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## Characteristics of friends of female college third culture kids

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College third culture kids' (TCKs') perceptions about the characteristics of closest friends were examined using a Q-methodology. Fifteen female college TCKs participated in the study. Three distinctive factor groups emerged representing three different patterns of characteristics of closest friends among the participants: the *Socially Connected* group (friend as playmate), the *Emotionally Connected* group (friend as nurturer and complement) and the *Functionally Connected* group (friend as resource). The findings of the current study have yielded important clinical and educational implications for higher education. Findings partially support earlier research conducted on this population but portray more within-group heterogeneity than has been reported elsewhere.

**Keywords:** college students; third culture kids; friendship; transnational transition

On college campuses, third culture kids (TCKs) might be one of the lesser-known minority populations. They are often called Global Nomads or sojourners due to their multiple transnational experiences while growing up (McCaig, 1992; Navara & James, 2002; Nette & Hayden, 2007; Schaetti, 2000; Useem, 1993). These multiple transnational transitions can be voluntary, such as international education, or involuntary, such as a result of war, famine, parents' economic migration or parents' occupations (Nette & Hayden, 2007). Although there was no consensus among scholars who have contributed to the literature as to when in one's life, for how long or in how many countries a person must live to qualify as a TCK, many authors defined TCKs as people who have spent the majority of their formative developmental years outside their birth country and culture of origin (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001). TCKs were described as having been exposed to many cultures, yet not having developed a full sense of belonging in any of the cultures that they have experienced (Fail, Thompson, & Walker, 2004; Schaetti & Ramsey, 1999).

Multicultural characteristics of TCKs, such as linguistic ability, neutrality, open-mindedness, flexibility, attitudes towards other systems, cultures and people and tolerance of differences, have been identified (Lam & Selmer, 2004). The TCK literature stressed their international mobility as one of the key factors that shaped these characteristics. However, ways in which the globally mobile lifestyle might influence college TCKs' friendship have not drawn much attention in Counsellor Education or Higher Education.

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The aim of this study was to attempt to better understand friendship characteristics of female college TCKs who had lived globally mobile lives and who made transitions to colleges in the United States.

### **Distinctive characteristics of college TCKs**

In 2000, it was reported that approximately 37,000 TCKs had come to the United States for college (Gaw, 2000). It is reasonable to expect that the number has increased due to globalization. College TCKs can be regarded as either American or international from the immigration legal point of view. A college TCK can be an American citizen or US passport holder but have lived outside of the United States for most of his or her life. Even though the person has returned to the United States as his or her home country, the person would not know much about America or feel American as his or her cultural identity. On the other hand, a college TCK can be an international student and may view America as another host country that he or she would stay in for educational purposes. For the current study, both American and international passport holders who met the research criteria (female college students who had involuntarily lived in countries other than home countries more than half of their lives between the ages 5–18 years and who currently enrolled as sophomore, junior or senior undergraduates in US colleges) were included.

Despite the diversity among this population, the shared set of beliefs, values and world-views of these students has been designated as a *third culture* (Gaw, 2006). The literature has asserted that TCKs, due to their shared characteristics, have developed distinct patterns of social networks (Gaw, 2006; Gerner & Perry, 2000; Hayden, Rancic, & Thompson, 2000; Kohls, 2001; Lam & Selmer, 2004; Shames, 1997; Stultz, 2002). Although TCKs have been found to have significant strengths, high global mobility could affect TCKs in less positive ways in their psychosocial identity. When frequent transnational mobility occurs, cultural identity, which affords a sense of security, stability and belonging, could be disrupted (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001).

Although little is known about the effects of such transnational mobility of TCKs, few aspects of their social and psychological development have been discussed in TCK literature. The literature described TCKs as facing unique difficulties in the development of individual identity. These struggles included difficulties related to a sense of belonging, unresolved grief and friendship development (Barringer, 2000; Choi & Luke, 2011; Cockburn, 2002; Cottrell & Useem, 1993; Fail et al., 2004; Gaw, 2006; Lambiri, 2005; Larsen & Larsen, 2007; Luebke & Gaw, 2000; McCaig, 1992; McLachlan, 2007; Pollock & Van Reken, 2001; Schaetti, 2000; Stulz, 2002; Tokuhama-Espinosa, 2003).

Very few empirical studies existed in the literature on TCKs (Gerner & Perry, 2000; Gerner, Perry, Moselle, & Archbold, 1992; Hayden et al., 2000; Lam & Selmer, 2004). Much of the research that has been conducted is qualitative in nature and many focus on TCKs who were in their mid- to late teenage years (Schaetti, 2000). Moreover, most existing articles and studies on college TCKs have reflected a deficit model. In other words, the emphasis of studies to date has been on the lack of connection or overall social deficiencies of college TCKs. What was missing in the literature was an effort to understand those friendships that existed involving college TCKs and the characteristics that college TCKs found attractive. The present study attempted to move beyond a deficit model to identify the qualities and behavioural characteristics that college TCKs sought in their closest friends.

## Method

Surveys and interviews have been the most widely used research methods to investigate friendship across the lifespan. Instruments, such as the Social Connectedness Scale (SCS; Lee & Robbins, 1995), the McGill Friendship Questionnaire (Mendelson & Aboud, 1999) and the Best Friends Check List (Bochner, McLeod, & Lin, 1977) were used to assess friendship. However, the researchers of the current study determined that using standardized assessments would be a constrained way to examine college TCKs' friendship considering their distinctive characteristics affected by their mobile life style (Gaw, 2006). Q-methodology was determined to hold more promise in capturing college TCKs' subjective opinions and beliefs concerning closest friendship. Moreover, it was recommended for use with college-age populations (Ray & Montgomery, 2006; Woosley, Hyman, & Graunke, 2004). Q-methodology was originally developed by William Stephenson (1935) and was later strengthened by Brown (1980). More recently, this method has become more widely used in the fields of Higher Education, Psychology, Political Science, and Communication (Brown, 1993; Donner, 2001; McKeown, Hinks, Stowell-Smith, Mercer, & Forster, 1999; Ray & Montgomery, 2006; Robbins, 2005; Woosley et al., 2004). The strengths of this methodology are: (1) it enables a researcher to discover distinguishing perspectives quantitatively in a relatively small sample size and (2) follow-up interviews can be added to generate qualitative data and assist in interpreting the data collected.

### *The concourse*

Within Q-methodology, the concourse refers to a collection of opinion statements (Brown, 1993). A total of 82 statements were generated based on two previous studies on friendship characteristics (Cole & Bradac, 1996; Maeda & Ritchie, 2003); one conducted with college students in the United States and the other conducted with college students in Japan. Both studies identified statements and words that described characteristics of closest or best friends that led to relational satisfaction.

### *The P-sample*

The P-sample (participants in Q-methodology) of this study consisted of 15 female college TCKs. Extensive literature (Adams, Blieszner, & de Vries, 2000; Blieszner & Adams, 1992; Fisher & Hood, 1987; Larose, Guay, & Boivin, 2002; Paul & Brier, 2001; Pittman & Richmond, 2008) indicated that gender and the length of time spent on campus could influence college student friendship. Therefore, only females were recruited for the study and first-year students were excluded from the study.

College TCKs were recruited from existing student organizations or communities in three different universities in the Upstate New York. The snowball sampling method, such as chain referral selection, was employed. The participant criteria for the study were clearly stated. The college TCKs eligible for this study were (1) individuals who had spent more than half of their lives (between the ages 5 and 18) in countries other than their home country, (2) individuals who had moved involuntarily due to their parents' careers (i.e. missionaries, diplomats, military personnel and business people) and (3) individuals who were female and currently enrolled as sophomore, junior or senior undergraduates in the United States.

The mean age of the participants in the group was 22 years, out of a range of 20–27 years. Seven students were in their second year of college; two were in their third, four were in their fourth and two were in their fifth year. The majority of the participants (60%,  $n = 9$ ) were born in Korea. The rest of the participants reported their birthplaces as follows: Australia ( $n = 1$ ), China ( $n = 1$ ), Kazakhstan ( $n = 1$ ), the Philippines ( $n = 1$ ), Singapore ( $n = 1$ ) and Taiwan ( $n = 1$ ). The participants reported having between 2 and 7 transnational transitions during their childhoods. The participants reported Armenia, Australia, Bulgaria, China, England, Germany, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Korea, Paraguay, the Philippines, Russia, Singapore, Taiwan, the United States and Ukraine as their transit countries. Participants reported their relationship status as follows: 20% ( $n = 3$ ) of the participants reported as dating and 80% ( $n = 12$ ) reported as not dating. None ( $n = 0$ ) of the participants responded having between 1 and 3 closest friends; 53% ( $n = 8$ ) responded having between 4 and 10 closest friends; 6% ( $n = 1$ ) reported having 11–20 closest friends and 40% ( $n = 6$ ) reported having more than 20 closest friends.

### *The Q-sample*

A Q-sample, which refers to a collection of stimulus items, was drawn from a larger set of concourse (Brown, 1993). Structured samples and a deductive factorial design were employed based on the two previous studies (Cole & Bradac, 1996; Maeda & Ritchie, 2003) to create the Q-sample from the concourse. Two main components – qualities and behaviours/interactive characteristics – were incorporated into the Q-sample. Generally, the number of statements in a Q-sample is between 40 and 50 statements (van Exel & de Graaf, 2005). Donner (2001) introduced several rules of thumb for choosing Q-samples: (1) choose a Q-sample that contains various meanings, (2) avoid extreme statements, but include plausible ones and (3) avoid sentences with double negatives. For the current study, 45 statements that were comprehensive and representative about college students' friendships were selected after closely reviewing 82 concourses.

### *The Q-sorting*

Performing a Q-sort involves the ranking of items from the Q-sample by each participant, and it is based on the participant's choice between 'more/less' rather than 'either/or' on the items. The Q-sorting process required participants to place each of 45 statements on the Q-sort grid of choices from *most characteristic of your closest friends* (+4) to those *least characteristic of your closest friends* (−4). The Q-sort process forced the participants to place only a limited number of statements in each of the categories (e.g. +4, +3 or −4, −3). It took approximately 30–40 minutes for each participant to finish the Q-sorting process. Seventy-three Q-sorts were initially collected and 28 Q-sorts were eliminated from the data analysis due to missing information (e.g. incomplete Q-sort data, unmatched demographic criteria – freshman or male).

### *Analysis of data*

The analysis of data in Q-methodology consists of various statistical procedures, including correlation, factor analysis, factor rotation, quantification of factor loading and factor interpretation (McKeown & Thomas, 1988). PQMethod 2.11 (Schmolck, 2002), a DOS-based program, was used to analyse the data. This program assisted with entering the sorting data onto the answer sheets. Then, the rankings gained from the Q-sample were correlated

and factor analysed to discover the groupings of opinions expressed by the remaining 15 participants. The final procedure was data interpretation. Additional data were collected from demographic questionnaires and follow-up interviews. Demographic questionnaires included age, major, home country, host countries, number of transnational transitions, religious affiliations, current relationship status and number of closest friends. In particular, follow-up interviews were conducted with three female college TCKs. Two criteria for the selection of the follow-up interviewees were considered: (1) a participant with the highest factor loadings which represented the purest view of the factor and (2) a participant who loaded on solely one factor. The interviewees were asked to elaborate their reasons of choosing certain Q-statements to describe the characteristics of their closest friends. This interview data assisted the researchers in interpreting the quantitative data from Q-sorting and provided in-depth understanding and clarification of each friendship types.

## Results

After closely examining and analysing the data, the researchers generated names of three friendship types that well described and adequately represented a result of the Q-sorting performed by 15 college TCKs. The three friendship types were the *Functionally Connected* (friend as resource), the *Socially Connected* (friend as nurturer) and the *Emotionally Connected* (friend as playfellow). Thirteen college TCKs were loaded onto three different factor groups. Six (40% of participants) were loaded onto the *Functionally Connected* friendship. Participants in this factor group had or desired to have closest friends characterized as being responsible, intelligent, independent, ambitious and creative, yet less characterized as being physically attractive or easy-going. Another four college TCKs (27%) were loaded onto the *Socially Connected* friendship. This group appeared to desire closest friends characterized as being fun to be around, outgoing, friendly, comfortable and physically accessible. Lastly, three college TCKs (20%) were loaded onto the *Emotionally Connected* friendship. Authenticity, compassion and mutual responsibility were the preferred characteristics among the college TCKs in this group. Each factor group showed strong preferences, which is interpreted in Table 1.

Table 1. Three factors.

Factor	<i>Functionally Connected</i>	<i>Socially Connected</i>	<i>Emotionally Connected</i>
Friendship type	Friend as resource	Friend as playfellow	Friend as nurturer/complement
Preferred characteristics of closest friend(s)	Independent, serious, intelligent, ambitious and creative	Fun to be around, physically attractive, glexible, approachable, outgoing and friendly	Honest, loyal, accepting, supportive, intimate and complementary
Interpretation	High level of personal stimulation & low level of closeness	High level of activity & low level of personal stimulation	High level of closeness & low level of activity
College TCK	40%	27%	20%

### **Factor A: Functionally Connected – friend as resource**

The *Functionally Connected* friendship preference seemed to be driven by intellectual stimulus and challenges from closest friendship. The female college students in this group regarded closest friends as resources. This type of friendship valued independence, intelligence, ambition and creativity highly. Closest friends in this friendship type enjoyed intellectual conversations, learned from each other and respected one's independence. The Q-sort identified 23 of the statements as distinguishing items within Factor A. In particular, there were seven positive distinguishing items – 'Are Intelligent', 'Have a sense of responsibility', 'Are independent, their own person', 'Have a common sense', 'Inspire and encourage me', 'Are ambitious' and 'Deal with a problem seriously when needed' – and were placed at +4, +3 and +2. They showed that the participants in this group befriended those who were intellectual, responsible, inspiring, ambitious and independent.

Anoka (pseudonym) was 21 years old and a senior majoring in Geography. She was born in the United States and had six transnational transitions across two other countries, the Philippines and Japan, during her childhood. She reported that she had between four and 10 closest friends. Anoka shared her view on befriending older or more experienced people:

I found that I make friends with a lot of older people who have had opportunities to travel like my professors. I feel like I can call them as my friends. It's always with older people who are more experienced, younger people with the same experiences like Sam [one of her CTCK friends on campus], or international students like Joan who has traveled. She is not a TCK, but she is an international student. So that's who I find the easiest to be friends with.

'Persons whom I can consult with about anything' was placed at +4 among the participants in this group. It appeared to indicate that this group wanted to be connected with someone who was resourceful and could engage in intellectual communication with them at a similar level. Anoka shared her difficulties with consulting fully and freely with people who were non-college TCKs. She said:

I was telling my friends, "I wish you guys [referring to her TCK friends] were here because it would be easier for me to express my feelings." When we [referring to college TCKs including herself] are trying to express our feelings to people who don't have the same life as we do, they might try to understand . . . but you end up feeling empty because you have to explain everything to them.

Also, 'Are intelligent', was also placed at +4 among the participants in this group. It seemed to suggest this group placed a high value on the importance of intelligent engagement rather than emotional connection. Moreover, item 'Are independent, their own person', indicated that the group participants placed a high value on autonomy compared to emotional and physical closeness. Anoka appeared to be active and enjoy changes. She said:

Change! There is more to see [with excitement]! But I am trying to see from another point of view like my friends. If I consider my friends [referring to most of her American friends on campus] who all went to school together for a very long time, I can see why it is hard for them to move away from each other and the place where they have stayed for so long.

Items such as 'Inspire and encourage me', 'Are ambitious' and 'Deal with a problem seriously when needed' were placed at +3 and +2, which represented the unique characteristics of this group's friendship characteristics as comparative and compensational friendship.

**Factor B: Socially Connected – friend as playfellow**

There were 24 distinguishing statements on Factor B. Three positive distinguishing items such as ‘Are fun to be around’, ‘Persons who make me feel totally at ease’ and ‘Are outgoing/friendly’ were placed at +4. It implies the college students in this factor group highly valued social connections such as playfulness, social easiness and friendliness.

Jin (pseudonym) in this group expressed as her rationale for choosing certain items as low or high. She was born in Korea and moved to the Philippines, Indonesia, and the United States during her childhood, yet she was in international schools (American educational system) throughout her childhood. Jin shared her reason for choosing item ‘Are outgoing/friendly’:

Most of my friends are not shy [because] we had many experiences of meeting new people. We have to accept new things, new people, new atmosphere and new environment. There is no time to be introverted. To live and survive, we have to be open-minded and friendly to find friends and to fit into [our] environments faster [than most people].

However, it seemed as if she usually had distinctive interactions with TCKs at a first meeting. Jin was elaborating on her reason for selecting item ‘Persons who makes me feel totally at ease’ when she talked about how she felt about developing friendships with non-TCKs and TCKs. She said:

Whenever I talk to them [referring to American college students], there is too much of a boundary. When you first meet someone, there is a certain wall between you and them. But with them [referring to other third culture kids] when I first met them, we were like best friends since then. It didn’t take that long to be close.

**Factor C: Emotionally Connected – friend as nurturer**

There were 25 distinguishing statements on Factor C. Positive distinguishing items such as ‘Are honest’, ‘Deal with a problem seriously when needed’, ‘Are caring, kind and compassionate’, ‘Persons who make me feel totally at ease’ and ‘Have a sense of responsibility’ were placed at +4, +3 and +2. The *Emotionally Connected* Friendship appeared to focus on one’s demeanour and intimate relationship. People in this group appeared to desire support and had compassion towards each other’s well-being. Closest friends appeared to be sensitive to each other’s needs and feelings, and they were considered as nurturers in this friendship type.

Joy (pseudonym) provided more insights into interpretations about certain items that were selected. Joy was 20 years old and in her sophomore year in college majoring in newspaper journalism. She was born in Australia and had lived in four different countries, including Australia, China, Hong Kong and America. She reported not dating and had more than 20 friends.

‘Are honest’, is one of the highest characteristics the participants in the group looked for in their closest friends. Joy stated her rationale for choosing this characteristic:

I don’t like people who are not honest. I prefer to have friends who can step in and say, ‘That’s wrong,’ when I am doing something wrong. You [referring to her friends] are not trying to take advantage of me. You just want to be a good friend. You don’t have any alternative motives and you are not trying to use me. [You don’t approach me thinking] ‘Um, maybe you can help with my math homework.’

Joy acknowledged, ‘Dealing with a problem seriously when needed’ as her closest friends’ characteristic and discussed why she chose this item as high:

When I tell my friends that I have a serious problem, they will stop joking around. The worst scenario would be if I try to get serious, but they still joke around. I love a sense of humor, [but] a good friend tries to be sensitive and can notice that it's time to be serious.

## Discussion

The *Functionally Connected* friendship type was the most representative friendship group for participants in this study, which was consistent with most of the previous research about a typical friendship pattern of TCKs. For example, TCKs tended to exhibit social patterns of being less emotional, maintaining distance in social situations and moving quickly without establishing intimacy (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001; Stultz, 2002). For most, the biggest challenge for the TCK population has been reported as not being able to connect with non-TCKs who never had any cross-cultural transition experiences (Choi & Luke, 2011). The findings of the current research could provide a plausible explanation for why many college TCKs faced social difficulties in the US campuses and what unique strengths and limitations this population had in terms of social characteristics.

Transnational experience could be argued to be an important factor in the formation of closest friendships. College TCKs preferred certain friendship characteristics such as independence, creativity and reliability compared to a wide range of social or emotional attachment to their closest friends. Frequent transnational transitions may stimulate intellectual challenges and enrich social and cultural coping skills. On the other hand, recurring separations and relational terminations may hinder emotional openness and closeness in forming a new relationship or developing emotional attachment with friends. College TCKs' friendship patterns tended to exhibit various self-defence mechanisms and coping skills to protect themselves from any potential heartbreak in their friendships (Choi & Luke, 2011).

Another interesting finding was that college TCKs with the *Socially Connected* friendship type might develop their friendship patterns as part of their social and psychological coping skills throughout their transnational transitions. Based on the follow-up interview with Jin, it sounded as if she purposely developed these preferred characteristics to cope with her transnational mobile experiences in order to quickly adjust to her new international schools. In TCK literature, developing *forced extroversion* has been used to describe one of the TCKs' coping psychological behaviours (McCaig, 1992). For example, TCKs learn how to say and what to say in order to get to know new people quickly in a new environment (Choi & Luke, 2011; McCaig, 1992).

However, these data appeared to support that college TCKs were not a homogeneous group in terms of their preferences for characteristics of their closest friends. Rather, even though the majority of college TCKs were identified with the *Functionally Connected* friendship, they appeared to be more heterogeneous than not. Most TCK literature has focused on the *Functionally Connected* friendship type and the uniqueness of TCK friendships. Most of the time, college TCKs in the other friendship types, the *Socially* and *Emotionally Connected* friendship types, have not received much attention in TCK literature. A possible hypothesis drawing from the current data is that college TCKs who loaded onto either the *Socially* or *Emotionally Connected* friendship type had an easier time adjusting to the social life and developing friendships in the United States.

### **Limitations**

The sample was a convenience sample – the snowball sampling method, such as the chain referral selection was used; all data were collected from three different Universities located in Upstate New York. Even though the three institutions shared some similar ecological surroundings (size and geographic location), the differences among these three institutions (i.e. number of international students, public vs. private, tuition and school ranks) might influence the difference of the participants' social and individual characteristics and the findings of the study.

Secondly, another limitation would be that an overwhelming number of participants were born in East and Southeast Asia: 13 from China, Korea, the Philippines, Singapore and Taiwan and two from elsewhere, such as Australia and Kazakhstan. Even though their transnational transition countries varied, the participants' Asian birthplaces might affect the results of the current study and limit generalizability. Thus, the current research might more reflect college TCKs from Asian cultures rather than European or African cultures.

Thirdly, the extent of the diversity among the college TCKs could be a limitation of the study. The multicultural backgrounds of college TCKs, by definition, could vary from one to over seven different host cultures that they have experienced during their childhood (Barringer, 2000). Differences in the number or duration of the transnational transitions were not controlled, but they were incorporated based on the information from the demographic questionnaires into the conclusions of the study.

### **Implications**

Gaw (2006) asserted that campuses failed to recognize college TCKs as a group with unique characteristics and needs. Student affairs professionals have primarily focused on psychological symptoms, such as culture shock, rather than recognizing their strengths and potential due to their transnational backgrounds. Therefore, misdiagnoses and incorrect psychosocial pictures of this population have prevailed. Moreover, standardized psychological assessment tools and constructs, which were based on majority domestic populations, were not applicable to this population (Gaw, 2006). Acknowledging the three distinctive friendship patterns of college TCKs could provide a framework for college counsellors, student affairs professionals and faculty to understand college TCKs' distinctive needs for sense of belonging on campuses, as well as their strengths in social patterns and adjustment skills.

### ***Multicultural programmes***

There has been an increased discussion of the characteristics and unique contributions of TCKs in the professional literature (Fail et al., 2004; McCaig, 1992; Navara & James, 2002; Nette & Hayden, 2007; Pollock & Van Reken, 2001; Schaetti, 2000; Schaetti & Ramsey, 1999; Useem, 1993). Recently, the field of business has been paying more attention to TCKs and their potential for leadership and entrepreneurship. Lam and Selmer (2004) claimed that TCKs were the ideal business expatriates due to their international experience, linguistic ability, neutrality, open-mindedness, flexibility, attitudes towards other systems, cultures and people and tolerance of differences. Mobilizing adult TCKs as cross-cultural trainers, mediators and mentors to domestic workers and other expatriates

in international organizations has been recommended (Lam & Selmer, 2004; Selmer & Lam, 2004). However, there has been no research addressing distinctive characteristics of college TCKs and their potential leadership on campuses.

In particular, the findings of this study suggested potential for mobilizing college TCKs who identified with *Socially Connected* friendship style as peer assistants, to bridge other college populations (domestic and international students) when multicultural interventions, activities and programmes are organized. Considering the fact that college TCKs have multicultural worldviews, intercultural sensitivities, knowledge and conflict resolution skills due to their transnational upbringing (Cottrell & Useem, 1993; Gaw, 2006; Larsen & Larsen, 2007; Pollock & Van Reken, 2001), their *Socially Connected* friendship characteristics (e.g. spontaneous, active, easy-going, unassuming, fun to be around, approachable, outgoing and friendly) can be well-utilized to play the roles of peer assistant in extra-curricular activities on campuses.

Moreover, college TCKs who had experience with international schools and were familiar with diverse populations and cultures were more likely connected with international students than domestic students as their first contacts (Eakin, 1996) because first culture students might not understand what would be like to live in another country other than their own. College TCKs can share their learned multicultural skills and coping strategies with international students who face cultural and social barriers coming from their first cultural transition. For instance, a college TCK who was born in America but lived the majority of his or her life in Korea could be easily connected with Korean international students who were born and lived in Korea until attending US colleges or universities. For those college TCKs, it would be a great opportunity for them to reconnect with their cultural identity through friendships with international students.

### ***Future research***

It is worthwhile to investigate existing TCK support groups and social networks, as well as their effectiveness on transitions and adjustment in US campuses. It can better understood how various resources (e.g. formal and informal cultural and social events, advanced technology and extracurricular support programmes) help college TCKs with different friendship patterns to develop effective social coping strategies and experience meaningful relationships on campuses. The frequent use of Facebook or Twitter as the main mechanism of socializing with friends overseas might be worthwhile to investigate for college TCKs. In addition, it might be worthy to investigate whether the culture of origin (e.g. Eastern vs. Western culture) has any influence on college TCKs' social patterns or preferred characteristics of their friends.

### **Conclusion**

To create a better atmosphere for diversity on campuses and to support diverse students' academic and social success, it is vital to understand the qualities or behaviours of different college subgroups. There were a modest number of studies that compare domestic and international college students across a variety of variables; however, there were few studies that considered characteristics of college TCKs. Lambiri (2005) asserted that understanding and researching TCKs could provide a snapshot of the changing world in which we are living. McCaig (1992) also claimed that TCKs are better equipped than others when intercultural communication, linguistic skills and mediation skills become critical in an era of globalization. This current research offers an initial understanding of how female college

TCKs perceived closest friendships. It also invites further investigation of college TCKs' multicultural skills, knowledge and their potential to promote diversity on campuses.

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