently living* and *Where I am currently living*. Two respondents indicated that *home* to them could be wherever they slept at night. I personally appreciated this perspective, as it seems to be such a simple way of defining *home*. Other respondents similar observations or thoughts on their idea of *home*:

Family, the culture I choose, sort of a combo of the two – home is wherever I sleep that night. Interestingly enough, in 2007 I stepped off the plane in Hawaii and FELT physically *home* for the first time in my whole life on the planet. For whatever reason, it was simply the place, and I was visiting my sister at the time. That was a significant feeling.

Home at its most basic and immediately relevant becomes wherever I plan to sleep that night; I've lived in the same apartment in the same city for 8 years now, so this apartment/city will always be a home.

Where my parents currently live automatically feels like home when I visit since everything inside the house is familiar. My country of citizenship is a form of home, but more so my city.

For most participants of the survey, *home* meant multiple concepts and places, as also indicated in answers to Question 2.

Survey Question # 4

How many countries did you live in by the age of 18? Would you be so kind as to list these countries?

The survey results showed that this group of TCKs had lived in 36 different countries around the world, with 22 having spent time intermittently in the United States between posts abroad. By asking this question, my main intent was to try to draw some conclusions about the number of places a TCK had lived and the impact this would have on their concept of *home* as well as on their career choices. Looking at a table that Cottrell presents which compares ATCKs' Sponsor (parents' host-occupation) with their (the ATCKs') chosen professional category, I created something similar in design (See appendix for original Table). Using the same occupational categories, I replaced parents' "Sponsor" with the ATCKs' self-identified chosen career category (per their response to the survey).

	# Countries lived in by the age of 18					
Chosen Career Path/Work	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6+*
Business/Financial			1	4		
Education			5	2	1	
Health/Social Service	1		1	2		2
Self						
Government			1		1	
Military						
Professional (law, consulting)		3				2
Arts, Media		1	2	1		
Religious						

There were several limitations in modeling my chart after Cottrell's. One significant reason is that I happened upon her study results after I had already sent out and received results for my own survey. Had I come across *Military Brats and other Global Nomads* before designing my survey, I would have been able to formulate my questions to mimic the larger study, based on my suppositions of the questions posed to those 603 ATCKs. I had not thought to ask participants what their parents' sponsor organization had been, though this data would have proven extremely useful and important in comparing and contrasting my findings with Cottrell's.

Another limitation is that I had no way of knowing exactly how Cottrell categorized certain professions. The footnote states, "'Professional' can refer to 'professional offices or firms other than medical (e.g., law, engineering, consulting, research)'" (Cottrell, 2002, p. 238). I did my best to follow suit, however it is uncertain whether I categorized my findings as she did. I also used the 'Professional' category to include 'Other' jobs that I could not put into other fields.

Finally, I have concluded that making assumptions or firm conclusions about the number of places lived having a direct correlation with career choice is a somewhat risky proposition. Cottrell states that assumptions are not easily made about the TCK experience based on the longevity of their time spent abroad: "One cannot assume that those who have had a TCK

experience, that is, who were abroad for a short time, are less affected by this experience than TCKs whose entire childhood was outside the United States. The effects of their experiences are different" (Cottrell, 2002, p. 232). I largely agree with this statement, and given the small scope of my survey in comparison to Cottrell's much larger study, I will offer conclusions that, while reasonable in nature, may not, in many cases, be backed by sufficient empirical data. I will further address the categorical professional results of this survey in question nine below.

Survey Question # 5

How many countries have you lived in after the age of 18?

I asked this question with the purpose of comparing the number of countries lived in before the age of 18 with the number of countries lived in afterward. Though I did not make many assumptions prior to asking these questions, I originally assumed that ATCKs who had lived in more countries growing up would also be inclined to live in more countries abroad after age 18.

Countries After Age 18

Countries before 18	1	2	3	4	5	6+
1			1			
2	1	3				
3	5	3			1	
4	3	1	3	1	1	
5		1	1			
6+	2		2	1		
Totals	**11**	**8**	**7**	**2**	**2**	**0**

According to the results shown in this chart, of the TCKs who lived in two or more countries before the age of 18, over 63% (19) have lived in two to five different countries since they turned 18. This finding confirms my assumptions. Though I did not ask participants to give their current

age, knowing them personally (and with most being approximately my age) allows me to state that for most respondents, it is 10-15 years since they turned 18. From the chart above, the vast majority (97% or 29 of 30) of my sample ATCKs lived in more than one country before the age of 18. In Cottrell's study, she reported that 60% of the sampled respondents had lived in more than one country outside the United States (Cottrell, 2002, p. 230). Thus, my sampling was considerably more mobile growing up.

Interestingly, over one-third (37%) of respondents have lived in only one country (all in the United States) after the age of 18, regardless of the number of countries lived in growing up. Considering that the majority of participants stated they did not consider their country of nationality, passport or citizenship to be "home," this first appeared to be somewhat of an anomaly. However, my literature review related to TCK identity formation and development, revealed the importance of establishing *home* and "roots," essential in providing familiar space to enhance evolution of self (Soddy as discussed in Downie, referenced by Jordan, 2002, p. 212). Perhaps the very reason for choosing to live only in the United States after a highly mobile upbringing is the desire to finally establish identity and roots. Another explanation would be that the TCKs have now become adults, thus independent from and no longer subject to their parents' peripatetic professions. In either case, I am able to understand the logic I too struggle with the question of returning overseas one day or remaining in the States.

One participant wrote, "Home is where I currently live. In a larger view, where I've been and the places that I carry with me are what have changed me and made me who I am (or am not)." Those ATCKs who have stayed only in the U.S. have undoubtedly kept parts of their upbringing with them and incorporate those experiences into their daily lives. Jordan supports this, stating, "ATKs have repertoires of social behavior, are keen observers, and adjust easily but

never really adapt. They carry their third cultureness with them, thriving on newness, difference, challenge, and stimulation" (Jordan, 2002, p. 226).

Survey Question # 6

If applicable, how many of these moves after age 18 were for a professional relocation (job, internship, career, etc)?

I asked this question in an attempt to learn more about the participants' professional mobility and to see if there was a correlation between the number of countries they have lived in after the age of 18 and how many of those moves were work (or school) related. In fact, 67% of respondents had moved at least once outside of the country for work. I assumed that perhaps the ATCKs who had moved around more as children would be more inclined to choose mobile professions. In fact, over one-fourth of respondents seem to have stayed in one place after returning to the U.S from abroad. However common it is for TCKs to continue to be mobile throughout their lives, there are always exceptions to this rule. Van Reken states:

> Some TCKs have an opposite response to their highly mobile background. They have moved so many times, in so many ways, and to so many places, they swear they will find a place to call their own, put up the white picket fence and never, ever, move again (Pollock & Van R., 2008, p. 126)

There have been moments when I have felt this way, as Van Reken describes, with the internal debate and weighing of pros and cons of staying in the U.S. or moving abroad again.

Work related moves

Countries after 18	0	1	2	3	4	5
0						
1	8	2	2			
2	2	6				
3		1	1	4	1	
4				1		
5				1		1
Totals	10	9	3	6	1	1

However, as seen from the above survey results and in line with my assumptions, the following description of TCKs' mobile tendencies remains true for most respondents:

> Due to their varied experiences of living abroad, TCKs may decide that traveling is what they wish to do in the future. Due to their need for a different kind of security and stability, TCKs could have developed a mental picture of what they would prefer their future and career to be. As their overseas experience grows and enriches them, TCKs may want to continue that inspiring experience by preferring a future internationally mobile career, avoiding to settle down in any one place. (Gerner & Perry, 2000; referencing Useem, 2001, as cited by Selmer & Lam)

Survey Question # 7

Do you feel that the number of places you have lived has influenced your definition/concept of home?

The vast majority of respondents (90%) felt that the number of places they had lived had influenced their concept of "home." One respondent said, "One thing that the TCK lifestyle has really shaped in me is that I don't really care where I live, it's who is there. I think I could be happy anywhere as long as I had my family nearby." Another TCK described how his concept of *home* shifts depending on where he is at the time:

> Where I am "from" is a very difficult question to answer. My country of birth (S. Africa), nationality of passport (USA), and where I consider "home" (Kenya) are three different

countries. Also I have noticed as a TCK, that when I am in one of the countries that makes up my identity, I tend to feel more like I am from the other place. For example, when I am in Kenya I tend to feel more American, and when I am in the USA I feel more like a foreigner and relate to being Kenyan.

Though not every participant clarified *how* their upbringing had shaped their definitions of "home," it is significant that the majority acknowledged they felt it had in some way. Perhaps it is enough to no they do recognize that their upbringing had an effect on their perception of "home." A more interesting follow-up question might be one for the three respondents who answered "no" to this question. One clarified that it was not the *number* of countries that had an impact on their beliefs, but the amount of time spent there. I believe this person makes a valid point. Perhaps I could have phrased my question differently, if only to distinguish which aspect of a multicultural upbringing had an effect on their definition of *home* rather than assuming it was the number of places that was most important factor.

Survey Question # 8

Do you feel that your concept of home has influenced the choice of where you are currently living or where you hope to live in the future?

Again, 90% of respondents agreed that their definition of home has influenced where they are living now or hope to live. Once more, in analyzing how the question was phrased, I realized that asking 'yes or no' questions was not the most helpful in obtaining the qualitative data necessary for my research. I initially asked it this way to make the survey simpler for participants. I did not want them to have to write detailed responses for every question on the survey in order to maximize the number of responses. The trouble with the way I worded this particular question is that I have no way of deciphering whether the respondents are answering 'yes' to their concept of *home* having influenced where they *currently* reside, or whether it has

influenced where they hope to live in the future. Overall, this question was not too helpful to inform my research question, however one respondent addressed it in more detail, providing context for her answer:

> I plan entirely to spend my life continuing to travel all over the world and cannot seem to quench my thirst to explore and share with other people from other cultures. Ultimately, I feel more comfortable as an "expat" in an entirely foreign place rather than being in a location that could be labeled as "home" for me. I question whether I will ever be able to happily live in one place and call that "home"! And if I did, it would not be a country that I'm currently a citizen of. I feel blessed and lucky to have this lifestyle, and to feel comfortable in it. It's really a privilege and I have been lucky to find a job that allows me to do this.

Survey Question # 9

Please write down your current job title and the industry in which you work OR school you currently attend and area of study.

For this question, I chose to compare my results with those of Cottrell's larger study. Once again, I have used the same professional categories as Cottrell, and attempted to group them based on my best assumptions of how her categories were structured. In comparing the two samples, educational, business and health-related professions were among the most prevalent for TCKs. From my survey, 47% of respondents self-identified as working in the educational and health fields. Nearly half of Cottrell's sample (46%) were in educational and business fields. If I were to combine percentages for the three most prevalent fields, my findings would be very similar to Cottrell's, showing 60% of respondents (to her 62%) opting for education, health and business-related professions.

As stated earlier in this paper, because I did not include a survey question asking respondents to indicate their parents' sponsor institution, exact comparisons cannot be made. However, other similarities can be drawn between our findings. From my survey, few (or none) of my respondents were engaged in religious, governmental or military occupations. Cottrell's

results indicate the same pattern. However, without additional information and without knowing what sponsor these TCKs' parents had, it is impossible to draw any definitive conclusions.

Type of work	My findings	%	Cottrell	%
Business/Financial	4	13%	118	24%
Education	8	**27%**	110	22%
Health/Social Service	6	**20%**	80	16%
Self	0	0%	67	13%
Government	2	6%	28	6%
Military	0	0%	21	4%
Professional (+ 'Other')	5	17%	42	8%
Arts, Media	5	17%	19	4%
Religious	0	0%	13	3%
Total	30	100%	498	100%

Another relevant and possibly important question I did not include in my survey was pertaining to academic achievement. This topic appears to be a large part of Useem, Useem and Cottrell's 1993 study. However, as I know all of the respondents personally (to varying degrees), I can confidently submit that the large majority of those sampled in my survey have pursued higher education. It would be safe to say that the vast majority have attained an undergraduate degree and several have pursued Masters and Doctoral degrees. This is evident in the specific positions that were noted by respondents (among them an Obstetrician Gynecologist, Clinical Psychologist, a Masters in International Education and an Associate Professor at a University). All of these would indicate degrees higher than a Bachelor's.

Survey Question # 10

What profession have you trained for or aspire to engage in as a career in the future?

In asking this question, I wanted to compare professions that respondents currently held with what they hope to do in the future (which would more clearly indicate their intended "career path"). When analyzing the data, I had to make my own assumptions about the connections between their current and aspiring career choices. What I gathered from the answers is that 73% of respondents were either already in their chosen field or were well on their way to achieving it. A number of responses were unclear or ambiguous (17%) and I noted these. Very few responses (10%) indicated the TCK was unsure about his/her future career. I think this is a profound finding given the still relatively young ages of the respondents.

Perhaps based on my own uncertainty as to my career path, I had assumed other respondents (essentially peers) would feel similarly. Though not a worry unique to TCKs, I felt that being exposed to so much during their formative years would hinder rather than help in this decision-making. I found largely the opposite to be true. Moreover, through the writing of this paper, I realized that I am not as confused about my career trajectory as I had originally thought. In looking at every volunteer opportunity and nearly every position I have held over the past ten years, there is, in fact, a clear pattern and connection between my upbringing as a TCK and what I feel most passionate about and am now pursuing as a career.

In reviewing my survey results and in further researching the topic, I discovered it is not at all uncommon for TCKs to be driven by the need to seek a meaningful career. Perhaps because of everything we are exposed to at a young age, (and continuously throughout life) working without some kind of purposeful agenda is unsettling. Jordan writes:

> It appears that for many, "work" or, if the desired work is not already found, a
> "labor of love," or, in some cases, the creation of one's own company assists in

providing the stimulus to resolution. Work was always a constant in their lives and provided the source of sponsorship, the structuring variable in creating their third culture identity (Jordan, 2002, p. 222)

This statement would certainly suggest that my preoccupation with seeking the perfect career is not an uncommon phenomenon for TCKs, and, in fact, appears to be a deep-rooted norm.

Further Findings

After completing my survey and reflecting on my own experiences as a TCK, I thought it useful to ask my parents what/where they considered home to be. Having just returned from Kenya last year, where my father was working as Peace Corps country director, they are now settling into retirement and residing in their house in northern Virginia. My father is originally from a small town in Oregon and my mother grew up outside of Boston, Massachusetts. They met as Peace Corps Volunteers in Senegal and pursued a 30-year career overseas with my father working for the Foreign Affairs Agency, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

When I asked for their definitions of *home*, they both noted that this was a valuable exercise for them, as they attempt to decide what their ultimate plans for retirement are. From their definitions I discovered that the highly mobile lives they led in adulthood have deeply affected their concepts of home. My mother wrote:

> For me, home is more of a state of mind, or emotional feeling rather than a place. For example, I have very fond memories of Weston, where I grew up, but don't consider it home anymore. Presently, I feel comfortable in Vienna [Virginia] and Oregon and I guess Vienna is the closest idea to home that I have since we have lived there on and off for the past 30 years. I have friends there and family comes and goes and so I feel an emotional attachment to the place. Oregon is different; It's your dad's favorite place and I like it there but because our house here has been mostly a vacation-type place, I am having a hard time looking at it as a permanent possibility. Maybe when one moves as much as we have, it's difficult to find a place to call home. We might just move through life making our present "homes" into comfortable places to live, but I definitely have to be around friends and family to feel happy and emotionally attached.

My father began by compiling a list of each place he had lived since childhood as well as the number of years spent at each. He wrote that he had spent his first 22 years in Oregon, with 4 years in California, 24 overall years in Africa and 14 years in Virginia (the latter spread out over the past twenty-six years). He also described his challenge in answering the question, "Where are you from?"

> I always give a two-fold answer, "We live in Vienna, VA now but I'm originally from Oregon." I think there's something to be found in that response: I really consider both places home for different reasons. Oregon will always feel like home because of the deep ancestral roots and family ties. I'm fifth-generation McMinnvillian and grew up on great grandfather James McPhillips's farm. So I think there's literally an attachment to the earth there. Whenever we're flying into Portland, I look down at the Columbia River, look out at Mt. Hood, St. Helens, Mt. Adams and the rest of the Cascade Range and at all the Douglas Fir forests and it just gives me a spiritual boost. I don't think I could go a summer without spending time here--the greenery, the water, the beach, the hike to Cascade Head and the breathtaking views from there....it's all part and parcel of who I am.

He went on to explain that, although he does not feel as connected to Virginia, he was surprised to discover that his ancestors -- who traveled the Oregon Trail by way of Pennsylvania and Missouri -- were originally from Winchester, Virginia. He also mentioned that the real attachment to living in Virginia, "...is all of the friends we've accumulated over the years, many of whom we met overseas and who are now living in the DC area." The rich history and cultural benefits of living in the DC area also appeal to him, and he feels that having so many things to do and being centrally located (on the East Coast) is key. He concluded:

> The interesting thing for me is that I wouldn't be happy living in JUST Oregon or JUST Virginia. I need yearly doses of both – for different reasons – to feel at "home." I think that's one of the problems of trying to figure out how much time to spend in each place. I guess you could say that for me, home is the place that gives you energy, it's the place where you connect with friends and family and it's the place you want to be (attachment to the past, to the surroundings, and cultural offerings).

Discovering that my parents don't strictly identify with their place of birth was an important finding. It has helped me move further past the idea that *home* should be a physical place. I think

that being heavily influenced by these cultural norms and ambiguities regarding *home* while

living in the United States has contributed to my confusion on the matter. As I tend to assimilate

into my environments wherever I go, not being from any one place in particular has been a

source of anxiety for me at times. However, as I continue to learn about different peoples'

concepts of home, I am slowly becoming more comfortable with the idea that it can be an

ambiguous concept or even a moving target.

Discussion

In a recent dissertation (from The University of British Columbia) entitled *Third*

Route Kids: A New Way of Conceptualizing the Adult Third Culture Kid Experience,

Tamara Williams concludes that there have only been five quantitative studies, four

qualitative and two-mixed method studies conducted on TCKs in the past 20 years

(Williams, 2013, p. 1). The majority of these studies have been pertaining to, mainly, the

identity and *culture* of ATCKs. In her research paper, she also includes data and

information from the leading researchers in the field; Useem, Useem, Cottrell, Van Reken

and Pollock. She states,

> Little is known about the experiences of TCKs, their identity, if they have
> a culture, and what that culture is like. Even less is known about the needs
> of this population in a therapeutic setting. Current theories of multicultural
> sensitivity do not include a conceptual or theoretical understanding of
> TCKs, instead focusing on predetermined categories of culture (i.e. race,
> ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation) that are often monolithic in nature
> and in which TCKs have no place. This leads not only to a lack of
> appropriate care for TCKs but to a discrimination against them by the field
> of psychology, since they are not one of the "right" cultures and therefore
> are not seen as a group that needs culturally appropriate care. It is essential
> for psychologists to develop a more fluid and nuanced understanding of
> culture, one that does not depend on predetermined categories but allows
> for the complexities inherent in not only the experiences of TCKs but in
> other diverse populations."

In the course of researching this topic, I can concur with Williams's verdict that few studies and theoretical frameworks exist for this group of people. Furthermore, there have been no studies conducted pertaining specifically to my topic and question related to ATCKs; *How does their concept of Home have an impact on their career paths*? It was fortunate -- for my research purposes -- that Cottrell's study included information related to occupational choices of ATCKs, as this provided a basis of comparison necessary for my own findings. Though my own small sample may be limited in scope as compared to the larger study, I was able to draw some important conclusions and similarities from the two sets of data.

Conclusions

The following points discuss the five major conclusions I have drawn from my own survey and existing research in the field. Supported by statistics and respondents' testimonies, I will form connections that answer my research question. I found that there is an overall connection between ATCKs' concept of *home* and their career paths.

1. There is a clear correlation between the number of moves before the age of 18 and the number of moves into adulthood by respondents from my survey.

	Countries After Age 18					
Countries before 18	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6+*
1			1			
2	1	3				
3	5	3			1	
4	3	1	3	1	1	
5		1	1			
6+	2		2	1		
Totals	**11**	**8**	**7**	**2**	**2**	**0**

Nearly two-thirds of ATCKs who had lived in multiple countries during their childhoods showed that they had also lived in multiple countries after the age of 18. This is a clear indication that a multicultural childhood likely leads to a path of movement in adulthood. Two-thirds of respondents also indicated that they had moved to another country at least once for work-related reasons. One respondent from my survey stated,

> The TCK lifestyle can make it hard to feel settled. It makes it hard to put down roots and create a home when you have uprooted yourself so many times. I've become more adaptable and I think it has served me well overall. I've learned to take things as they come.

This is a typical response for many TCKs as shown through my survey and in testimonies recorded in Useem, Useem and Cottrell's larger survey from 1993. Mobility during childhood can lead to an inherent desire and need to move in adulthood.

2. There is a robust number of ATCKs who choose professions in "helping" fields. Nearly 50% of respondents from my survey have chosen professions in fields related to education, medicine and social work. In Cottrell's narrative, she mentions that "…over half of the latter group [with careers involving expertise, leadership and independence] were in helping professions such as medicine, teaching, social work, clergy or counseling" (Cottrell, 2002, p. 236). Cottrell's results show 38% to my 49% of respondents working in these two categories of profession. This finding illustrates a strong connection between TCKs and a pursuit of work that in some way serves others.   There is a level of compassion (though not just unique to TCKs) that can be attributed to being exposed to many different types of people and places around the globe.

3. TCKs are overwhelmingly more likely to pursue higher education than the average American (the two studies compare only TCKs with an affiliation to the United States) and generally exhibit high academic aptitude and achievement. Cottrell's study showed that 81% of the 603 surveyed ATCKs had (at the very least) a bachelor's degree. Based on job titles and clearly stated degrees from respondents in my survey, I can estimate that roughly 90% of the 30 participants are in pursuit of or have acquired advanced degrees. In an article entitled *Lessons From Our Kissing Cousins: Third Culture Kids and Gifted Children*, Wenda Sheard states,

   > TCKs graduate from college at rates four times that of non-TCKs (Useem & Cottrell, 1999). One study by an organization of missionary agencies found that 73% of TCKs graduate from university and 25% of TCK graduate from university with honors" (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999, as cited by Sheard).

These are impressive statistics which support the theory that ATCKs, in general, value education, exhibit a thirst for knowledge, and often excel in their areas of study.

4. The majority of Third Culture Kids do not have a singular definition of *home*. Forty-nine percent of the respondents from my survey indicated that their concept of home was a combination of different ideas and places. As most do not primarily perceive *home* as their country of citizenship, passport or nationality, this suggests that ATCKs may find a level of comfort in countries outside of the United States. Ultimately, many of the respondents described a high level of discomfort and confusion upon re-entering the U.S. and adapting to American norms, as was similar to my own experience. Asking fellow-TCKs what they consider home to be allowed me to see that an overwhelming majority are not tied to the notion that home is a physical place, and that most (90%) agreed that their upbringing has had an influence on their perception of this concept.

5. As many articles and studies indicate, the majority of TCKs are known for their open-mindedness and cultural sensitivity. One respondent from my survey stated, "I wish more people were TCKs. I think it results in an inherent cultural competency that cannot be taught in school." These qualities undoubtedly contribute to the professional development of ATCKs and make them appealing candidates anywhere they choose to work. Van Reken states that in addition to enjoying other cultures,

> … most TCKs have gained valuable lessons from the deeper levels [of cultures] as well. They have lived in other places long enough to learn and appreciate the reasons and understanding behind some of the behavioral differences rather than simply being frustrated by the, as visitors tend to be (Pollock & Van R, 2008, p. 96). *And*

> As TCKs live in various cultures, they not only learn about cultural differences, but they also experience the world in a tangible way that is impossible to do by reading books, seeing movies, or watching nightly newscasts alone (Pollock & Van R, 2008, p. 88).

TCK make for excellent additions to any multicultural team and not only do they enjoy working with people with diverse backgrounds, they often thrive in multicultural settings.

Recommendations for Further Research

In dissecting my own survey questions and looking at the themes explored in Useem, Useem and Cottrell's 1993 study, I have identified many possible topics for further research. As TKC's remain somewhat enigmatic to social scientists and the world alike, there are potentially endless areas of study that can be explored and expanded upon. My recommendations include:

- ATCK areas of study in higher education and how that relates to career choices

- Further research regarding ATCK sponsor organizations and current chosen professions

- Quantitative study about ATCKs and entry (re-entry) into their *first culture*; common challenges they encounter

- Research delving further into ATCKs and concept of *Home*

- ATCK concept of *Home* as compared to cross-cultural kids' concept of *Home*

- ATCK concept of *Home* as compared to those who have lived abroad extensively in adulthood (but having spent their formative years in their *first culture*)

- Bi-racial/bi-cultural ATCKs' and their concept of *Home*

- TCKs (under the age of 18) and their concept of *Home*

- Further research on the ATCK and identity development

- ATCKs and their political beliefs

- ATCKs and their academic standing in universities

- TCKs and their results in the Myers Briggs test (for a larger study)

- ATCKs and the effect of a multicultural upbringing on maintaining stable relationships

- ATCKs: A more in-depth look at number of countries lived in before age 18 and number of countries lived in after

- TCK responses to the question "Where are you from?"

- A comparative study: A sample of TCKs' concept of home between the ages of 15-18 and their concept of home 10 years later

As you may see from the list, there are endless channels to take when studying TCK's; it is a relatively unchartered territory in scientific research. Understandably, there has been very little follow-up to original studies. As stated, the challenge in locating and surveying TCKs (as they are typically mobile) inherently limits the amount of research that has been conducted. It would

be interesting to try to devise methods of conducting a longitudinal study to see how one group of respondents' views or opinions have changed over the course of their lives. One way that I could best think to gather data on TCKs would be through their sponsor agencies; an exercise in working with children and parents alike, in partnership with these entities, in order to develop more data in the field. The method of tracking these individuals in future years, however, could prove to be an invasion of privacy or burden for some. On the other hand, the majority of TCKs' commitment to education and public service may lend itself to overcoming these obstacles. This area of study will perhaps remain a difficult one to produce conclusive facts and statistics for, but I have hopes that researchers will find a way to add to existing information on these unique individuals.

Closing Remarks

I currently work for the American Red Cross. Disaster Services of the Red Cross assists families who have been affected by disasters and find themselves displaced from their homes. Related to my work in New Orleans, in a very literal sense, I am helping people re-establish their family homes. My empathy for victims of catastrophe is rooted in my own upbringing. I often felt forced to leave multiple homes I had become deeply connected to. I think that some of the grief from experiencing this type of loss still lingers. After losing countless people, places, cultures and various homes, I think I have developed a defense mechanism to avoid more feelings of the same. It is perhaps the reason I felt the strong need to leave New Orleans after only 6 months and why I am currently feelings the pangs of restlessness. I believe that I instinctively feel that I must leave a place before developing strong attachments to it. It is relevant to this paper and my overall question to state that I am currently looking at professional opportunities abroad in Haiti and Puerto Rico, with the Red Cross. As I move forward in life and

in my career, I must remember to properly address these losses and grieve properly before moving on.

During my first months as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Cameroon, we were required to complete three months of training. All of us were placed in home-stays in the Northern Province of the country and took classes daily. On one of these days, they took us to the provincial government office to formally introduce us to the Cameroon equivalent of Mayor. As we all stood to introduce ourselves, I heard my fellow volunteers speak a few words, mostly in English, one-by-one. "Hello, my name is Sarah from Michigan." "My name is Ryan, from Chapel Hill, North Carolina," and so forth. In that moment, I briefly panicked. This was my least favorite question, after all. At the last minute, I suddenly knew what I would say. I stood up and in French, I said "Je m'appelle Kelly, je suis nee aux Etats-Unis, mais je suis un enfant du monde" – Hello, my name is Kelly, born in the U.S., but I am a child of the world. Much to my surprise, the Mayor and all of the officials seated with him – along with my fellow volunteers - rose from their seats and gave me a standing ovation. Perhaps this is the only response I will ever need. Maybe, the entire world is *my* home, just as it is for other Third Culture Kids roaming the globe in search of it.

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Appendices

APPENDIX A:

Map of New Orleans

The city of New Orleans (Orleans Parish), Louisiana is divided into 17 wards. Traditionally, the *wards* (otherwise commonly known as neighborhoods) served as divisions used in voting in elections, subdivided into precincts.

Adult Third Culture Kids (SURVEY)

Hi Friends! I'm writing my Masters thesis on my own professional journey as a Third Culture Kid, but I really wanted to learn more from you and about some of your journeys. I believe that being able to compare and contrast stories will create a much richer body of information, as well. This is completely anonymous, and I won't be discussing names or personal information. Let me know if you'd like me to share the findings with you, or even if you'd like to read my final paper upon completion?! Thank you so very much, in advance, for taking a few minutes to fill out this survey for me!

1. A Third Culture Kid (TCK) is defined as: "a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents' culture. The TCK frequently builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture may be assimilated into the TCK's life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar background." Given this definition, would you identify yourself as a 'Third Culture Kid'?
In this case the "first culture" refers to the parents'/adults' home culture; "second culture" refers to the host culture in which the family lived; and the "third culture" refers to shared commonalities of those living internationally mobile lifestyles.

☐ Yes

☐ No

2. What is the closest definition of what you define/consider to be "home"?
Please refer to 'Other' if none of these apply and provide your own definition. If multiple answers apply, please explain in question #3.

⊙ Where one or both of my parents was/were born or grew up/lived

⊙ My country of citizenship, where I hold a passport, or nationality I claim

⊙ The country in which I was born

⊙ One (or more) countries in which I grew up abroad and to which I have an emotional attachment or cultural affinity

⊙ Where I went to high school/international school or university

⊙ Where my "heart" lies; a certain culture or set of values or ideas which draws me to think of certain places or regions as "home"

⊙ A combination of one or more of the above

⊙ None of the above (I am a Global Nomad who considers no one place to be "home")

⊙ To me, "home" is not a physical place

⊙ Other: [   ]

3. If you feel that your definition of "home" included more than one of the options from question #2, please list them below in order of relevance to you.

4. How many countries did you live in by the age of 18? Would you be so kind as to list these countries?

5. How many countries have you lived in after the age of 18?
lived in refers to 6+ months of stay

6. If applicable, how many of these moves after age 18 were for a professional relocation (job, internship, career, etc)?

7. Do you feel that the number of places you have lived in has influenced your definition/concept of "home"?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Other: _____

8. Do you feel that your concept of "home" has influenced the choice of where you are currently living or where you hope to live in the future?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Other: _____

9. Please write down your current job title and the industry in which you work OR school you currently attend and area of study.

10. What profession have you trained for or aspire to engage in as a career in the future?

Please describe any details or responses that you felt the questions above did not provide ample room to discuss.
I'd also love to hear any thoughts or opinions on the TCK lifestyle and what it means to you in your adult life! How much do you identify with your multi-cultural upbringing?!

APPENDIX C:

Ann Baker Cottrell's Table of Employer/Work Setting by Sponsor (Ender, 2002, p. 238)

Work Setting	Mission (n=102)	Military (n=175)	Gov't (n=135)	Business n=90)	Other (n=80)	Total (N=582)
Business/ Financial	22	32	27	20	17	25
Education	25	23	17	17	28	22
Health/Social Service	24	7	13	23	13	15
Self	11	14	14	14	14	13
Government	3	5	5	7	8	5
Military	2	10	6	1	2	5
Professional	3	6	12	11	10	8
Arts/Media	0	3	5	4	7	4
Religious	10	0	0	2	1	2
Total percent	18%	30%	23%	16%	14%	100%