

12-2018

# Intercultural Adjustment for Teachers Abroad

Rachel Bassett

Follow this and additional works at: [https://repository.stcloudstate.edu/engl\\_etds](https://repository.stcloudstate.edu/engl_etds)

---

## Recommended Citation

Bassett, Rachel, "Intercultural Adjustment for Teachers Abroad" (2018). *Culminating Projects in English*. 150.  
[https://repository.stcloudstate.edu/engl\\_etds/150](https://repository.stcloudstate.edu/engl_etds/150)

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by theRepository at St. Cloud State. It has been accepted for inclusion in Culminating Projects in English by an authorized administrator of theRepository at St. Cloud State. For more information, please contact [rswexelbaum@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:rswexelbaum@stcloudstate.edu).

**Intercultural Adjustment for Teachers Abroad**

by

Rachel Bassett

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

St. Cloud State University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree

Master of Arts in

English: Teaching English as a Second Language

December, 2018

Thesis Committee:

James Robinson, Chairperson

Choonkyong Kim

Judith Dorn

### **Abstract**

The purpose of this research was to analyze how teachers adjusted to living and teaching overseas. Many teachers choose to move abroad for their careers, or for a portion of their careers. It is therefore vital that they adjust to the host culture and host culture within the educational institute, with a level of adaptability and cultural sensitivity. Some teachers appear to adapt well while others seem to struggle, causing distress for themselves and their workplace. The scope of this research was wide, searching for common themes regarding cultural adjustment among those living abroad as teachers. Eleven teachers were interviewed using a qualitative, ethnographic approach. The teachers were all currently teaching abroad or had recently taught abroad (within the last 12 months) in countries outside of the United States. The average length of time abroad was five years. Their responses resulted in a variety of topics concerning cultural adjustment; these were organized into four larger themes, including: 1) positive orientation towards different cultures, 2) school and workplace adjustment, 3) family and home life, and 4) additional factors. The results were then applied as strategies for international schools and international teachers to use to better support teachers' intercultural adjustment. The implications included seven strategies: 1) hiring teachers with previous experiences abroad or interest in other cultures and languages, 2) providing initial support and orientation programs, 3) choosing a positive mindset towards the host culture, 4) developing a support network with other international teachers and with local people, 5) accepting and valuing cultural differences in the workplace, 6) appreciating the benefits that the differences in cultures offers, and 7) prioritizing immediate family needs. This research should be helpful for both international teachers and schools abroad who hire teachers from overseas in any capacity.

### **Acknowledgments**

First, I would like to thank my Committee Chair and Advisor, Dr. James H. Robinson. His consistent support and guidance was critical throughout my studies and this research paper.

I also want to thank my committee members, Dr. Choonkyong Kim and Dr. Judith A. Dorn. Their input deepened my understanding of my project and of the research process.

Next, I want to thank the participants who shared their stories of their lives abroad to inform this research. Their stories clearly illuminated this growing group of teachers.

This project would not have been born without my experience teaching abroad in China. So, I want to thank the school where I taught, the International School of Qiushi. The students and staff I worked with gave me a home in a new place and inspired me daily.

Finally, I want to thank my mom, Nila Bassett, who encouraged me to consider language learning and pursuing further education in the field of Teaching English as a Second Language. Her constant belief and encouragement, along with the rest of my family's, have been vital in my education.

## Table of Contents

	Page
List of Table .....	7
Chapter	
1. Introduction .....	8
Rationale/Personal Ground .....	9
Research Question .....	11
2. Literature Review .....	13
Definitions .....	13
Expatriate Assignment .....	14
Overseas Experience .....	15
Self-Initiated Mobility .....	15
Peace Corps Volunteers .....	16
United States English Language Fellows .....	17
Unlicensed ESL/EFL/TESL/TESOL Teachers Abroad .....	17
Licensed Teachers .....	18
Student Teaching Abroad .....	18
Acculturation .....	21
Study Abroad Research .....	22
Culture Shock .....	22
U-Curve .....	24
Cultural Adjustment Models .....	25

	5
Chapter	Page
Social Learning/Social Identity .....	27
Culture Distance .....	28
Resiliency/Staff-Efficacy .....	31
3. Methodology .....	33
Expected Outcome .....	33
Participants .....	34
Materials .....	37
Consent .....	37
Procedure .....	37
Limitations .....	39
4. Results .....	40
Positive Orientation towards Different Cultures .....	40
School and Workplace Adjustment .....	46
Family and Home Life .....	59
Additional Factors .....	64
5. Implications .....	71
International School Strategy: Hire Teachers with Previous Experiences	
Abroad or Interest in Cultures and Languages .....	71
International School Strategy: Provide Initial Support and Orientation .....	72
Teacher Strategy: Choose a Positive Orientation Towards the Host	
Culture .....	74

Chapter	Page
Teacher Strategy: Develop a Support Network with Other International Teachers Abroad and with Local People .....	75
Teacher Strategy: Accept and Value Cultural Differences in the Workplace .....	76
Teacher Strategy: Appreciate the Benefits the New Culture Provides that the Home Culture Lacks, including Workplace Differences .....	78
Teacher Strategy: Prioritize your Immediate Family Needs Above your Extended Family Wishes .....	79
Conclusion .....	81
Limitations of the Study .....	81
Further Research .....	82
References .....	83
Appendices	
A. Intercultural Development Inventory .....	90
B. IRB Approval .....	92

**List of Table**

Table	Page
1. Participant's Information .....	36



## Chapter 1: Introduction

Living abroad attracts numerous people every year. For some it is the allure of the exotic, for others a career advancement opportunity, for still others they may feel forced into it or that they stumbled into it almost unknowingly. According to the International TEFL Academy (2012), at the time of this report, there were approximately 250,000 native English speakers working abroad to teach English. This number does not include all the licensed teachers abroad who teach academic content courses. UNESCO's (2011) research revealed the need for approximately two million more primary teachers alone in the subsequent years. With such variety in positions and countries, numerous teachers are recruited and start or continue careers abroad.

All these teachers are confronted with a culture (and oftentimes a language) that they may not understand. Teachers need to adjust to potential loneliness, separation from loved ones, and adapting to a new culture simultaneously. All the cultural components that affect daily life in a new country automatically affect the educational setting of a teacher as well. Each teacher reacts in a different way, some adjusting to the culture and others rejecting it (Grimes, 2010).

Some of these teachers are untrained and want to try something right after university or to try a career change while still having a steady paycheck and the appeal of easy access to travel opportunities. Others are trained, with varying degrees of experience, who want to add a cultural component to their teaching repertoire while simultaneously being students themselves as they travel to new countries learning about the world. Some are men; some are women. Some are older while many are younger. Many are stereotypically single or coupled without children while there are also families who live abroad for years. Regardless of the variety of teachers living

abroad, they live in different cultures, teach in schools unaccustomed at times to various educational practices, and take attitudes and understandings from their home cultures with them. Some seem to adapt culturally, linguistically, financially, and career-wise, fully enjoying, acclimating to and making the most of their cultural experience. Others seem to be less adaptive of cultural differences, viewing their host culture through the lenses of their own worldview and background.

So what factors are involved in how individuals respond to their new culture? What motivations, backgrounds, and personalities do those living and teaching abroad possess? Do the individual cultures affect newcomers in similar ways? What factors contribute to the decision for a teacher to stay abroad an additional year or years? What do schools and educational institutions do that help individuals feel successful and adjusted in their new roles and homes?

### **Rationale/Personal Ground**

This research topic is personally interesting to me. I spent the past three years living and teaching at a small host national, Alberta, Canada accredited school in central China. My students were all English learners with almost the entire population from the surrounding areas. The school community was largely Chinese and monolingual with only the Chinese English teaching staff and high school support staff bilingual in Mandarin and English. The foreign teachers who came to work at our school were largely Canadian, along with some Americans, Australians, and one Mexican. At any given time there may have been up to 12 foreign teachers employed. The city was mostly isolated from international influences so we as the foreign teachers were almost the only non-Chinese residents of this “small,” traditional Chinese city.

In my 3 years at this school, I was personally very happy and would consider my time successful and meaningful. However, I unfortunately witnessed many other teachers feel disgruntled, disillusioned, and bitter towards the school and/or towards China in general. It is obvious to me that many frustrations came from not understanding differences in cultural attitudes or practices. Many teachers seemed to adjust well and fit in to our school's bicultural/bilingual environment, learning from moments of misunderstandings and confusion. However, some teachers left after one year or even midyear. While there are many determining factors as to why a person may come abroad and stay abroad, these factors did not always seem to account for those who chose to stay while others in the same situations chose to leave.

In my second year at the school, I moved into an administration role and searched for ways I could better support teachers before their abroad experience and in their beginning weeks. I prepared a pre-departure orientation packet, trainings for when teachers arrived at the school, and helped facilitate some welcoming meals between newcomers, veteran foreign teachers, and the Chinese staff. Additionally, I was always very conscientious about my own example and would do everything possible to model the kind of attitudes towards our host culture that I hoped these teachers would develop. While this most likely was helpful to some, it still did not seem to "solve" the issue of teachers becoming frustrated with the experience and leaving or staying begrudgingly and with constant complaints.

In my wider circle of contacts outside of the school in China, I know numerous other teachers living abroad. While their situations may be "easier" or "more challenging" depending on their locations, schools, and other supports, there still seemed to be mixed results about a teacher's fulfillment there. Another piece to note was how some teachers who seemed to be

content with their experience stayed only 1 to 2 years, while others stayed longer term. On the flip side, those who seemed generally disillusioned and discontent would sometimes stay short term (a year or less) and others would stay long term, even though it appeared as though they were unhappy.

As an administrator trying to alleviate this difficulty, I racked my brain for ways my school and I could help assist teachers in their transitions into our school and support throughout their adjustment to China. Through this project, I hope to discover from others abroad what makes their experiences positive or negative and how they have learned to adapt to new cultures. The implications for this research could be helpful to the many educational institutions abroad and recruiting companies who work with teachers who want to move abroad.

### **Research Question**

The primary question is: *What kinds of themes or patterns emerge from the stories and experiences of teachers living abroad that can help us understand their cultural adjustment in their host country?*

This paper presents the research that has already been conducted regarding teachers abroad. The research currently available shows a clear lack in the specific topic this study seeks to address, which is teachers living abroad and their adjustment to the host culture(s). However, it pulls heavily on related studies including working abroad, student teaching abroad programs, cultural adaptation research, expatriate assignment, overseas experience (or gap year), students' adjustment to study abroad, culture shock, and culture distance. By taking relevant information from these similar studies, the issue of teacher adaptation abroad can be analyzed.

This issue is important to address because continual turnover at schools hurts the students and those who remain (both those from the host country and the foreign teachers). Additionally, for school administration and teachers abroad, more research addressing their specific needs could be helpful in developing processes, training, and support that leads to teachers' positive adjustment and their ability to stay in their position for an entire academic year or longer.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Definitions

These definitions are my working definitions and should provide some clarification for the following sections.

***Positive Cultural Adjustment***—an accepting and admiring view of another culture even when cultural differences are not understandable. Bochner's (1982) theory of interacting with one's home and host culture includes four levels. Level four, Mediating, where an individual accepts both cultures and integrates them into her life, aligns with the concept of positive cultural adjustment. Similarly, Berry, Kim, Power, Young, and Bujaki's (1989) theory has a category called, Integration, where an individual maintains his own culture and adapts to the new host culture.

***Host Culture***—new culture (in this study, often a new country).

***Home Culture***—culture (oftentimes country) an individual comes from.

***Expatriate Assignment***—being assigned an overseas position by a domestic employer.

***Overseas Experience***—typically for young adults to explore the world, oftentimes before pursuing their careers or higher education, also known as the “Gap Year,” more common in countries outside of the United States.

***Self-Initiated Mobility***—choosing to move abroad by one's own volition and not due to a company's job assignment or a lack of work in the home country.

***Student Teaching Abroad***—completing student teaching requirements as part of a teacher education program in another country.

*Study Abroad*—studying in another country to complete credits and graduation requirements in some programs.

*Culture Shock*—term used to describe strong initial feelings upon arriving in a new country and noticing the numerous differences from one’s home culture

*Acculturation*—the process of an individual adapting to a new culture.

*Cultural Distance*—how similar (“close”) or different (“far”) two countries may seem when contrasted You need citations for these definitions....

### **Expatriate Assignment**

Expatriation is different than teaching, however, it can provide insights into teachers abroad. As Suutari and Brewster (2000) noted, some of the earliest research subjects about living abroad came mostly from expatriate assignments. Expatriation usually involves being chosen by one’s company to live abroad for the purpose of work. It is usually connected with the institution a person already works for and the family most likely moves for the length of time abroad (Inkson, Arthur, Pringle, & Barry, 1997). Another form of expatriate assignment is missionaries who move abroad for extended time to spread their religion to the people in the host country.

Expatriate assignment is not the typical way teachers move abroad. However, for some teachers with a lack of job opportunities in their home state or country, they may feel forced to move abroad. Additionally, a spouse could get an overseas position and the teacher may feel reluctant to move abroad but is still able to find a teaching job. Even a teacher who chooses to move abroad may, for whatever reason, feel resentment or that he or she was forced into the decision.

## **Overseas Experience**

Inkson et al. (1997) provided the descriptors above regarding “Expatriate Assignment” to contrast two types of people living and working abroad, including “Expatriate Assignment” and “Overseas Experience” (OE). The Overseas Experience, or in other cases sometimes known as the “Gap Year,” is often specific to younger people who want a year or more to travel after high school or university. It is a formative time to learn about the world, oneself and to think about new career or living options for their futures. It is not seen as developing one’s professional resume necessarily although this is sometimes a byproduct.

The Overseas Experience also did not exactly fit the research topic of teachers living abroad. However, from this concept, the important factor of choice comes up. Choosing to move abroad versus feeling pushed abroad due to circumstances could have an effect on one’s international experience.

## **Self-Initiated Mobility**

Thorn (2009) focused on the concept of self-initiated mobility for those, in any professional career, who chose an international move. Jackson et. al. (2005) included a plethora of motivations and factors that played into one’s decisions to move abroad. There were six main motives with several sub-motives for each for a total of 25 specific factors that influenced the decision to relocate internationally. The motives were career, cultural and travel opportunities, economics, political environment, quality of life, and relationships. Some examples of sub-motives included professional development and career advancement (career), previous travel experiences, adventure, and interest in cultures (cultural and travel opportunities), improved standard of living and paying off student loans (economics), safety and to escape a political



environment (political environment), better public transportation and enjoying the outdoors (quality of life), change in a relationship, better education for children, and accompanying a partner (relationships).

Ackers (2005) also pointed out that there were a range of factors that changed throughout one's life. For example, a teacher who initially moved abroad for adventure and seeing the world could later stay abroad for financial or career advancement, etc. In later works, Thorn, Inkson, and Carr (2013) added to the discussion with the factors of how many moves an individual or a family made and how these motivations differed from a single international move. These studies all gave a clearer picture of the variety of reasons people move abroad. A factor to note is that some of these included personality traits, while others were situational, related to family circumstances, or life stages.

### **Peace Corps Volunteers**

One group of overseas teachers and volunteers is the Peace Corps. The Peace Corps program was established in 1961 by President John F. Kennedy. The program was initiated quickly and has launched over 220,000 people overseas in a variety of serving capacities in the developing world (Peace Corps: The Founding Moment., n.d.). Cross' (1998) study showed many positive qualities resulting from former Peace Corps members. Her surveys showed that many teachers developed a sense of self-efficacy and willingness to accept challenges even upon returning to the United States. She reported that many school districts strongly desired to hire former Peace Corps members for their increased cultural awareness and ability to communicate effectively with those who were different from them. Two of the Peace Corps' goals include bettering the understanding of Americans around the world and increasing understanding of

those abroad to Americans at home (Peace Corps: About, n.d.). Cross' results seem to agree with the Peace Corps mission stated above. These former members also reported personal growth, positive orientations towards those different than them, and an increased sense of self-confidence.

### **United States English Language Fellows**

While the Peace Corps accepts individuals from a wide variety of fields and trained and untrained teachers, The U.S. Department of State's English Language Fellows Program only accepts Americans with advanced degrees in ESL, TESOL or other language teaching master's degrees. This program allows highly qualified educators to work in universities, schools, and educational departments around the world as teachers and leaders in English language learning settings. This program has been in existence since 1969 (English Language Programs, n.d.). The existence of and rigidity of acceptance into this program shows the exclusiveness possible in the world today where English teachers are greatly needed and sought after.

### **Unlicensed ESL/EFL/TESL/TESOL Teachers Abroad**

In addition to these U.S. developed programs, there are numerous programs and individual schools and institutions around the world that recruit native English speakers (often from the United States, Canada, South Africa, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand) to teach children and teenagers. Some of these function within the public school systems, such as South Korea's popular and well known English Program in Korea (EPIK) program (EPIK: English Program in Korea, n.d.). Other companies offer outside of school English lessons, such as the long established and well-known English First (EF) company. This company hires unlicensed teachers to teach in its centers around the world (EF English First, n.d.). They provide

training and support for new teachers. There are numerous private schools and companies that hire unlicensed ESL teachers around the world as well.

### **Licensed Teachers**

There are many licensed and experienced teachers who move abroad to expand their teaching careers, finances, and life experiences. These teachers may be licensed to teach English, English as a Second Language, or any other typical school subject. Oftentimes they teach at international schools where students represent a host of countries, cultures, and languages. These schools tend to be highly multicultural. Some positions are in slightly more isolated areas while the majority of students may be from the host country. In these environments, the atmosphere tends to be more bicultural with a host culture and language and “specific” guest culture (for example, “Western” or “Canadian,” etc.). These schools usually are accredited by a governing authority such as a specific country’s, state’s, or province’s educational standards or by the popular International Baccalaureate Program ([ibo.org](http://ibo.org), n.d.).

### **Student Teaching Abroad**

A newer research focus is student teaching abroad programs. Several studies (Baker, Giacchino-Baker, 2000; Colville-Hall, Adamowicz-Harizsz, Sidorova, & Engelking, 2011; Cushner, 2007; Landerhold & Chacko, 2013; Maynes, Allison, & Julien-Schultz, 2013) explained why student teaching abroad was beneficial for new teachers, how the programs were developed, expected program outcomes, cultural training for teachers and evaluation of the programs.

Landerholm and Chacko (2013) provided an overview of the important status international experiences were obtaining in higher education. While studying abroad has been

popular for many years, it was becoming increasingly expected for many students. Additionally, there were numerous partner relationships between institutions abroad and domestic. In several university programs where students were placed in schools internationally, students learned about pedagogical methods and different views of learning that reflected non-western values. They also developed a greater awareness of privilege in a context outside of the United States. The goal of the universities was to develop citizens who could function successfully in a global economy and world. Finally, they supported the role of student teaching abroad for modern teachers because of the intercultural experience it provides. They compared international mindedness to other modern necessities, such as technological knowledge and use.

Landerholm and Chacko's (2013) study was about a specific five-month student teaching program in South Korea, called Student Teachers and Korean Experience (S.T.a.K.E.). After students completed eight weeks of student teaching in Chicago, they went to Korea and taught conversational English in primary, elementary, middle, and high schools. One benefit mentioned was several students decided to teach there following their student teaching experience. A few even stayed for 2 or 3 years.

Colville-Hall et al. (2011) presented a program that sent American pre-service teachers to France for 3 weeks of seminar training followed by a 9-week practicum experience in French schools. Before leaving, students took the Intercultural Development Inventory (Hammer & Bennet, 1998) which rates individuals on a continuum of feelings towards different cultures. They also completed individual and group interviews, reflective journals, ongoing meetings with mentor teachers, and discussions to compare teaching practices in France to home. Finally, they

completed the Intercultural Development Inventory. They found that 79% of students showed an increase in their intercultural sensitivity (p. 278).

Cushner's (2007) study stated the benefits of creating internationally-minded teachers through student teaching abroad. For modern, diverse countries, student teaching abroad was a formative experience for many young teachers. They were pushed outside of their comfort zones as they encountered different work styles. The experience oftentimes opened their minds about the world and helped them understand unfamiliar cultures. This understanding would make them stronger teachers in their home country as they would be able to relate to students who were different from them. Additionally, they developed a greater sense of self-efficacy which would benefit them in any future teaching position. Furthermore, in contrast to studying abroad where students from the same country or university could spend time together easily, Cushner explained that student teaching abroad placed students outside of such frequent contact with others from their program, so they benefitted from a more independent and immersive experience.

In Maynes et al.'s (2013) study, preservice teachers spent time teaching in rural Kenya for 3 weeks. Nine months later and again 4 years later, they reported long-term impacts. Results showed different views about the world resulting in approaching their teaching practices differently and a sense of self-esteem from overcoming challenges in a developing country.

Baker and Giacchino-Baker (2000) published a report about a student teaching project in Mexico. Their goal, along with developing stronger programs, was to develop multicultural teachers who would be successful in diverse classrooms around the United States, specifically with English learning populations. Students reported feelings of growth, greater openness

towards others, and a willingness to teach a variety of students. The participating institutions' leaders gave feedback as well. Their comments mentioned a positive view of the student teachers, appreciation for developing a greater sense of bilingualism, and greater knowledge through sharing ideas related to methodology and resources.

While these student teaching abroad studies mostly focused on the benefits to new teachers and institutions, specifically, the pre-service teachers developing the ability to work well with those different than them upon returning home, they had less information on how individual variables, such as, the type of educational institution, specific country factors, and family or personal factors, impacted their time abroad. Another key difference was that international student teaching was often only for a few weeks, months or one semester, whereas living as a teacher abroad was usually one year in a country at the minimum. Additionally, some teachers had been teaching for years and were therefore possibly coming abroad for other reasons besides teaching alone while a new teacher may have been primarily concerned with gaining teaching experience to finish his or her initial degree and license.

### **Acculturation**

Mendenhall and Oddou (1985) provided an excellent base understanding of expatriate acculturation. Their research was mostly completed in the business world. They pointed out the negative effects, both on the company and the individual, when a manager or employee did not make a positive cultural adjustment. There were financial, perceptual, and time losses. They acknowledged factors that could contribute to a more positive adjustment, such as pre-departure training, however, they also addressed internal personality features that played a role. They

created four categories to show a person's relationship with the host culture. These categories were: 1) self-oriented, 2) others-oriented, 3) perceptual, and 4) cultural toughness.

Self-orientation (1) included being able to substitute pleasures at home with similar pastimes in the host culture, the ability to deal with stress, and capability to complete the work of one's overseas assignment. Others-orientation (2) involved relationship development with host nationals and the ability to communicate. The ability to communicate brought up several noteworthy subcategories, including: willingness to communicate with host nationals, confidence in interacting with those from another culture and the desire to understand and relate to the local people. The perceptual dimension (3) dealt with the ability to make correct assumptions regarding the host culture and pointed out the levels of rigidity with which expats judge a host culture (Detweiler, 1975). The last component, cultural toughness (4), referred to how some countries themselves may have been more or less difficult for expatriate adjustment than others.

### **Study Abroad Research**

Although there was not a wide variety of literature on teachers, there was substantial research addressing a variety of topics including students studying abroad (most commonly for university). These studies helped explain the cultural adaptation process, culture shock and other factors relating to intercultural relations. Studying abroad was one of the main topics in original living abroad research.

### **Culture Shock**

One aspect of cultural adjustment that has been widely researched is the idea of "culture shock." This term first was mentioned by Oberg (1960) and referred to the nearly instant sense of change most individuals seemed to experience when encountering a new culture. Initially,

most of the research focused on physical or medical reactions (hence the term, “shock”). Oberg referred to it as a “malady” and an “ailment” stating that it had “symptoms” and a “cure.” His language showed the view of culture shock as a reaction belonging in the medical field. Oberg’s summary of culture shock claimed anxiety and frustration from losing the familiarity of daily, social interactions. According to Ward, Bochner, and Furnham (2001), studies that followed discussed culture shock in terms of the negative effects also.

Over time, the focus shifted away from medical treatments (Bochner, 1986, as cited in Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping & Todman, 2008) to social networks and the affective aspect of “transitioning.” With the change of focus, culture shock began to appear in the fields of psychology and education instead of in medicine. “Research has changed from ‘passive victim of trauma’ to ‘adaptation’ and ‘acculturation’” (Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping, & Todman, 2008, p. 65). Additionally, there were changes in practice as more positive preparation and orientation began to emerge for students who were about to study abroad (Bochner, 1982, as cited in Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping, & Todman, 2008).

Furnham and Bochner (1986, as cited by Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping, & Todman, 2008), proposed a view of culture shock that included culture learning, stress and coping, and social identification. They coined the three areas “ABC” to refer to the Affective aspect, the Behavioral reaction, and the Cognition of experiencing a culture. As they noted in their development of these areas, the ABC structure is a comprehensive model; this was most likely extremely beneficial at the time as the subject of culture shock shifted fields from medicine to psychology. In research since then, these phrases have been loosely, and somewhat commonly, referred to.



## **U-Curve**

Another model of adjustment abroad was the U-Curve model. This was championed by Lysgaard (1955) and has been widely accepted and referred to even outside of academic fields. The U-Curve demonstrated that when people moved abroad, they initially experienced excitement and a feeling of thrill from the new culture. Oberg (1960) referred to this phase as a “honeymoon period.” After this initial phase, people often experienced negative feelings, such as anxiety, fear, anger, hopelessness or a feeling of not belonging. Finally, sojourners adjusted and reached a satisfied level. This theory was so popular and widely accepted that an addition was made to reflect travelers’ re-entry into their host cultures. This theory was presented by Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) and was known as the “W-Curve.”

Ward, Okura, Kennedy, and Kojima (1998) assessed the effectiveness and validity of the U-Curve model. They shared that this model has been mostly proven using cross-sectional studies. Ward et al. proposed longitudinal studies as more reliable and, in addition to their own, cited numerous studies (Church, 1982; Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Kealey, 1989; Klineberg & Hull, 1979; Tanaka, Takai, Kohyama, & Fujihara, 1994; Ward & Kennedy, 1996; Zheng & Berry, 1991). The major reason as to why the U-Curve did not prove itself reliable could have been in the change from thinking of cultural adjustment as mostly clinical/physical to cognitive and social/behavioral. When looking at the different aspects of a person’s adjustment abroad, Ward, et al. found that the psychological adjustment was very negative at first which contrasted with Oberg’s (1960) euphoric entry. The adjustment of the socio-cultural dimension was also greatest at first but quickly changed as travelers made friends. Over time, this continued to even out. Therefore, these two factors had different rates (and different “curves”) which indicated

unreliability in the U-curve model. Nevertheless, it appears to remain a popular concept in literature.

### **Cultural Adjustment Models**

Once the topic of culture shock switched fields into psychology and education, culture shock somewhat changed to reflect a more gradual and more positive adjustment, that varied in time based on the individual and situation. Ward and Searle (1991) presented three approaches used to study culture shock which included: a) clinical (the previous way to conceptualize culture shock), b) social learning models, and c) social cognition. Many researchers presented useful models to help conceptualize degrees of how individuals may have reacted or interacted with the new host culture, as well as their own home culture. There were some similarities between models.

Bochner's (1982) model of interacting with a new and different culture included four reactions which were: 1) passing, 2) chauvinism, 3) marginal[ization], and 4) mediating. Passing (1) referred to the individual rejecting his or her home culture and totally accepting the host culture. His example was migrants. Chauvinism (2) would be when an individual rejected the host culture and built up the home culture. Bochner suggested this could lead to nationalism and racism on the part of the individual. Marginal[ization] (3) indicated an individual having trouble balancing his or her identity between both cultures. This could suggest an unsettling feeling of an identity loss as the individual may not feel a sense of connection to either culture. Mediating (4) was when an individual could successfully accept both the host and home culture into his or her sense of self and daily life.

Another model by Berry et al. (1989) was based in the setting of multicultural societies. This could be different than assessing how teachers reacted to living and adjusting abroad if they were in homogenous communities; however, the model is still beneficial as a way to frame an intercultural experience. The theory started with two ways of thinking: 1) cultural maintenance of one's own identity and 2) contact with other groups. In this study, the ideologies were applicable to individuals and groups, however, in this paper, only the individual will be presented with the assumption that the group could reflect the individual. The degree to which one associates with his or her own culture and the other culture landed an individual in one of four categories. These categories included: 1) assimilation, 2) integration, 3) separation, and 4) marginalization. Assimilation (1) meant an individual essentially abandoned his or her own cultural identity and assimilated into the other. Integration (2) referred to an individual maintaining his or her cultural heritage while he or she also adapted to and accepted the other culture. Separation (3) was when an individual rejected or withheld himself or herself from the other culture and maintained his or her own culture. It was an important factor to note that if it was the dominant group separating from the non-dominant group, it could also have been considered segregation. Marginalization (4) was an unfortunate experience that included an individual feeling removed from both his or her own culture and the other culture. This could have coincided with a great deal of anxiety and questions of identity.

Hammer and Bennet's (1998) Intercultural Development Inventory has been researched extensively and proven to be a successful means for analyzing a person's ability to relate to another culture (Paige, Jacobs-Cassuto, Yershova, & DeJaeghere, 2003). This tool classified people into six categories which then combined into two larger groups, one which did not accept

other cultures, Ethnocentric, and one which did accept other cultures, Ethnorelative. The six categories showed a continuum. According to Hammer and Bennet the three levels that fit into the Ethnocentric stages were Denial, Defense and Minimization and the three Ethnorelative stages were Acceptance, Adaptation, and Integration. The two larger categories and the six subcategories are shown in a table in the appendices.

Matsumoto et al. (2001) created another model, the Intercultural Adjustment Potential Scale (ICAPS), that included the psychological components of intercultural adjustment. This scale consisted of four categories which were: Emotion Regulation, Openness, Flexibility, and Critical Thinking. This scale was unique from other personality tests as it was able to predict adjustment abroad so it could be useful for companies who are hiring for or assigning overseas positions.

### **Social Learning/Social Identity**

A theme mentioned as a factor in many studies was the idea of friendship and social groups as a component of adjustment. One study by Alred and Byram (2002) mentioned how important a social/familial unit could be for many students who lived abroad. In their study, they interviewed British students who lived abroad in a country with a different language for one year. Many students revealed the importance of creating friendships or finding a pseudo family in their new country (maybe a host family). Whether these were established by the university or found otherwise, students felt they had more stability and comfort with a support system. They also acknowledged that whether their friends were from the host country or home country, both were helpful in aiding adjustment for individuals.

In Caligiuri's (2000) study, she looked at how interaction with host nationals affected the adjustment of expatriates. The findings revealed a positive correlation with cultural adjustment when the individuals already possessed the quality of openness. The expatriates were from an American information technology company.

Bochner, McLeod, and Lin's (1977) study examined friendship patterns abroad. The structure considered involved three categories of friendship groups. These were: a) a conational network which helped individuals retain their sense of their home identity and security, b) a host national network with local people; this relationship was assumed to be mostly functional as they helped individuals in their work place and personal lives with practical matters, and c) a multinational network which could include people from any nationality. This network served a primarily recreational need. The hypothesis was that the conational network would be the strongest and most relied on. The participants were study abroad students from a variety of countries studying in Hawaii. The findings showed that while the conational relationships were strong, they provided important support. Instead of discouraging these interactions, institutions could encourage them to expand to include other nationalities. Host national relationships could be strengthened by expanding their purposes beyond only functional use and multinational networks could continue to be encouraged. The results showed that regardless of the relationship categories, all relationships could provide vital support to those living abroad.

### **Culture Distance**

There were several theories and discussions about the topic of cultural distance. This idea did not consider the physical distance between places and cultures primarily, but focused more on the cultural differences. For example, one could assume two Asian countries would be more

similar to one another than an Asian country and a North American country. The assumption would be that when a person would experience a culture similar (“close”) to his or her own, he or she would adapt more easily and quickly, while a culture very different (“far”) would be more difficult to adjust to. Mendenhall and Oddou (1985) mentioned this as a component of their model (previously discussed) for relating to a new culture. Their term for it was “cultural toughness” referring to certain cultures which would have been considered more difficult for expatriates to acclimate to than others.

In McClure’s (2007) study, she reported on the transition and struggles that Chinese graduate students had going into a Singaporean university. These two cultures would be considered different as Singapore spoke English and had a more western style of thinking and educating. Students were reported excited by the possibility of studying there for the benefits of a more international education and updated technology and resources. After arrival, students communicated surprise and confusion by the more independent approach to learning they were expected to participate in within the Singaporean system. In the Chinese system, they worked much more closely with their professors on their research projects. They also felt unsure about how to communicate with professors when they needed something and mistook the expectation of working more independently to indicate a lack of interest on the part of the professors. Adding to their sense of marginalization in their university studies, was the extended feeling of disconnection in their personal lives outside of the academic day. Their expectations did not match the reality of their cross-cultural experience causing their adjustment to be slower. They did report adjusting eventually.

Selmer and Luring (2009) have reported that an easier adjustment between two similar cultures is not always true. In looking at two groups of people, those who seemed to be from similar cultures and those from different cultures, both groups had similar adjustment times and experiences. Selmer and Shiu's (1999) study assessed Hong Kong business leaders expatriating to mainland China, a supposedly similar culture and heritage. Their results showed considerable difficulty for many of these leaders. Oftentimes, the managers would expect the employees (Chinese workers) to adapt to common Hong Kong business practices. Chinese workers seldom changed their way and Hong Kong managers would become frustrated and sometimes isolated in their new home. So, the idea that their adjustment would be easier did not appear to be valid. An explanation for this could be that someone going to a dissimilar culture would be aware of the cultural differences ahead of time and be able to anticipate how to adjust. Someone relocating to a supposedly similar culture may not have given as much consideration to potential differences and, upon encountering the changes, may have felt blindsided and responded in a negative way (Brewster, 1995; Brewster, Lundmark & Holden, 1993, as cited in Selmer & Shiu, 1999).

Black, Mendenhall, and Oddou (1991) advocated reducing uncertainty before going abroad through pre-departure training to help in their anticipatory adjustment. Selmer and Shiu's (1999) study showed a lack of pre-departure training, especially in the area of cross-cultural adjustment. McClure's (2007) study seemed to further support the idea of pre-departure training and orientation. Several of their practical suggestions continued after the students' initial arrival. Some of these support measures included helping staff to become more aware of the potential cross-cultural difficulties of students, forming a club of former graduate students to help create a sense of community, assigning "buddies" to assist in pre-departure and arrival planning and

adjusting, discussing some of the cultural values and differences students could expect in the new setting, having the staff meet regularly to discuss any new issues and problem-solve, and encouraging staff to meet with students regularly for advising.

In Jenkins and Mockaitis' (2010) study, they determined that a crucial factor was being overlooked in the culture distance literature. This was the perception of the expatriate. While most of the literature about cultural distance was based on travelers' perceptions of the differences, the research was limited in that it did not always consider the impact of their correct or incorrect analysis on their adjustment. Their hypotheses for the study were to discover the expatriates' perceptions of their home and host cultures, to objectively measure cultural distance, and to measure the accuracy of the expatriates' evaluations of the host country. The need for an accurate tool to measure objective and subjective cultural distance was acknowledged (Clark & Pugh, 2001). Mendenhall and Oddou (1985) included this as a component in their categories for relating to host cultures. They coined it, "the perceptual element," meaning how accurately an expatriate could correctly assess the host culture. Results from Jenkins and Mockaitis' (2010) study showed that accurate perceptions of a host culture aided in a person's adjustment, while inaccurate perceptions created issues in their adaptation. Pre-departure training could have positive effects in helping expatriates develop more accurate perceptions before moving abroad (Black et al., 1991) and previous overseas experience could be beneficial in adjusting to a new culture (Black, 1988).

### **Resiliency/Self-Efficacy**

One theme that seemed to appear in many studies was the development of self-efficacy or resiliency for those who lived abroad. In McClure's (2007) study, the Chinese students in



Singapore eventually adapted and reported developing a sense of self-determination for completing their theses despite the difficulties in adjusting to the foreign academic style. The Peace Corps volunteers similarly returned with a belief that they could overcome challenges and successfully work with those who were different than them (Cross, 1998). Cushner's (2007) study advocated for preservice teachers to student teach abroad in order to develop globally minded educators who could work effectively with diverse populations in their teaching roles at home, regardless of any difficulties they encountered. Cushner (2007) also reported greater self-efficacy for those who student taught overseas. Even in the earlier research which viewed culture shock within medical realms, "coping strategies" were mentioned. According to Zhou et al. (2008), "'Shock' stems from inherently stressful life changes, so people engaging in cross-cultural encounters need to be resilient, adapt, and develop coping strategies and tactics. Adjustment is regarded as an active process of managing stress at different systemic levels – both individual and situational" (p. 65).

In Alred and Byram's (2002) study, students who lived abroad for a year claimed to have developed more self-confidence and maturity. They noticed that the year abroad "affect[ed] self-understanding and [their] outlook on life" (p. 339). Preservice teachers in Kenya for only a short period of time also reported greater self-confidence in a new setting, even four years later (Maynes et al., 2013).

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

I used a qualitative approach for this research project. Quantitative methods have many benefits, but were not ideal for my needs. There were numerous quantitative tools available for researching, but, they also required extensive training and resources. This study was not centered on one particular factor correlating to cultural adjustment of teachers abroad. Additionally, quantitative measures would have required a large quantity of participants.

I was more interested in talking with individuals about their unique experiences. I wanted to try to see their cross-cultural experiences through their lenses and then compare their experiences with others. A qualitative approach allowed a more open-ended conversation where data arrived from the informants themselves. The method used was an ethnographic interview. I structured my discussions with informants based on the procedures in Spradley's (2016) book on ethnographic interviews. Ethnographic interviews vary from traditional interviews in that instead of the interviewer trying to uncover specific information or relationships, the ethnographer listens to the informants to try to understand their worlds. After thorough immersion in the informants' settings/mindsets, the ethnographer shares common findings in her results.

#### **Expected Outcome**

My hypothesis was that previous multicultural experiences, such as travel, study abroad or second language learning would result in participants showing more openness to people who were different than them, self-reported positive adjustments to living abroad, and willingness to accept and understand some of the views and values of other cultures. I also predicted that those who had lived abroad before would generally be more multicultural themselves from having lived in several cultures and countries. An interesting facet was looking at each person's self-

reported motivations for moving abroad. I hypothesized that those who stated reasons such as travel, adventure or cultural experiences would be more open to cultures and new, unfamiliar experiences than those who moved abroad because of lack of job opportunities in their home countries. I was curious to see how career advancement opportunities would arise in the conversations and the factors involved in a teacher choosing to stay abroad short or long term. I was intrigued to note if those staying abroad multiple years, chose to stay in one or several positions and if they chose to stay in one location or several. While this study was not concerned with the return of teachers to their native homes, I believed this topic could arise in the discussions and could add another aspect to this study.

### **Participants**

All participants were teachers who were currently or have previously lived abroad. I tried to select those who were currently living abroad. They were asked to volunteer without pay. At my previous work place in China, there were about 12 teachers possibly available. However, according to Spradley (2016), it would be better if I did not know them myself. I asked the people I worked with to recommend some other teachers they knew. I found that the network of people living abroad was extensive and many people enjoyed sharing their experience with others. I also knew several teachers abroad who worked in other schools or countries who made excellent informants.

The variety of teaching roles and previous education in teacher training programs varied from licensed teachers to TESL/TEFL certified teachers. The teaching assignments were varied too; I anticipated it would include local public schools, international schools, private schools, after school programs, bigger organizations and smaller institutions. Ideally, I wanted to

interview both those who lived abroad for a few years and others who were newer to life abroad to see if there were any significant differences resulting from length of time abroad. The participants were not limited to one country or school. Another result could have shown differences resulting from individual countries' economic and social developments. Although many teachers were teaching in Asian countries, a few were also teaching, or previously taught, in Europe, Latin America or North America. As I expected, most participants were American or Canadian, but the informants were not limited to these countries. Informants who moved to America to teach were not considered for this project. The specific information about the participants is below.

Eleven individuals were interviewed. Seven were licensed teachers and four were unlicensed teachers who had ESL/TESL certifications. Four teachers worked in host national language institutes, three worked in international accredited schools (these teachers taught content subjects, not ESL), three licensed teachers taught ESL in a university setting to host national students, and one teacher created an online language education company. Ten educators were either currently or had previously taught in at least one Asian country including South Korea (three teachers), China (four teachers), Taiwan (two teachers), Singapore (one teacher), and Japan (one teacher). Other countries these teachers were teaching in or had taught in include Spain (one teacher), Germany (one teacher), and Nicaragua (one teacher). Three teachers taught in more than one country and two teachers had taught in the same country two different times. Seven had different positions within a school or lived in more than one city in their time in one country. Eight were women and three were men. Four teachers were either married or in relationships. Three were parents or were becoming parents and had their children with them

overseas. At the time of the interviews, two teachers had been teaching abroad for three years, one teacher for four years, four teachers for five years, two teachers for six years, one teacher for seven years, and one teacher for nine years. The average years of teaching abroad for these participants were 5.27. Most of these teachers were planning to stay abroad for the upcoming year, while a few mentioned wanting to move home after a year. A summary of the participants in a table is shown below for clarity.

Table 1

## Participant's Information

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Country/State of Origin</b>	<b>Countries Taught or Teaching in</b>	<b>Years of Teaching Abroad</b>	<b>Family Situation</b>
Sierra	MN, USA	South Korea	6	Single
Kali	IL, MN, & ND, USA	South Korea Taiwan	1 2	Married to a Taiwanese man
Lucy	MN, USA	China	5	Single
Cindy	IL, USA	China	4	Single
Ben	Spain	Nicaragua	3	Dating a Nicaraguan
Melinda	IN, USA	China	7	Married to an Indian man (married while in the US) Expecting 1 <sup>st</sup> child
George	MN, USA	Singapore (2 times)	9	Married with 2 young children
Amelia	CO, USA	China/Tibet	5	Married to American teacher
Chloe	MO & TX, USA	Taiwan Germany	4 1	Divorced/Single 1 son (elementary aged)
Roxy	AZ, MN & TX, USA	South Korea Spain	4 1	Single
Nolan	MN, USA	Japan (2 times)	6	Single

**Materials**

Since these teachers were living all over the world, I assumed most interviews would take place over Skype or another similar video chat program. Email and other social media programs were also used for initial and follow up communication. All participants, and I, needed to have access to reliable technology and WiFi capabilities. I also needed to find an app or program that could reliably record our conversations. I used a notebook to record notes during the interviews and expanded my notes in a word document that I shared with each participant individually.

**Consent**

To ensure ethical research practices, all informants received a written release form to confirm their participation in the research. They were all able to review my expanded notes and they were able to discontinue the interviews at any time. Pseudonyms were used to protect their identities also. This was all included in the consent form. Interviews were recorded with the informants' permission.

**Procedure**

I conducted interviews with participants either in person or via Skype (or another video chat app). Participants had the choice of which method they preferred to use for communication. I took notes during our conversation, and, as Spradley (2016) recommended, I often used verbatim phrases from the participants. I tried not to interpret or translate the notes while taking them. The interviews included several guiding questions (see the included document in the appendices), but were developed largely from the topics that naturally arose during the conversation.

This method was different than traditional interview methods in that I was not seeking one particular piece of information, but rather learned from the informants. My results depended entirely on the topics that naturally appeared throughout several interviews by different informants. I used descriptive questions and adjusted my register to integrate their vocabulary. After the interview, I reviewed the notes and listened to the recordings several times while expanding my notes further. This made writing the final report more manageable and more accurate.

I will interviewed eleven people one time each. I anticipated completing all the interviews from December 2017-March 2018 but completed them later. Ideally, I thought two to three interviews with each person would be helpful, but I found that one interview gave me sufficient data to compare interviews and topics. I imagined that each interview would take about 45 minutes to one hour, however most interviews lasted longer than an hour.

Following Spradley's (2016) design, I expanded and added to my notes from each interview. With participants' permission, the interviews were recorded so I was able to listen again for more detailed notes. After reviewing my expanded notes, I wrote a final written ethnography. In this task, I needed to accurately "translate" the expressions and mentalities of teachers abroad into explanations that others could understand (p. 205). I then looked for common themes to all these components. Possible expected themes were: adjustment, connections to the host culture and/or students from another culture, a new sense of self, self-efficacy, a renewed sense of adventure, accepting values from the host culture, work place adjustment, balancing two cultural identities, learning from new friendships or social communities, etc.

**Limitations**

A feasible limitation could have been my close connection to this topic. I needed to be conscientious of adding my own interpretation to the results. During interviews, I needed to be cognizant not to direct conversations toward my angle. For this reason, I tried to recruit people who I had not worked with directly (and who therefore knew my views on education overseas). As stated previously, I also tried to interview a variety of teachers from different situations so as to further diversity views and experiences.

Another limitation was time. Completing at least one or two interviews with ten people in a few months was a large feat. This was coupled with the fact that these were all busy teachers and we would most likely be communicating through various time zones. Additionally, any technological mishaps would further delay progress. Also, I needed to be flexible with their time schedules as they were doing a service to help me. Email follow up was used to help clarify some points from my written summaries post interview.



## Chapter 4: Results

After completing all eleven interviews, several themes arose which will be discussed in the following paragraphs. They are organized into four larger categories. The four larger categories include: 1) positive orientation towards different cultures, 2) school and workplace adjustment, 3) family and home life, and 4) additional factors.

### **Positive Orientation towards Different Cultures**

To begin with, several sub themes appeared all relating to an individual teacher's orientation towards multiculturalism and interest in other countries.

**Previous experiences.** For many people, having previous experiences abroad was a major part of their willingness or interest in moving abroad. Many mentioned traveling or living abroad short term through study abroad programs or student teaching abroad. Cindy went to China several times in college to see if she liked it and also spent a summer teaching in Mongolia and student taught in Macedonia. When she moved to China for her teaching position, she was not as initially shocked. Other participants also had experiences abroad. Kali student taught in Spain, Lucy spent a summer teaching in Thailand, Nolan studied French in Quebec and France, George studied abroad in Spain and traveled around Europe, Sierra and Roxy studied abroad in England for a year and traveled around Europe, and Ben spent one year in an internship in El Salvador.

For many, it seemed to give them a deeper curiosity in cultures. Before traveling abroad, some of them had never considered traveling or living abroad, so their first experience was an eye-opening time for them. They recognized a new opportunity; they could enjoy learning about new cultures. Roxy explained how she used to think that people studying abroad in India were

really special or brave. She didn't think she could do it. After studying abroad in Paris for a week, she felt more confident in her ability to be abroad and later spent a year studying abroad in England.

For many of the participants, it seemed that when they experienced one culture first hand, it increased their openness to additional cultures. After meeting some coworkers while working for a study abroad company in America, Roxy felt more interested in teaching in Korea. Additionally, it seemed to provide the confidence boost they needed to try a second time abroad. After studying in Spain and traveling in Europe, George thought "What could I do to stay?" He thought about teaching abroad, but he did not want to teach English so he started working on his Master's degree in teaching. He also mentioned how he has noticed the teachers who can learn the language and adapt to a place gained confidence. He said they realized, "I want to do this in another country." George remarked, "It can take a certain mindset to do that."

Although each previous time overseas looked different, it was a crucial experience. It appeared that without this initial, affirming time of being abroad for a shorter time (less than a year usually), many of the participants would not have been as likely to embark on teaching abroad. It is interesting to note that most of these experiences were more substantive in nature than a typical week-long vacation or travel. Most of their travels included language learning, short term teaching, student teaching, internships, or study abroad. These would much more closely mimic teaching and living abroad longer term than would a week's long vacation.

**Interest in other cultures, languages, and travel.** For some participants, their stories started in childhood or adolescence. They had comments like, "I always wanted to..." etc. Many of them had fascinations with other languages and wanted to learn more about the cultures that

used each language. Kali recalled memories from her childhood of having a curiosity to learn about China and Africa. She was interested in languages even as a child. She recollected buying a Mandarin language CD. She remarked, “I was always interested in learning languages.” Her family had Mexican neighbors who spoke Spanish and she remembered calling out “¡Sí!” to them. She would hang out with the two children and with her brother for a language exchange so they could learn some Spanish. Watching the Olympics further piqued her desire for cultural experiences and encouraged her to think about how her life would be if she was there. “One of the reasons I chose teaching was so that I could take it all over the world.” Cindy talked about how she was always intrigued by China and read books about Chinese culture, Chinese people, and about people who moved to China.

Still others had the interest in other places, but they had no understanding of how one would pursue moving abroad or living abroad. Chloe remembered being impressed by foreign exchange students when she was in high school, but she didn’t really understand how she could go abroad herself. Ben originally wanted to be a war journalist. He studied Arabic for four years and wanted to go to an Arabic country. He wanted to go to Egypt. He even had a friend who he visited in Cairo and thought he could get a Spanish teaching job there.

In all these stories, there was a variety of experiences that led up to their decision to move abroad as a teacher. They had multiple positive connections with language learning, exposures to the idea of a different place, and admirable fascinations with those who were from other countries. These interests seemingly helped lead them to their eventual decision to move overseas and prepared them to view these cultural and linguistic differences favorably.

**Desire for deeper cultural experience.** Many of the participants mentioned a distinction between traveling abroad and living abroad. This distinction seemed critical to many of the informants. They talked about it as a “deeper” experience and knowledge of a place, people, and culture. Ben said he always wanted to know about other cultures, other languages, and not just travel to them for a week or two. He did not just want the quick holiday trips. He wanted the deeper understanding that comes from living in a place. He always thought that language teaching could be a good way to do that. Lucy talked about her initial decision to move abroad. One of her main reasons was for travel. She wanted the opportunity to share with people and invest in a culture. Living in a place, as opposed to traveling for a short time, would provide her greater opportunities to interact with and understand the local people. Chloe said she always had the motivation to live abroad, “with traveling, you’re just sampling the culture.” She wanted to live daily life there. She wanted the experience of grocery shopping and doing other daily life activities.

All the participants recognized an opportunity not allowed to them as travelers. They felt the need to take on the role of resident. Many of them saw teaching as a vehicle for gaining the living abroad experience again after previously studying or volunteering abroad. This distinction between travel and living in a new country could be explained as an important factor in many teachers’ motivations for moving their careers abroad.

**Opportunities for travel and unique life experiences.** Numerous teachers talked favorably about the travel and special life experiences they have had while living in new countries. Chloe explained how her ex-husband was supportive of her moving abroad with their young son because of the amazing opportunities he would have outside of his school experience.

Since they all love history and learning about WWII, living in Germany has given them many opportunities to see important historical places. She also talked about how her son's view of America was different as he was growing up in Asia. Chloe felt the language learning for her son was a positive aspect of growing up in different countries.

Amelia remembered after college thinking about how her life could be enriched beyond daily life experiences in the US. While her friends were choosing carpet colors, she thought, "There had to be more, more to life, than just settling..." Ben said that after his contract ended for his position in El Salvador, he wanted to stay longer. Part of the reason was that he wanted to stay with his girlfriend in Nicaragua, but he also mentioned wanting to have new experiences. He was happy with how he had been able to travel around several countries around the area, such as El Salvador (where he lived for one year), Nicaragua (where he lives now), Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica, and the Caribbean coast. He still wants to visit Cuba at some point.

Travel and experiences outside of their professional careers further enriched their lives abroad, arguably allowing them to stay overseas longer. They recognized the opportunities that were not present in their lives at home and took advantage of their time in each unique country.

**Mindset: Deciding to have a positive view of host culture.** With a high orientation towards other cultures, most, if not all, of the teachers interviewed made a conscious decision to view the host culture positively or at least neutrally. Some did this before they arrived as they had already experienced challenges or differences from their prior times in new countries. Others chose this mindset after arriving in the host country.

For Kali, she arrived at this conscious mindset when she had trouble adjusting to Spain while studying abroad. "I think back to Spain and it was my first time abroad. I had a tough time

with things being different. This caught me off guard. So, I told myself, ‘this has to be your new norm. This isn’t weird to them.’ I made a decision. ‘You have to accept this as your new norm.’ It was easier after I made this decision to try to accept everything that came at me as normal, not as weird.” Lucy, in China, said, “Hard things about the culture were just things I viewed as an adventure.”

Melinda commented, “There’s an adjustment to living and teaching abroad. The golden rule I live by is ‘have no expectations.’ It’s not meant to be mean. Many people say, ‘It should be done this way, because back home it is this way.’ Preconceived ideas will make you very unhappy abroad.” Sierra said, “some people really hate the experience. They hate the food, culture, and language. I thought, *why do you hate it so much?*” Amelia commented on how some foreigners have reacted to the cultural differences. “I’ve seen other foreigners interact poorly in the culture. Cultural differences are real. You will mess up. Chinese people are forgiving and they know you’re a foreigner. Other cultures maybe aren’t like that. Some people come to China with American glasses on. They filter everything, ‘Why would you do this [they would ask about something that is different than in our culture]?’ Take the glasses off. When you’re teaching in China, being a foreigner makes you exotic and special automatically. It doesn’t make you a rock star. We need to remember. [Some people think,] ‘I’m so great. I speak English.’ Things can go to your head. Keep it in perspective. Chinese people are gracious and honoring, but that doesn’t mean you’re perfect.”

While all the teachers were confronted at various times with unexpected cultural misunderstandings, they viewed these as ways to learn about the culture, instead of as negative

features of another culture. Many of them often had a distinct instant when they felt they had to decide how they would view the differences.

### **School and Workplace Adjustment**

The next category of results includes subtopics relating to teachers' adjustment in their workplace and wider culture. This also includes relationships with other foreigners and local people. A teacher's level of happiness with the school and work expectations seemed to make a big impact on his overall experience in the new country.

**School and work adjustment.** Most of the teachers seemed to have more issues adjusting to the culture in the workplace than to the culture itself. Sometimes, the adjustment was due to the host culture in the workplace, but most teachers did not seem to mind the non-work cultural adjustment as much. For some, they were able to accept the different ways of functioning in a workplace, but were just initially surprised and had to find ways to adjust successfully within the work culture.

Several teachers mentioned their personality characteristics that they felt helped them to fit in with the host culture. Nolan explained his adjustment to the Japanese workplace, "I'm a fairly Minnesotan person." He considered himself fairly considerate. "I didn't want to bother people too much. I tried not to get in the way too much. Coworkers appreciated me. I received positive reviews." He described himself as "Minnesotan reserved." Sierra felt that for her initial cultural adjustment her non-confrontational personality helped. She wanted people to like her, so it wasn't a hard time for her to adjust, unlike others.

These teachers acknowledged their role as guests in the host culture and decided to try to fit in to the dominant culture instead of demanding their own cultural needs be fulfilled. Some

even discussed their frustration with some other teachers who did not share their adaptive mindset.

Amelia also explained how new teachers struggled with wanting to know everything right away even though change was so rapid and constant in China. She explained, “It’s okay to be quiet or observant. It’s okay to just wait. Give it a day. We get pressure to do stuff because we speak English. It’s okay to wait. This applies to culture. You can say ‘yes’ to everything and you’re going to go crazy. It’s okay to say, ‘let me think about that.’ Things are going to change in a second. We kind of have this joke, ‘TIC: This Is China.’ Water was out for two days in Changchun. No need to get upset that what would effectively be fixed in America isn’t, because TIC; we’re not in America. Sometimes it’s frustrating, but you’re going to waste more energy. Just grab a book and sit down. China glasses vs. American glasses. You waste energy being angry in situations.”

Kali commented on how the noisy, chaotic passing times between classes in her Korean school thoroughly surprised her after teaching fourth grade in the US for 2 years. “There were ten-minute breaks between classes. The kids were crazy during this time. There were no straight lines. It was mayhem. What is this?” She also thought keeping the windows open in the winter was weird. She said she still can’t accept this, but “accepts it as normal here. Home is my safe space [in Korea]. I keep my windows closed. It’s cold outside. I understand the concept. When it’s cold, I’m crabby.” Although aspects of the Korean culture shocked or annoyed her, she developed a mindset that allowed her to feel successful in the culture even in these differences.

Cindy described the classroom adjustment as the hardest cultural adjustment. “It was so unexpectedly different that I didn’t know how to handle it. Certain things I thought were



universal in the classroom were very cultural. The expectations of teachers vs. students in the classroom” [was different in the US and China]. She explained how her training that she had just completed in TESL dealt with active participation methods and other methods that were not utilized in China. She reasoned that in China, “the teacher talks the whole time. The students didn’t know they should be active participants.” To adjust, she had to measure her expectations. She considered how much she needed to adapt. “I need to adapt, not them. Taking notes. They won’t do it. They aren’t trained in our system. What is really going to benefit them and what are your standards?” [that you may have to let go of]. “How can I be flexible and not give up what’s important to me? I have to meet them halfway, if not further.” She really explained how she was balancing her standards with their actual learning needs. She did not limit her teaching to what she was comfortable with. She also helped them to understand their different cultural learning styles. “I tell them, ‘you’re bringing your culture to the classroom. I’m bringing mine. So, it will sometimes feel uncomfortable. You’ll feel tired sometimes. There are different cultural expectations in the classroom.’ I assume they don’t know and that they want to know. I can tell them about my expectations in the classroom.” She explained that she tries to affirm them. She wants her classroom to feel open and safe. For most students, she’s the first foreign teacher they’ve ever had. She wants them to have a positive experience. One specific adaptation she made was due to her frustration with the sizes of paper students would use to complete papers. Some students would use tiny papers and others large papers. To fix this for her own sake, she started handing out index cards for students to complete assignments on. Now her students know that if she gives them a paper, she expects it back with the assignment completed on it. This has been helpful for her and her students have also adapted to this practice. She shared gratitude for

her students by explaining, “The students are all very flexible, nice, and kind. They try hard to make me feel at home.”

Another example was when Cindy needed to compromise. Her supervisor told her on a Tuesday that she would be presenting to other teachers for an additional four hours about teaching techniques. The expected date was two days later on a Thursday. She explained her frustration with being told at the last minute about the extra time commitment. She said that this happens a lot since she does not speak Mandarin so the Chinese staff sometimes forgets that she does not know all the details up front. She explained, “I can’t speak Chinese so I’m told at the last minute. This isn’t their fault. It’s on me. I don’t speak the language. Sometimes I think they just forget that we don’t know. We’re the minority. They aren’t trying to leave us out.”

Melinda taught at a Taiwanese Kindergarten her first year, but she also taught high school English. On her first day she wanted to leave to catch the bus they arranged for her, but she waited to be relieved from the next teacher. She did not want to leave the teenagers unattended. They still had one more class that day. She was not aware that in their culture, they could be left alone. So, she missed the bus. “It was crazy to think that these high school students could be left alone. There’s more trust that the students will be accountable and behave. The students will work out their problems. When you take away the accountability, it becomes someone else’s. They lose that accountability for themselves.” This was an adjustment for her to understand, but she appreciated the maturity it forced the students to develop.

These teachers were faced with unexpected cultural differences in their workplaces. They were able to remain abroad due to their ability to accept these differences and find ways to function within the cultural systems already in place. Several developed ways to compromise,

either with the educational institutes themselves or within their own thinking. They balanced their own home culture preferences with the established ways of functioning in their new cultures. Due to this, they were able to adapt and function in a high capacity in their teaching roles.

**School support.** Several teachers directly pointed out the importance of happiness in their school placements. Some even mentioned how there was a direct connection between a school's communication and a teacher's retention at the school. George explained how his school in Singapore had an orientation process, helped with housing, provided communication beforehand for several months, and had a relationship with a major bank so it was easy to set up your banking. "Everyone brings their passport and the school helps you. This is a country where you could navigate it on your own. Doing this preparation makes a difference in teacher retention." Their school had one of the highest retention rates in international teaching abroad. Some people stayed around 20 years. "The school sets teachers up for success."

Kali also felt very prepared when she began her program in Korea (EPIK). "They have good training. They group you by location and have a good preparation program before you go to your city. In Taiwan, there's no structure with preparation for new, foreign teachers."

Although Chloe remembered the first year in Taiwan as feeling like "a wash" with so much to adjust to and learn, she said the school was great. They picked her up at the airport, helped her with an apartment and furnishings. However, she still needed to learn how to find and buy things like sheets, towels, plates and other household goods. There was a school orientation and she had to learn new things like a 1:1 laptop classroom and how to use Macbooks. "In any new job that a person has anywhere, it's always overwhelming at first. There's new vocabulary

to learn, etc. But with moving overseas, there's new work, plus a new life outside of work. I had a five-year-old in a new country, with a new job and no babysitter. So, the first year was a blur." She explained that in Taiwan, there was a workshop for new people. It is about the host culture. It taught topics like saving face, how to deal with parents and students, how students would react to them, what is normal for students, and other related topics. This was prompted by teachers struggling with cultural adjustment in the classroom. There were issues like students not talking in class. 90% of students were Taiwanese. Most of the teachers were American. There were also many Taiwanese teachers and the support staff and Chinese [language] teachers were mostly Taiwanese. So, although the culture was quite different, the school's support made a positive adjustment in her ability to adjust to her teaching assignment.

It has been a different experience for her to adjust to her teaching job in Germany. "In Germany it's different. There are more international teachers from all over the world. They are mostly from the UK, US, Australia, Canada, and France. In the office area, the people are also from all over. So, the support staff isn't dominated by Germans [which was different than her school in Taiwan]. They [German staff] are less helpful than the Taiwanese office support staff who would translate. In Germany, many people have been there for many years. So there is a feeling that the new people will be able to figure things out for themselves. There's less hand holding. It's hard."

Melinda loved the shared office space with the Chinese teachers at the Taiwanese school she worked in during her first year in China. "It promoted comradery. They all got along. In Chinese culture, getting along and being harmonious is extremely important. In the US, I was told not to go to the teacher's lounge since it'd just be complaints. I was told to stay away and to

stay positive. But in China, the teachers all worked together. All the teachers were Chinese but the boss was Taiwanese. There were English speaking western teachers from the US, Canada, Ireland, the UK, and India. It was so different than anything I could imagine.” In her office, she was with all the Kindergarten teachers and she knew most of the them. “The way we voice our opinions is different than in the west. In China, the boss says what she wants and it’s almost like a to do list and everyone has a job with their name on it. Everyone just gets to work. I respected my boss. For example, when they wanted to make a play store for their kindergarteners, they all worked together to croquet eggplants. We collected shampoo bottles. One of the ways we were able to do this was because teachers don’t teach the whole day. They shared their class between multiple teachers. There were always three teachers in the classroom. There was a morning head teacher who would do her planning in the afternoon. There was an assistant/housekeeper. There was an afternoon headteacher who did her planning in the morning. There was an assistant teacher with me.” Melinda saw this as a positive aspect to the Chinese educational system. Teachers had enough planning and work time by having reduced direct contact time with students.

While each school was different, participants felt supported by and connected to their school communities in numerous ways. In general, more communication and practical help proved to be beneficial for most teachers. The language assistance provided by school workers further connected teachers to their schools and allowed them to make a positive adjustment to their new contexts.

**Relationships with other expats.** While this was usually not the first topic to arise in our interviews, it usually came up at some point. Overall, the comments about other expatriates were

positive and the relationships were regarded as extremely helpful to teachers' sense of belonging, cultural adjustment, workplace success, and satisfaction abroad. Chloe explained how she was a little surprised during her first year in Taiwan when a coworker asked her to travel with her for the weekend to Kenting. She had not known this coworker for very long at that point. She was friends with her teacher colleagues in the United States too, but the relationships abroad were much closer. She explained how they did Christmas together and Thanksgiving, etc. They were like family. The relationships have stayed close after being abroad too. Recently, she met up with a friend she worked with in Taiwan on a trip to Italy.

Lucy explained how her team was important. She appreciated talking with other teachers who had been there and found their advice extremely helpful for questions related to the teaching, such as, "how do you do class with 45 people?" or "how should you interact with colleagues on campus and Chinese bosses?" She leaned on them and learned from them. They were her main support group. They were teaching similar students so they would talk about lesson plans, grading, and other topics related to their teaching. They would share resources too and compare which lessons or activities were successful with their Chinese students. Amelia talked about how there were many different cultures to adjust to even within the Americans she worked with. For example, there was a coworker from a more rural, traditional, farming culture which was very different from her, being from Colorado. She still found the group and these relationships helpful though.

Roxy had a great community of expat friends in South Korea. She compared it to her feeling now after her first several months living in Spain. "Something that made the transition to Korea easier was the expat community. In Korea, the expat community was very close knit. They

depended on each other. You needed each other. You felt closer to these people. We did Christmas together and found where we could get hamburgers. The expats in Spain who speak Spanish seem to have a more integrated life within the mainstream Spanish culture. There aren't as many expat bars. There's less of the separation. They also look more similar. I felt closer to the community in Busan because we needed each other. That community isn't here [in Spain]. They don't need each other as much."

Other foreign teachers or foreigners living in the same city provided a significant support system for teachers. Oftentimes, the teachers found connections within their work community. The communities of foreigners helped in everything from work to entertainment, travel, and holidays.

**Transient expat communities.** One negative part of living abroad usually came in the second or later parts of our conversations. It was the constant changes every year to the expatriate community. Lucy said, "I got tired from my team of teachers changing. Getting to know colleagues and becoming like family and then having colleagues leave after a year or a few months." George repeated this idea, "One thing that's hard is with friends. You make close friends, then they move on." One of his friends actually was so burnt out from this constant transition, that she decided to not invest in any new relationships for a year. Later, she realized that she still needed to make relationships a priority, even if they would be moving in a year. The changing community has been even harder for his wife, who didn't work at the school and was a stay at home mom with their two young children. George referred to her and others in her situation as "trailing spouses." He said that "it's easier if people are a teaching couple. They both have natural, built-in connections. Connections outside of work can start happening then. For the

“trailing spouse” it’s harder. It’s one sided if they are in a place and don’t have the support they need.” Last year alone, his wife had three of her very close friends move away from Singapore.

Foreigners in these teaching communities changed frequently. For teachers abroad longer term, they witnessed friendships and coworker relationships changing yearly. Overtime, they felt the emotionally or psychologically drained from feeling a constant loss of friendships and transition in their daily work and personal lives. Still, overall, they continued to value these friendships and work relationships even among constant changes.

**Relationships with host nationals.** Teachers’ relationships with the native people of the host country, also sometimes referred to as “host nationals,” were important and helpful. However, developing these relationships seemed to be secondary compared with developing relationships with other foreign teachers. Several teachers discussed positive, or sometimes neutral, relationships with the host nationals. Rarely, did any discuss these relationships negatively. Oftentimes, these relationships would be work related, but sometimes, they would be relationships not connected with work.

Lucy described how when she first arrived in China, she asked her foreign colleagues who had already been living in China for a few years how to interact with her Chinese boss and with the teachers who were Chinese. It was difficult for her to connect with the Chinese staff at first. “When I first got there, I didn’t have a lot of interaction with Chinese colleagues. I’d teach in different buildings so there wasn’t much overlap. As time went on, I saw more of the value of learning from the Chinese colleagues. But when I first got there, I was just transitioning; I wasn’t really thinking about that. I was relying on my team of other American teachers. I didn’t know



who was who on campus. Who's the teacher, who's the staff? We didn't have a lot of spaces to interact. They [Chinese teachers] didn't live on campus."

For Ben, although he shared a language with the people of El Salvador, he still felt it was hard to break into the local community and develop friendships. He commented, "At first, you live in a foreign bubble. In El Salvador, it's difficult to meet native people. They don't know many foreigners. It's harder to make friends; it's different than in Nicaragua where it's easier to know the locals." Eventually, he became friends with a taxi driver who frequently drove him to work. It was different when he moved to Nicaragua as he was already connected to his Nicaraguan girlfriend's family, friends, and community. He suggested that anyone who goes abroad, should find a contact. "Someone to help you in the beginning; it's fundamental. It'll change your experience." He also encouraged anyone moving to a new country to not only be friends with other foreigners, but also to develop relationships with local people. "It's tempting to fall into an international bubble. It's comfortable because they're relating to the same situation as you, but it's not as deep. It's better to meet locals. It's hard, but you can try. You'll have a deeper experience."

Amelia said she did not have a lot of really, close Chinese relationships. "I have a couple. It's hard to keep up with people when you're moving so much. We try to visit when we can. Over Spring Festival, she visited some former students [from her 1st year teaching in China] and a friend came to visit [she lives in Sichuan]. They stayed with her [friend's] family. In Chinese culture, being in the country, they see that we love them." Amelia's experience in China was unique in that she lived in both Tibet and other cities in "mainland China." This gave her the chance to experience two different cultures within China.

“Tibet has a totally different people group. The [Han] Chinese people want to make friends with foreigners. In Tibet, they are more quiet and reserved. It’s culturally acceptable for women to be quiet and reserved. I couldn’t hear them speaking out in class. Women don’t speak out. Tibet has its own faith. Tibet has an even slower pace than China. Most places in China are slow paced, but it’s even more in Tibet. It’s harder to build relationships. For example, one coworker talked about getting coffee for 2 years before it actually happened. In Tibet, the contracts for teaching are only allowed to be three years. I’m not sure why this is.” She thinks it could contribute to their lack of interest in developing longer term relationships with foreigners. She’s not sure though.

The variety of friendships abroad with local people spanned from coworkers to random people around town. Numerous teachers developed an appreciation for these connections over time. They found that a local perspective and connection benefitted them in a different way than relationships with fellow foreigners. Although their relationships did not seem to be as deep or extensive as with other international teachers, the participants still talked favorably and affirmatively about developing host country connections.

**Opportunities for career advancement.** While career advancement alone did not seem to be a major factor in an individual’s decision to move abroad or stay abroad, it was mentioned as a positive aspect. For Melinda, she saw many opportunities while she was in China to gain leadership experience and credibility. Her opportunities were partly found in pursuing further training in the International Baccalaureate (IB) program. In her second position in China, she was able to take on an administrative, leadership position. Sierra was able to gain a university instructor position after teaching in children’s ESL settings for several years. George mentioned

many possibilities for gaining leadership positions at his school in Singapore. Ben's position was a little different as he went to Nicaragua to be close to his girlfriend and not for the sake of advancing his career. However, once there, he needed to be creative in how he found work. Through teaching online, he has found a new career for himself and is his own boss. Chloe found herself unlikely to gain a position in Europe until after she first taught in Taiwan for four years in the IB program.

Numerous teachers began teaching abroad for the opportunity to live in a new country and experience a culture. Once there for a while, they saw potential in positions and the professional experiences they gained abroad. For some, these opportunities helped them see themselves abroad for additional years than originally anticipated.

**Opportunities for financial gain.** Again, financial gain was mentioned by many, but did not appear to be an initial deciding factor. For Nolan, his second move to Japan was largely influenced by money and his focus on paying off his student loans. Melinda also discussed money as a major influence on their decision to stay in China longer term. She and her husband acknowledged many factors, however, money was identified several times. She stated that they were "living their American dream in China." George also mentioned good pay in Singapore, however, he balanced it with additional factors as well. Roxy explained how one of her factors for staying in Korea longer was to make progress on her student loans so they were more manageable before she moved to Spain where the pay wasn't as good as a foreign English teacher.

In all these cases, financial benefits were an added bonus to their rich cultural experiences. As they considered multiple factors, a high pay rate sometimes contributed to their

decision to stay abroad or move to a new country, city, or position. Some saw the overseas financial opportunity as significantly better than the opportunities at home.

### **Family and Home Life**

Personal relationships and family members were important and talked about extensively in some cases. As teachers moved abroad, many factors were considered. Teachers who had family members with them explained how the family members' experiences contributed to their overall adjustment and ability to stay abroad or in a specific teaching position. Additionally, a few teachers talked about the influence of extended family that was living in their home countries.

**Family influence—partners and children.** The majority of the participants were currently single or single at some point in their traveling abroad experience. However, as most of them were abroad for longer than a year or two, many of them had or had had significant relationships in their time abroad. Those in partnerships talked about the importance of both partners having a positive experience and being willing to move for the other. Melinda and her husband agreed that they moved based on who was making the money. The company her husband worked for in China also arranged for her to come to China for the initial visit before her husband took the position as it knew the importance of the spouse's satisfaction contributing to the employee's work there. They exhibited an autonomy from extended family as they functioned as a small, cohesive unit abroad. Melinda explained this by saying, "You will need to find how you want to organize and live your life. At the end of the day, it is your life and you must be satisfied with your choices. We choose how to live our lives. We base our decisions on

what's best for both of us. Despite how you might be swayed and influenced, you must remember, it's not their lives. It's your life."

George talked about his wife's struggle with living so far from home and her community in Minnesota. He said he enjoys his job and the leadership opportunities he could have in his current position, but for his wife's sake, they will need to move instead of staying even longer term. She does not like the heat and misses the seasons. She also does not like her community of friends changing every few years.

Couples who were dating or married to a host national mentioned a built-in support network and immediate community. They had immediate culture insights on language, food, and cultural norms. Ben explained how the cultural adjustment was not very difficult for him when he moved from El Salvador to Nicaragua because he had already been dating his girlfriend for one year and had visited her there two times on holidays. He also had a built-in community right away as she introduced him to people and he lived with some of her friends. He knew her family before moving there too. Sierra attributed some of her length of stay in South Korea (6 years) with her relationships she has had with Koreans. Kali, who was dating her husband, a Taiwanese man, before moving abroad, explained her adjustment to moving from Korea to Taiwan. She could not think of any major cultural thing that affected her. "I don't feel I've experienced culture shock as much as some people have." In Taiwan, she said she felt shielded. "I always had people take care of me" [husband, his family, etc.].

A few, Chloe and George, also had children while abroad. Melinda was pregnant with her first child at the time of the interview. It was apparent that those with children saw practical matters as a necessity immediately. Their focus upon moving and arrival was focused on meeting

basic needs. George said that if he knew the practical aspects, then he could deal with any cultural surprises. Chloe talked about knowing where to buy the cucumbers as an example of feeling successful and able to function abroad with her young son. Melinda explained how when she and her husband first came abroad, practical things, such as health care, were not very important to them in their job benefits. Now that they are a little older and she is pregnant, it is a major priority for them.

Chloe explained how she regretted not having nice furniture from home sent over to Taiwan. After talking with another teacher who had been abroad for around 20 years and had beautiful furniture from all over the world, she realized that she needed to make her home in Taiwan special for her son. It was his childhood home. Now that he is older and they are living in Germany a challenge they have is that he wants to play football, but it is hard to find an American football team in Germany.

The addition of a partner or child for teachers in a new culture was a vital component of their lives overseas. Their child's or partners happiness and ability to adapt and thrive in their new home was essential in a teacher's ability to remain abroad and feel happy and successful themselves.

**Family influence—extended family at home.** There was some discussion about extended family. This always seemed like a slightly more removed topic than immediate partners or children. Some teachers talked about missing out on things at home. Many discussed this in a way that showed they acknowledged what they were missing, but also that they valued their lives abroad and the unique opportunities it provided. Chloe mentioned missing out on her sister's child's birth, but she said she would meet the baby when she was home in the summer. She

countered this by emphasizing the phenomenal learning experience her son is having outside the classroom. He is interested in history so Europe has been fascinating for him. Also, he learned some Mandarin while in Taiwan and is now learning German in Germany.

Melinda talked about the importance of saying goodbye to family members each time she and her husband left their families and home countries. For anyone moving abroad, she recommended that they mentally prepare for tragedy. “If you are abroad for longer than a year or two, tragedy is bound to happen at some point. Some schools in China will not allow you to fly home for the funeral out of fear that it is an excuse to abandon your position.” She and her husband have both had family members in the hospitals while abroad, and they were too far away to fly home to help. She mentioned how she felt helpless. She said if she would be living at home, she would be able to help, but abroad, she could not do anything. She explained how they took the time to really say goodbye whenever they left since they did not know if they would see each other again.

George explained how his family was spread out in the United States and were used to the idea of living apart. He mentioned how his father and mother had previously lived in Kuwait when they were in their 20’s so it was a normal thing for family members to live abroad in his family with six children. He explained how it was very different for his wife. She came from a small, close-knit family and it was very hard for her to be apart from her family for the majority of the year.

Although extended family did not hold the most important spot in affecting teachers’ decisions abroad, extended family members proved to be significant in impacting teachers’ experiences overseas. Missing out on important events or just missing being close was hard for

some teachers. However, the value of living abroad allowed them to remain at their positions contentedly.

**Changing feelings towards home, home culture, and sense of identity in relation to home culture.** Many teachers explained a sense of being different than their home culture after living abroad. They mentioned they related to home differently or adjusted what their sense of home was. Chloe mentioned how her identity at home had been as an interesting, unique person who wanted to travel and learn about cultures, but abroad, all her coworkers were like that. She thought “what’s my thing? I’m not the weird travel girl anymore. What are my hobbies?” She also mentioned a feeling of not fitting in, whether in Germany or in the US. As an example, she talked about her young son visiting the US in the summers and not understanding movie theatre norms. “It’s nebulous and in-between. It’s both excellent and has its challenges.”

Sierra has been in Korea for six years and said, “The longer I stayed, the more unsure of what I’d do at home I became. It’s scary.” She usually visits home once a year or every other year. Melinda mentioned originally feeling that China was a good “in-between” location between her family in the US and her husband’s family in India. They were trying to decide if their identity should continue to be the “international teachers in China” or if they wanted to continue on to teach in other countries.

While teachers’ experiences abroad developed into multiple years, changes in their identities occurred. They related to home differently. This was often recognized as having positive and negative points. Regardless, a sense of personal identity changed because of their longer time in a foreign country.



### **Additional Factors**

The remaining subcategories did not necessarily fit in the previous three categories, but still warranted attention. These include: “Boomerang Teachers,” multi-country placement, “close” vs. “far” cultures, and language learning/speaking the host language.

**“Boomerang teachers”**. A new term was given by George. He called himself and others like him “Boomerang Teachers.” These were teachers who had a position in a country, left, and later returned to the same country. He had previously lived in Singapore for four years, then spent four years in Minnesota, before returning to Singapore with his wife. They have now been in Singapore together for five years. So, George’s total time in Singapore has been nine years, but split between two different periods. He said that of their team of five teachers, three were considered “Boomerang Teachers” who were in Singapore previously, left, and returned. He said they were not automatically given their previous positions back. They still needed to re-apply and interview for their positions, but it was definitely a common occurrence for many individuals and families he has worked with.

Amelia also spent four years in China then went home for a year and is now back in China, but in a new city. She said that when she returned to China after their year in America, it felt comfortable to them. She and her husband felt more uncomfortable in America now than in China. Nolan spent four years in Japan originally, went home, and eventually returned to Japan for an additional two years.

While “boomeranging” was not the norm for these teachers, it was significant that several of them had returned to teaching abroad. In a sense, many of these participants could be considered “boomerang” individuals in that they previously volunteered, studied, student taught,

or traveled abroad and returned for an additional and longer experience as a full-time teacher in a school overseas.

**Multi-country placements.** Several teachers had lived in more than one country. Chloe spent 4 years in Taiwan before changing to her current position in Germany. Kali lived in South Korea for 1 year before moving to Taiwan, where she has now been for 2 years. Roxy taught in South Korea for 4 years before moving to Spain. Ben lived in El Salvador for a year in a non-teaching position before moving to Nicaragua and starting his online teaching business.

These individuals showed great ambition in their ability to adjust to not only one, but two, different cultures and countries. Oftentimes, these teachers even experienced different languages in the second country. Not only this, but they also changed job positions with each move. Many times, the teachers mentioned one as generally more positive than the other, but most could see the positive aspects to both countries and enjoyed them individually for what each offered.

**“Close cultures” vs. “far cultures”.** There were mixed opinions on teachers’ views of a culture’s closeness. Overall, more teachers felt the reaction to “similar cultures” was easier. Similar cultures could share the home culture’s language or customs. An exception was Roxy’s experience. South Korea would generally be considered a “far culture” for a North American. However, she spent four years there and felt like she had a positive time. Korea was a supportive place for foreigners even though she did not know the language. Roxy explained how Koreans did not expect the foreigners to know Korean. There was support for them through a large community of expatriate teachers. They had foreign bars and social meet-ups. She did have some

Korean friends too, but over her four years, considered her foreign friends to have been the closest friendships.

Roxy studied Spanish before moving to Spain, but she still felt it was a difficult adjustment. Spain could be considered a “closer” culture to the US than South Korea. However, she said the Spaniards had a higher expectation of foreigners to learn the language. She felt that most foreigners who had seemingly adjusted to the culture, had a good command of the language and a more integrated lifestyle with Spaniards. Even though she had studied Spanish before arriving, she felt that Spaniards did not appreciate this as much and were not as patient or helpful to encourage her to use her Spanish. She said they even rolled their eyes when she tried to use her Spanish so it discouraged her from trying. Roxy’s sense of community in Korea was different than in Spain. In Spain, she did not feel she could find the sense of community that she had had in Korea. Her perception of Korea was that the foreigners had their own unique and valued community apart from the dominant Korea culture, while still interacting with the Korean culture positively. She remarked, “It’s been very, very hard. It has been harder adjusting to Spain than it was to Korea. The language expectations have been harder. In Korea, and Asia in general, the people don’t expect you to know the language(s). In Spain, they expect you to know the language. I don’t know enough Spanish. I would try and it wasn’t good enough. People would speak full throttle Spanish and I’d get flustered. As scary as they seem to be, Japan, China, and Korea are easier than other places because they help with all the set up at the beginning. They actually are easier for starting off.”

Chloe echoed a similar experience but with a different opinion about the situation. The similarity was that in Taiwan, like Korea, she was better supported than her new position in

Germany (a seemingly “closer” country). She said that the school was great. They picked her up at the airport, helped her with an apartment and furnishings. However, in Germany, they expected her to be more independent in learning how to get things done in the city and the school. In Taiwan, the school colleagues would translate or help the foreign teachers with many other issues. However, Chloe thought the adjustment to Germany was easier overall. “It was much easier in Germany. The German people speak better English. I can speak some German language and can read it. It’s a more familiar culture. It’s different than the exotic feeling of Taiwan. The adjustment was faster due to both the location and having already had experience with teaching and living abroad in Taiwan.”

George’s situation seemed unique. He said Singapore was sometimes referred to as “Asia Light” because they made it so easy for foreigners in Singapore by being very western. So, Singapore would be considered a “close” culture even though the location was far from the United States. Also, English was spoken there. His school was international, so he mostly interacted with other Americans and teachers from many western countries. Likewise, the student population at his school was largely American and Western with some Asians, but hardly any Singaporeans. “In the international school setting, it’s harder to get out of the American bubble. The western cultures blend together. The local staff is used to working with westerners. So, we don’t get a taste of the Singaporean culture. You have to go out to look for it. Singapore is an international city so it makes life comfortable for expats and caters to westerners. Some of the local flavor, “Oh wow, I’m in a different culture,” is lost. [It’s] different than going to downtown Bangkok. It’s not a hard place.” This cultural “closeness” may have potentially made the transition easier for George.

Nolan found that although he could adjust to Japanese culture and be successful in his position, he still felt the cultural distance. He contrasted his experience teaching in Japanese schools with doing an internship in France, which could be considered culturally “closer” than Japan. In regards to getting used to the Japanese workplace he explained that he tried not to get in the way in the workplace but that this was not necessarily positive. “Coworkers appreciated me. I received positive reviews. [But] I felt separated from the culture.” He thought maybe this was because of being “Minnesota reserved” but acknowledged that this could have been his own perception, his own personality, or his personal upbringing. “This manifested in passive aggressiveness. In Japan, it seems typical to be passive aggressive. The adjustment to the workplace took a while. I did fine. The adjustment to a French workplace was easier. It felt closer to home.”

Participants had different reactions to their host countries’ cultural “closeness.” Overall, a culture that would be considered “close” was not always easier for participants to adjust to. For some, other factors made a greater impact on their adjustment. Still, cultural “closeness” was an important facet for consideration in their abilities to adjust to their new host cultures.

**Language learning/speaking host language(s).** Several teachers had previously studied at least one language before moving abroad and many were interested in language learning. Several were learning the language of the host country which impacted them in some practical ways.

Lucy said that after two years of studying Mandarin and then returning to teaching, she was in a unique situation. She could choose when and if she wanted to use her Mandarin skills in her English class. She explained how even though there were many opinions about this in the

ESL field, for her, there were certain times when using the students' first language was really helpful for them. Sometimes a simple direction was really confusing for her students and she found that if she could just explain the direction in Mandarin, then they would be able to meet the learning objective for the lesson. Otherwise, she would sometimes be explaining the direction four to five times in English and they would still be confused. When using Mandarin, she still explained the directions in English first. With her students who were studying English for their major she tried to use English more exclusively.

Melinda explained how she and her husband had really invested time in learning Mandarin. They passed the first level of six language levels. Recently, they even went on a trip on a Chinese tour bus. So, they relied on their Mandarin abilities to communicate with their fellow travelers throughout the trip.

Roxy studied Spanish while she was still living in Korea in preparation for moving to Spain, but it has been really hard for her to keep learning in Spain and to feel successful with her language learning. She talked about feeling like she mixed up Spanish and Korean. In Spain, she felt that she was already losing her Korean language abilities. She would accidentally talk to her Spanish students in Korean. Sierra also spent extensive time learning Korean language. Chloe's son learned some Mandarin and German and she viewed this positively. Ben already spoke Spanish as a native speaker before moving to Nicaragua. So, while he did not talk about this factor very often in his interview, it is still valid to note.

Knowing the first language of the host country allowed for a different experience in the new country. For most, this was positive and offered additional opportunities. In the

conversations with participants, overall cultural adjustment, was usually attributed to other factors than knowing the host language.

## Chapter 5: Implications

The purpose of this study was to create a comprehensive analysis of teachers living and working abroad and how they adapted to their host cultures. It allowed for many subtopics relating to teacher adjustment to be explored. The goal was that international teachers and schools would find this study helpful in considering the multitude of factors affecting their teachers and offer possible support.

Many of these teachers have lived abroad for several years and have therefore developed numerous strategies to help themselves and others adjust positively to living and teaching in a new country. They could be considered experts as international teachers, due to their numerous years abroad, often in the same country or even the same school. Their strategies will be analyzed in the following paragraphs and include two strategies specifically for international schools to consider: 1) hiring teachers with previous experiences abroad or interest in other cultures and languages and 2) providing initial support and orientation programs. The teachers also provided suggestions which have been divided into five additional strategies that include: 3) choosing a positive mindset towards the host culture, 4) developing a support network with other international teachers and with local people, 5) accepting and valuing cultural differences in the workplace, 6) appreciating the benefits that the differences in cultures offers, and 7) prioritizing immediate family needs.

### **International School Strategy: Hire Teachers with Previous Experiences Abroad or Interest in Cultures and Languages**

Many participants either had experiences abroad or interest in other cultures before deciding to move abroad. While a recently hired teacher may not have time to take a trip or work with international students before moving abroad, these facets could be considered and



prioritized in the hiring process. Jackson et. al. (2005) identified 25 factors as reasons why a person may choose to move abroad. One grouping of the 25 factors was cultural and travel opportunities. While the other factors were not negative, a school's hiring committee could ask questions relating to motives for moving abroad or provide the list of all 25 factors for an individual to reflect on. Even if this list was not used as an evaluative tool for potential hiring, the list could provide a clear picture for both the hiring committee and the teacher as to which values may be important at the school. This list could serve as a discussion piece for both parties to consider if they would be a good fit with the other. For educational institutes with appropriate resources, the Intercultural Development Inventory (Hammer & Bennet, 1998) could also be considered as a hiring tool. It would provide a clear picture of an individual's orientation towards other cultures.

While many of the teachers were professional and highly trained teachers, several commented that they chose teaching because of its ability to help them live abroad. Again, they had an interest in culture, as opposed to simply needing a job. Minimally, administrators could listen to a person's interest in or motivation for teaching abroad. If anything mentioned by the potential employee is related to positive views or the desire to experience a new culture, the candidate could be more willing to form a culturally adaptive mindset and work successfully with other international teachers as well as local teachers.

### **International School Strategy: Provide Initial Support and Orientation**

Schools can provide significant support for teachers before and during the beginning of new teachers' experiences in a new country. George, Kali, Amelia, Chloe, and Lucy all had some orientation, training, or direct support for practical and cultural understanding needs at the start

of their time overseas. They all felt these were helpful. George directly attributed this as a factor in why he thinks his school has one of the highest teacher retention rates for international schools, with some teachers staying up to 20 years. Caligiuri, Phillips, Lazarova, Tarique, and Bürgi (2001) examined the role of Cross-Cultural Training, specifically with the topic of relevant cross-cultural training. The results showed that training directly related to the specific country and assignment resulted in higher levels of met expectations. The employees had a higher level of adjustment with met expectations. Schools could consider the specific cultural and workplace factors that would generally be considered different from western workplace educational settings. With significant, explicit training about these differences and cultural values of both the country and the specific school, teachers may be more likely to adapt positively to the new culture and school.

Colville-Hall et al. (2011) examined a pre-service teacher program that showed positive intercultural adjustment results on the Intercultural Development Inventory (Hammer & Bennet, 1998) when American students spent three weeks in France in seminars before completing their nine-week practicum in French schools. In addition to their seminars, they completed reflective journals, multiple meetings with mentor teachers, and discussions about teaching practices at home and in France. Schools could easily incorporate some of the ongoing practices into their teachers' ongoing professional development. Giving a specific space and time to discuss cultural implications in the classroom would show new teachers that issues relating to cultural adjustment are valued and essential in allowing the school, teachers, and all students to function effectively. By directly addressing the discrepancies between cultures, it could prevent teachers with low opinions of the host culture from remaining in a place of negativity. The leadership would be

showing all teachers that the school's expectation for foreign teachers is cultural adaptability, adjustment, teamwork between cultures, and a deeper level of commitment to and respect towards the host culture.

Teachers looking for positions abroad could also ask about pre-departure and arrival support and orientation as a way to evaluate the best employment opportunities.

### **Teacher Strategy: Choose a Positive Orientation Towards the Host Culture**

Numerous teachers told a story of a time when they felt confronted by a difference in the host culture. They made a decision to have a flexible mindset or an openness to the difference. Individuals living in another culture will have the challenge of relating to one's culture of origin, as well as, to the host culture. The ability to view another culture positively while retaining one's positive connection to the home culture can be seen in two models. Bochner's (1982) model included a level called, mediating [between the home and host culture] and Berry et al.'s (1989) model included a category known as, integration. Both of these reflect the ability to enjoy, accept, and validate one's home culture and new host culture simultaneously. This requires flexible thinking and a non-judgemental mindset that is focused on learning instead of on making judgements. Alred and Byram (2003) explained the feelings a person goes through when living in a new culture.

...strangers abroad are thrown, somewhat unwittingly, into direct contact with otherness. The sheer force of an unmediated holistic contact, particularly with linguistic otherness, must not be underestimated. This particular intercultural experience involves at first disorientation and loss, a confrontation with a foreign environment which may violently jolt individuals and perturb their taken-for-granted world. It places individuals in a

situation where adaptation and transformations are necessary if they are to maximise life in their new conditions. In other words, life abroad represents an extensive natural learning situations which stimulates many more aspects fo learners' personalities than are usually catered for...

Caligiuri's (2000) study pointed out a tendency for cultural adjustment when individuals were considered to have openness as a personal quality. Sierra and Nolan both mentioned their personalities as being helpful in their adaptation. Cindy suggested foreign teachers keep their hearts open and kind and make an effort to have a positive view of the culture. She also mentioned accepting that a person will have bad days and good days adjusting to a culture. She explained this by saying, "I can't eat Chinese food for every meal."

Teachers need to balance their lives between two cultures. New teachers will benefit from coming to a point when they realize they can choose to see their host cultures' differences positively, while still valuing their home cultures.

### **Teacher Strategy: Develop a Support Network with Other International Teachers Abroad and with Local People**

Support and a sense of community from other foreign teachers was commonly reported as having a positive effect on teachers' time abroad. The majority of situations for teachers abroad would allow an individual to connect with other foreigners from a similar home culture. Many schools have multiple foreign teachers, so a built-in support system is common. Bochner et al.'s (1997) study showed support for friendships developed from the same or similar backgrounds in aiding an individual's feelings of community and support. Teachers themselves can easily facilitate friendship development abroad beyond typical work-relationships commonly seen in the United States by gathering at a local restaurant, inviting everyone over to their homes,

starting a club with a shared interest, etc. Veteran foreign teachers especially can provide this sense of community for all foreign teachers, especially those who have recently arrived.

Additionally, international or host national schools can make suggestions of things to see and do or take the foreign teachers to cultural events to help facilitate a sense of community.

Individuals who developed relationships with local people while abroad also reported feeling connected to the host culture. This further reinforces Bochner et al.'s (1977) and Alred and Byram's (2002) studies about friendships abroad. Caligiui's (2000) study also showed the benefits of the relationship between host nationals and expatriates as beneficial. In many international school settings in countries that do not speak English, there are staff who are bilingual and can be utilized for numerous functional uses and translating. Beyond these basic needs, new teachers could be encouraged to invest in developing true friendships with these coworkers. These host national relationships provide important support systems for foreign teachers.

### **Teacher Strategy: Accept and Value Cultural Differences in the Workplace**

Nearly all the teachers had advice about culture affecting the workplace. Oftentimes, teachers seemed to approach the culture with an ability to adapt, but when they arrived at their workplace, they realized that they also needed to adapt to the host culture within the workplace. Without an adjustment, there could be numerous negative effects on companies, such as financial, perceptual, or time losses (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985). The participants adjusted to the cultural differences by changing their expectations instead of by assigning judgement to the host culture. Cindy adjusted her expectations of her students' assignments turned in on various sizes of paper by giving them the size of paper she wanted when she created

the assignment. She explained that she needed to adjust her expectations and realized that she needed to be the one to adapt, not them [her students]. She recognized that their educational training was different than her western style. Cindy directly addressed these differences with her students. Cindy mentioned that teachers should reconsider how teacher's roles and student's roles may differ from our home country's perspective. She recommended that teachers be aware of the classroom culture when they start teaching in a new culture.

Amelia felt frustrated with some coworkers and described them as viewing the workplace with "American glasses on." She explained how new teachers would be concerned when new things came up in the workplace. She told them to relax and wait a day. Not everything discussed among Chinese staff would happen, so if they could wait a day or two, the issue may be resolved naturally. She recommended "take the [American] glasses off." International teachers are not in America and will benefit from accepting the culture within the workplace setting. She said they had a saying to help them accept the situations they could not understand. They would say "TIC" which means, "This is China." It implied that they needed to put aside their American understanding of how things happened and accepted the things they did not understand about how China functioned. She recommended working within your means instead of trying to change things that will not be changed by a foreigner.

Culture is not separate from workplaces. Teachers working internationally should be made aware of the immense implication of understanding the host culture in the workplace (Selmer & Shiu, 1999). Teachers could benefit themselves by not trying to immediately understand or change workplace practices. This could lead to an unnecessary expenditure of energy without any changes. Furthermore, one of the reasons teachers want to work abroad is for

the cultural experience. By trying to completely change the cultural practices in the educational setting to American practices, the teacher would be negating a crucial part of the learning process of working abroad. Additionally, it may not benefit students or school workers from the host culture or from foreign cultures. Teachers can instead focus on slowly learning about workplace practices in the host culture and appreciating these new cultural insights.

**Teacher Strategy: Appreciate the Benefits the New Culture Provides that the Home Culture Lacks, including Workplace Differences**

Several teachers gave the advice to notice the benefits the host culture had that were missing from home cultures. One of these was from Melinda who was surprised that high school students could be left alone without a teacher. She recognized the important cultural value of harmony and how it helped students self-regulate and become socially responsible at a younger age than we expect in western cultures. She also mentioned how, in the United States, she was advised not to go to the teacher's lounge because it would be full of negative gossip. However, in China, she loved the relationships she had with the other teachers and the supportive environment the shared office space provided. Additionally, the Chinese teachers teaching load was less, so they had more planning time, resulting in higher quality lessons.

Cindy explained that while she sometimes had extra expectations or was told things at the last minute due to not speaking Mandarin, she also was excused from many responsibilities that her Chinese co-workers were required to do. Nolan mentioned the harmonious Japanese work meetings. They were long, because everyone needed to have a turn to share and to reach a common consensus. He thought this was overall beneficial and helpful. It helped create a harmonious work environment.

Teachers acknowledged the sadness or disappointment of missing out on things at home, but their strategy was focusing on the unique aspects of living abroad. Chloe gave the example of missing out on her sister's baby's birth, but she counteracted that with her son getting to see historical sites around Europe. Chloe mentioned how her young son had learned some Mandarin language while in Taiwan and is now learning German.

Living abroad is a chance to view life in a new way. Cushner's (2007) study about student teaching abroad showed how students developed the ability to work outside of their comfort zones as they encountered different cultural work styles. They became adaptable and able to connect with and work with a greater variety of people in any setting. For teachers overseas, they can look for differences in cultures and focus on the positive differences they experience abroad. Many differences will feel uncomfortable, but some will soon reveal benefits not allowed in one's home culture. In this way, foreign teachers can appreciate the different practices and enjoy new experiences in daily life and work.

**Teacher Strategy: Prioritize your Immediate Family Needs Above your Extended Family Wishes**

One strategy identified was to prioritize the immediate family's needs above extended family desires. After several years abroad, Melinda and her husband developed the view of their family as a small, cohesive family unit. She discussed making decisions based on what was best for them and not from the opinions of their extended family. They do value their extended family greatly. Melinda explained how she and her husband really value their time spent visiting their families in America and India. When they leave, they make sure to say goodbye thoroughly, because they do not know if or when they will see each other again.



Chloe shared a similar strategy. Even though she was divorced, her ex-husband supported her decision to move abroad with their young son and has made a point to visit them frequently. On the other end of the spectrum, George mentioned how, although he is happy in Singapore, he knows he and his family will need to move at some point since his wife is not content there. He sounded open to future teaching abroad situations and returning home to the United States. In all three of these examples, the teachers were prioritizing the needs of their immediate family members even when they needed to make sacrifices with extended family members.

Chloe and George both mentioned resources for parents with children abroad. Furthermore, Chloe recommended that international teachers who were also parents remember that their home abroad is also their child's childhood home. She regretted not bringing furniture with her to make her home in Taiwan more familiar and comfortable for them both. George suggested finding out all the details possible about the practical things. Getting the practical matters dealt with allowed him to focus on interesting aspects of the culture. Melinda echoed this by saying how health insurance became more important to her in later years abroad and especially after becoming pregnant with her first child.

Immediate family members who are embarking on the international experience with teachers are going through intercultural adjustment also. Teachers should pay attention to their needs and realize how impacting this move is on all family members. Ackers' (2005) acknowledged a range of factors for moving abroad along with the idea that needs change over time. For teachers with family members living with them, they must consider the best interests of their children and/or partners. Practical matters can help make everyone comfortable and extending friendships and the school/work or local community can also help everyone feel

connected to the new home. Family members at home may have suggestions, advice, or desire for the teacher's family to move home again, however, teachers and their immediate families can weigh the benefits of their experiences abroad with the needs of those at home.

### **Conclusion**

Teaching abroad can be a meaningful experience, both professionally and personally. Those who have an interest in and desire to live in a new culture can find great satisfaction in this opportunity. The challenges are significant and the way a teacher views the differences in cultures can help determine the individual's sense of adjustment and happiness in her new home. Schools and veteran teachers provide important support networks and can do a lot to support the new teachers initially and continually through training, including cultural and institutionally specific information. Teachers should also be encouraged to value relationships with local people, both those working in their school and others they may encounter. Teachers who have the potential to interact with the new culture in an open and curious way have the opportunity to positively represent intercultural attitudes and a positive view of the culture(s) they come from. In this way, they can benefit not only themselves, but also the school and international communities they work in. Their personal abilities to culturally adapt play out in all areas of their life overseas. This directly impacts their feelings of happiness, sense of belonging and purpose, and continued commitment to advance the teaching profession internationally, along with the lives of those they work with.

### **Limitations of the Study**

One limitation was that each teacher was only interviewed once and checked in afterwards once or twice. This is limiting as it only shows the snapshot of their lives abroad as

teachers. Longitudinal studies may be helpful. Another limitation was the lack of age variety in participants who responded. They all were around their late 20s through early 50s. It would be useful and interesting to hear from teachers in their late 50s and 60s, especially those who had already taught in western school districts and were teaching abroad as an enriching experience in their retirement years. Since participating in this study was volunteering, the individuals who agreed to being interviewed were actually the professional and elite international teachers instead of the exploratory teachers who stayed maybe only a year or two. This caused the results to show the higher level of strategies and adaptations. It may not be reflective of the general population of teachers abroad. These teachers have successfully integrated their lives into a host culture. Another limitation would be the higher proportion of women to men. This was due to who responded to the interview invitations.

### **Further Research**

Future research could consider longer term teaching abroad and how it affects individuals' careers and family life. More research aimed at addressing the needs of spouses, partners, and children would be beneficial for many families. Research to support teachers who do not have as high of an orientation towards positive views of different cultures could be helpful for numerous schools and teachers overseas. The "Boomerang" teachers who returned to their original country or position after a year or more away would be advantageous to study, especially as more individuals are choosing to develop their careers internationally. As the scope of this research was broad, each facet studied could be expanded into subsequent individual research projects.

## References

- Ackers, L. (2005). Promoting scientific mobility and balanced growth in the European research area. *Innovation, 18*, 301-317.
- Alred, G., & Byram, M. (2002). Becoming an intercultural mediator: A longitudinal study of residence abroad. *Journal of multilingual and multicultural development, 23*(5), 339-352.
- Baker, F. J., & Giacchino-Baker, R. (2000). *Building an international student teaching program: A California/Mexico experience*. Cal Poly Pomona University & Cal State San Bernardino. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED449143.pdf>.
- Berry, J. W., Kim, U., Power, S., Young, M., & Bujaki, M. (1989). Acculturation attitudes in plural societies. *Applied Psychology: An International Review, 38*(2), 185-206. doi: 10.1111/j.1464-0597.1989.tb01208.x
- Black, J. S. (1988). Work role transitions: A study of American expatriate managers in Japan. *Journal of International Business Studies, 19*, 277-294.
- Black, J. S., Mendenhall, M., & Oddou, G. (1991). Toward a comprehensive model of international adjustment: An integration of multiple theoretical perspectives. *Academy of Management Review, 16*, 291-317. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/258863>.
- Bochner, S. (1982). *Cultures in contact: Studies in cross-cultural interaction*. Oxford, England: Pergamon Press, Ltd.
- Bochner, S., McLeod, B. M., & Lin, A. (1977). Friendship patterns of overseas students: A functional model (<sup>1</sup>). *International Journal of Psychology, 12*(4), 277-294.
- Brewster, C. (1995). The paradox of expatriate adjustment. In J. Selmer (Ed.), *Expatriate management: New ideas for international business*. Westport, CT: Quorum Books.

- Brewster, C., Lundmark, A., & Holden, L. (1993). *A different tack: An analysis of British and Swedish management styles*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.
- Caligiuri, P. M. (2000). Selecting expatriates for personality characteristics: A moderating effect of personality on the relationship between host national contact and cross-cultural adjustment. *Management International Review*, 40(1), 61-80.
- Caligiuri, P., Phillips, J., Lazarova, M., Tarique, I., & Bürgi, P. (2001). The theory of met expectations applied to expatriate adjustment: The role of cross-cultural training. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 12(3), 357-372.
- Church, A. T. (1982). Sojourner adjustment. *Psychological Bulletin*, 91, 540-572.
- Clark, T., & Pugh, D. S. (2001). Foreign country priorities in the internationalization process: A measure and exploratory test on British Firms. *International Business Review*, 10, 285-303.
- Colville-Hall, S., Adamowicz-Hariasz, M., Sidorova, V., & Engelking, T. (2011). Franco-American teachers-in-training: A study of best practices in teaching and studying abroad. *The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 21, 275-288. Retrieved from <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ991096>.
- Cross, M. C. (1998). *Self-efficacy and cultural awareness: A study of returned Peace Corps teachers*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Maryland, April 16, 1998. Montgomery County Public Schools.
- Cushner, K. (2007). The role of experience in the making of internationally-minded teachers. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 34(1), 27-39. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23478850>.

- EF English First*. (n.d.). Retrieved October 12, 2017 from <http://www.englishfirst.com/ESL-Jobs/>.
- English language programs*. (n.d.). Retrieved October 12, 2017 from <https://elprograms.org/about/program-history/>.
- EPIK: English Program in Korea*. (n.d.) Retrieved October 12, 2017 from <https://www.epik.go.kr:8080/index.do>.
- Furnham, A., & Bochner, S. (1986). *Culture shock. Psychological reactions to unfamiliar environments*. London, UK: Methuen & Co., Ltd.
- Grimes, S. (2010). Cultural understanding a crucial responsibility of language teachers abroad. *Schools: Studies in Education*, 7(1), 27-40. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/651294>.
- Gullahorn, J. T., & Gullahorn, J. E. (1963). An extension of the U-curve hypothesis. *Journal of Social Issues*, 19, 33-47.
- Hammer, M. R. & Bennet, M. J. (1998). *The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) manual*. Portland, OR: The Intercultural Communication Institute.
- ibo.org (n.d.). Retrieved October 12, 2017, from <http://www.ibo.org/about-the-ib/>.
- Inkson, K., Arthur, M., Pringle, J., & Barry, S. (1997). Expatriate assignment versus overseas experience: Contrasting models of international human resource development. *Journal of World Business*, 32(4), 351-368. Retrieved from [http://ac.els-cdn.com/S1090951697900171/1-s2.0-S1090951697900171-main.pdf?\\_tid=c3be1582-29f2-11e6-b8be-00000aacb362&acdnat=1465003512\\_c533960ef381497a4cb3ee244766cd14](http://ac.els-cdn.com/S1090951697900171/1-s2.0-S1090951697900171-main.pdf?_tid=c3be1582-29f2-11e6-b8be-00000aacb362&acdnat=1465003512_c533960ef381497a4cb3ee244766cd14).

- International TEFL Academy. (2012, February 21). *Frequently asked questions about TEFL certification and teaching English abroad*. Retrieved from [www.internationalteflacademy.com/faq/bid/102201/How-large-is-the-job-market-for-English-teachers-abroad](http://www.internationalteflacademy.com/faq/bid/102201/How-large-is-the-job-market-for-English-teachers-abroad).
- Jackson, D. J. R., Carr, S. C., Edwards, M., Thorn, K., Allfree, N., Hooks, J., & Inkson, K. (2005). Exploring the dynamics of New Zealand's talent flow. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology, 34*, 110-116.
- Jenkins, E. M., & Mockaitis, A. I. (2010). You're from where? The influence of distance factors on New Zealand expatriates' cross-cultural adjustment. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 21*(15), 2694-2715. doi:10.1080/09585192.2010. 528653
- Kealey, D. J. (1989). A study of cross-cultural effectiveness: Theoretical issues, practical applications. *International Journal of Intercultural relations, 13*, 387-428.
- Klineberg, O., & Hull, W. F. (1979). *At a foreign university: An international study of adaptation and coping*. New York: Praeger.
- Landerhold, E., & Chacko, J. B. (2013). *Student teaching abroad: An experience for 21<sup>st</sup> century teachers*. Teacher Education, Northeastern Illinois University. Retrieved from <http://www.eric.ed.gov/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=ED540609>.
- Lysgaard, S. (1955). Adjustment in a foreign society: Norwegian Fulbright grantees visiting in the United States. *International Social Science Bulletin, 7*, 45-51.
- Matsumoto, D., LeRoux, J., Ratzlaff, C., Tatani, H., Uchida, H., Kim, C., & Araki, S. (2001). Development and validation of a measure of intercultural adjustment potential in Japanese sojourners: The Intercultural Adjustment Potential Scale (ICAPS). *International*

- Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 25, 483-510. Retrieved from [www.elsevier.com/locate/ijintrel](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/ijintrel).
- Maynes, N., Allison, J., & Julien-Schultz, L. J. (2013). An examination of longevity of impact of an international practicum experience on teachers' beliefs and practices four years later. *International Education Studies*, 6(4). doi:10.5539/ies.v6n4p154
- McClure, J. W. (2007). International graduates' cross-cultural adjustment: Experiences, coping strategies, and suggested programmatic responses. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 12(2), 199-217. doi: 10.1080/13562510701191976
- Mendenhall, M., & Oddou, G. (1985). The dimensions of expatriate acculturation: A review. *The Academy of Management Review*, 10(1), 39-47. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/258210>
- Oberg, K. (1960). Culture shock: Adjustment to new cultural environments [Abstract]. *Missiology: An International Review*, 7(4), 177-182.
- Paige, R. M., Jacobs-Cassuto, M., Yershova, Y. A., & DeJaeghere, J. (2003). Assessing intercultural sensitivity: An empirical analysis of the Hammer and Bennet Intercultural Development Inventory. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 27, 467-486. doi:10.1016/S0147-1767(03)00034-8
- Peace Corps: About. (n.d.). Retrieved October 12, 2017, from <https://www.peacecorps.gov/about/>.
- Peace Corps: The Founding Moment. (n.d.). Retrieved October 12, 2017, from <https://www.peacecorps.gov/about/history/founding-moment/>.



- Selmer, J., & Luring, J. (2009). Cultural similarity and adjustment of expatriate academics [Abstract]. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 33, 429-436. doi:10.1016/j.ijintrel.2009.06.007
- Selmer, J., & Shiu, L. S. (1999). Coming home? Adjustment of Hong Kong Chinese expatriate business managers assigned to the People's Republic of China. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 23(3), 447-465. Retrieved from PII: S0147-1767(99)00005-X.
- Spradley, J. P. (2016). *The ethnographic interview*. [Kindle version]. Retrieved from Amazon.com.
- Suutari, V., & Brewster, C. (2000). Making their own way: international experience through self-initiated foreign assignments. *Journal of World Business*, 35, 417-436.
- Tanaka, T., Takai, J., Kohyama, T., & Fujihara, T. (1994). Adjustment patterns of students in Japan. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 18, 55-76.
- Thorn, K. (2009). The relative importance of motives for international self-initiated mobility. *Career Development International*, 14(5), 441-464. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/13620430910989843>.
- Thorn, K., Inkson, K., & Carr, S. (2013). New constructs for the prediction of self-initiated international mobility: An exploratory study. *Journal of Pacific Rim Psychology*, 7(1), 24-35. doi:10.1017/prp.2013.3
- UNESCO Institute for Statistics. (2011) *Information sheet no. 6. The global demand for primary teachers—2011 update*. [PDF file]. Retrieved from <https://www.gooverseas.com/industry-trends/teach-abroad-report>

- Ward, C., Bochner, S., & Furnham, A. (2001). *The psychology of culture shock*. East Sussex, England: Routledge.
- Ward, C., & Kennedy, A. (1996). Crossing cultures: The relationship between psychological and sociocultural dimensions of cross-cultural adjustment. In J. Pandey, D. P. S. Bhawuk & D. Sinha (Eds.), *Asian contributions to cross-cultural psychology* (pp. 289-306). New Delhi: Sage.
- Ward, C., Okura, Y., Kennedy, A., & Kojima, T. (1998). The U-curve on trial: A longitudinal study of psychological and sociocultural adjustment during cross-cultural transition... *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 22(3), 277-291. doi:10.1016/S0147-1767(98)00008-X
- Ward, C., & Searle, W. (1991). The impact of value discrepancies and cultural identity on psychological and sociocultural adjustment of sojourners. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 15, 209-225.
- Zheng, X., & Berry, J. W. (1991). Psychological adaptation of Chinese sojourners in Canada. *International Journal of Psychology*, 26, 451-470.
- Zhou, Y., Jindal-Snape, D., Topping, K., & Todman, J. (2008). Theoretical models of culture shock and adaptation in international students in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*, 33(1), 63-75. doi:10.1080/03075070701794833

### Appendix A: Intercultural Development Inventory

A. Hammer and Bennet's (1998) Intercultural Development Inventory continuum of relating to other cultures

Ethnocentric			Ethnorelative		
Denial	Defense	Minimization	Acceptance	Adaptation	Integration

B. Possible Interview Questions

- 1) Tell me a story about why you originally decided to move abroad?
- 2) Tell me a story that shows the factors that pushed you forward in your decision to move abroad and what some of your concerns were?
- 3) How has your adjustment to living and teaching abroad been? Tell me stories that show some of the adjustments you made.
- 4) What surprised you (positively, neutrally, or negatively) about teaching abroad? What stories can you share that can illustrate these reactions?
- 5) Share stories about how you prepared for moving abroad?
- 6) What in your opinion is the most helpful resource, idea, or knowledge that has helped you abroad? Do you have any stories that can illustrate these specifically?
- 7) What were your previous experiences with other cultures, languages, or travel?
- 8) What is your previous teaching experience?
- 9) What factors would affect your decision to stay abroad or move home? Do you have any stories that highlight any of these?
- 10) How long did you initially plan to stay abroad?

11) To what extent do you see the host culture's influence on the work place? Do you see this influence as positive, neutral, or negative?

12) What was your initial impression of the host culture and teaching institution based on your interactions with coworkers who already worked there? Can you share some specific examples to illustrate your points?

13) What would you say to someone who was interested in moving abroad in general and to your specific teaching assignment?

## Appendix B: IRB Approval



### Institutional Review Board (IRB)

720 4th Avenue South AS 210, St. Cloud, MN 56301-4498

**Name:** Rachel Bassett  
**Email:** bara1301@stcloudstate.edu

## IRB PROTOCOL DETERMINATION: Expedited Review-1

**Project Title:** Intercultural Adjustment for Teachers Abroad

**Advisor** James Robinson

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed your protocol to conduct research involving human subjects. Your project has been: **APPROVED**

Please note the following important information concerning IRB projects:

- The principal investigator assumes the responsibilities for the protection of participants in this project. Any adverse events must be reported to the IRB as soon as possible (ex. research related injuries, harmful outcomes, significant withdrawal of subject population, etc.).
- For expedited or full board review, the principal investigator must submit a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated on this letter to report conclusion of the research or request an extension.
- Exempt review only requires the submission of a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated in this letter if an extension of time is needed.
- Approved consent forms display the official IRB stamp which documents approval and expiration dates. If a renewal is requested and approved, new consent forms will be officially stamped and reflect the new approval and expiration dates.
- The principal investigator must seek approval for any changes to the study (ex. research design, consent process, survey/interview instruments, funding source, etc.). The IRB reserves the right to review the research at any time.

If we can be of further assistance, feel free to contact the IRB at 320-308-4932 or email ResearchNow@stcloudstate.edu and please reference the SCSU IRB number when corresponding.

**IRB Chair:**

Dr. Benjamin Witts  
 Associate Professor- Applied Behavior Analysis  
 Department of Community Psychology, Counseling, and Family Therapy

**IRB Institutional Official:**

Dr. Latha Ramakrishnan  
 Interim Associate Provost for Research  
 Dean of Graduate Studies

#### OFFICE USE ONLY

<b>SCSU IRB#</b> 1773 - 2248	<b>Type:</b> Expedited Review-1	<b>Today's Date:</b> 2/13/2018
<b>1st Year Approval Date:</b> 2/13/2018	<b>2nd Year Approval Date:</b>	<b>3rd Year Approval Date:</b>
<b>1st Year Expiration Date:</b> 2/12/2019	<b>2nd Year Expiration Date:</b>	<b>3rd Year Expiration Date:</b>