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Stories of international teachers: a narrative inquiry about culturally responsive teaching

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STORIES FROM INTERNATIONAL TEACHERS: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY ABOUT CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING

by

Leslie Maureen Cavendish

An Abstract

Of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree
in Teaching and Learning (Language, Literacy and Culture)
in the Graduate College of
The University of Iowa

May 2011

Thesis Supervisor: Professor Kathryn F. Whitmore

ABSTRACT

How do elementary educators approach cultural diversity within international school settings? How do North American teachers negotiate the tensions and experiences they have as cultural agents living abroad while valuing the cultural identities of the students they serve? This study describes how international teachers' unique positions, experiences and perspectives affect their attention to cultural diversity within their classrooms. Sociocultural theory frames this study with emphasis on personal and professional identities, narrative inquiry and culturally responsive teaching. I interweave narrative inquiry and ethnographic research methods as theoretical and methodological frameworks.

I interviewed and observed the 3 North American educators in their elementary classrooms in an American school in China over several weeks. Data collected in this study included interview transcripts, artifacts from the school and classrooms, photographs and field notes. I also weave my own stories from my experiences as an international teacher throughout the study.

The Atlas TI qualitative computer program assisted the constant-comparative analysis process. Grounded and axial coding revealed a pattern across participants' stories and approaches to cultural diversity. All three teachers authored stories from their cross cultural experiences that informed their identities as educators. The teachers questioned their cultural agent role, reflected on their responses and took action in their teaching to be culturally responsive. The approaches each teacher implemented to be responsive to the cultural worlds in their classroom related to their cultural agent identities in their personal stories of cross-cultural experiences. Findings indicated that

teachers were more likely to be culturally responsive in their teaching when they implemented a constructivist educational philosophy in their classrooms. This study reconceptualized cultural responsiveness to include the diverse cultural worlds of the student, teacher and international school setting.

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Iowa City, Iowa

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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PH.D. THESIS

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This is to certify that the Ph.D. thesis of

Leslie Maureen Cavendish

has been approved by the Examining Committee
for the thesis requirement for the Doctor of Philosophy
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To: Charles and Betty Cavendish

When you learn something from people, or from a culture, you accept it as a gift, and it is your lifelong commitment to preserve it and build on it.

Yo-Yo Ma

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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ABSTRACT

How do elementary educators approach cultural diversity within international school settings? How do North American teachers negotiate the tensions and experiences they have as cultural agents living abroad while valuing the cultural identities of the students they serve? This study describes how international teachers' unique positions, experiences and perspectives affect their attention to cultural diversity within their classrooms. Sociocultural theory frames this study with emphasis on personal and professional identities, narrative inquiry and culturally responsive teaching. I interweave narrative inquiry and ethnographic research methods as theoretical and methodological frameworks.

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reconceptualized cultural responsiveness to include the diverse cultural worlds of the student, teacher and international school setting.

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INTRODUCTION

At the heart of any story are the people and their lives. I have been incredibly fortunate to be welcomed into three international teachers' lives for this research: Richard, Elaine and Kate. It is through their stories that we can learn from their experiences. Richard, Elaine and Kate gracefully opened their classrooms and spent time talking with me over dinner, coffee and even on shopping trips. I have a history with these three teachers. Ten years ago, they were my international teaching colleagues. I moved back to the United States and didn't keep in touch with any of them for 6 years. When I started this research project I contacted Richard and Elaine who generously agreed to participate. The first day I visited the American School of China, I had lunch in the faculty lounge with Kate. She enthusiastically volunteered to participate as well. Without these three teachers' willingness to take a risk and trust me with their stories and lives, I would never have been able to start this project. Before sharing their stories, though, it is essential that I share my own.

My Background

From the time I was born to age 6, my family moved 4 times in 3 different states. My father, a steel salesman, relocated our family to new territories on a fairly regular basis. Around my 6th birthday, our family moved to Bettendorf, Iowa where I grew up. It was a quiet town with biking paths, a celebrated state-championship high school football team and a school system that emphasized independent learning. I chose a small liberal arts college for my undergraduate work because it offered opportunities to study abroad. I had a desire to go places. To see new things. To meet new people. While at school, I studied for 5 months in The Netherlands and I realized I had found my niche. Living overseas was where I wanted to be.

Elementary Teaching History

I have a story that I have told over and over again when asked about my 11 years of teaching in elementary schools. It involves four different countries, four different schools and two different grade levels.

My first teaching job was in Bahrain in the Middle East. The fall after graduating from college, I moved to this small island country in the Persian Gulf to teach third grade in a bilingual Bahraini school. It was the year after the first Gulf War ended. When I first moved there, I knew absolutely nothing about the Middle East or Islam. The kids were from wealthy Bahraini families, many of them were royalty, and I was highly respected as a teacher. I spent my free time jet skiing on the Persian Gulf, learning about the local culture and history and camping in the desert. I loved it. On vacations I travelled around the Middle East and even got my scuba diving license. After a couple years I left, not because I had a change of heart, but because I was fearful that I may end up never leaving! I returned to the U.S. and got a job over the phone to teach 3rd grade in Houston, TX. I hated it. This particular school was oppressive and treated the teachers with an assumption of incompetence. The students were highly controlled and monitored, not unlike a prison. Although while working at this school I had great colleagues, the students were wonderful to work with, the overall tone of the school was not a fit for me. By February I had gone to an international teaching job fair and a secured a job for the following school year in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. I had heard KL was a great place to live from teachers I knew in Bahrain. I was more than ready to go.

I taught first grade for 4 years in Malaysia. While it wasn't the most well known of the international schools in town, it was certainly the most progressive. It was brand new and the teachers were celebrated, highly trusted, and valued as

knowledgeable professionals. My classroom would easily have 12-14 different nationalities with multiple languages spoken at home. The school philosophy was student centered and inquiry based. Once again, I loved it. KL is a fabulous place to live. There were weekly hash runs in the jungle, biking across town, and a mix of Malay, Indian and Chinese cultures in this liberal Muslim country. I embraced the tropical weather, the food, the travel around Southeast Asia, vacations on undeveloped islands, rainforest treks and the overall laid back lifestyle.

After living and working in Malaysia for 4 years I decided to once again seek out a new place to work, so I returned to the U.S. for another international teaching job fair. I was very fortunate. I was offered jobs in Turkey, Laos, China and Mexico. I remember being very uncertain about what to do, and spoke with a former colleague from Bahrain at the job fair. He recommended China. So, off I went…

Life in China was very different than my other experiences. Instead of living in local neighborhoods as I did in Bahrain and Malaysia, the school housed us in an expensive and elite living community. The school was well funded, paid teachers well, and had every resource imaginable. While working there, I studied Chinese and spent time exploring the less easily accessible parts of the country and the city. Over the four years of living in China, the cosmopolitan aspect of city life boomed. When I arrived it could be a challenge to find particular western foods, like cheese in the grocery store. After 4 years, there was a Starbucks every two blocks in the heart of the city. I left because even though it was highly beneficial for me financially to live there, I felt that the experience was more than a little colonialist and I questioned gated living. However, I had embraced the experience of living in a large, bustling cosmopolitan city, far different than the Iowan town where I grew up. My decision to leave was difficult but after living in

Asia for 8 years, I was ready for another challenge and returned to live in the U. S.

Noticeably, my short work autobiography includes snippets of my personal life. Like students, who teachers are outside of school comes into the classroom. International teachers change countries, not just the state they live in, to do their jobs. My story, the story I live by, tells of travel, play and work. It highlights what I value in professional environments and a personal sense of adventure to explore the sea and rainforests. It also touches on considerations of not only where but how I want to live and be in the world.

After I left China, I continued to reflect on my international living and teaching experiences for years. As a graduate student, in class after class, I kept returning to my lived experiences. What stories still perplex me as an educator and researcher? What can I learn from those experiences? Throughout my dissertation I refer to stories that I have written about experiences I had while I taught and lived overseas. These are stories that I wrote prior and during my trip to China as part of my research process in my researcher diary. I realized that I am passionate about being a storyteller myself, and I was encouraged to pursue narrative, inquiry-based research. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) define narrative inquiry as:

> a way of understanding experience. It is a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places and in social interaction with milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in this same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the *stories of the experiences that make up people's lives, both individual and social. Simply stated….narrative inquiry is stories lived and told* [italics added]. (p.20)

What Is a Narrative Story?

I make numerous references to story and narrative as if these terms are easily defined, understood and identifiable. In my readings of narrative inquiry based research, there have been many definitions offered of a narrative as a story (fiction or not) with a

sequence of events. Additionally, other structural features appear in narratives such as characters, time, and place. During an interview, Richard, a 5th grade American teacher tells a personal story of the process involved to call his family in the U.S. from Egypt during the 1980's.

> R: Because communication was, there was no internet, to call on the telephone, you would need to go to a main phone office near the part of Cairo where you lived. And you would take a number with 50 other people, and you would sit there and when your number was called, you would hand them the piece of paper of the number on it you were dialing. And you could buy 3 minutes or 6 minutes. And then they would dial the number and hand you the phone, and when someone said "Hello!" on the other end of the line, the operator would announce, "Egypt Calling" and hand you the phone and you could talk. And depending on whatever time it was, they would snatch the phone from you, and say "goodbye!"
>
> L: No kidding?(both laughing)
>
> R: Yes, That was amusing. But it also meant you knew exactly what you were paying in phone bills. And if you wanted another 6 minutes, you'd go to the back of the line and start again.
>
> Richard, Transcript, October 29, 2009

In Richard's phoning home story, the sequence of events is viewed through the steps he describes to make a phone call: going to the main office, taking a number, waiting, giving the operator a phone number, buying minutes, the operator making the connection, talking to family, time ending, phone being taken from him, then deciding whether to repeat the process. Structurally, the historical timeframe is important (before there were cell phones, internet) as is the place, the communal Egyptian city office. He is a character in his own story and also performs the operator, adding dialogue and action

when telling the story. These structures, often helpful in determining narrative stories, can also constrain the reality of story-telling.

Defining narrative is culturally bound and changes for the storyteller through considerations of audience and purpose. There is no one set of particular structural parameters (ie: length, form, elements) to qualify that what a participant states is a story, however those parameters play a role in the narratives themselves. Ochs and Capps (2001) note that seeking formal criteria can lead to excluding narratives that may be non-linear or heavily embedded in shared discourse. Below, for example, Kate tells her story of different types of Buddhists. She doesn't tell it through a linear sequence of events; however, the events exist within the larger context of the interview and her life experiences.

> So I think there are people like my mother-in-law who are superstitious Buddhists. And it developed out [of] habit while Buddhism stopped for 50 years just about and when it came back on the rise people had lost their traditions. And I think a lot of the philosophy isn't alive anymore it is merely the ritual like the habitual stuff and the culture and some of the original Chinese superstitions and that stuff mixed in. People don't go to the temple to pray to Buddha for a grandchild. You don't go to the temple to ask for a visa for their child to study in the U.S. That has, to me, that has nothing to do with Buddhism. That has everything to do with Chinese superstition, and it has been melded together. My mother-in-law is that kind of person, she goes and she prays and she bows and she does all of that stuff a lot.
>
> The other section is my husband, who is more of the philosopher. Buddhist philosophy is his thing. He doesn't go to the temple, he won't bow, he doesn't burn incense; he doesn't do any of that stuff. To him it's a philosophy. To her it is a real, superstitious religion.

> And in the middle is me. I've studied the philosophy, and I understand the philosophy as a daily way of life, not as a once a week going to the temple because that is much more Christian than it is Buddhism. The philosophy on its own for me is lacking, I am somewhere in between. To me, we represent the three different, I am sure there are more than that, but those are the three main ones.
>
> She is the very superstitious kind, he is the very philosophical, intellectual kind and I am somewhere in the middle. If I go to a temple, I am not going to not burn incense. Or I am not going to not bow, but, I am not going to ask for anything. Because the Buddha isn't meant to be a god and he's not meant to grant wishes. He is supposed to be a model of, of, the right way to live, it is not meant to be anything else.
>
> Kate, Transcript, November 2, 2009

Kate's story of her experiences developing her spiritual life and practices intertwines Chinese history, her husband's approach, her mother-in-law's beliefs and observations from living in China for over 10 years. I also consider her description of Buddhism in her family life as a narrative in my research. Although it may not fit the narrow definition of a sequence of events, with clearly identified beginning and end points, Kate uses narrative to explain her belief system.

Oftentimes, the stories the teachers tell are larger than a particular section I share of the interview. As I listened to the teachers and conducted analysis on the data collected, I realized that like this example from Kate, the participants were telling many stories at any given time. There are multiple narratives implied in their stories, like Chinese political history and stories of cultural superstition. There are also narratives the participants told me that weave across our discussions and meetings. Multiple threads are pieces in other stories Kate told me, like her history of studying and becoming a Buddhist as well as her narratives about her family.

This is a research project built on a series of stories and reflections. Stories told by myself or participants can be identified as they are double-spaced, indented and justified on both the right and left margins. I used pseudonyms for all people and schools mentioned. For this study, I invite the reader to "think narratively" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), to think through and about stories. Catherine Bateson (1994) explained using stories as an avenue to understand experiences in her book, *Peripheral Visions*.

> Wherever a story comes from, whether it is a familiar myth or a private memory, the retelling exemplifies the making of a connection from one pattern to another: a potential translation in which narrative becomes parable and the once upon a time comes to stand for some renascent truth. This approach applies to all the incidents of everyday life: the phrase in the newspaper, the endearing or infuriating game of a toddler, the misunderstanding at the office. Our species thinks in metaphors and *learns through stories* [italics added]. (p.11)

I sought to understand how Richard's, Elaine's and Kate's stories about living and working overseas weave into how they address cultural diversity in their classrooms.

Chapter One starts with my own story about teaching first grade during Thanksgiving time in China. This experience started my research journey. I became intrigued to learn from international teachers how they address diversity in their classrooms. I then introduce the research questions and explain the sociocultural theoretical framework. I use more of my own stories to discuss three prominent themes: teachers' personal and professional identities, narrative inquiry, and culturally responsive teaching. These themes intersect in the sociocultural theoretical framework for my research.

A review of relevant research literature is shared in Chapter Two. I provide a definition and description of third culture kids, a term that describes many of the students who attend the American School of China (ASC). Other research reviewed centers on three themes: narrative research in education, international teachers and schools, and culturally responsive teaching. While sharing teachers' stories is becoming an

increasingly more popular approach to qualitative research, my review indicates that no one has previously used narrative inquiry in the international school context to further understand culturally responsive teaching.

The focus of Chapter Three is the background and rationale for narrative inquiry methodology in educational settings. Specifically, I describe my data collection and analysis processes. I adapt the constant-comparative method as an avenue to revisit narratives and extract themes from the data. I also introduce the 3 teachers who participated in this research and describe the research setting.

Chapter Four presents Richard's and Elaine's personal narratives. The focus is on how these two teachers negotiate the tensions and experiences they have as cultural agents living abroad. Questioning emerged as a theme in Richard's and Elaine's stories. An exploration of how their international experiences, as revealed through their stories, lends insight into their perspectives on the role of culture in their classrooms. I also share descriptions of classroom activities I observed while visiting the school.

Kate speaks Chinese, is married to a Chinese man, and is a Canadian working at the American School of China. She also used questioning in her storytelling as a way to seek out new understandings of cultural practices. Her stories are particularly intriguing because they illustrate a delicate balance as she negotiates between Asian and North American cultural frameworks, both at school and at home. Along with her stories, Kate's classroom curriculum and practices are shared in Chapter Five.

In Chapter Six, I synthesize findings looking across all three participants. I answer the research questions with data drawn from Richard, Elaine and Kate. Findings include connections between teacher's stories and their classroom practices. Additionally, I redefine cultural responsiveness through examining cultural worlds found in international classrooms. I discuss implications from the study for teachers beyond international schools. I also pose new queries about international schools and teachers for consideration.

CHAPTER ONE
MY STORIES AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

November 1, 2002: China

Our first grade teaching team disperses after having our weekly meeting. There are 7 women: one Australian, one Filipino, one Canadian and 4 American teachers. I leave shaking my head wondering, what just happened? It was decided that several first grade teachers wanted have their students perform a Thanksgiving play, which would require students to memorize a part of a "traditional interpretation" of the American Thanksgiving. The goal was to perform this for invited parents and have a celebratory tea party. However, we just had a school-wide Halloween celebration that was much more extravagant than any Halloween celebration I had ever been a part of growing up. I know Christmas will be equally excessive. Now we are not only creating another "American holiday" celebration, but are requiring the children to regurgitate the myths of American history in Shanghai, China. Who is this play for?

I don't understand why I would celebrate Thanksgiving in my class which has only one American child, but 4 Korean students. I don't understand why we would take the time to perpetuate the myths that the American "settlers" had friendly relations with Native Americans. I don't understand why we aren't delving into the rich culture and way of life of our host country, right outside our window. I don't understand the role of performance that has gripped our teaching team to the extreme that would lean towards requiring all the students to "perform American" in our global community. I refuse and so do two other teachers.

Thanksgiving Day arrives and the schedule is a bit more hectic than usual. Report cards are to go home. I am scrambling to make certain the right report card goes in the right folder, into the corresponding child's hand then makes its way

> into the right backpack. It is a half day. Oddly, some teachers have been angry about working the holiday in years past even though American Thanksgiving is not a holiday in China. My students have music class. I take them down the hall and return to the classroom. Standing amongst the desks and chairs are four Korean mothers. Through gestures and a few English words exchanged I find out why four parents have shown up in the middle of the morning, arms filled with bags. They are curious. Where are the students? When is the show? Now I am confused. Apparently, several first grade Korean families have talked and it is their understanding the first grade classes are performing a Thanksgiving show. I explain that it doesn't include our class. I am quite proud of myself, because the students didn't spend the previous three weeks memorizing a watered down Thanksgiving story. They had written for themselves, been engaged in building puppet plays, read books and shared their own stories. The mothers are decidedly distraught. Holding up their bags, they exclaim, "We brought corn bread!"
>
> Researcher Diary, April 2009

My experience at the American School of China (ASC) is not unique in the international school community. Oftentimes, international school culture does not reflect the population of the students it serves. I started with this story because it is important for my readers to understand how my own experiences shaped this research project. Throughout my years as an international educator there were times where I didn't consider cultural perspectives, times when I brought students' home lives into the classroom, and times like this story. Times when I thought I was responding to the students but in fact, I was not meeting the needs of the families I was serving. The parents were looking for something from me as their child's first grade American teacher that I did not provide. A performance? A holiday celebration? An American tradition?

The moment has long passed, but it leads me to wonder, what were they looking for and should I have provided it?

I don't believe there is one "right" way to teach or approach cultural diversity in the classroom. My colleagues at ASC have much to teach me about how they incorporate and value the cultural backgrounds of their students, as well as their own. The students and teachers are also negotiating an understanding of cultural practices of the host country. I employ Sunstein and Chiseri-Strasser's (2007) definition of culture as "an invisible web of behaviors, patterns, rules and rituals of a group of people who have contact with one another and share common languages" (p.3). I also want to emphasize that culture itself is dynamic, changing and impacts "how we think, believe, and behave" (Gay, 2000, p.9).

My research delves into examining stories from 3 elementary classroom teachers at ASC. This is a school with an American curriculum but has students from many countries around the world. In an international school setting the student and family may be from one particular cultural background, the teacher from another and the school itself located in a third. It is not uncommon for international teachers to have students with 10 different nationalities in their classrooms. The overarching question for my dissertation is: How do educators approach cultural diversity within international school settings? What stories do they tell? Findings from *Stories from international teachers: A narrative inquiry about culturally responsive teaching* describe how international teachers' unique positions, experiences and perspectives affect their attention to culture within their classrooms.

Why International Schools?

I spent a majority of my 11 years teaching elementary children in international schools. Defining international schools is tricky. There are many types of international schools around the globe. Some are private national schools with international educators

hired primarily for the purpose of teaching English. In the Middle East, I taught third grade English and science. All other subjects were taught in Arabic. About 95% of the students were from the host country. In a different design, there are private schools serving expatriates with a curriculum compiled from a variety of cultures and countries. I worked in an international school in Malaysia for four years that compiled curriculum and pedagogies from American, Australian and Western European resources. The students were from over 30 countries. Additionally, while serving a population of students from a multitude of countries, some schools reflect a particular nationalistic curriculum and viewpoint. The American School of China (ASC) where I taught for 4 years has a curriculum structured almost solely on American resources while the student body, from almost 40 countries, is quite culturally and nationally diverse. These are just three examples of different types of international schools found around the world.

As a teacher in international schools, although physically distant from the bubbling pot of American teaching practices developing at the time, I often found myself on the cusp of new methodologies and pedagogical practices. For example, I arrived in Kuala Lumpur in the summer of 1995. Instantly, the school immersed me into inquiry based curriculum, assessment portfolios and student-led conferences for my first grade classroom. I discovered international schools to be a beehive of highly engaged and knowledgeable educators. A New York Times article confirms this very point. On December 28, 2008 Karen Cullotta explained “new” approaches to parent teacher meetings, inviting students to participate in the process, implementing student-led conferences. Here it was almost 2009 in New York City and the newspaper highlighted a “new” approach to home-school connections and engagement for educators, parents and students. I had experienced and implemented student-led conferences 14 years earlier in an international school in Malaysia.

Research Questions

What can we learn from the stories of teachers who live and work internationally? Research in the field of humanities examines stories, ideas, and words that help us make sense of our lives and our world. Culture is integral to stories - it always plays a role in the way we tell stories, view our experiences, and interact with others. Teachers' stories, personal and professional, help us understand how they teach, ways students learn, and approaches to engage with the world. Culturally responsive teachers recognize the role culture plays for students in their home lives, school experiences and in the space where these two intersect.

Stories from international teachers: A narrative inquiry about culturally responsive teaching examines how international teachers' positions, experiences and perspectives affect their attention to culture within their classrooms and investigates what we can learn from their unique teaching perspectives. As Jerome Bruner (1990) emphasized in *Acts of Meaning,* narrative plays a prominent role in ways we make sense of the world and our experience. My goal was to seek out educators willing to share stories and reflections of their lives abroad and international teaching experiences. I interviewed 3 international educators and asked them to share their personal and professional stories. I also observed their teaching at ASC and ventured into the community alongside the teachers as they went about their daily lives in China. The following questions guided my study:

1) How do three international teachers' stories of living and working overseas provide insight into their perspectives of culture and the classroom?

2) How do three international classroom teachers approach cultural diversity within an international school setting?

3) How do the teachers negotiate the tensions and experiences they have as cultural agents living abroad while valuing the cultural identities of the students they serve?

Theoretical Framework

How we construct new understandings and engage with one another is set within a sociocultural context. “Sociocultural” means that learning occurs in interactions with others (whether they are present at the time or not) and within a cultural framework. This does not mean we are bound by cultural context; we have agency within ourselves to stretch, and reframe a lens. Nonetheless, our identities are culturally constructed and contextualized and impact how we view and learn everything around us (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner & Cain, 1998). Culture was the force that instigated a woman of a lower caste in Nepal to climb up the side of a house instead of walking through the kitchen on the first floor, a culturally forbidden act. Researchers visiting the village invited her to their home for an interview. However, their request conflicted with the woman’s culture of caste systems and socializing. Sociocultural theoretical approaches incorporate attention to identity, agency and history (Gutiérrez, 2007). In this example, identity, agency and history of the woman played roles in considerations she made to enter this house in her Nepal village.

Meanings are not necessarily individualized but shared between people (Bakhtin, 1981; Geertz, 1973; González, Moll & Amanti, 2005). The Nepalese village community shared the meaning behind expectations of a “house visit”, but not by the visiting researchers. Each individual in a particular context does not necessarily practice shared meanings. However, cultural constructs are constantly in flux and participation is also active in identity and cultural framework formations (González et al., 2005; Holland et al., 1998; Rosaldo, 1993). “Sociocultural theories have refocused education researchers away from often well-intentioned, yet deficit-orientated, research agendas to research programs that seek to understand the social and cultural practices of people from many different backgrounds and experiences” (Lewis, Encisco & Moje, 2007, p. 3). At ASC, one of the educational objectives is to “develop in each student an understanding and

appreciation of ethical, cultural, social, scientific, economic and political ideas and practice throughout the world" (school website, n.d.) A curricular objective is "to develop in the students a broad understanding of different cultures" (school website, n.d.). ASC intrigued me as a research site because it purposefully seeks to understand social and cultural diversity. There I had the opportunity to learn what this can look like in practice through three different elementary classroom teachers.

Stories international educators share about their personal and professional cross cultural experiences inform my research about international teacher identities and the role culture plays in their teaching practices. Story is a frequent vehicle used to identify connections across experiences and culture in sociocultural research. Orellana (2007) encourages educators to challenge conceptions of experiences of home and school as separate spaces, instead emphasizing the transactions across and between the two. Holland et al. (1998) state "culture and subject positions are important components of the working of identity, but cultural production and heuristic development are the keys to its analysis" (p. 46). Culturally responsive teachers understand the values constructed within their classrooms and seek insights into students' home lives and communities. They do not separate home and school lives, but build opportunities to incorporate connections across and between different social and cultural contexts. Likewise, teachers bring their experiences into the classroom as well. I am interested in international teachers' cross cultural experiences and the impact they may have on their understanding of and responses to their students from many different backgrounds.

Next I discuss each of three aspects of contemporary sociocultural theory that provide the theoretical framework for this study. I introduce teacher identities, narrative inquiry and culturally responsive teaching with relevant stories from my own international teaching journey.

Teacher Professional and Personal Identities

The day before my first day of school at ASC, I review my introduction welcome letter for the parents in my second grade classroom. It has all the relevant information, my name, where I am from and my teaching experience. I explain clearly that while I am an American teacher, I have worked with students and families from many countries because I have taught overseas for 6 years. My class of 12 students is small, but diverse. The children are from Taiwan, Israel, the US, Australia, Singapore, Korea and Canada. We start to form a friendly productive safe little learning environment.

After the first week of school, the principal calls a grade-level faculty meeting to talk to the 7 second grade teachers. Someone is going to need to volunteer and shift to teach third grade. Whoever volunteers, her students will be shared amongst the other six teachers, and she will take over for a third grade teacher who is moving to a technology position. We all look at each other. Of the 3 women who have already lived in China for a year or two, one is the team leader, one has taught second grade for over 20 years (set in her ways a bit) and the third is married to a third grade teacher. She does not want to be on the same teaching team as her husband.

That means there are 4 new teachers left. We have all been living and working in China for two weeks. We are in the midst of adjusting to a new country, culture and job. One is a newlywed, two have never taught overseas before and then there is me. I have already lived in Asia for 4 years and had even visited China before moving here. I go home that night and I just know. My heart sinks a little. Our little second grade family was going to be taken apart. But objectively, I knew. Of the seven teachers on the second grade teaching team, I

> am the person who can best handle the change. I approach the principal the next day. He smiles and says, "I knew you would do it!"
>
> Researcher Diary, March 2011

The complexity of student and teacher identity is reframed when the context is an international school setting and the teachers live in a country different than the one in which they grew up. While teaching in Houston, TX, my nationality was not a factor that played into my identity framework. Holland et al. (1998) define identity as "the way a person understands and views himself, and is often viewed by others, at least in certain situations" (p. 68). In this study, I look at the identities that emerge from the teachers' stories and apply it to the figured world of the international school and classroom.

One aspect of identity is the *figured world*, the socially and culturally constructed community in which people and actions are recognized and valued (Holland et al., 1998). As Geertz (1973) defines culture as a "web of meaning", Holland et al. define figured worlds as a constructed place with particular evidences and values.

> Figured worlds take shape within and grant shape to the coproduction of activities, discourses, performances, and artifacts. A figured world is peopled by the figures, characters and types who carry out its tasks and who also have styles of interacting within, distinguishable perspectives on, and orientations toward it. (p.51)

In the figured world of international schools, the teachers' and students' nationalities are often a part of initial introductions. Benedict Anderson (1983) has described the use of nationality as an imagined community, where larger social structures construct meaning. As an imagined community, "regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (p.7). The role of agency within the construction of identity is crucial as the figured world sets parameters around what is valued within any particular identity construction. Nationality,

religion, race, and socio-economic class are aspects of socially constructed identities but the participants have agency to bend and alter the implications of identity constructions.

On the other hand, teachers' daily acts construct positional identities. In this study, positional identities relate to the interactions of teachers' and students' daily lives in international settings. Elaine, a 4th grade teacher, explained in an interview how her roles in her community and school are key elements in her identity as an international educator: being a mother, classroom teacher, administrator's wife, literacy curriculum coordinator, expatriate. Each plays a role in who she is, how others view her and how it gives her agency within the figured world.

Personal story is a vehicle for identity formation. In exploring Alcoholics Anonymous, Holland et al. (1998) determined that it was "the personal stories themselves …by which the member transforms his past experience into something useful" (p.87). The storyteller makes meaning of himself in a space within the self and with others. Bakhtin uses the term internally persuasive discourse to call attention to the dialogical process of personal story telling. Bakhtin's (1981) internally persuasive discourses describe mediating and assimilating social speech, meanings and connecting it to our own:

> Internally persuasive discourse—as opposed to one that is externally authoritative—is, as it is affirmed through assimilation, tightly interwoven with "ones' own word." In the everyday rounds of our consciousness, the internally persuasive word is half-ours and half-someone else's. (p. 345)

Storytelling takes place on a daily basis for everyone. International teachers tell stories in the classroom, the tuk-tuk (a type of taxi in Asia), or market place. When I tell my story about my first week working at ASC I am active in authoring of self, enacting human agency in the meaning I make through dialogue with myself and others (Holland et al, 1998).

Identity is a complex framework, for we are never speaking from one stagnant perspective of who we are. Alsup (2006) explored the role narratives have in identity

development for pre-service secondary teachers in teacher education experiences. She found the borderland discourses integrative with the combination of the personal and professional selves. It is this overlapping arena that most intrigues me. Similarly, I examine the stories of the international teachers' "various subjectivities or understandings of self as expressed through genres of discourse and influenced by life experiences" (Alsup, 2006, p. 42). These teachers' identities include expatriates, teachers, members of the international community, and world travelers. Identities in the borderland are neither binary nor separate. Our identities are culturally contextualized, constructed within figured worlds and impact how we view and learn everything around us (Holland et al., 1998). The complexities of different identities within an individual integrate and may become the site of a struggle.

As I listened to the 3 teachers' stories and spent time in their classrooms, I became aware of the tensions international teachers experience. The tension emerges from exploring their understanding of their own cultural view point and their approach to developing a way of life in a different cultural setting. They address this tension all while attempting to understand and connect to their students who have different cultural backgrounds.

Narrative Inquiry

> Several times a week before work I get up early and go for a run. I lace up my sneakers, leave my luxurious apartment with hardwood floors and two balconies, walk down the path in the center of the compound around the 4 pools, across the bridge and over the babbling brook. I ignore the new air-conditioned fully equipped fitness center, note the empty 8 tennis courts and head out the gate that surrounds the China Expat Racquet Club. As the sun rises some groups of older Chinese people start to gather outside the gate to do tai-chi, looking at the decorative waterfall and landscape. I dash out of the compound and head out into

the small township. I run past our school, located on the edge of the town, and onto the gravel paths that weave around the fields the few remaining farmers have held onto. The farmers shuffle out of their cardboard homes towards the running water pipe at the end of the road to make a cup of tea in tin cups at the roadside. Ducks and chickens frequent my running path. I am certain I was a source of curiosity for my neighbors as I continued on my morning ritual.

I prided myself on my efforts to get to know China in the early morning hours, to spend free time outside the boundaries of the school and apartment complex. Among the expat teaching staff we referred to these two locations as The Bubble. But it also gnawed at me. Who was I, this white American woman to come bounding past the farmer's home at 5:30 am? Were my efforts to live my life impinging on local cultural frameworks? What were the people who were doing tai-chi thinking as I bound through the gate heading back towards my apartment for a hot shower to start my day? While personally I knew that I was living a lifestyle that I could never afford back home (and that I am never one to turn down comfort) I was increasingly feeling uneasy. Compared to the local township, life in the school and compound must have looked extremely wealthy and excessive. There were few differences between my early morning routine and the first 20 minutes of Steven Spielberg's Empire of the Sun which gives a glimpse of western colonialist expatriate life in Shanghai in the 1940's. Sixty years later, I found the parallels to my own life in China chilling.

Researcher Diary, November 2009

Narrative inquiry is a particular conceptual framework that explores a "way of knowing" (Lyons & LaBoskey, 2002). Narratives are a vehicle for educators to reflect on their teaching practices and explore queries they have about their professional decisions. Through narratives we see and understand the world (Bruner, 1986; Clandinin &

Connelly 2000; Coles 1989; Wortham, 2001). Which narratives we decide to tell and retell and the dynamics of telling stories play roles in constructing identities. The act of describing oneself allows for agency, the key to self construction. Do I share my morning jog story to perform, to share that "yes, I was a colonialist but hey at least I thought about it?" Perhaps sharing a story of a personal journey through the "local community" is a common narrative told by international teachers. Maybe it serves as a personal reminder to consider how a morning exercise ritual isn't meant to be painful, but a way to see the world in new ways. Wortham (2001) explains, "The act of telling an autobiographical narrative is a performance that can position the narrator and audience in various ways" (p. 9).

In addition, telling stories of self is a window into how people view themselves, their experiences and others. If I proudly share a story about when my class was the best in the school because they walked silently in straight lines, I give the audience a window into what I value about my students and my teaching (obedience, silence, order). This research has led me to reflect and review my own teaching stories. Holland et al (1998) explain, "People tell others who they are, but even more important, they tell themselves and then try to act as though they are who they say they are" (p. 3). People have agency to select and edit stories they tell based on their purposes and considerations for audience. Telling stories is a dialogic process, within the self and with others (Holland et al, 1998). What do the stories that I repeatedly revisit and share tell me about myself and my life overseas? What can the stories teach me about what I value in education? A narrative inquiry framework led me to ask questions like: What do stories about cross-cultural experiences teach us about teacher identity and how does the story content provide a window into culturally responsiveness in teaching? International teachers' narratives position them and open opportunities to understand how their experiences lead to cultural reflections, insights and queries about teaching in international schools.

International teaching narratives have a particular language and style that reflects the international teaching community. Just as there is a particular discourse of coffee shops, music concerts or political activists, the international teaching community has its own unique discourse. Gee (1990) explains that discourse "demands certain ways of using language, certain ways of acting and interacting, and the display of certain values and attitudes" (p.xvii). Particular patterns of language and word meanings are developed through time and actively constructed through internally persuasive discourse, "when thought begins to work in an independent, experimenting and discriminating way" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 345). While the speaker has agency in the utterances he/she makes, the meanings are socially constructed reflecting change through time and context, or what Bakhtin (1981) refers to as heteroglossia. It is time within the community of discourse that allows the speaker to develop the language applied within that context through internally persuasive discourse. Throughout the stories the 3 teachers tell, there are references to terms commonly understood at ASC, for example, expat, third-culture kid, ayi, the bubble. There is also a shared value in cross-cultural experiences. Meeting people from different countries, traveling, and understanding a culture different than your own are all themes in the stories the 3 teachers told in this research.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

> I have 4 first graders on the floor with me. I have a simple book about trucks we are going to read together in a guided reading group lesson. Trucks. Perfect. These kids have all seen trucks. Each child is from a different country, Taiwan, Korea, Australia, Singapore. But here we all are on the carpeted floor of the American School of China. I want to engage their prior knowledge before we open our books, so the students have some background pushed to the forefront to help them with the text. I ask a seemingly innocent question. What sort of things do you know trucks carry? The kids start rattling off multitude of answers:

> Chickens! People! Bricks! All valid answers, especially considering the daily view out their school bus window. None were reflected in the Australian made Sunshine reader book.
>
> Researcher Diary, May 2009

If I ask you to close your eyes and imagine a truck, what image conjures up in your mind? A Ford pick-up with large wheels? A cement mixer? An 18 wheeler with a container? Perhaps none of these. It is your experiences with trucks that led you to imagine a particular vehicle. When teachers, curriculum and materials ignore students' diversity of experiences and assume singular epistemologies or ways of knowing, students may be viewed as deficient (Gay, 2000; Gee, 1990; Howard, 1999; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Gee (1990) uses an example of an African-American kindergartener telling a descriptive story about her grandmother's birthday. The story was filled with rhythm and patterns to entertain the other students. In this case, the teacher, from a white, middle class background, responded with concerns about the child's oral language skills. She saw the child as confused and was concerned about her ability to tell the truth. How should I respond in my truck story? These kids are slow because they don't even know about trucks? Culturally responsive educators will draw from students' perspectives and knowledge and build from their culturally known for language and literacy development (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Shirley Brice Heath (1983) reported in *Ways with Words* that "traditional school" literacy activities happen more readily in mainstream homes. Heath found that many children who appear to struggle in school have literacy rich home environments, but the home literacy practices differ from those practices valued in schools. For example, traditionally, schools assess a struggling reader based on narrow parameters that mark what a child doesn't know. A sociocultural framework readjusts this lens by opening literacy definitions to focus on "understanding, valuing, and actively making use of each

child's language and literacy" (Owocki & Goodman, 2002, p. 17). Thus, teachers assess students' reading within an authentic context, not on a prefabricated text or an isolated activity. What does the child do while reading a book alone? What behaviors does the teacher observe while the child writes a letter to his best friend in the writing center? What questions and responses does the child offer while poring over a magazine with a classmate? Teachers with a sociocultural framework do not compare students against one another or according to their own cultural bias. They are curious to learn about a student's home life and bring family and previous experiences into the classroom. Students' passions, interests, curiosities and capabilities are celebrated. Teachers are actively engaged in supporting students within their zone of proximal development, and are teaching within the context of authentic literacy engagements.

Schools are culturally constructed spaces and some students' home lives may be discordant with traditionally-valued educational experiences (Moll, 2000). In an international school setting the student and their family may be from one particular cultural background, the teacher from another and the school itself located in a third. For example, I was a Midwestern Christian Caucasian woman who taught a Hindu south Indian student in a school located in a Muslim Malaysian cosmopolitan city. Teachers who teach from a sociocultural framework assume and expect competence from all children regardless of cultural differences. Each child coming to school has *funds of knowledge* to be tapped and explored (González et al., 2005). Moll, Amanti, Neff, and González (2005) use the term funds of knowledge to refer to the social and labor histories of families, "which reveal the accumulated bodies of knowledge" in student households (p.72). By understanding household and community histories and activities, teachers can bring student epistemologies into the classroom. They accept differences and incorporate ways to support student learning. For example, Kathryn Au (1980) found children's reading comprehension increased when talk structures at school were similar to home valued participation structures. The teacher Au studied understood and valued the story-

like talk of her minority students. She offered students authentic literacy engagements that valued structures from the children's homes. Today this teacher would be considered a *culturally responsive* teacher. Culturally responsive teachers seek to understand the complicated intertwining of their own perspectives, their students' experiences, and the culture of the school and triangulate them within learning engagements.

Villegas and Lucas (2002) define culturally responsive teachers as those who have a sociocultural consciousness, an awareness that "one's world view is not universal but is profoundly shaped by one's life experiences, as mediated by a variety of factors, chief among them race/ethnicity, social class and gender" (p. 27). In their definition of culturally responsive teachers, they outline beliefs which include: 1) Educators need to develop a sociocultural consciousness of their own lives. 2) Educators are to be familiar with students' prior knowledge and experiences, viewing differences from an affirming perspective, understanding differences as strengths. 3) Educators develop skills to act as agents of change. 4) Educators use understandings to lead to positive and valuable change in their classroom practices. Arnetha Ball (2000) developed a model of what this internalization process can look like for teachers interested in working in urban schools. Internalization, or the process of "appropriating" what others are doing or saying and making it one's own, is similar the process represented in Villegas and Lucas's pillars. Additionally, reflecting on one's own experiences and considering multiple perspectives are vital for new understandings (Ball, 2000; Villegas and Lucas, 2002). In my story, I ask questions as an avenue to reconsider my own experiences. Ball (2000) determined that personal involvement leads to critique, reassessing personal viewpoints and being open to new learning. As a researcher, I am interested in cultural consciousness and internalization as I consider international teachers' stories and contribute to the growing body of research about culturally responsive teaching.

Conclusion

In international classrooms, the students' home lives, the host country, the school, and the teacher are constantly interacting. They flow across, intertwine and bump against each other constructing tensions, understandings and new meanings all at the same time. A sociocultural theory offers me a framework to delve into the complexity of these interactions. Three elements within sociocultural theory are particularly productive for my research. Identity supports my analysis of connections between teachers' personal and professional identities. My focus is on identities formed through the narratives they tell. Narrative inquiry is a base for analyzing the stories the teachers tell about their personal and professional experiences. Through analysis of the teachers' stories, I identify how international teachers' cross cultural experiences affect their identities, their ways of knowing, and teaching. Culturally responsive teaching, the third element, emphasizes the teachers' views of student diversity from a strength perspective. Culturally responsive teachers are conscious and reflective about their own cultural perspective and make efforts to bring in students' home lives and experiences into the classroom. In Chapter Two I review relevant literature in the areas of narrative inquiry in education, international education and culturally responsive teaching.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

I think back to typical first days of school and classrooms at an international school in Malaysia. In a collage of memories, I recall how morning sunlight streams through the wall of windows, already starting to heat the classroom in the tropical climate. Twenty desks are in groups of four. Books checked out from the school library stand tall on the windowsill and in baskets near pillows in the reading area. Math manipulatives sit in plastic tubs, carefully labeled so the pattern blocks, beans, and rulers will be ready for sequencing, counting, and measuring. Open shelves of supplies contain glue, glitter, scissors, clay, paints, construction paper, crayons and markers. They wait patiently for first graders to burst them open to create new works of art. Bold colors mix on bulletin boards to add to the brightness and welcome feeling. On one wall is a calendar, noting the month, days of the week and daily schedule. Invitations to write with pockets of different types of paper catch the eye on another. And a third holds a map of the world. There are 21 pins in 14 different countries: Sweden, India, US, Australia, South Korea, Taiwan, Kuwait, India, England, Denmark, The Netherlands, Canada, Brazil and Singapore. Each pin has a piece of yarn leading to a photo of a smiling child taken the previous week during open house. There is even a picture of the teacher. Above the map, a seemingly innocent question appears: Where are you from?

Researcher Diary, May 2009

To inform my study, *Stories from international teachers: A narrative inquiry about culturally responsive teaching,* I reviewed relevant qualitative research literature. I introduce this chapter with a description of the students whose photos often found on bulletin board maps, a snap shot of the international school classroom's figured world. Mary Langford (2004) notes international teachers are keenly aware of the unique role international schools play in students' and their families' lives. "We are not just schools, but community centers" notes an international administrator (Langford, 2004, p. 38).

The first time I came across the term *third culture kids* was while working overseas. Students in international schools walk a delicate line in defining their personal story when asked, "Where are you from?" Often the kids struggle with the answer to this question leaving them with incomplete answers. Are they from where they live now? Are they from where it says on their passport? Are they from the last country they lived in?

Are they from where their parents grew up? A third culture kid (TCK) or adult defined by David Pollack and Ruth Van Reken(1999) is:

> a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents' culture. The TCK builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture are assimilated into the TCK's life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar background. (p. 19)

Educators need to be aware of the unique backgrounds and experiences students in their classroom have and bring them into the curriculum and classroom community. Gay (2000) notes culturally relevant pedagogy "teaches to and through strengths of students… and is culturally validating and affirming" (p. 29). I am not suggesting the bulletin board described in my researcher diary represents culturally responsive teaching; in fact in this case it represents a caution towards over-simplification of the cultural complexity and experiences of both internationals students and teachers.

Pollock & VanReken's (1999) writings about the experiences of third culture kids have been well received by teachers and parents in the international expatriate community. *Third Culture Kids: The experience growing up among worlds* is often used as a guide to help adults in international communities to understand the benefits and challenges children face growing up in a country as an outsider, but also not quite feeling ownership to the home country of their parents. Other literature shares stories collected, adding perspectives and insights of growing up abroad (Bell, 1997; McCluskey, 1994). Jon Zimmerman (2006) collated a history of American teachers working largely through the Peace Corps and missionary programs, noting the impact the experience had on them and their world view. He repeatedly points out in his work how many participants in these programs shared musings of negotiating their own identity and being respectful of the culture and country where they lived and worked. "Where do I draw the line between my culture and theirs?" asked a deaf Peace Corps teacher in the Philippines, noting

Filipinos' prejudice against the physically handicapped. "I don't want them to adopt mine, but I do want to be comfortable in theirs" (Zimmerman, 2006, p. 83). While the population Zimmerman focused on differs from the international educator population I researched, an international school teacher experiences similar tensions.

I have arranged the rest of the literature review through three key strands in education research that intersect in my study: narratives in teacher research, international teaching and culturally responsive teaching. This allows me to build on the findings and methodological processes used by narrative researchers in education as well as identify areas of international teaching and education researchers have already studied. In the field of culturally responsive teaching, I focus on a few researchers whose work shapes my thinking about how teachers can effectively address the role culture and cultural diversity play in the classroom. Third culture students come to school with funds of knowledge and culturally responsive teachers include the students' home lives and experiences in the classroom. What can international teachers' professional and personal experiences as told as stories teach others about attending to diversity? I start with addressing how and why other researchers have used teachers' stories in educational research.

Narrative Research in Education

Researchers have conducted numerous studies using a narrative approach both within education and in the larger social sciences such as anthropology or psychotherapy (Clandinin, 2007). Freema Elbaz-Luwisch (2007) published a literature review of narrative inquiry with an emphasis on teachers' lives and experiences. This section is not comprehensive of teacher narrative inquiry studies. Instead it focuses on teachers and more specifically research attending to cross cultural education, teacher identity or cultural consciousness for teachers.

Mentioned earlier, Janet Alsup (2006) conducted research about teacher identity Discourses through personal and professional narratives shared by six pre-service teachers. By collecting stories of their educational history, family, friends, and their experiences as teachers, Alsup uncovered critical intersections in forming a professional identity. The tensions student teachers experienced between their personal and professional lives allowed for reflection and growth. She recommended teacher educators provide spaces for students to engage in discussions allowing for differences in conflicting narratives. Sleeter (2001) also found narrative research to be useful in studying teacher education but with a focus on multiculturalism. She explained that participants' discussions about their stories "enable teacher educators to connect strategies or observations with examined life experiences" (p. 238).

In a two country comparative study focusing on how national policy impacts a primary class teacher's identity, Elizabeth McNess (2009) interviewed four teachers, two from England and two from Denmark. As both countries shifted to rely heavily on standardized tests for student assessment, the teachers had markedly differing responses. The collective nature of the Danish society allowed the two teachers from Denmark to mediate and address concerns to changing policy. In England, the two teachers felt the new emphasis was to constrain teachers as advocates. McNess found teachers' stories illustrated the role national context has on the concept the teachers hold for themselves as primary classroom teachers.

Ming Fang He (2002) researched three Chinese-Canadian teachers telling their stories of three aspects of their cross-cultural lives: life in China, life in Canada and life in the academic world. Two participants were academic colleagues, and she was the third teacher in the study, using her own stories as data. Examining across personal narratives of growing up in China He found similar themes of survival, cultural shifts, and political upheaval intermixed in family stories bound by the Cultural Revolution. Her findings

reaffirm that telling and retelling stories is an inquiry into our identities as the "narratives of our past are part of the narratives of our present and future" (p. 319).

Narrative as a way of knowing and learning is the emphasis of Richert's (2002) findings in her research following two teachers in a course project focusing on teachers who work with students from a background different than their own. The teachers wrote four 1-3 page narratives in a year-long professional development project. They engaged in self-reflection, talked through their teaching, talked through their writing, and shared their narratives with colleagues. The teachers discovered they knew little about their students and felt they had little opportunity to learn more. Richert found areas the teachers were willing to further develop while also confirming the knowledge they do have about teaching. To have teachers tell their stories of practice, then build from the telling is documented to be successful in teacher education research (Ball, 2000; Howard, 1999; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Clandinin and Connelly (1996) found narrative inquiry research effective whether the focus is on a particular place (school, classroom), a school issue (racism) or pedagogical practice (team teaching). In any of these, the landscape or context of the stories led to critical unveiling of insights of not just what teacher's professional knowledge is, but how they know what they know. In an earlier research study, Connelly and Clandinin (1986) used narratives as a way to deepen understanding of classroom teaching practice. Following two science teachers, they connected the diverse elements of the school, the teachers' lives, the teachers' perspectives of the students' lives and their futures. Connelly and Clandinin (1999) also conducted research highlighting teaching stories shaping educators' professional identities. Drawing up a two-pronged agenda for narrative inquiries about teaching, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) state, "We need to listen closely to teachers and other learners and to the stories of their lives in and out of classrooms. We also need to tell our own stories as we live our own collaborative researcher/teacher lives" (p. 12).

In Chapter Three I describe additional narrative education research. These studies convinced me that analyzing narratives is a powerful avenue for understanding teachers and their ways of knowing. On the other hand the collection of narrative studies left me wondering about how personal experience plays a role in international teachers' ways of knowing. In essence, what stories do international educators tell?

International Teachers, Schools and Education

The majority of international education research either focuses on quantitative survey statistics of international schools or qualitative studies of the impact student teaching internationally has on pre-service education students. While I include a few examples of them here, I also include literature that centers on essential international school questions. Examples are how international schools are defined, how international schools can impact local American education and research about qualities sought in recruiting international teachers. The literature helps situate the experiences of the teachers at ASC in my study in the broader international teaching community.

Kenneth Cushner (2007) argues now more than ever, pre-service teachers need to have cross cultural experiences. Previous studies showed college students experienced intercultural development, challenging perceptions of themselves and others by participating in study abroad programs (Bennett & Bennett, 2004). Focusing on student teaching experiences, Cushner (2007) finds similar results with the addition of increased self confidence, efficacy, intercultural sensitivity and increased importance of the need to attend to diversity in the classroom. One element that seems to ring to the forefront is the need to experience being an outsider. This coincides with Merryfield's (2000) findings about students' firsthand experience of identity shifts beyond their control. For example, the students are more reflective of their perceptions after experiencing being a victim of stereotypes and prejudice. The international experience draws student teachers to reflect on previously held assumptions they may have had about others.

Maria Dantas (2007) explored the impact of intercultural and education abroad experiences on a group of American and Brazilian teachers working on their teaching credentials or master's degrees in literacy education. In this semester long qualitative study, teachers were asked to keep a journal. Class work and interviews were also used as data. One outcome goal of the international experience in Brazil for the American teachers was to build competency to work with diverse learners. They broached issues of diversity and made visible assumptions the teachers have (through the international experience). The coursework and discussions turned culture "clash" points into "rich points." They addressed attending to curricular needs and entry spaces to learn about themselves and the families with whom they work. In this study and in the research about student-teachers abroad, follow-up of classroom observation did not occur.

Hayden, Rancic, & Thompson (2000) administered surveys to over 200 high school teachers and students in mainly private schools worldwide. The schools' student populations were largely third culture kids, or children whose parents are globally mobile. The purpose of the study was to seek what characteristics this particular group of people would define as "international." As explained earlier, defining international schools is a heady task but the results lend insight into some of the values of this population of teachers and students. Survey results defined being "international" as a lifestyle of global mobility and experiences across different continents. Attitudes aligned as international included open-mindedness, flexibility, being interested and informed about other people and parts of the world, as well as respecting rights of others to have differing viewpoints.

Niki Singh (2002) wrote an article in *Educational Leadership* that broadened the term of an international school to apply to elementary schools within the US which have adopted the Primary Years Program (PYP) international curriculum structure. PYP, developed out of the International Schools Curriculum Project, was originally established to guide international schools to develop an inquiry based curricular framework. The

International Baccalaureate (IB) organization adopted and further developed PYP. Best known for its college prep courses, IB can be found in high schools in North America and international schools. Singh explained how a curriculum originally designed for international schools overseas works well within public schools in the U.S. For example, in a PYP school in Colorado a state history lesson was broadened to include migratory patterns of people. The PYP curriculum purposefully attends to differing perspectives and responsibility towards action. The PYP curriculum also incorporates reflection on how we know what we know by whose stories are included or excluded.

Wondering who works for international schools, Brian Garton (1995) interviewed heads of several international schools and teacher recruitment agencies. Teachers generally came in three different groups: host-country nationals, local-hire expatriates and overseas-hire expatriates. In my research, two of the teachers, Richard and Elaine are overseas-hire expatriates. One teacher, Kate, is a local-hire expatriate. The process for overseas-hire expatriates is time consuming and extensive with a heavy focus on considering personality, specifically adaptability and flexibility, in addition to concerns regarding teacher qualifications. Gillies (2001) found that these personality qualities were essential. Teachers needed to adjust well to living abroad in order to represent the school to the local community and assist the school's students and families in their own transitions and adjustments to overseas living. At the same time, Ortloff and Escobar-Ortloff (2002) defined a need for professional development for educators in international schools to further inform them about cultural and language diversity issues and school-community relations.

Dolby & Rahman's (2008) review of research in international education confirms that research regarding international schools is somewhat limited. Literature features defining international schools (what counts as an international school), as well as the unique student body of the schools, or third culture kids. Additionally, research emphasizes curriculum (the IB programs mentioned earlier) and the business side of

international schools in the marketplace. In fact much of the research in international education is quantitative. Numerous studies investigating international teachers are on student teaching experiences, short international course work experiences or through generative surveys.

Dolby & Rahman's findings coincide with my own; that there is little published research sharing the voice of the international teachers actually working within the schools, sharing their experiences, expertise and classrooms. This is starting to change. Kathy Hsu (2009), a teacher at the American School of Taipei published an article in *The Reading Teacher* about her work with peer collaboration during writer's workshop in her classroom. She researched her own 5th grade teaching practices alongside her colleagues' approach to incorporating writing partnerships. This research is an example of how international teachers can share their effective teaching practices happening in classrooms around the world. It led me to build on my curiosity, not only what stories to international teachers tell, but what can those narratives teach others about attending to diversity in their own classrooms?

Culturally Responsive Teaching

There has been a great deal of research conducted regarding culturally responsive teaching. This strand of educational research largely focuses on teachers who serve a population of students marginalized in U.S. schools for various reasons such as language, low socio-economic status and/or ethnic diversity. Attention to culturally relevant pedagogy stemmed out of a history in education that tended to label ethnically diverse students in low socio-economic areas as lacking, placing failure on the students' shoulders (Gay, 1983; Ogbu, 1983; Sleeter & Grant, 1987). In response, some educational researchers focused the lens on the disparate gap between the school culture and the home lives of the students (Au, 1980; Banks, 1971; González et al, 2005; Heath, 1981). In this section I focus on literature that highlights culturally responsive pedagogy.

Some researchers worked with teachers through teacher education courses, either teacher in-service or pre-service programs. Villegas and Lucas (2002), referred to earlier, developed a teacher education approach for bringing educators towards culturally responsive teaching. Additionally, I incorporate research that identifies successful educators who work with students in communities that have not traditionally done well academically.

Differences exist between researchers concerning terminology and naming culturally responsive practices. However, the shared emphasis is a view of diversity, including culture, ethnicity, and ways of thinking, as a value within schools rather than identifying it as a problem to be fixed. Ladson-Billings (1995) defined culturally relevant pedagogy as a practice that "not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate" (p. 469). In a largely African American low-income community Ladson-Billings studied eight elementary teachers highly regarded by colleagues, administrators and parents. She conducted initial interviews, then spent two years observing their classrooms three days a week. Ladson-Billings also conducted follow-up discussions after observations. In groups, she then showed teachers videos of each other and themselves as they analyzed and interpreted their own and each other's practices. Ladson-Billings found three broad themes from working with these successful educators. The teachers: (a) viewed themselves and students as capable as well as considered themselves part of the community, (b) developed strong and positive classroom communities focusing on collaborative learning and connectedness, and (c) conceived knowledge as a construction, as active and shared, and applied multiple forms of assessment. Ladson-Billing's implications emphasize teacher education programs need to implement coursework that encourages teachers to "problematize teaching and encourage teachers to ask about the

nature of the student-teacher relationship, the curriculum, schooling and society" (p. 483).

Gay (2000) has similar viewpoints in her work, defining the fundamental aim of culturally responsive pedagogy is "to empower ethnically diverse students through academic success, cultural affiliation, and personal efficacy" (p. 111). Among many attributes and practices, she cites the role of the teacher is to view students as capable, be conscious of self awareness, and having a curriculum that addresses traditional societal bias. Gay (2000) describes culturally responsive pedagogy as *liberating* - opening the intellect of students "from the constraining manacles of mainstream canons of knowledge and ways of knowing" (p. 35).

In Chapter One, I introduced González, Moll & Amanti's (2005) work uncovering and valuing the Latino students' ways of knowing or funds of knowledge in the southwestern U. S. Here I more thoroughly describe their research because funds of knowledge is an important concept in my study of international teachers. In a teacher study group, González et al. work alongside classroom teachers to develop a culturally responsive pedagogy. They conduct their research on the basis that schools are culturally constructed spaces and that some students' home lives may be discordant with traditional educational values (Moll, 2000). Each child coming to school has funds of knowledge to be tapped and explored. Through understanding household and community histories and activities, the teacher can bring student epistemologies into the classroom.

The goal is for teachers to research ways of knowing students have coming to school and eventually find ways to tap into their strengths. González et al. (2005) call these resources funds of knowledge to refer to "those historically developed and accumulated strategies (skills, abilities, ideas, practices) or bodies of knowledge that are essential to a household's functioning and well being" (p. 91-92). The diverse funds of knowledge include community and social networks. The research process occurs

throughout the course; from positioning of self, building field notes, and conducting family interviews.

In the seminal Community Literacy Project, three interviews developed about funds of knowledge (González et al., 2005). One focused on asking family and labor stories. Knowing family stories allows us to learn a great deal about perspectives, expectations and values (González et al., 2005; Stone, 2005). A second interview followed, learning about regular household activities (gardening, bike repair, shopping routines etc). It revealed literacy and mathematical activities embedded in these routines. A final interview included open discussions with parents about their school experiences, their roles as parents in schools, and comparisons with their children's school experiences. As participants explored student family histories, household activities and parental viewpoints, the families were their cultural "guide."

Moll (2000) states, "The emphasis, then is on connecting our ideas of culture with empirically grounded knowledge, not handed to the teachers by academics but developed firsthand through their own inquiry about a group of people and their lived experiences, about what their everyday life is all about" (p. 262). Communities are constantly in transition and meanings fluctuate, reemphasizing the crucial role for individuals to participate in active research (McIntyre, Rosebery, & González, 2001). This is similar to Cushner (2007) and Merryfield's (2000) research about the international experience supporting pre-service teachers to reconsider their cultural perspectives. Through personal experiences of conducting interviews and applying research methodologies, the teachers in the Community Literacy Project constructed for themselves understandings of the children's sociocultural contexts from where they view the world (Tenery, 2005).

Montero and Robertson (2006) use children's literature as a vehicle to support pre-service and practicing teachers to reexamine their assumptions about world cultures and strengthen their ability to be culturally responsive in their teaching. Nudging the teachers to be outside of their comfort zones, they read unfamiliar literature, participate in

an in-depth conversation with someone from another culture and critique literature representing a way of life different than their own. “We asked our students what it was like to examine life looking from the outside in – something international students experience frequently” (p.33). The research found the teachers became more open to using international literature as they learned to access resources that were more culturally inclusive. However, Montero and Robertson did not follow the teachers into their classroom to view teaching practices.

As referenced earlier, Kathryn Au (1980) found children’s reading comprehension increased when talk structures at school were similar to home valued participation structures. Similarly, Danling Fu (2003) in her research at a New York City school in Chinatown found the students flourished in their writing development when teachers embraced their home culture, language, and life experiences. Fu (2009) described classroom practices and teaching strategies of how to implement this writing approach. In her critical literacy research, Stephanie Jones (2006) discussed how teachers unwittingly make assumptions about students’ personal connections to texts that do not reflect the lived experiences of the children in the classroom. Jones invites teachers to reexamine their approaches to literature and writing in the classroom, to encourage students to read critically, and for both students and teachers to make challenges to the “status quo” in writing and reading engagements.

Justifiably the emphasis on culturally responsive teaching has been on disenfranchised students whether based on their economic status, language abilities or cultural background. Much research about culturally responsive teaching tends to focus on teacher education and professional development. Research also emphasizes teachers working in classrooms with students from a background different from the teacher. But often the research presents the classrooms as “mono-cultural” or one particular ethnicity. This does not necessarily apply to international schools, where educators often have a great deal of experience and are working with students from a variety of backgrounds.

The students speak multiple languages in a place that is not the home culture for either the teacher or the students. This body of literature led me to consider one of my research questions, how do international teachers approach cultural diversity in their classrooms?

Conclusion

> If we take the time to listen, we'll find wisdom, wonder, and poetry in the lives and stories of the people around us. (Isay, 2007, p. 1)

Dave Isay (2007) illustrates through StoryCorps that the stories of everyday people are fascinating and important. StoryCorps allows for recording and collecting of interviews between two people who are important to one another. Through listening to a loved one's stories, each participant walks away gaining insight into another's world. Richert (2002) furthers this thought, explaining, "Narratives of teaching practice provide special access to the world of schooling" (p. 48). As Richert states a teacher's stories are a window into the classroom. In summary, I want to highlight one piece of research in particular, JoAnne Phillion's (2002) *Narrative Inquiry in a Multicultural Landscape: Multicultural Teaching and Learning*. For two years, JoAnn Phillion worked closely with a classroom teacher, Pam, using narratives as an avenue to research Pam's culturally relevant pedagogical practices. Pam, a Caribbean immigrant lives in Canada teaching in a culturally diverse school changing and shifting through time, like a microcosm of Canadian society. Phillion's research revisited concepts such as "place" seeing it as not an object form but a multidimensional and living landscape. She uncovers the tension in seeking "Ms. Multicultural" for her research, a teacher that would fit what she imagined a culturally relevant teacher would be. In the tensions, she uncovers not the one "sacred story" that is often clung to in teaching and research, but the many stories of Pam: stories from classroom observations, school history stories, stories by her colleagues, Phillion's own reflective research stories and Pam's teaching narratives. Phillion's work embodies pathways, lessons and insights for me about conducting narrative research. Especially

with educators living in a country different than their own with a focus on culturally responsive pedagogy in a school that has students coming from multiple places.

I moved into my research at The American School of China with the knowledge of previous educational narrative inquiry studies examining identities and gaining a window into teachers' knowledge through stories. The research surrounding international education defines international schools, shares teachers' experiences as outsiders, and describes values schools seek in international educators. Culturally responsive teaching research often highlighted a particular cultural group following in-service educators and methods for teacher education. This study intends to add to the body of research that seeks to learn from classroom teacher's voices and experiences in order to draw and deepen understandings about culturally responsive teaching. While my research uncovers different and new insights, as mine is across several teachers and more focused on international experiences, Phillion's work and all others reviewed here are a stepping stone supporting me in my endeavor.

CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

"Narrative inquiries almost always are about people's lives, their interests, concerns, and passions" (Phillion, p.17). I use narrative inquiry as a window into the complexities of international teachers' lives and experiences. What personal stories do they share about their lives abroad? How do their international experiences give them a lens into the role culture plays in their teaching? *Stories from International Teachers: A narrative inquiry about culturally responsive teaching* draws from narrative inquiry and ethnographic traditions for its methodological framework and research design.

I adopted and adapted a narrative inquiry methodology to learn about the lives and experiences of 3 international teachers. My study design includes descriptions of data collection methods, data sources, and data analysis procedures. I also explain the positioning complexities of my role and stance as a researcher and procedures to monitor my bias.

Narrative Inquiry

> In this view of teachers' knowledge, teachers know their lives in terms of stories. They live stories, tell stories of those lives, retell stories with changed possibilities, and relived the changed stories. In this narrative view of teachers' knowledge, we mean more than teachers' telling stories of specific children and events. We mean that their way of being in the classroom is storied: As teachers they are characters in their own stories of teaching, which they author. (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p. 12).

Research based in narratives is rich in anthropological traditions. Mary Catherine Bateson (1994), in *Peripheral Visions* shares stories to examine her perspective in culturally negotiated spaces. Graham (2003) studies the Xavante's performance of dreams and stories in Central Brazil and the role they play in cultural identity. Rosaldo (1989) articulates how through his personal experience of his wife's death he was able to gain insights and understandings of the Ilongot response to grief in the Philippines.

Bateson (1994), Coles (1989) and Wortham (2001) have all shown that through narratives people share their experiences. Holland et al. (1989) and Wortham (2001) teach us that identities develop through narratives, while Bateson (1994) uses stories to explain that much of what we learn is through experiences, not schooling. Robert Coles (1989) learned, through his experience as a resident in his psychiatry training, that one role stories play is to teach. Stories help us learn to understand ourselves and act as windows into the life experiences and viewpoints of others.

"Experience happens narratively. Narrative inquiry is a form of narrative experience. Therefore, educational experiences should be studied narratively" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.19). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) stress that narrative inquiry in educational settings is much more than seeking out and hearing a story. For my research, narratives are an entry point for examining the role experience has on cultural understandings and identity. International teachers are a subgroup of educators who work and live abroad. The experience of working internationally is culturally complex. For teachers, the cultural complexity intensifies in the intersections between their home culture, the host country of the school and the diversity of their students' backgrounds. As a result, they are members of a unique group of educators who delve into cultural tensions in both their personal and professional lives.

There are many reasons why I chose narrative as a methodology for this study. I am curious about how stories international teachers tell illustrate their ways of knowing and the role culture plays in their lives and teaching. There is a history of using narratives in exploring reflective practices in teacher education as well as how teachers use narratives within their teaching (Lyons & LaBoskey, 2002; McEwan & Egan, 1995). Moreover, Bruner (1990) explains, "People narrativize their experience of the world and of their own role in it" (p.115). Through people's stories we can understand their views and how experiences have shaped those views. For example, through reexamining my own narratives I have explored how my personal experiences have impacted my teaching

and ways of thinking. Reflecting on my own teaching narratives led me to new ways of questioning and perspectives about cultural assumptions, curriculum and pedagogy. My international experiences helped me develop a cultural consciousness about my own life. They were also a catalyst for learning about my students and their lives, as well as understanding and respecting different cultural perspectives, beliefs and values.

My international experiences and stories reflect two pillars of cultural responsive teaching as outlined by Villegas and Lucas (2002). First, educators need to develop a sociocultural consciousness of their own lives. For instance, my consciousness arises in my early morning jogging story. Furthermore, educators are to be familiar with students' prior knowledge and experiences, viewing differences from an affirming perspective, understanding differences as strengths. I demonstrated my effort to value the students' prior knowledge as I talked with them about trucks in my story about reading with first graders. In my study, I use narratives as an avenue to investigate how other international teachers' experiences (through the stories they share) may have led them to be more reflective about their own biases and ways of knowing. Additionally, I examine two other pillars: (a) educators develop skills to act as agents of change and (b) educators use understandings to lead to positive and valuable change in their classroom practices (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Research Design and Methods

Stories from International Teachers: A narrative inquiry about culturally responsive teaching focuses on 3 international teachers. Each participant was an elementary classroom teacher from one international school, The American School of China (ASC). Narrative inquiry is based on the stance that through our stories we construct our identities and "ways of knowing." As narrative inquiry is one of the best ways to reflect upon experience, this methodology is well suited for insights about how particular cross cultural experiences influence international teaching practices (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Through the narrative inquiry process, I triangulated data from

classroom observations, field notes, data from class websites, and school communications. The research design had three distinct phases. The first was narrative interviews with each participant. The second was to apply ethnographic research techniques at a field site in China alongside the teacher participants. I spent 5 weeks at ASC to contextualize the teachers' lives within the international teaching setting (Chiseri-Strater & Sunstein, 2006). I completed these two concurrently. Following my return from my visit to China, I completed the third phase, data analysis.

Narrative Interviews

The emphasis for me as an interviewer was to not have preconceived notions of what I planned to hear from the teachers. My goal was to investigate what I could learn from their stories about international cross-cultural experiences and how these experiences may impact their teaching. Qualitative researchers generally agree that interview questions need to be open-ended and framed using every day and common language (Creswell, 2007; Elliot, 2005; Glesne, 2011; Merriam, 2009; Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2007). Many of my planned questions were prompts, such as "tell me…". Based on recommendations from narrative researchers, I, as the interviewer, tried to be conscious to not interrupt my participants so as not to disrupt the opportunity for narratives to emerge naturally from conversations (Elliot, 2005).

I designed the interviews and discussions around three categories: (a) the teachers' autobiographical narratives, (b) stories of living overseas, and (c) stories of teaching in international schools. Within these I directed focus to their experiences and perspectives related to straddling different cultural worlds (home country, host country, international school, etc.). A collection of interview questions prepared in advance and a sampling of queries posed to participants is in Appendix A. The interviews were largely informal (Agar, 1996). The purpose of these interviews was to gather autobiographical narratives, stories about international living experiences and teaching stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Although I had a plan for these interviews, the intention was for the

conversations to also be flexible. There was room for follow up questions, responses that referred back to participants' stories for clarification as well as opportunities to build rapport. Comfortable rapport between each teacher and I was critical for my inquiry design. Asking participants to share themselves, their experiences, and their stories required a great deal of trust and respect for all involved (Clandinin &Connelly, 2000; Fetterman, 1998; Glesne, 2011). Additionally, I was conscious of my role as a former international educator. I recognized how my own experiences constrained what I saw and how participants shared themselves.

I met individually with each teacher in person in China to conduct the interviews. We planned an hour for each interview session. However they often extended far beyond the scheduled time. I also met with the participants on many other occasions. How we spent time varied but it included classroom visits, chatting during recess, impromptu lunches together at school, or even taking the subway together. I spent a significant amount of time with each participant based on their availability and schedules. Table 3.1 presents the amount of time and number of days I spent with the teachers, inside and outside of the classrooms. Table 3.1 demonstrates how time I spent with each participant varied in classroom observations, formal interviews and informal meetings.

Participants and Grade Level	Kate 1st grade	Elaine 4th grade	Richard 5th grade	Total
Number of individual participant meetings	7	8	9	24 meetings
Number of days of classroom observations	4	5	5	14 days
Hours spent in classroom	14½	6 ½	6	27 hours
Hours spent with participant outside of classroom	2	3	8 ½	13 ½ hours
Number of recorded interviews	2	2	3	7 interviews
Hours of recorded interviews	3 ½	2 ½	1 ½	7 ½ hours

Table 3.1 Conversation and Observation Data Chart

"The study of narratives is the study of the ways humans experience the world" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Life is messy. Experiences are multifaceted. Narrative inquiry is collaboration. At play is the complexity for both participants and myself; we are all living our stories while at the same time reflecting on life and explaining ourselves to each other. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) state, "Because collaboration occurs from beginning to end in narrative inquiry, plot outlines are continually revised as consultation takes place over written materials and as further data are collected to develop points of

importance in the revised story" (p.11). A key aspect of my role as a narrative researcher was to acknowledge that there were always multiple stories happening at any one time; I made a concerted effort to attend to my participants' perspectives and stories during our interview times. Transcription data confirms a majority of speaking and longer turns belonged to the participants. Merriam (2009) explains the essence of qualitative research when she states it "is interested in how meaning is constructed, how people make sense of their lives and their worlds. The *primary* goal of a basic qualitative study is to uncover and interpret these meanings" (p.24).

Ethnographic Methods

I spent 5 weeks researching at ASC over a period of three months, October - December in 2009. In addition to narrative interviews, I also applied ethnographic participant-observation techniques as I visited classrooms. I observed teacher practice, participated in school activities like holiday celebrations, spent time outside of the school with the teachers, and talked to parents, administrators and other teachers in the community. I also collected artifacts from the school, expatriate community and the city.

Classroom Visits and Observations: In addition to meeting individually for interviews, all 3 teachers welcomed me into their classrooms as a participant-observer. In each classroom, participants introduced me as a teacher from the U.S., and invited students to ask questions about me and why I was visiting. I observed the teacher teaching the whole class, meeting with individual students and collaborating with student groups. The academic subjects I observed varied, but included Social Studies inquiry units, writing workshops and reading workshops. In each classroom, I also observed daily routines. A few such routines included students arriving in the morning, daily read alouds and snack time. Additionally, there were times where the teacher planned for me to assist with an activity. Glesne (2011) mentions, "the more you participate, the greater the opportunity to learn" (p.65), and I was pleased to be asked to be active in all three classrooms. For example, I listened to students read, helped students plan a character

performance or talked with students about their writing. Classroom visits tended to last a little over an hour, although I often spent larger blocks of time in Kate's classroom (about 2 ½ hours with each visit). Table 3.1 details time spent in each teacher's classroom.

School Visits: ASC is a gated non-profit private school for grades pre K-12. The campus has eight buildings, including a performing arts center, cafeteria, administration building, and aquatic center. I spent a considerable amount of time at the school that didn't involve being in the participants' classrooms. For example, one day I walked around campus for a little unscheduled tour with a high school teacher. In fact, I chatted with teachers from all three schools: elementary, middle and high school. How I spent my time outside the classrooms varied day to day. I had lunch in the cafeteria with teachers, visited the parent run book sale and watched an international high school women's soccer tournament. I also attended two theater productions: Mulan, presented by the high school and an elementary school theater shadow puppet assembly. The elementary principal and vice-principal both met with me to talk about the school and my research. As a final point, I spent at least an hour each day in the elementary school library. I used a library computer to write out daily analysis memos, added to field notes for my visit and planned my next meetings. For a summary of the amount of time spent weekly at ASC see Table 3.2.

Week	Number of days	Number of hours
Week One	5 days	25 hours
Week Two	3 days	21 hours
Week Three	3 days	16 hours
Week Four	4 days	24 ½ hours
Week Five	3 days	17 hours
Total	18 days	103.5 hours

Table 3.2 Time spent at American School of China

Beyond ASC: Visiting with participants didn't just occur on school grounds. I had dinner with two of the participants at restaurants at least once, and met the third for a long coffee. Kate and I had a lengthy dinner together one evening and she gave elaborate information about the neighborhood where she lived. Several days afterward, I spent about 3 hours walking around her neighborhood and the local community where the school sits. Elaine and I spent a day together wandering through a unique market neighborhood tucked away in the center of the city. Through a maze of small alleys was a mix of shops selling local antiques, high quality art as well as little dining cafes. I spent a day shopping for fabric and pearls with Richard, preparing for Christmas holidays and buying gifts for family and friends. Additionally, I spent time exploring local museums to get a sense of the city's history, rode public transportation, went to the grocery store and visited places mentioned in interviews by the participants. By walking around, spending

time outside the school, I gained a sense of some of the teachers' daily activities and experiences from living in a Chinese city with over 15 million people.

Artifacts: The artifacts I collected document what I observed both within the school and outside the school gates. I took photographs of the classrooms, student work, the hallways of ASC elementary and the outside campus to help me remember what I observed. Photographs and video recordings also documented the context of the city and activities outside the school. They were not intended to be comprehensive but to be visual aids for me as a researcher and as "representations of *aspects* of culture" (Pink, 2007, p. 75). Additionally, during my visit I collected communications sent to parents from teachers and the school as well as expatriate magazines found in the school lobby. Teachers even gave me school produced posters and copies of extra handouts they were doing with the students. I also gathered information available through the internet. Each participant had a website for their classroom. The classes had their own blogs photographs and documents that reflected their classroom community, work, and thinking. These websites were available to the public at large and were accessible without passwords. This data was useful for triangulating what I observed in my visit to the school and the stories the teachers shared (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strasser, 2007). The school website also offers its policies, philosophies and curricular plans.

Field Notes: While in the midst of classroom visits, I wrote observational field notes. These tracked what was happening in the classroom and noted environmental factors as well as the context of visits. After each classroom observation, school visit, and participant meeting I also completed daily analysis memos as recommended by Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater (2007). In this memo, directly after completing field notes at a field site, the researcher asks and answers the following questions: (a) What surprised me? (to track assumptions), (b) What intrigued me? (to track positions) and (c) What disturbed me? (to track tensions). They allowed me to monitor my thinking, sift through the day's observations and support me in preparing for my next classroom visit.

Researcher Diary: A researcher diary allowed me to track my thinking in an unstructured venue as I went through the research process. I began using my researcher diary prior to my visit to China, writing and collecting stories I had previously written about my own teaching experiences. Additionally, while in China I took notes of my reactions as I returned to Asia after a 6 year absence. I also tracked my daily calendar and considered plans for future visits with participants. My diary also ended up including stories of my experiences while I was in China conducting research for this study.

Data Analysis

> Data analysis is the process of organizing and storing data in light of your increasingly sophisticated judgments, that is, of the meaning-finding interpretations that you are learning to make about the shape of your study. (Glesne, 2006, p. 149)

Initial Data Organization: After returning from China, I began data analysis. The initial organization structure was by participant. Each teacher had a file that included classroom observations, field notes and reflections from my diary that related to the teacher. I also arranged photographs, class website data and interview recordings by teacher. Lastly, the files included completed transcriptions of interviews.

I transcribed each interview using a clean transcript (Elliot, 2005). This form of transcript eliminates the pauses, intonations, false starts, and utterances that are common in everyday speech. With a clean transcript, the focus is on the content of what participants say and it made the material easy to read (for both myself and readers). Once this was completed, coding of data began.

Coding: I based the structure of my data analysis plan in the constant-comparative method. This involved reading and rereading the transcripts.

> The communication of meaning is the focus… The process involves the simultaneous coding of raw data and the construction of categories that capture relevant characteristics of the document's content (Merriam, 1998, p. 161).

First I conducted initial coding of the data. Initial coding defines what was happening in the data. In other words, what does my data actually show? Researchers refer to the process of creating codes by doing a close reading of the data and mining it for ideas as grounded theory coding (Charmaz, 2006; Glesne, 2011; Merriam, 2009). Through this method, I was able to avoid imposing preconceived ideas of categories to the data. Instead I created a code based on what the data showed. I followed recommendations from Charmaz (2006), coding lines using gerunds and describing the data by action. Examples of some initial codes are: planning community service, naming self as outsider, questioning freedom of information. Using the Atlas TI computer program, I completed initial coding. This program allowed me to code a section of data in multiple categories. Additionally the program allowed me to access a pattern of codes that applied across participants (quantifying how many times I used a code). It also facilitated the process of sifting through initial codes by document.

Next, I created categories of the initial codes. According to Glesne (2011) coding "is a progressive process of sorting and defining and defining and sorting those scraps of collected data…that are applicable to your research purpose" (p. 194). After compiling a list of over 350 initial codes, I formed categories from patterns that emerged out of the initial codes. Appendix B is a compilation of significant coding categories that formed from grouping the initial codes by topic.

Reading through the data for a third time, I identified stories in the participant interviews. I defined narratives as a sequence of events, self-contained to one or two turns of talking within an interview. There were 79 stories collected in the formal interviews that fit this description. Table 3.3 tabulates the number of stories from participants captured in the transcripts.

Participant	Personal	Professional	Both professional and personal	Total
Richard	16	5	1	22
Elaine	8	12	2	22
Kate	17	13	5	35

Table 3.3 Teachers' Narratives in Transcripts

After identifying these narratives I reread the stories collected by each participant and categorized them as mainly personal, professional or close mix of both. Narratives I labeled as personal were stories that took place outside of school and were not about career experiences. Professional narratives took place inside of school or were about their working lives. It is important to note that the teachers also told many more stories beyond what I captured in recorded interviews during our time together.

Figure 3.1 is a visual of the first half of my data analysis procedures. While the pyramid may give the impression that the process was solely a top-down approach that is not my intention. With a first read through of all transcripts, I created initial descriptive codes. Coding categories formed from patterns emerged from initial codes. Reading through the transcripts again, I labeled narratives told by participants. In the second reading I coded larger portions of data identified as stories.

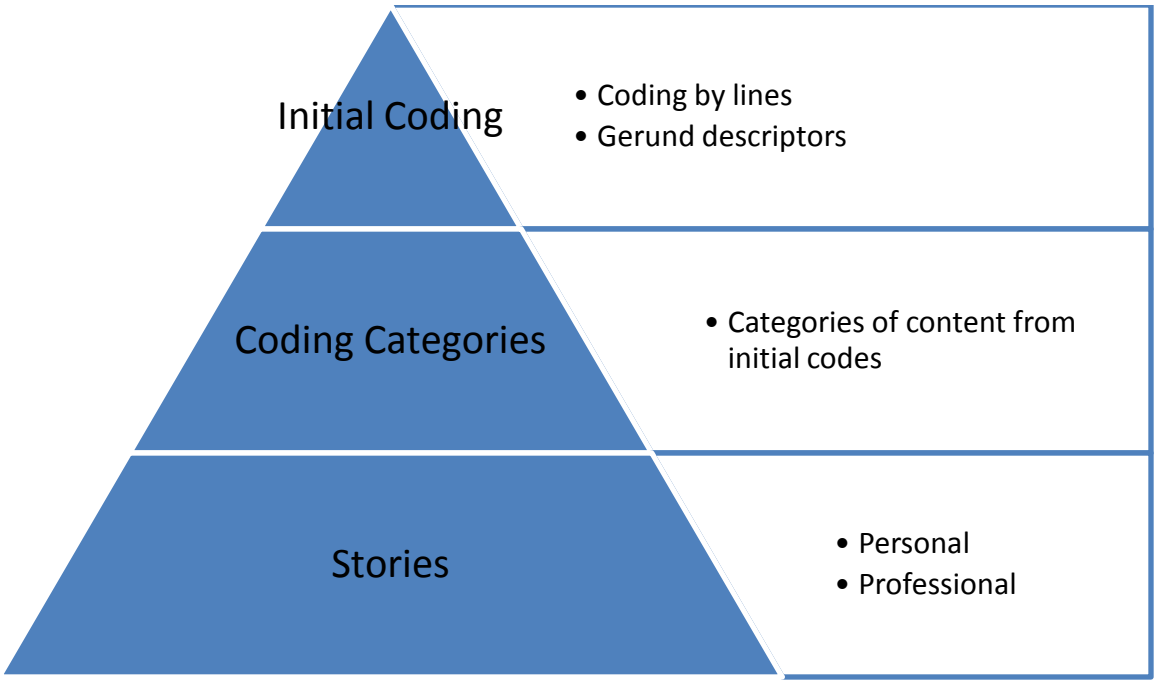

Figure 3.1 Transcript Coding Pyramid

Narratives: As previously explained in the introduction, narratives take shape in different forms, from the self contained stories to the narratives that expand across meetings and topics. What intrigued me was not necessarily the form my participants' narratives took but when and how stories were vehicles for sharing their "ways of knowing." Participants told narratives in our discussions for one of three reasons. One was as a response to a question asking specifically for a story. For example, one the questions I posed to each of the 3 participants was, can you think of a story from your teaching when you felt tension as a teacher? Another avenue that brought about storytelling for the participants was as an example to explain a point they were trying to make. When Kate was explaining how the teachers collaborate at her grade level, she told a story of how she borrowed a teaching approach and adopted it for her classroom. Finally, another way participants told stories in our discussions was as an approach to explain their own thinking coming from their experiences. When Elaine explained her

beliefs about teaching American history, she told stories. Whether from teaching, traveling or any other description they were offering, the stories the teachers told described their perspectives. Verified in the history of narrative research and in my study, through stories we describe our experiences and share our view of the world.

My data analysis approach was spiral in action, as I reread to identify, describe and interpret. The next phase of data analysis is shown in an inverted pyramid in Figure 3.2. After identifying narratives in the interviews, I categorized for content in the stories that identified cross cultural experiences; traveling, understanding the host country culture and learning a new language were a few topics in the stories. In the final step of data analysis, I conducted axial coding. Axial coding or analytical coding included interpretation and reflection (Merriam, 2009). Tension emerged with all three participants as a common axial code through interpreting gerund descriptors originally applied in initial coding. For example, I grouped initial codes with terms such as resisting, frustrated, and conflict into an axial code I called tension. I also considered stories participants told when I asked questions like, “Can you think of any times when you felt tension as an expatriate living overseas?” My spiral data analysis process revealed three prominent patterns across participants and their stories: questioning, reflecting and action. Stories selected to tell in this research were examples from these patterns.

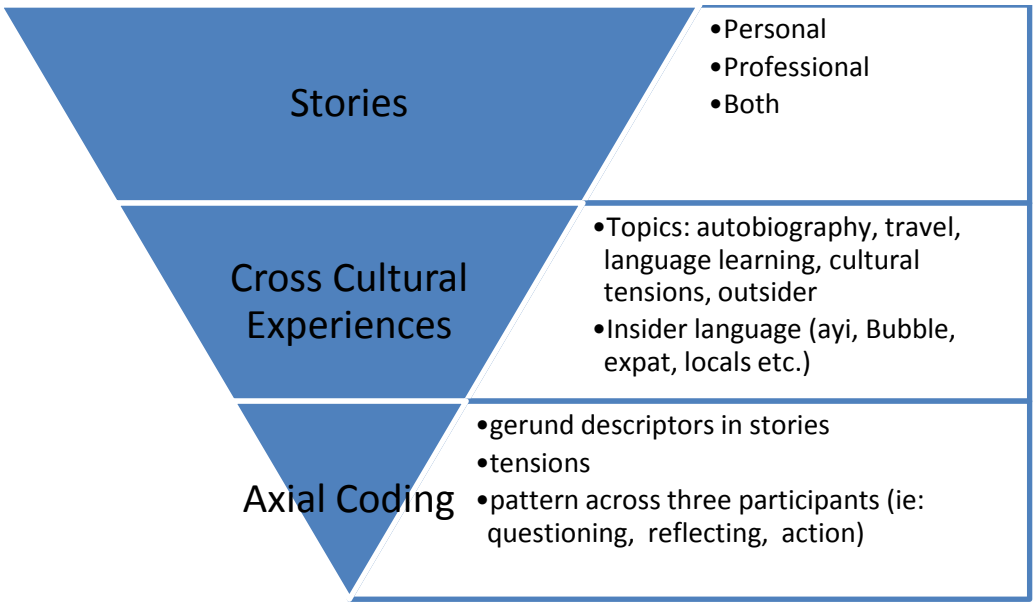

Figure 3.2 Narrative Coding Pyramid

Beyond coding of the stories, I triangulated the data from transcripts, field notes, artifacts and my researcher diary. It was through this triangulation process that I identified, described and analyzed culturally responsive teaching approaches (Chiseri-Strater & Sunstein, 2006). I looked across the body of data for each individual such as their classroom organization and teaching approach and named how the teachers described themselves personally and professionally in their stories. Metaphors emerged through this process.

Research Setting

American School of China

ASC was historically a school established by the American government in a major Chinese city in 1912. Governed by a board of directors, ASC is a non-profit, private school owned by the Parent Association. The school was closed from 1949-1980, but it reopened as a small international school with less than 100 students. Since then the

school has grown to have over 2600 students from almost 40 different countries. Families or the parent's employers pay tuition for students to attend the school. There are about 370 teachers at the school with majority from the U.S. or Canada. The school is located in the outskirts of a major Chinese city with a population of over 15 million people. Depending on traffic, it takes about 40 minutes by taxi to get to the center of the city from the school. There is an intricate subway system that makes traveling around the city much easier, but it does not go out to the school neighborhood where the 3 teachers live.

International Teachers

All 3 teachers are North American licensed classroom elementary educators. They have been working at the American School of China for at least 8 years. Each is different in their home lives, experiences living abroad, teaching histories and pedagogy. All three are Caucasian, significant in the fact that while walking down a street in China they are immediately identified as an outsider or *lao wei*. Richard and Elaine are overseas hired international teachers. This means among other contractual agreements the school provides yearly plane tickets to return to the U.S. for a visit and provides housing for the teachers while living and working in China. ASC hired Kate, a Canadian, while she was already in China. The school considers her a locally hired international teacher. This means the school does not provide housing or a yearly paid flight back to her home country. I made an effort to seek out international educators who had varied backgrounds and approaches to teaching. This allowed for the study to reflect differing experiences of international teachers. Each teacher had an open willingness to participate in this research.

Richard: Richard is an American educator from the Midwest who has been teaching overseas for 28 years. Prior to working at ASC, he taught at an international school in Egypt for 17 years. While working in America he was an experience educator teaching 2nd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th grade. He was also an elementary principal for four years. He explains after his four years as a principal he felt he had accomplished his goals and decided to seek out new teaching

opportunities by attending an international teaching job fair. While at this job fair in the 80's he had five job offers and chose to work in Egypt because the head of school's educational philosophy correlated to his own. He studied Arabic, became fluent and lived in homes in local community neighborhoods while working in Egypt.

In 1998 he was hired to work at ASC and has been a 5th grade teacher there for the past 11 years. He lives in a 2 bedroom apartment (paid for by the school) in a gated community 3 blocks away from the school. It has a health club, swimming pools and tennis courts. Many other teachers as well as families whose children attend the school live in the compound-community as well. Richard is a consummate host and an engaging storyteller. He has a story for everything and loves to share his experiences. Outside his classroom, he has created a welcoming place for students, parents and visitors to gather with a comfortable couch and a table with international news and expatriate magazines. He welcomes visitors into his classroom and often has colleagues coming in after school for a friendly mid afternoon chat. He not only invited me into his classroom, but into his home and to out of school social events as well. From shopping in a pearl market to eating Turkish food in the heart of the city, Richard warmly embraced me into it all.

Elaine: Working at ASC was the first international teaching job for Elaine and her husband. From an international teaching job fair, the school hired her as a 5th grade classroom teacher and her husband as the middle school academic support specialist. In August of 1999, they moved from the American west coast to China with their 7 year old daughter and family dog. They were the first overseas family the school had hired. The school policy prior to their arrival had been to only hire single teachers or childless married teaching couples. Since then, however, there have been many singles and couples with children hired to teach at the school. Elaine taught 5th grade for 5 years, and then shifted to teaching 4th grade. When I visited she was in her sixth year of teaching 4th grade. Both she and her husband had opportunities to change job positions and continue with their professional development while working at ASC. For example, Elaine also became a literacy coordinator, a job she shared with a first grade teacher. She held this

position when I visited the fall of 2009. Originally intending to sign on for a two or three year adventure, Elaine explained that deciding to stay at the school was a frequent family discussion and a family decision which weighed opinions of all three members. Considerations included educational opportunities for her daughter, as well as professional ones for her and her husband. Elaine and her family lived in a school rented apartment next to the school in a gated community, but different than Richard's. Elaine's daughter graduated high school from ASC in 2010, having attended the school since 2nd grade.

Elaine welcomed me into her classroom and put me to work to help with her lesson plans. In the midst of my visit, Elaine was juggling supporting her daughter with college applications, hosting a visiting literacy coach, maintaining her 4th grade classroom teaching as well as interviewing with her husband for new international educational positions. She was excited to have an extra person on hand to meet and chat with students about their reading and writing and I was delighted to be of assistance. She was extremely busy with her obligations in her many roles at the school and at home and I was constantly amazed she found time for me as well. After working at ASC for 11 years, Elaine and her husband moved to work in another international school in the fall of 2010.

Kate: Kate is a Canadian woman, married to a Chinese man. After teaching 3 and 4 year olds in a Canadian working class neighborhood for 8 years, Kate decided to return to university for a degree in East Asian Studies. Her program included studying religion, art, and Chinese language. While working on her degree she studied on a scholarship at a university in Nanjing, became fluent in Mandarin and returned to Canada. Kate then earned an internship at a Canadian consulate in China. This opportunity brought her back to China in the spring of 1999. Her work there included translating formal documents and making appearances at local events as a Canadian representative. Her work also included helping Canadian teachers at ASC. She applied at the school for a teaching job in the fall

of 2000, and began working there as a first grade teacher. Already living in China, the school considers Kate a local hire, meaning that the school does not fund her apartment or yearly flights to her home country. They do, however, take care of her work visa and health care coverage. At the end of her first school year working at ASC, Kate met her soon to be husband, Li Wei. He is a local artist, whose family lives in northern China. Kate and her husband live in an apartment they own about 6 blocks from the school. They also own a house they are renovating and hope to move into in the upcoming year. Since Li Wei does not speak English, they communicate in Chinese.

Kate considers China her home and describes herself more comfortable with the daily life there than when she visits her family in Canada. She was very patient with me and my questions about Chinese culture and language. Kate often acted as a cultural guide, bridging my own cultural curiosities about the host country, students, and her Canadian role in an American school. Kate invited me into her classroom for her morning literacy block. At least once a week, I would start my day with a friendly cup of coffee and a chat with Kate and her assistant, Ms. Tina. The three of us had relaxed conversations about education, her class, and politics making me feel a part of her first grade classroom teaching team.

Cautions about Narrative Inquiry: Positioning

As a narrative inquiry researcher, I tried to be particularly cognizant of possible tensions between my own narrative history and the narrative histories of my participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996). This involved reconstructing my own narrative history, exploring how that viewpoint may differ from others who are a part of that history, and being conscious of how my own autobiographical narrative emphasizes a particular perspective. Objectivity is not a goal in conducting narrative research; in fact identifying and analyzing my own international teaching experiences and stories is essential. Asking my participants to share their life stories (stories that shared cultural consciousness,

awkwardness and confusion) required trust on their part, openness on mine and respect between us.

I do not claim to be objective, as my life experiences shape my own stories, lens and interests. My decision to conduct this study relates directly to my own international teaching experiences: those that perplexed me, those that embarrass me as I reconsider them, and those that complicate my consideration of culture in the classroom. Narrative research emphasizes the importance of the researcher exploring their own personal narratives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Phillion, 2002; He, 2002; Lyons & Labosky, 2002). Etherington (2009) recommends using a journal "to keep a focus on our internal responses as researchers and capture our changing and developing understanding of method and content" (p.86). As explained earlier, I wrote my stories throughout the research process, tracking my thinking in field notes and in my researcher's diary. By understanding my autobiographical relationship to the research topic and methodology adopted, I recognize my bias.

Monitoring my own subjectivity or the effects of self is essential in my research (Glesne, 2011). Who I am as a researcher impacts the stance from which I view my research. I am a teacher. I was an international educator for 10 years. I taught in 3 very different international schools in different countries and cultures. I have experience developing the identity of international school teacher; an identity I was unaware of when I began teaching overseas in my 20s. While I identified myself as an international educator for over 10 years, I was also somewhat stripped of that identity when I moved back to the U.S., where I have lived since August of 2003. When I began my research, it had been 6 years since I had last flown across the globe to work, live and play.

Along with my own subjectivity it is essential that I monitor my intersubjectivity. This means being conscious of not only my own bias but also those of my participants and how our interactions impact the research process and data (Glesne, 2011). The way that my participants responded guided the process as well. For example, Richard had

more time available outside of school for our discussions, and Elaine tended to focus more on discussing academic programs. While not necessarily an equivocal relationship, I invited the participants at the end of my visit to share their perception of me and the research process. I also asked each teacher if there was anything else they wanted to share that we had not discussed. I was particularly curious if they noticed any ideas or considerations that I may have somehow missed in my research and interview process. Richard said he had nothing to add. Elaine reiterated a previous discussion describing some differences she noticed in her role as a teacher at ASC and a big school district she worked in back in the U.S. Kate first responded wondering if she had been staying on the topics we had been discussion or going off on tangents. I reassured her that the interviews and time spent in her classroom had been a powerful learning opportunity. She then explained how she found having visitors in her classroom helped her be a more mindful teacher; all classroom visitors urged her and her assistant to think more about what they are doing and the reasons why they do things. Kate found participating in this research to benefit her teaching.

Conclusion

Which stories participants choose to share can lead to insights about the educators' perspectives and how they feel they want to represent themselves. To borrow from Robert Coles' (1989) "call of stories," there is genuine curiosity embedded in the teaching stories that confound teachers. Phillion (2002) explains,

> Narrative is about understanding the complexities of experience, honoring the subtleties of experience, and understanding the dynamics between individual experience and contexts that shape experience. Narrative reaches out to the past, is rooted in the present, and turns an eye to the future; narrative evolves with changes and shifts in time, place, and interactions. Narrative, as both phenomenon and form of inquiry, is a perspective that provides illuminating ways of viewing the world (p.20).

Studying the complexities of their personal and teaching stories can reveal how international teachers consider the role culture plays in their daily and teaching lives. My own teaching stories led me towards this curiosity. Following Coles' approach, I listened to the international teachers' stories, concentrated on understanding the storyteller, and understood it was their story. My goal was to understand how international teachers' experiences shape their approaches to culture in their diverse classrooms. Merriam (2009) describes the process stating, "The overall interpretation will be the researcher's understanding of the participants' understanding of the phenomenon of interest" (p.23-24). So, as I asked Richard, Elaine and Kate to share their lives with me I sought to discover: What stories do international teachers tell? What will international teachers' stories teach us? "Try to tell me a few stories about [your] life – "moments in it," Coles (1989, p.11) urged. And so did I.

CHAPTER FOUR
RICHARD AND ELAINE: THE DIPLOMAT AND THE EXPLORER

While at the international school rugby team tournament, a fourth grade girl ran up to me. She asked, "Where are you from?" I explained I was visiting from Iowa in the United States for a few months. She then quickly told me her best friend in the whole world is from Iowa. The girl explained that she met her friend in the Los Angeles airport. They were both going to Dhaka, Bangladesh. Then they found out they were going to be on the same plane, going to the same town and were going to be in the same school! When school started, they were in the same kindergarten class, sitting right next to each other. The girl explained, her best friend is now in Bangladesh, but she is here, in China now.

Researcher Diary, October 23, 2009

People often ask international teachers, "Where are you from?" In China, I answered the question during subway rides, waiting for a man to make me keys, bargaining for a tote bag and buying an apple from the market. Oftentimes, the answer was one of the first phrases you learn in the host language. I'd easily reply, "*Wo shi meiguo ren,"* or I am American.

When I revisited the story I told in Chapter One about my resistance towards putting on a Thanksgiving play in first grade, I was surprised to realize I had a role as a cultural agent. The parents in my classroom were expecting me to be organizing their children to be participating in an American style holiday celebration. There was a disconnect between my expectations for myself as a teacher at an American international school and the parents' expectations for their children's experiences at an American international school. While I could chalk my story up to simple miscommunication, it is also an example of the tensions I felt as a cultural agent. This is a very real tension that exists for Richard, Elaine and Kate as they negotiate the role different cultures play in their classrooms. Their tensions come out of their experiences as cultural agents in both their personal and professional lives.

A federal agent works for the government and represents governmental policies. A travel agent works for a travel agency and represents several travel companies. These

international teachers are cultural agents. They represent the culture and place where they are from. Richard, Elaine, Kate and I look different walking down a street in Asia. Who you are, where you are from, why you are here is a natural curiosity, especially since we are not tourists. International teachers live in their host country. They are making a home for themselves. They are also visible members of the international teaching community. After only two observations in Richard's fifth grade classroom, one of his students approached me at recess asking if I had been at the large goods market over the weekend. I had, and she explained that she saw me from her car. I was shocked. How on earth did she remember who I was and what were the chances that anyone would recognize me when I knew only a handful of people in the city? There is a lack of anonymity for an international teacher in the community, even in a city of over 15 million people. International teachers like Richard, Elaine and Kate are aware of their role as cultural agents, both in the school community and in their personal experiences.

George and Louise Spindler (1994) explain how teachers' and their students' cultures impact education in classrooms. "Teachers carry into the classroom their personal cultural background. They perceive students, all of whom are cultural agents, with inevitable prejudice and preconception" (p.xii). Likewise, students also perceive their teachers and classmates with perspectives based on their own experiences. It is in the schools and classrooms where teachers and students negotiate and construct environments that weave a "cultural fabric" that carries shared meanings, expectations and experiences. The three teachers contemplated the role culture plays in the international classroom in the interviews I had with them.

How the teacher's culture impacts the classroom is unique at the American School of China (ASC). The teacher's personal cultural background and the school's definition of "American education" affects classroom practices and school policies. The host country, China, plays a role too. For instance, while walking around the elementary school there are visual cues to the host country. Outside the library stands a life-sized

replica of a terracotta Xian warrior and on the wall is a mural painted in the style of a traditional Chinese peasant painting (Fieldnotes, Oct. 19). Additionally, the unique cultural viewpoint of each student places them in the role of cultural agent. Each child is coming into the classroom with their own cultural perspective and biases. The students are also sharing the third culture kid identity, building from their experiences living as expatriates for several years in their childhood.

It is the teachers' responses and attentiveness to this dynamic cultural situation that intrigues me in my research. Richard, Elaine and Kate were each active in their approaches to the cultural dynamics in their classrooms by recognizing their role as cultural agents. All three told stories that exhibited questioning and reflection. However, their views as cultural agents differed. Questioning their roles as cultural agents emerged as a key feature in the international teachers' stories. My codes often noted specific aspects of their teaching or their experiences living overseas that led the teachers to question their own thinking, actions or practices. Examples of these codes are: representing home country living abroad, reflecting on teacher role in cultural discussions and questioning acceptance by host country. Ball (2000) found questioning and reflection crucial aspects of developing teachers as change agents, teachers who take action in their schools and classrooms addressing inequitable school practices. Both Villegas and Lucas (2002) and Gay's (2000) research show the role of questioning is critical for shifting toward culturally responsive teaching. In this chapter I highlight narratives Richard and Elaine told me in our interviews that demonstrate questioning in their personal and professional stories. I then discuss each person's role as a cultural agent in the content of the stories. Finally, I describe the teaching I observed when I visited their elementary classrooms and the ways I saw them incorporate cultural responsiveness in their daily teaching. I will share Kate's stories in Chapter Five.

Cultural Agent Richard: Diplomatic Host

> You form a new family. Your friends become your family, your support group.
> Richard, Transcript, Nov. 9, 2009

Personal and Professional Stories

Richard has lived and worked as an elementary teacher overseas for 29 years, first in Egypt and then in China. He is a single man and recognizes how living and working overseas has an impact on your immediate family. His parents and sister live in the Midwest, where he returns for most Christmas holidays and all summer breaks. With the new technology of Skype, Richard explained keeping in contact with family is easier than ever. As described in his story in the introduction, just making a phone call to the U.S. in the 80's was a cross cultural experience that left him with quite the story of Egyptian telecommunications.

Richard spoke fondly of the bonding that occurs among staff members working at an international school. To illustrate, he told a story of a time in Egypt when the country ran out of tomato paste and tomatoes were out of season. He remembered traveling to Athens for a weekend trip, "bringing home a suitcase of tomato paste and giving it out in the faculty lounge. Everyone was treasuring it because we could make spaghetti again!" (Transcript, October, 29, 2009).

Like in the tomato paste and phone call scenarios, Richard relished telling stories of what it was like "back then," frequently describing how a city or country has changed over the years. Through his narratives, Richard established himself as a bit of an authority through his long history of living overseas. He valued lifelong friendships built out of a life overseas. Richard analyzed how friendships build in international schools and in different settings. In Cairo he described the staff and community as "a real family feel. You knew everyone" (November 9, 2009). At ASC, Richard explained how friendships tended to be based on fitting in a particular family structure, "married couples with

children in one group, married couples another, single younger people one, older single people another" (November 9, 2009). So, as a single man, Richard's friendships in China tended to be with single people that have worked abroad for a lengthy period of time. In his time overseas he also built friendships outside of the school community. While living in Egypt, Richard studied Arabic over a summer with a culturally diverse group of people. He explained how after the lessons, in the evening, they would have parties or go out to dinner with the teacher continuing their language learning. People in the group took turns hosting dinners, "cooking their own food." Richard treated his guests from Germany, Japan, and Egypt to roast beef, mashed potatoes and corn on the cob one warm summer night in the suburbs of Cairo.

Richard's exchanges in sharing his own culture and learning about others continued in China. When I asked him for a favorite story he likes to tell about living in China, he told a personal cross cultural exchange story discussing the Bible. Richard first explained how he met his friend with a goal to learn Mandarin Chinese and his willingness to teach English in return. The tutoring relationship fell to the wayside as a friendship built. Richard's friend was willing to be a language translator for him and in exchange, Richard shared pieces of his American culture with his Chinese friend.

> …when I first came I went through a series of Chinese tutors … and I was complaining about this to some Chinese friends that I had. And they said, they knew this guy, that could read and write English perfectly, but his spoken English wasn't that good and maybe they could work out a deal…We could meet two hours on the weekend, and we could do an hour of English and an hour of Chinese. Well, it didn't help my Chinese at all because we ended up becoming really good friends. And then he bought me a cell phone, and any time I needed help with Chinese, I'd just call him! So, we ended up spending all our time talking in English. And we were chatting, and I had just been to Singapore and I had picked up [in] those days we had, VCDs, and I had picked up The Greatest

> Story Ever Told a biblical thing, and he was looking at it and he asked me and he said, “Are you a Christian”? And I said, “Yes, I am.” And he said, “Well, I am a Communist.” And I just thought, “Well you know it’s sort of funny.”
>
> … I loaned him the Bible. And he is reading the Bible. And one night he calls me up at 10:30 at night and he is very concerned about Moses and about God and the plagues. And you know as a kid growing up you learn about God and the 10 commandments and the plagues and all that everything, but you never read between the lines in the Bible…and what it is, is God hits the Egyptians with the plague, Pharaoh is going to free to them and then God hardens his heart and sets him up for the next plague. And he keeps hardening his heart and that was upsetting, upsetting my friend. And he kept saying, “Why does God keep doing this to the Pharaoh”? And I said, “I don’t know! I don’t know the answer!” I’d never thought of it!
>
> Richard, Transcript, November 9, 2009

In this personal story, Richard talked about himself in terms of needing to answer his friend’s questions about his cultural, or in this case religious, understandings. He seemed worried that he didn’t have the answers he’d like to give to his friend. Perhaps more importantly, the question posed to him left him wondering, why haven’t I ever thought about my religious beliefs or my cultural perspective in this way? As a character in the story he told, it was his friend’s questioning that led him to reflect on his own way of thinking and the grounding of his beliefs. Part of the role this particular narrative played for Richard is to emphasize how talking with his Chinese friend led him to question his knowledge about his own culture. It reminded me of the question my Bahraini friend asked me while visiting me in the U.S. Why don’t the coins have numbers on them like they do almost everywhere else in the world? As a cultural agent, I just shrugged my shoulders and realized I hadn’t thought about that

before. He was right! There are no numbers on the American coins. Why do we do that?

Richard wants to be the best representative he can. He's a generous host, willingly sharing his personal copies of books and movies, welcoming his friend to his cultural experiences and ways of thinking. His motives are not to transform him but to be a knowledgeable guide. This role of representing his home cultural viewpoint played out in a story he shared about his classroom as well. Here I had asked him for a story that told of a time he felt tension as a teacher in an international school.

> At one point, I was in Egypt in the 80s. And I had the Israeli Charge de' Affaires' daughter in my class and the Egyptian's field marshal's grandson in my class. And puppy love hit. I had both sets of parents call and complain. And my advice was, because the Egyptians couldn't believe their son liked the Israeli girl and the Israeli's Charge de' Affaires' wife who is French, she called was quite upset…..
>
> I said, "My advice is, don't worry. They're 10 year old kids! Once their peers find out who they are sweet on them, it's over."
>
> Because they'll secretly at this age, they'll secretly like someone. But once it becomes public knowledge, "Oh they're horrible! They are disgusting!" And that's it. And so this is exactly what happened, and it felt pretty uncomfortable for a while.
>
> Because it was like, politically, I am in a sensitive position. Because I don't want to lean one way or another. I need to be as insensitive as I can. And yet I need to be totally sensitive at the same time.
>
> Richard, Transcript, November 9, 2009

Richard didn't necessarily question his own role in the story, culturally or academically as he considered how to address adolescent puppy love, explaining it as a world-wide phenomenon. However, he was reflective of how world views can cause unique tensions in international school classrooms. Richard explained he needed to be

sensitive to his role in the dynamic. The context included Middle Eastern dating expectations and the long held conflicts between two cultural groups. It was set within the cultural and historical dynamics between the Palestinians and Israelis, and the American role in these conflicts. The school also exposed the children to western cultural and education curriculums. All the while, the students maintained their identities as representatives of national policies that they had no role in creating (but their families may have). He didn't want to make the issue bigger than it was, but he also was conscious of the context creating the concern. Richard found himself in the middle, and much like an American secretary of state, he recognized the parents' concerns but didn't want to elevate the conflict.

Culturally responsive teaching in Richard's classroom

Richard's role of host, inviting others to enter his cultural framework was striking as I walked down the school hallway. On a table outside his classroom was a spread of magazines that included school bulletins, community social news, Newsweek and Time. Entering the classroom, my eye was drawn toward the photographs of American diplomats and presidents above the storage cabinets. Along the top of the chalkboard were posters of every American president from George Washington to Barack Obama. As I visited during the months of October, November and December, there were American holiday themed displays. For example, in October, a bulletin board invited students to add their own Halloween Jokes, a spider web tablecloth covered a group work table, and pumpkin posters hung on the wall. It was Richard's quiet touch that transformed three of the four terracotta soldiers guarding an elementary stairway into Halloween costumes, including a ghost.

During my visit, the fifth grade teaching team had classes rotating into each other's classrooms for Social Studies and Science. For an hour each afternoon, the class moved together to another teacher's classroom for their Science or Social Studies

lesson. For several weeks, each class worked through a Social Studies or Science study unit with a fifth grade teacher. Then, when the unit was completed, the class rotated to a new teacher for a new study unit. The students worked though different study units, while the teacher repeated teaching a unit for each fifth grade class.

When I visited, Richard was teaching a Social Studies unit about recent American history. Each day he gave a lecture about a particular decade and the students learned about significant American historical events, study skills such as how to take notes and elements of high quality presentations. This lasted for a little over a week. Afterwards, the students were expected to conduct their own research project about a time period.

One afternoon I watched Richard give a PowerPoint lecture about the 1950s with a class of 5th graders who were not his students. Richard talked about the initial use of credit cards, popular culture at the time (I Love Lucy!) and the Korean War. When he broached the subject of the Korean War, his first question was, "Are there are any students in here from Korea?" and 3 students raised their hands. He recognized that "you would know more than me" about the Korean War and paused to have them share their knowledge (Fieldnotes, November 3, 2009). Richard enticed students to share their personal histories and knowledge with him and their classmates. He named the students as history teachers inviting them to add to the lecture. South Korean students shared their family histories and how the Korean War impacts their lives today. He maintained his role of the active guide, leading the discussion through his PowerPoint to share the information he wanted the students to walk away with while inviting them to bring their prior knowledge and perspective to the discussions.

This is one way Richard was culturally responsive in his classroom; he invited students to share their "funds of knowledge" into the framework that existed in the 5th grade social studies curriculum (González et al, 2005). He named them as experts and invited them to teach others what they knew about their personal and national history.

In an interview the following day we discussed his teaching approach. Richard explained when discussing conflicts between Japanese and the treatment of the Chinese during WWII, he does it "very gently." He went further to state, "they are 10-year old children. And so the way they look at the world, and what they've learned, everything is black and white. There are no shades of gray yet. So we have to start painting the world gray" (Transcript, November 9, 2009). Through his pedagogy, Richard sought out the students' different histories. Through classroom discussions he complicated their knowledge by adding perspectives they may have not considered before. At his invitation, students considered different historical viewpoints that existed in their culturally diverse class.

Evidence of how he continued to invite students to explore their home country's history hung on the walls. After a series of decade lectures Richard delivered over 6 school days, students researched a specific 20th century decade further. Each student built an individual inquiry about a particular time frame. They delved deeper into a time period issue already discussed or they chose their own. Among the posters on the back wall, there was one by a Danish student, *Life in Denmark in the 1940s*. She talked about limitations of importing products, self imposed evening dark hours and Germany demanding livestock during WWII. She had the opportunity through an initial social studies American centric lens to delve into her own family's national history.

Additionally, the students were encouraged to include their personal lived experiences in their writings and literature discussions. For example, while reading aloud the book *There's a Boy in the Girl's Bathroom!* one boy raised his hand and told a story about how he had an experience in a mall in Taiwan when he needed to use the restroom but he couldn't read the Chinese characters. Many of the students nodded their heads in agreement; the shared experience of being in a new place and making a misstep due to language limitations was a familiar one for these third culture kids. On the bulletin board in the hallway, papers hung from when students in Richard's

classroom interviewed each other. Each paper highlighted stories the students shared about themselves. Several stories reflected their third culture international lives; they have lived in a country other than their own. For example, a 5th grade student Sarah shared stories of dead jellyfish washed up on the beach, watching the Olympics in Beijing and trying to sleep while camping in France.

In a writing assignment for the students to tell a spooky story, Richard taught mini-lessons about character development, setting, mood and description. The fifth grade students initially leapt to create gruesome scenes with their words. However, Richard explained how "gore is often used in spooky stories as a way to cover-up poor storylines" (Fieldnotes, October 21, 2009). He then modeled storytelling, retelling one of his favorite Alfred Hitchcock tales, *The Thing at the Foot of the Bed*. He even gave them storytelling tips in case they wanted to retell the story to younger siblings, reminding them to change their voices and lean in to add more excitement.

In my visits in his classroom, it was clear that the students were welcome to be creative in their story settings. During a writer's workshop session the students returned to writing their rough drafts. I observed one girl, Carrie, researching famous sites in Mali (Fieldnotes, October 30, 2009). When I asked her why Mali, she explained there were three places for her story. Mali because it was in Africa, it would be hot, and her family had taken a vacation there. Secondly, Indonesia, because it would be rainy and her best friend from another school had moved to Indonesia. Then Norway, because it would be cold. Carrie was purposeful with her choices of story location. She considered climate that would fit her storyline. However, the specific places incorporated her life experiences as an international traveler and third culture kid within the backdrop of the school's mainstream American Halloween holiday celebration. In his writing workshop, Richard created avenues for his students to revisit their own experiences and stories in their interviews. Richard was culturally responsive as he made certain the students brought into the room their prior experiences, embrace their identities and

knowledge. He also was open to have students mold their spooky stories in their own fashion. Richard had students access the internet to conduct research as needed for their stories, and Carrie researched these places each with a personal connection.

Every year at ASC there is an elementary costume parade on the main school pathway, lined with parents and middle school and high school students. In 2009, Richard was definitely a highlight of the celebration. He brought up the end of the more than 500 elementary students and teachers walking in the parade, dressed in a white bridal gown, veil blowing in the wind.

In Richard's classroom, different cultural viewpoints tended to interact on the margins around a centralized traditional American framework. For example, the fifth grader creating a "Life in Denmark" poster for a social studies project had an opportunity to delve into her personal history. She researched her family's national history parallel to the other students' inquiries and Richard's PowerPoint of American history.

The Diplomat

From time to time Richard and I discussed incorporating Chinese culture or the students' home cultures in his teaching. However, he more frequently told stories about his personal experiences living overseas and school policies. Data analysis of our discussions corroborated the emphasis was on Richard's home American culture, his valuing of the international teaching lifestyle and his view of his colleagues as family. As I think about what I learned from Richard I realize that being an international teacher is a prominent identity. He is an American expatriate. The metaphor that emerged to describe Richard was diplomat. I thought about him hosting people as they came to his classroom and his story of hosting others to an American dinner. I can almost picture him on the lawn of an American international school standing between the Israeli and Palestinian parents brokering his own peace agreement. This metaphor

emerged not only from his stories but through triangulating data collected from field notes from classroom observations, discussions about teaching observations and artifacts I collected while visiting ASC. In his stories and in his classroom, Richard is diplomatic in making certain that people from different cultural backgrounds are comfortable. He has done this against a subtle and not so subtle American backdrop.

As an example of the prominence of U.S. culture in Richard's cultural perspectives, he is active in the social studies curriculum development for ASC. He sees his role as being an advocate for the students' educational future, with the knowledge that most ASC high school graduates attend an American university or college. Both educators and anthropologists refer to this stance as being a cultural broker or someone who facilitates the border crossing of a person or group of people from one culture into another (García-Castñón, 1994; Gentemann & Whitehead, 1983). He implements his agency in terms of advocating for his diverse students to have access to curriculum and experiences that will support them in their "border crossing" with their studies at ASC or future educational endeavors.

I considered how Richard integrated the different cultural perspectives in his classroom from his stories and classroom observations. I then created a visual diagram in Figure 4.1. Richard regularly used an American cultural perspective as a base, for example, his history lessons and creative writing projects of spooky stories. He then created opportunities for his students to build out from that base in directions that related to their lived experiences as third culture kids, curiosities about their identities and histories from their home country and the culture of where they all lived together, in China.

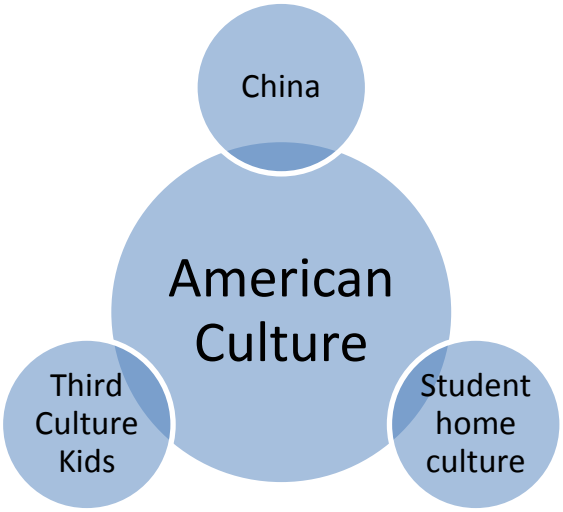

Figure 4.1 Intersection of Cultural Perspectives in Richard's Classroom

At the center of his classroom teaching is Richard's sharing of his and the school's American cultural framework. Richard explained he implements the school curriculum through a "traditional" American lens. "But as long as we are an American school, I feel, we have a duty to the parents. Most of our students go to America, to the university and they should have some understanding of U.S. history, certainly U.S. government" (Transcript, November 9, 2009). Richard was confident in his role as an American cultural agent and relished in sharing himself as well as learning other viewpoints in his personal life and in the classroom. He was reflective and questioned how he could better explain his beliefs in this cultural exchange even while he confidently hosted others into his cultural world.

Cultural Agent Elaine: Reflective Explorer

> [Living in] another country [puts] you in uncomfortable situations and you learn strategies to deal with it. And if you take the time to process it and reflect on it, you are going to grow from those experiences. And I think that goes right into our classrooms.
>
> Elaine, Transcript, October 31, 2009

Personal and Professional Stories

Elaine moved to China with her husband Mark and 7 year old daughter, Phoebe, in 1999 from the U.S. Elaine's many roles at ASC came from both professional opportunities as well as her from her family life. She was a classroom teacher and a parent of a student for 10 years at ASC. When discussing her multiple perspectives of the school, Elaine noted that because Phoebe grew up attending ASC, Elaine had a broad view of her professional setting. Elaine explained:

> But I think for me I see the system. I see the cog that I am in the system. This is my role and I like that. And this is what I am doing, and I've watched her, and I think she lends me a lot of legitimacy in the community. And I know people know I have seen both sides of the system as a parent and as a teacher.
>
> Elaine, Transcript, October 31, 2009

Elaine continued describing how she had a strong understanding of the long term view of the ASC educational experience and opportunities for students. She based this view on the academic, artistic and social aspects of Phoebe's education. Elaine also became the wife of a school administrator when the school promoted Mark to middle school vice principal.

While living in China, Elaine studied Chinese by hiring a tutor with friends. She quickly pointed out she was not fluent, but she got around comfortably on her own with ease. With pride, she marveled at her daughter's bilingual capabilities. Elaine was a member of a book club, meeting once a month in different restaurants around the city for Sunday brunch. She had several friends who she worked with as well as friends from outside school. Elaine was quick to smile, offered a light hearted laugh and told witty jokes in the midst of our discussions.

Elaine explained there is a combination of isolation while also a bit of confidence that grew from the experience of living in a country and culture different

from where she is from. “But when I am in the states, my life is, I am not pushing myself out of my comfort zone very often. … I get bored, I get antsy. Being on the street here, sometimes I am all by myself, I feel like the lone white person” (Transcript, October 31, 2009). There is no doubt about it. Like Richard, Elaine recognized her minority status was coming from a place of privilege. The guards didn’t question Elaine at the school or at gates of her compound where she lived. Meanwhile, security had from time to time escorted her friend and language tutor, a frequent visitor, to Elaine’s home or classroom. Living overseas for Elaine has built a self-reliance that translated beyond where she lives or where she is from. After telling about the confusion she felt arriving in Athens on her own, with no knowledge of the local language or cultures she explained, “It is really a unique feeling [knowing] that you can get off a plane anywhere in the world, and I can maneuver my way around. And there is a confidence in that, and it will play out in your classroom” (Transcript, October 31, 2009).

Elaine’s questioning focused on her own role, who she is, what she does and her own behaviors and practices. Thinking of her as a cultural agent, I found the metaphor of being an explorer suited her well. She was sensitive to how others view her based on her nationality. She placed many of her stories in travel, and in interacting with citizens of different countries. Seeing herself as a global citizen, Elaine brought that viewpoint to her students. It is an open-ended approach and she acknowledged that while she may not know all the answers, she constantly sought out opportunities to reflect on her own perspective as well as seek out others. In the midst of a discussion about how our home national politics and policies can impact the daily life of an American traveling overseas, Elaine told the story of talking with an Egyptian shopkeeper about the recent American presidential election.

> After Obama had been elected [I was in] Cairo, Egypt, …I got in this real interesting discussion in the market with this young boy, he was probably about 19, 20 years old. He said, “Do you like Obama?”

I said, “yes, very much.”

“Oh this is good! I think that he will love Cairo; I think he will love the Egyptians. Do you think he will love the Egyptians?”

So here I was speaking for Obama, saying, “Oh yeah, you know when Barack was calling me last week! When I spoke to him last week” [pause]

But really what I said was, “You know, I am not exactly sure what all of his policies are, but I know he is a very intelligent man. And he seems to see people as individuals and he sees their strengths. And these are the reasons why I like him very much and that he is the person communicating with other countries.”

“You vote for him right?”

“Yes, yes.”

“Good, good, good. That will be good for America. And good for Egypt. We will be friends. Friends for Egypt.”

And I said, “That would be good.”

It was the coolest conversation.

Elaine, Transcript, October 31, 2009

In this narrative she had with an Egyptian shopkeeper, Elaine marveled how powerful a cross-cultural exchange can be for both participants, naming it as “the coolest conversation.” Here were two strangers, different generations, different religions, different countries, talking cross-culturally about the election of an American president. In her telling of the story, Elaine chuckled that she found herself speaking for Obama. She put actions to her words as if she was chatting with the president on the phone regularly. While her mental response to the boy may appear lighthearted, Elaine actually carefully explained her perspective of the new president. Elaine recognized the shopkeeper viewed her as a representative American and she took that role seriously. She explained her way of thinking, and considered how this Egyptian could perceive

that perspective. The shopkeeper sought her confirmation in what he believed; the American-Egyptian relationship may improve. And that it would benefit both nations if this is true. Interestingly, in the way Elaine told the story, he didn't assume Elaine held this perspective. His first question was to ask if she liked Obama, showing his knowledge of the diversity of opinions within the U.S. political system.

Elaine's cautiousness in being a cultural representative also played out in her role as a classroom teacher at ASC. Elaine talked openly about her tension with the expectation to teach early American history while living in China. She told a story of questioning her participation in implementing the American history curriculum. She questioned how she and her colleagues approached the topic and how her life abroad had changed her perspective.

> I ended up evolving my social studies to talking about, when people are forming a government, what aspects do they look for, what are their needs, which is a way I think you can study American history, which is fascinating. I think it is a well documented journey … people finding who they are. You don't have that many opportunities where they basically threw everything out and said, "Who are we as a people? We know we don't want this, but we don't really know who we are after that."
>
> And they had to take all those different beliefs and philosophies and established this new way. And it was definitely a combination of a lot of things, but by combining it they come up with new system of government. And I didn't have the background to study it. And now when I look at it all the scholars on that subject, and they [the students] could study it that way. And if I went back, that would be how I would go about it. Taking it as a case study, not as this is the right way to lead the world. No one was teaching it that way, but my knowledge was so limited.

> But you know I had grown up with this "hand over the heart America" and it's like once you've lived overseas, you can say, yeah it has its strengths but. Well, especially in the last 8 years [referring to the years George W. Bush was in office], it has its flaws.
>
> Elaine, Transcript, October, 31, 2009

In this story, Elaine was in the midst of negotiating the role she had a cultural agent at ASC. She considered how as the teacher this cultural agent role could impact her students' perspectives of their own backgrounds and of the host country. The evidence of the tension rose when she didn't view one governmental approach as better; she also recognized how her experience and knowledge was limited prior to living overseas. She didn't place her move abroad as giving her confidence in representing her own nation. Instead it gave her new perspectives and questions about her own culture and others. It is a complex undertaking, to move overseas. Elaine confronted herself through reflection on teaching practices that previously she had been confident of from her own upbringing.

In both of these stories Elaine questioned her role as a representative of her national culture and negotiated this on a personal level. She was reflective about how others viewed her, conscious how her knowledge of her own culture is limited, and stated those limitations. In the school story she explained she wished she knew more about governmental history and in the travel story she stated she wasn't quite certain about all of Obama's policies. In recognizing her limitations of knowledge she explained that her experience is just one perspective. These stories underscore her belief that global knowledge and multiple perspectives are important. Elaine's responses and reflections included an active process of considering how others view her and her responsibility in that role.

Culturally responsive teaching in Elaine's classroom

As I walked into Elaine's fourth grade class, there was a sense of purposeful energy. At first glance the sight of students at tables, on the floor, and with computers scattered around the room might appear unorganized. But students were working in various spaces on different projects. With a closer look, on a shelf there was a collection of objects from Elaine's previous students. One corner collected gifts and photos from the children's home countries. Even the pencil holders on student tables required a second glance. For instance, one was a Tibetan wooden box. Above the white board a sign said, "Let learning take you around the world" and if you slowly turned around in this 4th grade classroom, the artifacts, literature and posters most certainly did that.

Like Richard, evidence of Elaine's teaching pedagogy was on the walls and in her discussions with students and colleagues. Through Elaine's teaching content and teaching approach, she attended to the cultural diversity in her class. With a framework of assignment expectations clearly articulated, the students applied their own interests, curiosities and perspectives to their queries. For example, each student had to complete the requirement to research a famous site in Asia. Students then chose a site that they had a personal connection to, perhaps through their own travels or their nationality. Each student researched the longitude, latitude, the direction of the site from their hometown and a description of the site. Sites researched varied from the Hong Kong Ocean Park to Taipei 101 (tallest skyscraper in Taiwan). Elaine recognized she can incorporate the shared experience the students have as third culture kids in China while meeting curriculum standards. Here, she adjusted the benchmark of applying geographical terms to these global travelers and their experiences. When I asked one student in the classroom about why she chose the site she did, this fourth grade girl said, "I am not from Taipei, but my family is from there" (Fieldnotes, October 26, 2009). The students contemplated the "where are you from" question, the third culture kid perspective, that lingered in the

air. Elaine's students lived in a country and culture different than their parents, and she afforded opportunities for students to explore their own developing identities and personal histories.

Elaine also incorporated student discussions of their personal lives through the daily reading and writing workshops. Students were welcome to choose literature and write stories most meaningful to them. Again, she gave clear expectations for achievement in both workshops but the role of choice allowed students to build on their personal experiences and bring them into the classroom. Elaine became a literacy coach for the school on top of her job as a classroom teacher. We had several conversations about how her reading and writing workshop allowed for students to branch into their interests. As I looked at one child's reading log, it was similar to what you might find in a 4th grade classroom in the U.S.: *Clean Break* by Jacqueline Wilson, *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White and *Deadly Diseases* by Nick Arnold. When I asked Elaine about the literature she used in her classroom, she mentioned that she tried to consciously bring in more literature with Asian characters. She explained that while the professional workshop resources they have at the school often recommended using literature with African American characters, she taught the same lesson with books that reflected the ethnicity of her classroom. Naming a few favorite authors, Elaine mentioned Helen Recovortis and Yangsook Choi.

In this midst of the conversation we had about literature, Elaine mentioned previously using a novel about the Korean War, *The Year of Impossible Goodbyes* by Sook Nul Choi. This novel tells a story of a family living in North Korea in the midst of Japanese tyranny during WWII. Through the eyes of 8 year old Sookan readers learn about life under the oppressive regime, the following Russian invasion and her family's flight to freedom to South Korea. Elaine had concerns as she offered and used this literature in her classroom. The tension between Japan and China is still palatable today in the larger political discourse. For example, Elaine spoke about having a Japanese

student in her class when the Japanese government recently changed their textbooks to edit out the war crimes committed in Nanjing. She explained that she tried to cover the major news event by discussing it in class. Elaine described her approach by articulating what different people think while at the same time she was comfortable that as a class they didn't need to come to a consensus about highly charged issues. This tension didn't deter her from using literature that brought out students' family histories and stories to the forefront of discussions. While reading *In the Year of Impossible Goodbyes*, Elaine recalled one student's response:

> I had a Korean student tell me a story one time about his Grandmother crossing a river, with bullets when she was a teenager. And um they were escaping the invasion of the Chinese…it gave me goose bumps. But she was escaping. And the way he heard the story, she took him back to the bridge. And they looked down at the river, where she had escaped from the Japanese. And she was describing uhm, being, going across the river and having to hold all of her belongings over her head. And bullets coming down all around them. And her father, uh, at one point having to have to pick her up and push her along because there was a group of them, there was a whole village and they were all escaping. She had taken her grandchildren back and telling them the story. You figure if there are stories like that, and you are hearing it…there has got to be a little bit of animosity and anger and racial tension there…But he wasn't saying it in a way, that was like that, he was just saying oh yeah, they did this. He was just kind of focusing on her point of view with it….That is recent history. That is their grandparents. That has got to be like a part of your general make-up.
>
> Elaine, Transcript, December 11, 2009

Elaine spoke directly to how students' family histories shape their perspective and responses to literature. In an international classroom, Elaine recognized students' family

stories impact their world view and that includes valuing all student perspectives. There wasn't a goal to have a collective classroom agreement about historical or current political tensions. Elaine knew striving to have one historical perspective denied some students' family experiences. Equally important she allowed space for the discussion to occur in the first place.

Elaine's discomfort with her charge to teach American history while she viewed herself as a guest in China brought her to change from teaching 5th grade to 4th grade. The 5th grade curriculum emphasizes American history at ASC. She felt more comfortable teaching the 4th grade curriculum with the emphasis on learning about the host country of China. For instance, she implemented an inquiry-based project about the Three Gorges Dam project. In this inquiry-based unit students built topographical maps of China and participated in research groups, and Elaine invited guest speakers. Student groups investigated different stakeholders' perspectives of this current political issue in their host country. Cooperative groups researched the viewpoints of Chinese citizens, dam engineers, environmentalists and government officials. Elaine was cautious not to simplify the Three Gorges Dam controversial issues; she modeled for her students through this host country research that any issue has multiple viewpoints and consequences. With each viewpoint there were positive and negative effects, but she didn't turn the inquiry into a debate. The emphasis was on delving into the complexity of any perspective involved.

Reflective Explorer

Elaine didn't shy away from the endeavor to incorporate multiple viewpoints in her classroom but excitedly took it on as an opportunity to learn and explore along the way. The metaphor of Elaine as an explorer emerged from how she positioned herself in the travel stories she told, including the one where she explained how a confidence has grown within her from being able to navigate the world and the connection she sees with

her classroom teaching. Through triangulating her personal stories with fieldnotes and discussions about teaching philosophies, Elaine approached being culturally responsive much like an explorer, investigating the back alleys around the different cultural perspectives in her classroom. She was intrigued as she maneuvered around and learned new insights. Many of her insights came as she reconsidered what had happened in her classroom and how she might change her responses, pedagogy and curriculum. Differing cultural perspectives in Elaine's classroom were interconnected. As demonstrated in the stories Elaine told, cultural perspectives were a source for reflection and contemplation for change.

Data analysis showed that Elaine talked a great deal about her role as an American and was cautious about imposing any particular perspective on her students. At the same time she made great efforts to be respectful of the host country. She modeled not valuing one particular country's governmental and political systems, but emphasized understanding the complexities of any society. There was an overlap between her and the school's American cultural perspectives, the students' home cultures, the host country and the students' identities as third culture kids. I created a visual diagram of this overlap in Figure 4.2. Based on the data, a balance of incorporating the different cultural perspectives existed in her classroom. For example, when the students read and discussed *In the Year of Impossible Goodbyes*, students brought their home cultural perspective as they responded to the literature. At the same time the class discussed China's (the host country) political relationship with other Asian countries. Elaine created this balance in the context of an American curriculum. As third culture kids, the students considered different perspectives and Elaine didn't expect them to conclude or claim any as their own.

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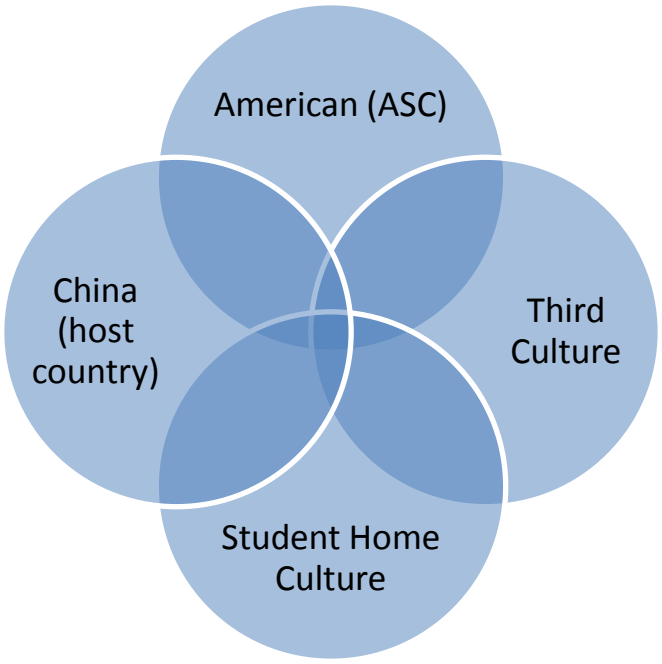

Figure 4.2 Intersection of Cultural Perspectives in Elaine's Classroom

As a cultural agent, Elaine constantly explored other perspectives, building on her own knowledge and reflecting on her point of view. Her reflections and questions about her teaching flowed through her own experiences in learning, based on the foundation of working and living overseas. She also took action by ensuring different perspectives were valued in her own teaching practices. One avenue she used was an inquiry-based curriculum. In her literacy workshops the students brought their personal perspectives into discussions. Elaine was comfortable seeking out opportunities for herself and her students to learn new perspectives and from one another. She noted that she has changed both personally and professionally from living and working in China for the past 10 years. Elaine explained,

> I don't think I was as much of a learner when I was in the states. I mean I thought I was, but here I am always in the role of my students. I have many more opportunities to be in the role of my students. I am out there, I have limited language, I am a little more in tune with my cognitive abilities…and the limitations. And I can articulate that a little bit more clearly because I am in that

> learning mode, and I think that I am much more open to, there are many ways to do things. I think you're much more aware of differences. It's not that I was intolerant; I just didn't know they were out there.
>
> Elaine, Transcript, December 11, 2009

Conclusion

In this chapter, I shared some of Richard's and Elaine's stories. Through their stories I came to understand how their personal and professional experiences impacted how they address the cultural diversity in their classrooms. Questions were evident in both teachers' stories. Richard and Elaine had different approaches to being cultural agents, representatives of their American cultural perspective, while living and working abroad. Richard took on the role of a diplomat, hosting others to his cultural framework and making certain they were comfortable to share their own. He questioned how he was representing his knowledge of his cultural background. Elaine took on the persona of an explorer, seeking many different perspectives while hesitant to impose her own. She questioned how her role as a cultural agent may impact her students' viewpoint of the host country or their own cultural backgrounds.

Returning to Villegas and Lucas's (2002) pillars for culturally responsive teaching, both Richard and Elaine showed in their stories a sociocultural consciousness in their own lives. Whether negotiating a peaceful solution to classroom puppy love or reflecting on how teaching American governmental history is potentially problematic while living in China, Richard and Elaine were conscious of their own cultural viewpoints and how that can be perceived by others. Additionally they exhibited another pillar, familiarity with students' prior experiences and viewing differences as strengths. Both Richard and Elaine invited their students to share their expertise from their experiences, family histories, cultural knowledge and perspectives. In research assignments, discussions about current events, history or literature, Richard and Elaine offered opportunities for students to put their funds of knowledge into their daily classroom activities. Both teachers recognized that the funds of knowledge the students brought into the classroom relied on the lived experiences of the students.

While other teachers may call upon students to be cultural agents for their parents' home countries, the students at ASC are third culture kids. Richard and Elaine both offered opportunities for their students to explore and learn about where they call home, and what "where are you from" means to them. Likewise, as shown through their stories, Richard and Elaine wrestled with their own cultural agent roles.

CHAPTER FIVE
KATE: THE TRANSLATOR AND NEGOTIATOR

> The hardest thing for me is that I will never fit in. You are in a culture that you love, living in a place that you want to live and you are married to someone from there, so you are part of the family, but you will always stick out like a sore thumb, because the population all looks alike. All the black hair, brown eyes. And here's this tall pale red head, living here. So I have assimilated, I guess. I don't have a problem living in the culture. The culture itself will never accept me. I will never be accepted 100%, only because I look like a foreigner, you know?
>
> Kate, Transcript, November 2, 2009

When Will I Stop Being a Lao-Wei?

Straddling different worlds, Kate explained the cultural nuances she encounters as a cultural agent by choosing to make China her permanent home. Kate complicated the picture of international teachers at the American School of China (ASC). She is a Canadian, and did not come to China to specifically work for the school. As explained earlier, Kate has lived in China under different professional umbrellas. She was a student at a major university studying the language and culture. She completed her degree in Canada, then Kate returned to China as an intern at a Canadian consulate. Her job included representing Canada at social events. She also translated and transcribed documents as well as assisted Canadian citizens with their needs working in China. In 2001, she began working at ASC. Married to Li Wei, they bought an apartment and are renovating a house. Kate has made China her home. Her daily life included working out at the gym (Curves), going to book club meetings with friends and watching movies with her husband. Like her colleagues, Kate has many stories of her life in China. However, she is in a unique position as an international teacher. She has strong personal ties to the host country. Her prior experiences and knowledge led her to deconstruct cultural misunderstandings that occurred at the individual level. She articulated how she experienced tensions based on the broader scope of different cultural approaches. It is this complexity that led me to delve more in deeply with Kate and her stories. In this chapter I

share stories Kate told me about misunderstandings she had with restaurateurs and her queries about the interactions she sees between Chinese children and their parents on their way to school. She related these stories to observations of her students' behaviors. Kate also told stories of how she sought to dilute misunderstandings that could occur between the school and parents. Whether Kate had concerns about holiday celebrations, school policies or Chinese language classes, she straddled multiple worlds much like she does walking down the street in China.

As a woman in Asia, the fixed identities of Caucasian, tall, red-headed follow Kate in every setting: school, grocery store, family gathering. In fact, she wrote a paper as a student while living in China called, *When Will I Stop being a Lao-Wei?*[outsider]. In her writings she wondered if she married a Chinese man and lived in China the rest of her life, when she would stop being a foreigner. She wrote this over 10 years ago eerily foreshadowing her current life living and working in China.

Cultural Agent Kate: Translator and Negotiator

> One of the things that I have learned about myself, the more that I teach and I watch my students, is that I have a lot of the same issues that my students have.
>
> Kate, Transcript, November 2, 2009

Kate sees the parallels between the negotiations her students make straddling different cultural worlds and her own experiences. Kate's desire to make China her home does not negate the tensions she can experience about feeling like an outsider. She has negotiated this for herself for many years. In the stories she told, Kate didn't question how she answered questions about her home culture like Richard or how she was a viewed by others as a North American cultural agent like Elaine. Instead, Kate's background knowledge from her Chinese studies programs as well as her personal life led her to question why miscommunications happen between people of different cultural backgrounds. She emphasized that it was often not because of language challenges but due to broader cultural perspectives.

Personal and Professional Stories

In the midst of a discussion how reasoning can differ based on cultural frameworks, Kate told a story of how this difference manifested in a seemingly simple experience of trying to order a vegetarian dish in a local Chinese restaurant. She discovered there seemed to be another form of reasoning that occurred that involved sharing information between her as customer and the restaurateur. Kate and I were having a discussion about how narrative styles may differ as a genre across time and cultures. Kate emphasized that the sequence of storytelling remains similar, but underlying this assumed sequence the links between events differ than what she expected from her North American perspective. As an example to explain her point, Kate told a story about going to a restaurant after her first move to China. After explaining that she was a vegetarian, she ordered fried rice. She was surprised to have the dish served to her with ham. Kate expected the restaurateur to warn her against ordering a dish with meat. She found this lack of connection between her needs as a customer and the response of the local restaurateur baffling.

> I guess the style could be different, but the sequencing, still has to happen in logical sequence. Mind you, saying that, they follow a difference sense of logic than us. Like their connections are different. This is purely an observational thing, it is not founded in anything, but … It is just something I have noticed over the years … So for example, I am a vegetarian. And when I first came to China, I would go to restaurants and I would say, "Does this have meat in it?" And they would say, "yes." And I would say, "Oh, ok, I can't eat that because I am a vegetarian. I want something that doesn't have meat in it." And I would say, "I am going to have this, and this fried rice." Because the fried rice on the menu said it had egg and onions. Well, the fried rice comes with ham. But I didn't know that … But they brought me the fried rice. But I just finished saying, "I don't eat

> meat,"… Logically they would say, "There is meat in that rice, you can't eat that." They don't. It is [as if] they are missing that next step that is just odd to me.
>
> Kate, Transcript, November 2, 2009

Kate recognized she used anecdotal evidence to understand broader cultural ways of thinking. When telling stories, Kate often shared her understanding of Chinese cultural patterns but emphasized her insights are not necessarily based on research. In short, her knowledge is based on experience. In this story, Kate was confounded why the local Chinese man taking her order didn't give her information warning her that she ordered a dish with meat when she had just explained that she was a vegetarian. From her point of view, it seemed like it would be the logical thing to do. She took that misunderstanding in stride and recognized we make assumptions based on our cultural viewpoint. Kate reflected on these disconnects; she may not have understood the behavior, but she accepted it as different way of thinking.

Questioning for Kate tended to be less personal about her own role, and more focused on broader cultural practices each person brings to the table. Kate also viewed herself as a learner, and sought out ways to understand more about her students' perspectives. With her strength of knowledge of the host culture and practices, she recognized that cultural perspective impacts a child's daily life at ASC from the moment they walk into the classroom. When I asked about tensions with students being from a different cultural background than the school, Kate explained she observed this more in children's social interactions.

In October, I observed the start of the school day. As the first graders walked in the door, Kate and her assistant, Ms. Tina, expected the students to organize for the day. The students greeted the teachers as they walked in and headed straight to the back of the room. Each child put their bags and coat away, took out a lunch and put it in the class lunch basket, took out a take home folder, homework, and parent-teacher communication

book and put each in the proper basket. Then the students each got their morning message book and started to write. The morning message book was a daily private written conversation between each child and Kate. If a child mistakenly laid a piece of paper on a counter and it didn't quite make it into the proper basket, Tina, the classroom assistant asked the child to come back to do their part for the classroom to run smoothly. Both Kate and Tina agreed that the students need to take care of their own items. Expectations for first grade students to independently organize themselves are familiar to many North American teachers. However, the families of many of the students at ASC have full time *ayis*. Ayis are most often local Chinese women hired to help with cleaning, cooking and taking care of the children. The expectations for children to be self-sufficient in the school environment differed greatly from the perspective of the ayis' understanding of their job as a child's caretaker. Kate explained:

> You see it when they first come in the morning. They don't have their independence because ayi does everything for them at home. And I talked to Li Wei once, because I see the grandmas and the grandpas from our compound that are taking their grandkids to school. And they are like 7, 8, 9 years old. And Grandma or Grandpa are carrying this big school pack and the kids aren't carrying anything, or they are on the bike and being pedaled by Grandma, you know.
>
> And I said to Li Wei, "This is ridiculous, they are big enough to carry their own bags and bike themselves to school. The school is just around the corner, you know."
>
> And he'll say, "Yes but for Chinese parents they feel that it is their job to do for their kids while they can. You know so they can be successful, so they can succeed in school, they will do a lot for them in those respects but when their older, they will take care of their parents." He says, "They learn all the skills that you are telling me that they don't come in with in grade one. They'll get them all,

> just because someone does it for them, doesn't mean they can't do them, it doesn't mean that they haven't learned it." But he said they don't have to use them as early because someone does it for them.
>
> And I said, "Why don't just they just let them carry their own school bag?", because that is one of the first things I teach my students. "You know, ayi shouldn't be carrying your school bag in for you. You should have your school bag on your back."
>
> But as soon as ayi shows up they go "Here you go", and I say, "No, carry your own school bag!"
>
> Kate, Transcript, November 2, 2009

In Kate's story, she explained her frustration with some student behaviors she observed in the Chinese neighborhood where she lives and asked questions about the reasoning behind what she observed. The kids in her apartment complex don't carry their own bags or bike themselves to school, their family members do it for them. The children coming into the classroom have an ayi, or housekeeper packing their bags, cleaning up after them, carrying their books for them. Why are the children (from the host country and ASC students) seemingly not doing things for themselves? Why does this carry into her first grade classroom at ASC? She sought out answers to the questions she had about these cultural differences. While she began to understand them, she also confronted the differences directly. She articulated to her students that expectations in her classroom are different than at home. At ASC, Kate expected them to be responsible for their own work, their own bag, and to clean up after themselves. Keep in mind the students are not necessarily Chinese, but their ayis are. The ayis are trying to do their job the best they know how, according to their cultural expectations of how to take a child to school. In the classroom morning ritual, the students and Kate are straddling cultural expectations from North America, China and the students' home cultures.

Kate and I discussed the tensions she has as a Canadian teacher working at an American school with students from diverse cultural backgrounds. As an example, Kate talked about the upcoming American Thanksgiving holiday celebrations for her first graders. Kate is one of six first grade classroom teachers. The teaching team planned the grade level holiday celebrations together. It is important to note that in the school year I visited, the school was closed half a day on Thursday, Thanksgiving Day and on the following Friday. It is also perhaps helpful to know Canadians also celebrate Thanksgiving, traditionally held the second Monday of October.

> Thanksgiving is um, Thanksgiving used to be, a huge big snack in the hallway, you know where my classroom is. The whole hallway is a long sheet of butcher paper and all of the kids come in pilgrim and Native American costumes. And they have placemats that they have all made and popcorn they have all made and we have a big snack. I don't mind that. I really like that. Its community. For me that's the thing. The parents love it too. They come, and we videotape and we put it on our blogs and we have a great time.
>
> But I didn't like the whole pilgrim/Native American costume thing. Part of it was because, well, it's not **my** Thanksgiving, it's not how **we** do Thanksgiving. Uhm, and I just like to and obviously you want to give them the background of Thanksgiving. But Thanksgiving is celebrated in different places [and is] not just an American holiday. And I think it is important for them to understand that we celebrate it in different ways and for different reasons in different countries. Not just for that reason and not just that history of it. So I think that the important thing about Thanksgiving is not the costumes but the idea that you are thankful for what you have.
>
> So last year I convinced the team that people who wanted to make the costumes could, but people who didn't could make headbands on which their children would write, I am thankful for _____ and then they would fill, write their

> headband, finish that sentence, and then when you would look around you would see headbands, oh I am thankful for my mom and dad, I am thankful for ASC, as opposed to feathers sticking out of costumes made by the teachers, because the kids can't make the costumes and so the teachers made the fancy hats made for the pilgrims and stuff. I didn't see the point. But I love the community part of it, and I love the thankful part of it, but I didn't like the whole costume part of it, so I convinced them to do one way or the other.
>
> Kate, Transcript, November 2, 2009

Kate started off describing the scene of the celebration from previous years at ASC. She recalled 90 six-year olds sitting in a hallway with an imagined table made out of a large sheet of butcher paper. The energy of the scene was set. Students were excited, food was laid out for all to enjoy, parents came to school to participate and all joined in on the community atmosphere. However, she also negotiated several tensions she had with hosting what Americans may imagine as a "traditional American school Thanksgiving" scene. Her personal experience growing up and teaching in Canada did not relate to what was happening at the school. She connected this to her students' perspective, noting that for both her and her students the meaning behind the holiday wasn't about marking an American historical event. Thanksgiving, from Kate's point of view, was more of a broad human experience, reflecting on what you appreciate about your life. She added the amount of work that went into making "costumes" for the kids to wear didn't support the purpose behind the holiday celebration as she viewed it.

As Kate told the story, she described actions as an advocate for change, talking to her colleagues, offering up options and ideas to shift the grade level celebration to a broader cultural experience for all. Photos and a video on her classroom website the first week of December were evidence of kids wearing "I am thankful for ___" headbands. Parents smiled broadly in the background. Plates with popcorn sat in front of students and

teachers led everyone in songs. No feathers. No pilgrim hats. She negotiated change that fit for her and her students.

Culturally responsive teaching in Kate's classroom

A string of Canadian flags hung over the double doors that opened into Kate's first grade classroom. On the doors, two laminated posters that welcomed the students celebrated the diversity of the classroom. One stated, "The greatest natural resource that any country can have is its children" and the other used the word diversity as an acronym: "Different Individuals Valuing Each other Regardless of Skin color, Intellect, Talent or Years." A children's picture book, *Peaceful Piggy Meditation* by Kerry Lee MacLean sat on the whiteboard marker tray at the front of the classroom. A set of Tibetan cymbals were also in the front of the room, ready to be used as signal to the first graders that they needed to stop whatever they were doing and look to Kate for directions. She brought in these pieces of herself. Her Buddhist philosophy and Asian artifacts were not just for display but Kate integrated them into the daily classroom rhythm.

Kate's cultural responsiveness included inviting students to bring their funds of knowledge from home into the room, usually under the umbrella of class inquiry units. Kate described her method as a project approach. She explained that she doesn't map out the unit, but instead she plans the first third. For example, during a food unit, Kate started with activating the students' prior knowledge by asking students what they already knew about food (KWL) and built webs of their knowledge. She helped them make categories of their known knowledge (ie: carrots are from the ground, apples are from trees were in the category 'where food comes from'). She had students discuss and write about memories of foods, flavors and family events that included food. Then she initiated the wonder aspect, collecting students' questions about food, what they really wondered about. Then students chose which question they wanted to research, with Kate helping students to organize into groups. When I was there a few questions the children

researched were: Where does sugar come from? Where did the first seeds come from? Does meat make us healthy? Kate explained the next step, “From there the groups are responsible for planning their research, and how they are going to find out the information, and who they need to talk to and what I can do to help them.” She asked the computer teacher and librarian to assist her students in their research. Kate also invited parents to come in and share their family’s favorite recipes. Parents are an integral part of Kate’s classroom programs. They came in regularly not only for school holiday celebrations, but also to read books aloud and share their home traditions and family life. Kate explained that through her project approach, students can investigate queries that matter most to them. Kate gave an example of a student’s inquiry from a previous class.

> One year I had a vegetarian, and she wanted to know, why are people vegetarians? Why are people omnivores instead of vegetarians? So she ran around the school and polled people, “What are you? An omnivore or a vegetarian? Why?” She got a whole list of answers!
>
> Kate, Transcript, November 2, 2009

After they had enough information, the students needed to decide how they wanted to present what they learned. Choices varied including posters, powerpoint, slide shows, puppet shows, mobile etc. In her food unit, Kate valued students’ prior knowledge and home experiences, then supported them to investigate queries that they were most passionate about.

Each year for Chinese New Year, Kate challenges herself to continually make adjustments that can further integrate the students’ experiences across their home lives and the local holiday celebration. She is also conscious that many of the activities that occur in the school come from Western teaching sources. She explained in an interview that she had already contacted the Chinese teachers in the school to integrate the subjects a bit more for the holiday celebrations. For example, getting copies of the poems the students were learning in Chinese and translating them into English. She recalled how she

had done this for the Moon Festival earlier in the fall. Kate also made efforts to integrate students' family dumpling recipes in an attempt to integrate more Chinese traditional customs into her classroom by hosting a dumpling party. She explained, "The families all come in and have enough wrappers for 4 or 5 kids and enough fillings for 4 or 5 kids. And so everyone brings in their own family recipe for dumplings, so everyone gets to try different things."

Kate can read and write Chinese and has used it to evaluate a few of her students over the years to try to determine if academic concerns or issues are based on language or on their thinking. For example, Kate had a child who seemingly struggled to write and tell a story with a sequence of events. She asked him to tell a story in his home language, Mandarin Chinese, and he seemed to struggle there as well. This allowed her to eliminate his developing English as attributing to her concerns.

Beyond the integration of cultural diversity in her classroom curriculum, Kate told stories of questioning, reflecting upon and then acting on cultural misunderstandings with school policies. Her advocacy centered on her role as a first grade classroom teacher. It was in her action that her agency as a cultural translator helped bridge cultural tensions that were bound to arise when the school established policies that prioritized one cultural viewpoint of family or language over another. For example, Kate explained how the school implemented a policy for parents to follow if they were both out of town. She recognized why the school would have a policy for parents to complete paperwork when traveling. But Kate also understood the unintended message the policy may send to some of her students' families.

> K: But I think that there are some teachers, and administrators included, come in, if they have worked in Asia before it is not as huge, but there have been some policies they have had in the past that I completely disagreed with that absolutely were coming from a North American standpoint. They have what is considered acceptable practices for child care. For example, let's say I have a parent who

travels and has an ayi and a grandparent at home. And a lot of the Chinese culture and the Philippines too, a lot of the Filipinos have been with their grandparents all their life, like Tina who has been working overseas…So it is an acceptable practice, as long as the child is being cared for and is with somebody, it's ok. Right? You know as long as everything that needs to get done is getting done. But you know, they put a policy in place a few years ago, that was, one parent had to always be here.

L: They did?

K: Yeah, and if not, they had to fill out a form, a permission for temporary guardianship. And it had to be a relative. So that meant if the child was going to be here and the parents were going out of town, they had to fill out this form stating who in the family was responsible for that child while they were away, where they were going and how long they were going to be gone and stuff like that. Well, you know, our parents are business people and they travel so much. There is no way they are always going to do that, and I just thought it was culturally insensitive to assume that because the parents weren't there the children weren't being cared for. If you've seen the ayis at our school, they take care of the children better than they take care of themselves or their own children. These children are not just their job. So, excuse me, I just thought it was a stupid policy, because I understand their point, of the North American standpoint of worrying about neglect and that kind of thing,

L: Or legality maybe.

K: Or legality maybe, but here its not an issue,

L: Ah.

K: As long as the child is in the home and someone is there caring for them. You know so they put this policy into effect, but I didn't enforce it. Parents would email and say, "We are going to be gone for a week." And I'd say, "Fine, can you

> make certain I have the number of the person taking care of the child?" But that was it. I wouldn't ask them to fill out the form. I have kids whose parents are away every second week.
>
> Kate, Transcript, November 2, 2009

Kate stepped in between the administration policies of the school, who she viewed as coming from a North American cultural viewpoint. (All administrators of the school for the past 10 years have been North American or Australian.) She understood the reasoning behind their decision to expect parents to complete a form if they both found themselves out of town at the same time. She framed the school perspective as needing information to know who was responsible and ASC expected a relative to be in the home to take care of the children in their absence. At the same time, she viewed the policy from the perspective of the parents, bringing forth the assumptions the school was making about the parents and their home lives by instituting such a policy. The inherent message was that the parents weren't capable of choosing who would be the best person to take care of their child while out of town and that the school did not view their ayi (or their person of choice) as a reliable and trustworthy adult. Furthermore, the policy underscored the school's position as unrealistic about the community they serve; the families are expatriates themselves. Most do not have their extended family living with them in China.

Instead of implementing the policy, Kate inserted herself between the school and the parents, negotiating between the different viewpoints about home responsibilities regarding child care. Keep in mind, the families don't leave the children home alone. They are often in the care of their ayi, a woman who often lives with the family for many years. Kate was also in a unique position to be most comfortable with this type of arrangement because she could communicate with the ayi, since she is fluent in Mandarin. An interesting aside, notice that from my American perspective, I assumed it

was an issue of legality. But Kate was quick to correct me that that viewpoint wasn't applicable there. However, Kate recognized the school's bias and understood it, but did not want to be the agent imparting it onto the families in her classroom. Instead, she quietly negotiated her own agreement with the parents in her class, knowing that while this was a unique situation that may not impact every child, some parents travelled on a regular basis and it was just a way of life. Kate recognized that because of her fluency in Chinese, she could communicate with the family's ayi. So if a parent is out of town, Kate can easily talk with the caretaker at home.

Kate also was an advocate for the Chinese language staff. Her knowledge of the Chinese language allowed her to broker between different perspectives of language learning at ASC. First graders attend Chinese language class for 40 minutes every other day or they attend ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) if needed. From 12:40-1:20 every other day, all first grade students (approximately 90 children) disperse into different Chinese classes or ESOL classes. For example a native English speaker attends Chinese language class. A Korean student new to ASC and in the early stages of learning English likely attends ESOL classes. The school assesses each student's language needs at the beginning of the year or when they start school. On average, out of a class of 16 first grade students, 5 students attend ESOL. The rest of the students attend Chinese class leveled according to ability: beginning speakers, native speakers, reading-writing fluency etc. In these classes, the students focus on reading, speaking and writing Chinese. They learn both Chinese characters and pinyin. Pinyin is a form of written Chinese using Roman letters.

Kate told me a story about a tension that arose at the school when some teachers and parents voiced concerns about the first graders learning different sounds for letters based on the language they were studying.

> One of the problems is that Chinese pronunciation isn't the same as English for a lot of the well [letters], especially vowels. And sometimes we run

> into problems in that in grade one we are trying to teach them that o-n-g, is ong like song, but in Chinese they are teaching them o-n-g is ōng (long 0) like sōng. It is pronounced differently. And so there was this debate for quite a while. And they actually had the Chinese teachers stop teaching pin-yin in grade one. And I just thought, a couple years ago they asked us to revisit that. And I was a new teacher at the time, I just thought, and so I was like, I can understand the reasoning for it, but I just thought, wow that is like asking me not to teach them phonics. Isn't it? That doesn't make sense. It's like how can you ask them to not teach a huge part of their curriculum because it is inconvenient for you? … We can't eliminate a whole pronunciation part of it because it's not convenient for us. The children are smart enough to know it is this way in Chinese class and this way in English. You will have ones that will have difficulties but they are probably having difficulty with other things. And they probably are going to be going to ESOL and not to Chinese class if they are having difficulties with those things. So we had a talk about it and we revisited it and said, "We think you should be teaching pinyin." …And there've been a couple parents that go, "You know it's hard because" and we go, "yeah, we know it's hard." But the fact is, they have to know that hao is pronounced 'how' and it is written h-a-o. They need to know that.
>
> Kate, Transcript, December 10, 2009

In this story, Kate positioned herself as feeling a bit uncomfortable being thrown into the school debate when she was just beginning to teach first grade at ASC. But this discomfort did not deter her from taking a stance based on her personal and professional knowledge. She knows how people learn language and she knows the nuances of the Chinese and English languages. Kate recognized how some parents and teachers saw the potential for confusion of different language letter sound correlations for young children.

However, she named the students as capable. She viewed their multiple language experiences as an asset, and not an area of concern. As noted in Villegas and Lucas (2002), a pillar for culturally responsive teachers is for them to view diversity from a strength perspective. Kate also acknowledged her students are capable of code switching, or activating "two languages at the same time" (Fu, 2009). Perhaps it is because she can do this herself. One unclear aspect of the story is whether the Chinese language teachers participated in discussions if they should/want to teach pinyin in their classes. Knowing the school, I suspect that it was a collection of meetings with the Chinese language teachers, first grade teachers and perhaps the ESOL teachers. In the story, Kate put herself in the position of advocate for the Chinese language teachers when parents came to question the pinyin aspect of the curriculum.

Kate not only "translates" by negotiating on behalf of the teachers, students and their families within the school, but she is also active in promoting opportunities to learn about the local community outside the gated walls of ASC. Early in the fall, the first grade teachers took their students on a field trip into the local neighborhood park. When I visited this park, the walking paths were busy with older Chinese adults, jogging, walking, or stretching. Like almost every local neighborhood across the country, there were also groups of people doing tai-chi. As I explained earlier, many of the children who attend this school live in gated expatriate communities. Kate wanted to expand their view of community beyond the compound living, beyond ASC's walls and into the local Chinse neighborhood that the school is located.

This last example of local community connections and outreach may initially seem to not be responsive to the cultures of the students in the classroom. After all, these are children who are not necessarily from China, but from a variety of countries and cultures, including being ethnically Chinese. To these 6 and 7 year old third culture kids, this is their home. If you ask them where they are from, they may answer like Sandy, "I am from Seattle but now I live in China." Kate promoted opportunities for her students to

experience and draw new understandings about the community where they live through something as seemingly simple as a walk to the neighborhood park. Kate lived in an apartment in the local community near the park with her husband. She extended her own personal experiences with China to her students.

She also invited her students to look beyond their school life and see how living in China is different for other children in the community. Kate wanted the students to have concrete experiences with Chinese children. So, she and the other first grade teachers began a 'needs and wants' unit and with it constructed a community service piece. Through the PTA, she connected with a private businessman who funded a couple of migrant schools for children. Due to government restrictions, the migrant children were not eligible to attend local schools. The first grade teachers created a fundraising project for the students. The concept was simple; the ASC students earned money by doing jobs or chores at home. The children brought in their earnings and the teachers used the money to buy school supplies. The teachers paired the students from both schools together during a visit the ASC students took to the migrant school. Kate explained she felt it was a good experience for the ASC students. She wanted them to see a first grade classroom with 50-60 kids, rows and rows of desks, no heat, and windows left open to keep air circulating. She felt it was important for the ASC students to see the difference between their private well funded school and this school in China set up through a charity. She stated, "It was good for our kids to see, but I don't know if it would be good for them [the migrant school children] to see the difference. So we never brought them here." (Transcript, December 10, 2009)

Kate was mindful of how visiting ASC could be a negative experience from the perspective of the local Chinese children. She didn't quite see the benefit of offering them the opportunity to tour a school that they would never be able to attend and to see the wealth of ASC. She thought part of her role was to make certain her ASC students understood that they were coming from a place of economic privilege and that they could

learn more about the nuances of the country and culture where they were guests. Kate's goal wasn't an equal exchange, but for her students to be learners through experience.

Translator and Negotiator

As a Canadian woman who made China her home, Kate became a "cultural broker" for her students and interested colleagues for the host country. In the stories she authored she was conscious and explicit about the duality of her perspective. Two metaphorical roles emerged for Kate as a cultural agent in her personal and professional stories. Fieldnotes and informal discussions confirmed Kate fulfilled these roles for her students, families, colleagues and friends in multiple settings. She translated between two languages, English and Chinese, and actively translated culturally based actions by reflecting on behaviors that confused her and deconstructing them through a cultural lens. Kate also negotiated between different cultural perspectives. Parents, administration and students not only understood the translations but Kate created changes that considered different cultural perspectives for her students and others at ASC.

As I reviewed the data, I realized the different cultural frameworks overlapped in Kate's classroom curriculum, pedagogy and resources more than in Elaine's and Richard's classrooms. In our discussions and in her stories Kate explicitly and repeatedly addressed the different cultural considerations she balanced. She supported parents who needed assistance adjusting to school policies that didn't fit their cultural framework. Her story about having students recognize that they took care of their own backpacks and homework without their ayis, is just one example of how Kate was explicit in discussing with her students distinct expectations for responsibility and independence in an American school setting that may differ from their own cultural backgrounds. Kate questioned what she observed (student behavior, school policy, curriculum projects) and created opportunities for her students and their families to bring in their perspectives. For example she had students incorporate lived experiences in classroom units of inquiry like

about food. She didn't ask them to represent a particular national dish, but the students discussed with their families what they felt they wanted to share. Additionally, she initiated cross cultural experiences for her students to interact within the local community and the local Chinese people's daily routines. In Kate's classroom, the 4 cultural frameworks overlapped in field trips, writing workshop, reading responses, parent-school policies, her food inquiry unit and even a grade one Thanksgiving celebration. This overlapping is shown in Figure 5.1.

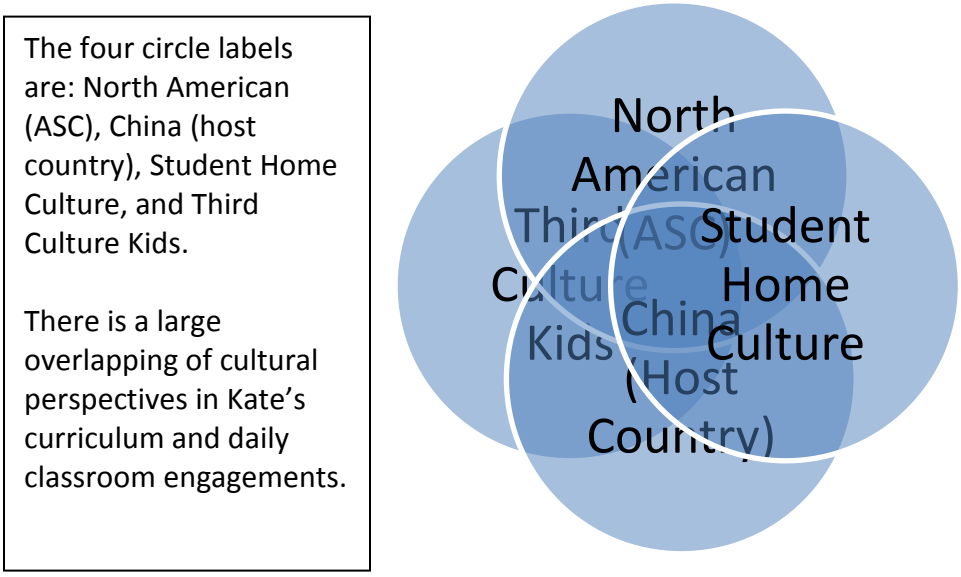

Figure 5.1 Intersection of Cultural Perspectives in Kate's Classroom

Like a cultural code switcher, Kate constantly shifted her viewpoint, from her own North American lens to the lens of the local community and then to the lens of the families at the school. She translated not only language but behaviors that could be misunderstood. For example, for several years Kate had taken her first grade classes to visit the migrant school. However, last year when the secretary called to schedule the

visit the headmaster asked ASC students not to return. He was fine with the donations, but didn't want the visits anymore. Initially from ASC's point of view, this was not only disappointing but frustrating considering the amount of time and energy spent to build the connection to the local community. The visit to the migrant was an essential piece for Kate's goals for students to develop further understanding of the host country. Kate investigated and discovered the ASC visits required following particular and extensive government regulations. He was also required to organize government officials to be in attendance for every ASC visit. This was adding more pressure and work for the already overwhelmed headmaster. While Kate found herself perplexed by different ways of thinking like ordering dinner or the conflict with the migrant school headmaster, she did not judge the difference negatively, but sought to understand it.

Experiences when Kate was a cultural code-switcher overlapped for Kate in her personal and professional life. This is true for her students as well. When we talked about how living overseas has changed her teaching approach Kate explained, "I think it has broadened my, kind of broadened what I see as potential teaching topics or teaching moments. There are a lot more of what comes from what is going on around me. I draw on what's around me more, because I have so much more that I can kind of incorporate into what I do" (Transcript, December 10, 2009). Kate's awareness of the different cultural frameworks within her classroom drew her to make changes to respond to the needs of her students, curriculum and the families she serves.

Conclusion

Well, I'm still, from Montreal. Because I was there until I was 28, 29. I didn't pack up and move until I was 30. But when you ask me where is home, it's [China]. I remember the first time I said it in front of my mother she almost lost her mind. I had already been here for two or three years. And I was already living with [Li Wei] and we had already bought an apartment. And [while I was visiting Canada] someone said to me, "When is your flight?"
And I said, "Well I am heading home…"
And my mother is like, "THIS is home! You are going *back* to [China]…
So this is home, and that's where I'm from. I am what I am.

Kate, Transcript, November 2, 2009

Kate has been our guide throughout this chapter, as she shared her perspective of negotiating her role as a cultural agent for multiple cultural perspectives. For Kate, China is home and Canada is where she is from. Kate is an agent for her new home country, China, as she is able to translate cultural practices to her western colleagues and families. Kate also translates the western cultural practices of the school to the Asian families in her class, negotiating in areas that may otherwise lead to misunderstandings. Given her physical features, she recognizes she will always be negotiating tensions in her cultural agent role.

In her stories, Kate explained how she is conscious of her own sociocultural perspective. As she ordered a vegetarian dish, she detailed how her perspective led to assumptions she made about what type of response she expected from the man in the restaurant. With this consciousness of her own cultural perspective, Kate analyzed how her experiences of living in China for many years has led her to understand broader cultural ways of thinking. In her classroom and in her role as a staff member, she negotiated opportunities for her students to share their funds of knowledge and she views these differences as strengths. Whether it is in learning another language, celebrating a holiday or cooking a meal, Kate enacted opportunities for students to bring forth their own perspectives instead of adopting an American one built from the school curriculum. Furthermore, in several of her stories, Kate showed how she advocated for opportunities

for her students to interact with the culture and daily activities of the Chinese people. At ASC, Kate put a priority on being responsive not just to the students' home cultures, but to the culture of the host country, China.

CHAPTER SIX
FROM CULTURAL AGENT TO CULTURAL AGENCY

> On the day I saw Elaine for the first time in 6 years we quickly starting chatting about when we both worked together years ago overseas. She mentioned, "One of my favorite stories I like to tell is when you convinced a taxi driver that you were a better driver than him, and he let you drive his taxi!" I couldn't believe she remembered that story. I had almost forgotten it myself, and it had happened to me!
>
> Researcher's Diary, October 19, 2009

Ten years ago, in my first year in China I took language courses. I left Chinese class feeling quite confident in my ability to communicate and grabbed a taxi home. While the taxi driver was speeding down the highway, I convinced him (in Chinese) I was a very good driver. He told me he had already had his license for one year, and I explained I had my driving license for over 15 years. I was very good with lots of experience. As the highway narrowed to 4 lane road, he pulled over and let me drive the 20 minutes for the rest of the way home. It was absolutely one of the most terrifying driving experiences I have ever had. People wove out into traffic on motorbikes, bicycles, and on foot; trucks blasted their horns, blazing past. I admit I learned my lesson very quickly. Driving in China is not for me.

It is interesting though that Elaine mentioned this story as one she retells. She had been telling one of my stories. Now I find in this study that I am able to listen and share these 3 teachers' stories. Each teacher has had his or her own experiences. Each story is unique to each individual. I learned from their stories. I have focused my attention in this study and in these teachers' stories on insights I can gain about the role culture plays for elementary classroom teachers who live overseas and work in an American school in China.

Whose Story?

First I address the limitations of this research. I consider myself incredibly fortunate these 3 teachers embraced me into their lives and I am honored they were willing to share themselves and their time with me. They told stories of their daily lives, stories of their pasts and hopes for their futures. They also opened their classroom doors, welcomed me as a member of their classroom communities and shared their teaching and students with me. However, any picture of their lives is just a slice of who they are, as educators and as people. I am mindful that several levels of editing occurred in our time together. There were the decisions each participant made to share a particular story or perspective. Additionally there were numerous ways I molded the research: the questions I asked, the data I collected, the observations I made, the choice of which stories to tell and which aspects of the stories I decided to attend to. With each layer there was another opportunity to reframe the focus. Mishler (1995, p.117) states, "we do not *find* stories; we *make* stories." He explains further,

> we retell our respondents' accounts through our analytic redescriptions. We, too, are storytellers and through our concepts and methods-our research strategies, data samples, transcription procedures, specifications of narrative units and structures, and interpretive perspectives-we construct the story and its meaning. In this sense the story is always coauthored, either directly in the process of an interviewer eliciting an account or indirectly through our representing and thus transforming others' texts and discourses. (pp.117-118)

In this study while telling the tales of the participants, I am also engaged in a retelling (Mishler, 1995). Understanding this, I am cautious about making generalizations about elementary teachers or even international teachers. These three educators, while unique and effective in their own way are not necessarily representative of any group. However, through the stories Kate, Elaine and Richard shared we have a unique understanding of their "way of knowing." Or to put it a different way, we gain some insight into how they view themselves and their experiences. In this chapter, I answer the

original research questions for this study. I synthesize data already presented across the three teachers. I then offer implications for educators and schools about attending to diversity in classrooms. I pose questions for consideration for further research and share one more story. A story that incorporates my roles as a teacher, researcher and cultural agent.

What was learned through this study?

Stories of Experiences

In this section, I address the first research question, how do three international teachers' stories of living and working overseas provide insight into their perspectives of culture and the classroom? This question is built upon a conceptual framework that explores a "way of knowing" (Lyons & LaBoskey, 2002) through narrative inquiry. Which narratives we decide to tell and retell and the dynamics of the actual telling of stories plays a role in constructing our identities. Holland et al. (1998) define identity as "the way a person understands and views himself, and is often viewed by others, at least in certain situations" (p. 68). In this study, the narratives were vehicles to extrapolate how the teachers viewed themselves in their experiences living and working overseas. The stories highlighted the role culture played in their lives and their classrooms. Additionally, narratives were also an avenue for the teachers to reflect on their teaching practices and explore queries they had about their professional decisions.

Agency within the construction of identity can be enacted through processes such as internalization or authoring of selves. Vygotsky (1978) described internalization as "the internal reconstruction of an external operation" (p.56). In other words, internalization involves a transformation of adopting and adapting meaning from a social level to an individual level. In Ball's (2000) study, she interpreted that the students used the process of internalization to develop personal voice as emerging teachers through

discussions, reflections and experiences to making changes in their practice. Similarly, Richard, Elaine and Kate enacted human agency in the meaning they made of themselves through dialogue and storytelling between themselves and others. How they authored themselves in the stories they told of their experiences constructed their identities and how they view themselves. Their identities in turn affected instructional practices.

In his stories, I saw Richard placing himself as a diplomat, negotiating different cultural points of view while he sustained a role as a knowledgeable authority. In the classroom he invited the exchange of knowledge with students, encouraging them to share their experiences and cultural histories while he taught the class about American history. In his stories, Richard was confident and knowledgeable in this role. Just as he invited people into his home to share an American feast, he invited his students into American history and American traditions. As a gracious host, he actively made certain everyone was comfortable, gingerly handling tricky negotiations based on broader political conflicts such as an Israel-Palestinian relationship.

In Elaine's stories, her experiences of cross cultural interactions exuded a sense of curiosity and an openness to position herself as a learner while leery of being a cultural representative. Elaine reflected that a confidence grows through landing in a country and being able to independently navigate around. For Elaine, this confidence exhibited itself as she explored new perspectives. From chatting with a man in the Egyptian market and talking about politics to delving into an inquiry project about the Three Gorges her storied experiences show a sense of adventure. What will happen? Who will we meet? What will we learn? Elaine brought her approach to culture outside of the classroom, a comfortable willingness to take risks, into her classroom. Students had opportunities to take those risks, to share themselves and their experiences. They also learned about different cultural practices and experiences. Elaine routinely stated she was still learning, and reflected on what is new for her and how she wanted to learn more.

Kate's perspective of culture was also inquisitive. When she saw a behavior she didn't understand, she sought an answer through viewing the behavior through a culturally based lens. Kate's approach was to learn broader cultural patterns. For example she asked herself how did what I observed out in the local apartment complex in the morning relate to what I saw my students do in the classroom? Why are the students behaving a certain way, how does this conflict with my expectations and how can I address the issue? In her stories, Kate repeatedly recognized that different cultural perspectives could be easily misunderstood. Like the man in the restaurant not warning her about the ham in the fried rice, she labeled a behavior confusing to her as "a different way of thinking." When she noticed a different way of thinking within her classroom she discussed it with her students.

The act of authoring of self in the stories each teacher told revealed a perspective of their life experiences. Bakhtin used the term voice "to describe the role of language in constructing meaning" (Ball, 2000, p. 232). Listening to the stories each teacher decided to tell revealed their perspectives about culture and the international classroom. Their stories were windows to their approaches to overseas cross-cultural experiences. For these 3 teachers, they revealed characteristics of being a diplomat, explorer or negotiator in their stories. How they viewed themselves in their stories of cross cultural experiences was reflected in their approaches to the cultural diversity in their classrooms.

Redefining Cultural Diversity

Building on the stories the 3 teachers told as lenses to their approaches to culture in their classrooms I answer the second question from my research: How do three international classroom teachers approach cultural diversity within an international school setting? In Chapter Four and Chapter Five I described Richard's, Elaine's and Kate's classroom practices responding to the cultural diversity within their classrooms. Following the lead of prominent researchers such as Gay (2000), Villegas and Lucas

(2002), Ladson-Billings (1995) and González et al. (2005) in the field of culturally responsive teaching, I reexamine what cultural diversity looks like in these teachers' international school classrooms. Cultural diversity in this study shifted from focusing on students' home cultural practices to the interaction of different cultural worlds at play at any given time. I argue that for these 3 teachers, we can't define being culturally responsive as mainly responding to the child's home life and experiences. Instead, being culturally responsive is responding to the cultural worlds brought into the classroom through the student, school and teacher.

Holland et al. (1998) use the terms cultural world and figured world interchangeably. I differ here, adapting the term cultural world to identify cultures named through nationalities, ethnicities, and through constructed communities. These cultural worlds are identified from employing Sunstein and Chiseri-Strasser's (2007) definition of culture as "an invisible web of behaviors, patterns, rules and rituals of a group of people who have contact with one another and share common languages" (p.3).

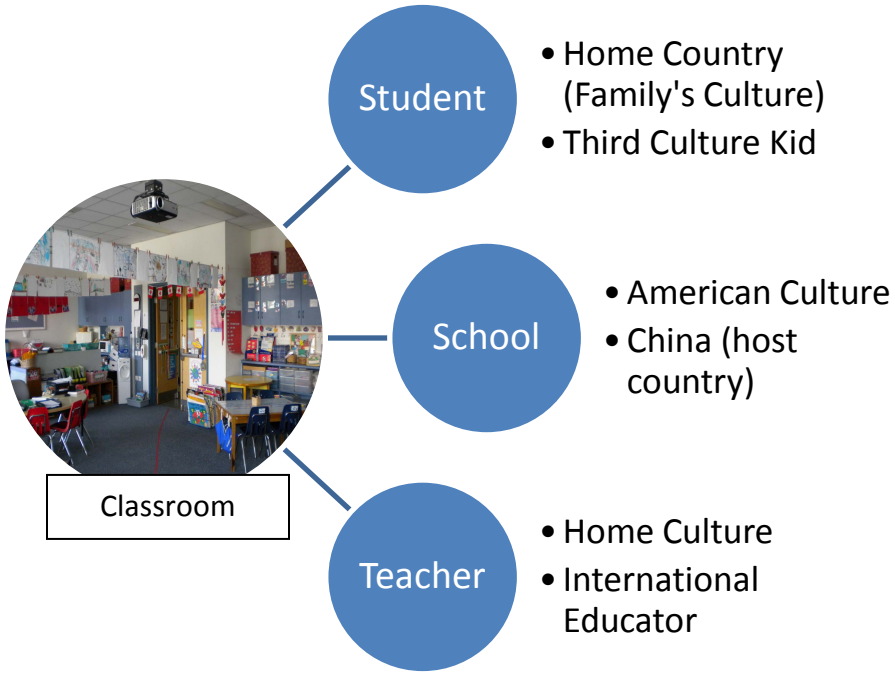

Figure 6.1 Cultural Worlds Interacting

Figure 6.1 illustrates the several cultural worlds of the student, teacher or the school interacting in the figured world of the classroom at any given time. As Luis Moll (2000) explained, “cultural life includes multiple voices” (p.257). Here the cultural lives of the students, teachers and school include multiple voices from different cultural worlds. The cultural worlds are active and interactive, integrating in different ways within each teacher’s classroom. In essence this study redefined cultural diversity as a term from ethnic and national groups to these cultural worlds. The cultural worlds inform and mediate the values and actions within the figured world of the elementary classrooms. A figured world defined by Holland et al. (1998) is “a socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others” (p.52). The students, teachers and school are all particular characters; they informed what

was valued within the classroom, a socially and culturally constructed group. The 3 teachers addressed the cultural worlds found within themselves, the school and their students. Many cultural worlds compile the cultural diversity in these international classrooms. How the teachers integrated and addressed them in their classrooms and curriculum differed dramatically as shown through the figures and discussions in Chapters Four and Five. Next I describe each of these cultural worlds, as they expressed themselves in my study of these 3 teachers at ASC.

Students: The students brought their families' home cultures to these international school classrooms. At ASC, the student body included over 40 different nationalities. This diversity of perspective and experience led to rich storytelling and sharing valued in these classrooms. Students' lives included their families' funds of knowledge, personal experiences, language, and stories. For example, Elaine had a student who wanted to teach the class about her family's celebration of Diwali. The student created a presentation for the class and together they all celebrated the Indian festival of lights. Richard asked his students to bring their knowledge of their history into social studies discussions and to share personal stories in writing workshops. Kate had students share family recipes and traditions in a curricular food unit and school celebrations. She invited everyone to bring their own dumpling recipes during Chinese New Year.

Another form of culture breathing in the classrooms was the culture of students living as expatriates or third culture kids. These are children who have lived a significant portion of their childhood in a country and culture other than their own. They are most comfortable, not necessarily with kids from their own nationality, but with those who have lives similar to their own, such as other expatriates. Understanding the third culture kid cultural world role came into play when Kate advocated for the families, understanding the role of parental travel in international living. Elaine considered the role of third culture kids when she reflected on how to teach about government. She explained that she didn't want to teach one way of American government, but strove to widen the

lens to discuss different ways societies form governments. Richard considered students' third culture kid status when he made curricular decisions based his students' futures. He recognized most of his students will likely study at a college or university in the U.S., regardless of their nationality. He addressed this third culture kid status by preparing them for their future educational endeavors. All three teachers attended to cultural diversity by recognizing their students are global citizens. The teachers encouraged their students to grapple with what living as a third culture kid can mean for their developing identities. Each teacher is conscious of the expectation for students to be representatives of cultures and traditions that they may not have necessarily personally experienced firsthand. A six year old Korean boy who lived 4 years in Singapore before moving to China with his family has his own cultural background far beyond the national label he carries in his passport and where he lives. Richard, Elaine and Kate offered opportunities for the students to explore essential questions such as who they are and where they are from.

School: These teachers have to negotiate, like all teachers, the culture of their school. Cultural worlds can be imagined communities of nationality (Anderson, 2006). It may be a community the student has not personally experienced, like the U.S. For example, there is a cultural world of "American-ness" constructed at ASC. At ASC, there is a heavy emphasis on celebrating traditional American holidays. When I arrived in October, outside the main office cardboard pumpkins hung from the hallway ceiling. When I was leaving in December, a Christmas tree stood tall, with directions for donations. Alongside this "American-ness" was the host country, China. Colorful Chinese umbrellas hung in the hallways next to the bright orange pumpkins. Beside that Christmas tree, a large Chinese screen stood with a painting of the mountainside. Every day for lunch the school offered students a western style meal choice and an Asian style choice of food. For example, chicken nuggets or chicken fried rice? Like the décor and

lunch, ASC was constantly striving to serve two national cultures or cultural worlds at the same time; the American and Chinese.

Both of these cultural threads ran through these three international teachers' classrooms. All three had Christmas trees up in their classrooms in December. All three teachers had artifacts from China in their classrooms as well. Just like in the school as a whole, inside the classroom they incorporated pieces of traditional American culture as well as traditions from China, the host country. While I was not at ASC during February, I know from previous time spent at the school and class websites, that there was a school wide celebration for Chinese New Year. Similarly in October I witnessed busy Halloween classroom parties.

Beyond holiday celebrations and school décor, the elementary school structured the curriculum to highlight these cultures running parallel to one another. Students attended Chinese language class daily in grades 2-5, and every other day in grade 1. However, if a child was in the need of additional support as an English language learner, they attended ESOL classes. In other words, for students' "second language studies" there is a choice: Chinese or English.

Teacher: Each teacher's home cultural background made a large impact in the classroom. As evidenced in the stories told, the teachers' personal experiences, how they view their roles as cultural agents, their languages and traditions, impacted the daily life in their classroom. Kate is a good example of this. As a Canadian "outsider," she is analytical and observational about the strong American cultural overtones throughout the school. When the first grade team decided to have a Thanksgiving celebration, she didn't hesitate to explain that it wasn't *her* Thanksgiving, so she negotiated change for her students. Her fluency in multiple languages, English, Chinese and French brought with it access to students' home lives and learning processes.

The 3 teachers are also members of the cultural world of international education. All 3 told stories of traveling. Each teacher told stories of learning a new language to live

in a new country. Each told stories of being confident as global citizens, successfully navigating a way of life in a country that is not their own. Each is knowledgeable about cultural, historical and political ideas and practices from throughout the world. Living overseas as global citizens, these 3 teachers understand social and cultural practices of people from many different backgrounds.

International Teachers as Cultural Agents

How do the teachers negotiate the tensions and experiences they have as cultural agents living abroad while also valuing the cultural identities of the students they serve? This is the third and final question I address in this research study. Living abroad, in a culture other than their own, Kate, Richard and Elaine are cultural agents. They are outsiders of the host country as expatriates, while insiders of the subculture of expatriate life. They sought different avenues to negotiate experiences they had as cultural agents living abroad. At the same time they were responsive in their teaching to the cultural identities of the students they served. With the various cultural worlds bumping up against each other at any given time, frictions or tensions are bound to occur. As evidenced by my own story at the beginning of this study, it was the discomfort I experienced as a first grade teacher on Thanksgiving at an international school that started me on this research. The presence of the tension forced me to reexamine my assumptions.

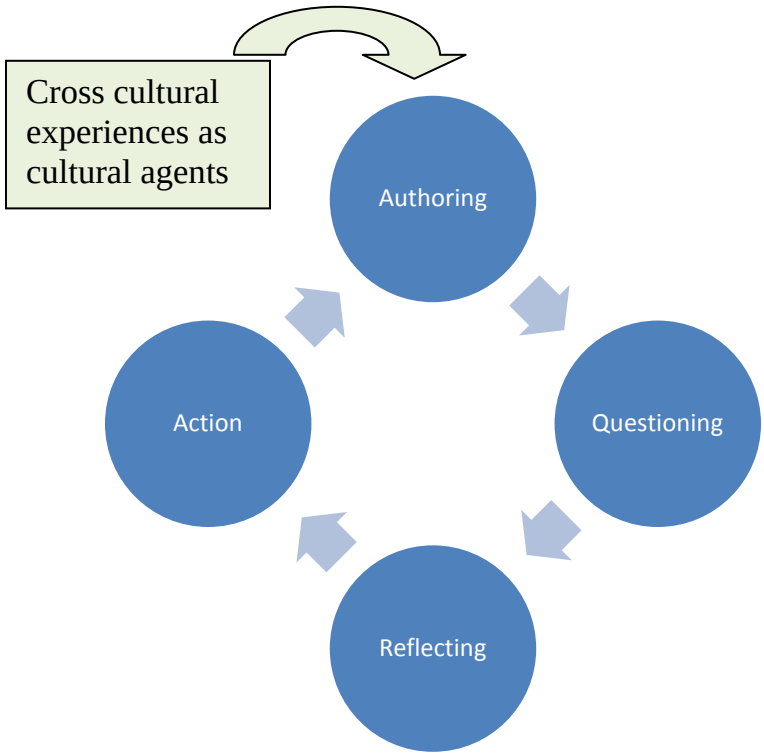

Figure 6.2 Cultural Agent to Cultural Agency

Figure 6.2 illustrates the process each teacher experienced in exhibiting agency in valuing the viewpoints of their students in this study. It began with the lived experiences they had as cultural agents. In this study I focused on stories the 3 teachers told of living and working overseas that produced tension for the teachers. Each teacher reexamined assumptions they had either about their own perspective or others' perspectives through questioning and reflecting. In the stories they told the discomfort that they felt connected the responses the teachers had as cultural agents. This friction moved the teachers to exhibit agency in attending to the cultural diversity in their classrooms.

I was incredibly fortunate to observe three different approaches to negotiating tensions as cultural agents within the same school. As cultural agents, there was the diplomat, the explorer and the negotiator representing the place and culture where they are from. As a part of these experiences they told stories they had as cultural agents living and working overseas. Their stories provided insights into how the teachers grappled with uneasiness they experienced as cultural agents. Richard focused on keeping others comfortable in what could potentially be tense situations from differing perspectives. In his teaching, Richard did this with parents when puppy love struck and with his students when talking about the Korean War, explaining he broaches such topics very gently. Richard took on a diplomatic approach in stories that revealed tensions he had both outside of the school and in his classroom. Elaine was open to exploring new perspectives in her role as a cultural agent. The discomfort Elaine experienced in these stories centered on her consciousness of the role power can play when a teacher is a cultural agent. Kate's stories told of apprehensions she felt as she translated and negotiated across multiple cultural perspectives in her personal and professional life. While an insider into Chinese culture, life and language in many ways, Kate struggled with being an outsider as well.

As shown through the stories authored by Richard, Elaine and Kate, all three teachers asked questions. Richard's stories revealed his examining whether he clearly explained his cultural viewpoint when questioned about his perspective and beliefs. In Elaine's stories, she didn't want to prioritize her American perspective or impose a personal cultural viewpoint onto her students and questioned her capabilities to meet this goal. When Kate experienced tensions as a cultural agent, she sought out an understanding through questioning more knowledgeable members of a cultural community. She asked her husband, why do parents in China often carry their child's books to school when they seem capable of doing it themselves?

From questions posed to them or from within, Richard, Elaine and Kate reflected on their previous experiences and reconsidered their actions. Richard reflected on how he needed to be sensitive to the various histories and experiences each student and parent brought to the issues. The tensions Elaine experienced often resulted from reflecting on the ASC curriculum that emphasized an American perspective and the impact it can have on how her students viewed their own cultural perspectives. For example, in her story about a social studies government unit, she didn't want to teach that an American democracy is the best way, but *one* way to organize a government. Kate also experienced uneasiness in finding ways to balance and have a voice as a Canadian inside the American school. For example she reflected…"this isn't *my* Thanksgiving" while recognizing why she needed to be respectful of American celebrations and beliefs.

Richard's, Elaine's and Kate's negotiations of the tensions exhibited agency as they took action to value the cultural identities of the students they teach. At the center of Richard's cultural agent role was his American cultural perspective. He exchanged and weighed different cultural viewpoints. Richard sought out opportunities for cultural viewpoint exchanges in order to simultaneously teach and learn. Being diplomatic, Richard separately weighed each cultural world and voice. Elaine changed grade levels and incorporated different perspectives into curriculum units. She invited her students to explore their personal histories and identities. She dove into learning about the complexities of the three gorges dam project alongside her students. Elaine layered the multiple perspectives of and within the different cultural worlds, encouraging each to simultaneously co-exist. Kate also advocated that same recognition for her own and her students' backgrounds. She changed the celebrations to be less about a particular national history to be more about the idea behind a shared purpose for a holiday. When Kate experienced apprehensions in school, she sought out an understanding of different perspectives. She also negotiated change in school curriculum to broaden it to incorporate as many different cultural worlds as possible. Kate weaved the cultural worlds more than

the other two teachers, and when a knot occurred, she negotiated a change that maximized opportunities for her students to expand their engagement with different cultural worlds.

With sometimes conflicting cultural worlds bumping into each other, tensions are bound to arise. As life and experiences continue the teachers will author new stories. This cyclical process is continuous. The teachers each described tensions they felt in their stories that led to questions. Stopping and examining the questions that we grapple with, much like the questions that arose for me from my Thanksgiving story is a valuable process for educators to engage in. Tension in their questioning, whether from within themselves or from characters in their stories, led them to reflect on their viewpoints. The teachers employed agency to enact teaching practices that valued the identities of the students and cultural worlds in their classrooms.

Constructivism in Culturally Responsive Teaching

> If we can find ways of responding as individuals to multiple patterns of meaning, enriching rather than displacing those traditional to any one group, this can make a momentous difference to the well being of individuals and the fate of the earth. What would it be like to have not only color vision but culture vision, the ability to see the multiple worlds of others?
>
> Mary Catherine Bateson, Peripheral Visions

Mary Bateson's (1994) term "cultural vision" is a powerful way to describe the multiple worlds within these international teachers' classrooms. The multiple worlds of the school, the teacher and the students co-exist in these classrooms. I argue that Richard, Elaine and Kate have cultural vision. They exhibit their vision in their culturally responsive teaching.

Cultural responsiveness took different forms in each classroom, but the common thread across all three teachers was the role of reflection and constructivism in the teachers' approaches. Culturally responsive teachers as defined by Villegas and Lucas

(2002) are those who have a sociocultural consciousness, have affirming views of students, sense themselves as change agents, are constructivists familiar with students' prior knowledge and beliefs and design instruction based on the known to expand beyond the familiar. Gay's (2000) descriptive characteristics of culturally responsive teaching are similar. The teachers' stories and my classroom observations showed the teachers' sociocultural consciousness and affirming views of their students. Each teacher also demonstrated a sense of agency in their attention to culture within their classroom. Richard, Elaine and Kate all felt they could make changes.

Villegas and Lucas (2002) say teachers who are agents of change see "schools and society as interconnected" (p.55). Villegas and Lucas emphasize for teachers to be change agents they

> must develop a personal vision of why they are teachers and what is important in education and in the larger society. As agents of change, they assume responsibility for identifying and interrupting inequitable school practices. Their actions are never neutral; they either support or challenge the existing social order (p. 54).

Richard's, Elaine's and Kate's stories show they understand that their teaching is not neutral. They each considered how the discussions, choices and approaches in their classrooms led to students reflecting and questioning their previous perspectives. When the teachers took action to be culturally responsive, they did so most effectively with a constructivist approach.

Ladson-Billings (1995) identified culturally relevant teachers in her study and noted they defined "knowledge was about doing" (p.481). Learning was a process, a construction, based on previous and current experiences. Knowledge or understanding is not a passive, but a building of bridges between what a learner already knows and new understandings (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Richard often kept his attention to cultural diversity, or the cultural worlds in separate orbits. His responsiveness to cultural diversity

was strongest when he included constructivist approaches in his classroom. Overlap of cultural worlds occurred when he applied constructivist teaching approaches in his classroom curriculum. For example, he encouraged his students to incorporate their life experiences in their blog writing as well as in their organized class writing projects, like the interviews and ghost stories. Richard also invited students to delve deeper into research a historical decade from the student's cultural perspective or on a topic of interest. He incorporated opportunities for his students to construct new understandings of their perspectives and identities through their reading and writing.

Elaine, in her research units about the three gorges dam had students construct understanding of differing perspectives of the Chinese people impacted by the project. Her students from all around the globe built on what they knew about living in China in order to form new understandings about a large scale complex governmental and environmental energy based project. In discussing current affairs, Elaine invited the students to build on their families' perspectives of international relations to develop new understandings of current national conflicts. She recognized that due to cultural diversity in the classroom, the class will not build a consensus and she is comfortable with that.

Kate similarly took action by developing opportunities for her students to visit and meet people from the host country. Through trips to the local park or to a local school, her students built on their previous experiences of living in China. Through these shared experiences the students in her classroom developed a more in depth understanding of the country and culture of where they live.

A learner has a "zone of proximal development," the distance between what can be done independently and in collaboration with more capable others (Vygotsky, 1986). One way the teachers implemented constructivist pedagogy was through naming students to be the capable, knowledgeable experts in the classroom. Elaine had a student teach her classmates about Diwali and Richard had his students share their experiences and background knowledge of the Korean War. Kate had her students bring in how they make

dumplings in their homes. All three of these teachers not only named the cultural diversity in the classroom as a strength, but used it as a platform for their classmates learning.

There were many different cultural worlds in the classrooms. How each teacher addressed cultural diversity through their curriculum was unique to each educator. Each of the teachers were culturally responsive, but did so in different ways. There was plenty of room for teacher differences and experiences. It was through implementing a constructivist educational philosophy, where knowledge is a construction built through learners' experiences that most culturally responsive action was able to occur in the teachers' classrooms (Villegas and Lucas, 2002).

Beyond ASC

Lessons learned from Richard, Elaine and Kate

As I mentioned earlier, I can't make generalizations about international teachers based on this research. However, these international teachers' experiences can teach others about attending to cultural diversity in their own classrooms. Several themes emerged from the data for teachers to consider; teachers can benefit from reflecting upon their own stories, teaching contexts and teaching practices. The 3 teachers' experiences as a diplomat, explorer or negotiator give educators a window into different approaches and a mirror to have them reconsider their own approaches as well.

Experiences: As Elaine articulated so clearly, "I have many more opportunities to be in the role of my students. I am out there" (December 11, 2009). Having the experiences of being in the role of her students, to be a learner, really helped her see and value differences. In order to have a story to tell, as educators we need to push ourselves outside of our cultural comfort zone. Richard, Elaine and Kate all did this when they stepped on a plane to work, live and play in a different country. We can each push

ourselves to have cross-cultural experiences by stepping into neighborhoods different than our own. Having a learning experience that pushes cultural assumptions is a key factor in preparing pre-service educators for cultural diversity (Trent, Kea, & Oh, 2008). So what happens when teachers have cross-cultural experiences? Forcing themselves out of their comfort zones, putting themselves in the role of their students as a learner is the first step. There is no guarantee this experience is going to be a positive one. It may be loaded with tension and leave the teacher with a sense of uneasiness. Elaine and Kate are models for reflecting on tensions to reconsider teaching practices and assumptions. By making themselves vulnerable, taking risks to push themselves out of their comfort zones and talking about their experiences teachers can make new insights about themselves and teaching practices.

Authoring of Selves: There is a history of using personal stories and experiences to support educators towards attending to culture in their classrooms (Howard, 1999; Villegas and Lucas, 2002; Gay, 2000). Stories are a vehicle for teachers to examine their assumptions, often culturally based. Revisiting stories teachers tell about cross cultural experiences they have, both personal and professional, gives a lens into how they author themselves. It is a window into how they view the world and themselves. What surprises them? What intrigues them? What worries them? What do the stories we tell reveal about how we approach cultural diversity in the classroom? Beyond examining those assumptions, my research explored how the personal narratives the teachers told are vehicles to explore their identity as culturally responsive teachers. There were parallels between how the teachers positioned themselves in their stories and in their teaching practices. I invite teachers to explore how the identities they have in the cross cultural personal stories they tell relates to how they approach cultural diversity in their classrooms.

Cultural Worlds: When considering culturally responsive teaching, these teachers attended to not just students' home lives, but to the complexity of the number of cultures

at work at any given time. Each teacher in this study had “culture vision” or the ability to see the multiple worlds around them. Due to the international setting, ASC magnified the multiple cultural worlds in the school. However, each neighborhood, each school, each classroom is unique. All classrooms have multiple worlds interacting within them. Teachers can identify and understand the complexity of the cultural worlds enacted and constructed in their own classrooms. What are the multiple voices whispering through the cultural worlds of their classroom? How do they manifest themselves? Through student behaviors? School policies? Curriculum? It is crucial to not only name the cultural worlds but create ways for teachers to recognize and find ways for students to engage with differing cultural perspectives. Often Richard, Elaine and Kate were able to support their students to interact with cultural worlds simultaneously. In order for this to happen as evidenced in this study, the teachers took action.

Action: Having cross-cultural experiences, telling stories of the experiences, reflecting on the stories, considering the cultural complexity of the classroom is not enough. Teachers must be willing to enact the agency they use in their storytelling to address the cultural diversity in their classrooms. How to be culturally responsive isn’t pre-scripted here. I don’t intend it to be. But through classroom observations and Richard’s, Elaine’s and Kate’s stories we get a sense of a variety of approaches to addressing cultural diversity in their classrooms. The commonality was a constructivist approach. Each teacher ensured their students were building new understandings on prior knowledge and experiences. Culturally relevant pedagogy was elevated when students constructed learning through doing in their classrooms. I invite teachers to reevaluate their practices and consider, when do they find themselves most responsive to the cultural worlds in their classrooms? What action can they take to build constructivist approaches in their teaching practices that attend to the cultural diversity in their classrooms?

Future Research with, by and about International Teachers

There is very little qualitative research available about current international teachers. They have unique experiences that can lead us to gain insights into any teachers' practices. As evidenced in this study, hearing teachers' voices and stories led to new insights.

One area that nudges further study for international educators is to examine how teachers find access to more knowledgeable members of a cultural community. With the multiple cultural worlds interacting in any classroom, the teacher cannot be realistically knowledgeable about each one. In fact, I wouldn't advocate for that. The teachers were responsive when they were in the role of being a learner themselves. But, in order to learn, they need to be able to have rich discussions that enable cultural insights valuing and understanding the cultural worlds in their classrooms. In this research, Kate had the capability and opportunity to talk with her husband about questions she had. This led her to new understandings of cultural practices she was encountering in her classroom and to address tensions she was experiencing. What resources would best support international teachers as they strive to be culturally responsive? This type of query also initiates an examination of how international teachers develop in their cultural responsiveness. What elements of their lives overseas bring them to be more attentive to the cultural diversity in their classrooms?

Schools in the broader sense of the term have their own cultural structures where particular beliefs, philosophies and ways of knowing are more prominently valued over others (Heath, 1983; Gee 1990; Spindler & Spindler, 1995). At this particular school, the American School of China, the teachers were active in constructing curriculum, school policies and given opportunities for professional development. They had a great deal of autonomy in their classroom teaching practices and highly valued as knowledgeable educators. At ASC, the teachers were in the unique position of being able to participate in

committees that created school policy; they developed curriculum and adopted programs that met their established educational philosophies. As an international school located in China with a largely American curriculum, the school created literacy policies outside of district, state or national constraints. I would invite more research into examining the strengths and concerns for schools that can operate largely independently but can mold themselves to be responsive to their immediate community. How are international *schools* culturally responsive to the students they serve and the host country?

Another essential aspect of this research to consider for further research is the potential to broaden our understanding of the international students' perspective in cultural responsive teaching at international schools. All three of these teachers recognized that as third culture kids, the students were cultural agents. At ASC and in the community they were cultural agents for a cultural perspective they may or may not have firsthand experience with themselves. As Elaine's fourth grade student described, "I am not from Taipei, but my family is from there" (Fieldnotes, October 26, 2009). My research emphasized the teachers' stories and role as cultural agents while living and working abroad. International teachers, communities and families would benefit from further research of third culture kids' lives and experiences as cultural agents. Their voices, their stories, their experiences need to be heard as well.

Final Thoughts

> An awareness of narrative highlights the role of researcher as storyteller.
>
> K.A. Holley and J. Colyer, 2009

It seems fitting that I would end with a story. This story takes place while I was visiting ASC, conducting research for this study in the fall of 2009. The date is significant because there was a global epidemic of swine flu at the time. China had a strict policy in place when I landed. Every visitor had their temperature taken at the airport before going through immigration. There was additional governmental paperwork

to complete about your general health, seat assignment and contact information where the government could reach you. Just a couple weeks before I arrived in China a plane full of passengers had been quarantined after one person on the flight became sick with the swine flu.

One day while I was doing classroom observations at ASC, I was asked to be a substitute teacher for Elaine's class. She had meetings the next day, and she thought I might like to do it. I jumped at the chance. I took the local employee bus to the school. From where I was staying, I walked about a half mile and met the bus at 7:10 in the morning. I was excited to be going to her class and nervous at the same time. It had been a while since I had been in charge of a fourth grade class! Around 7:50, the employee bus pulled through the school gates and started on the road that wrapped around the perimeter of the school grounds. We stopped at the high school first, dropping off a couple of employees, went ahead a half block and stopped again at the middle school. Finally we reached the elementary school doors and I went directly to the office. The secretary had a friendly greeting for me, I signed a form and up to Elaine's classroom I went. Walking past Richard's classroom, I waved and told him I would be around for the day. I walk into Elaine's classroom and flipped on the lights. I took a breath. The room was familiar from my time spent doing observations. I already knew some of the routines and the students. I had met and worked with the kids a couple times. I looked on Elaine's desk. The directions for the morning seemed simple enough. But they were oddly foreign and familiar at the same time.

The first item on the list was that I was to take each child's temperature. There was a thermometer that looked like a glue gun lying in the middle of her desk. It was on top of a clipboard with a class chart. There was a row for each child, and a column for each day of the week. I picked the thermometer up and pointed it at my forehead.

I had had my own temperature hiccup a few days earlier trying to get onto the school grounds at ASC. My taxi ride the previous day had been on a warm afternoon, had

taken an unusually long time due to traffic and, there was no air conditioning. When I stepped up to the guard at the gate he politely pointed to the sign “please cooperate with taking of temperature” and pointed the thermometer gun at my forehead. It registered at 39 degrees Celsius. He then said, “No”. I explained in my limited Chinese that my health is fine, I am not sick, but the taxi was hot. He pointed the gun at his head, no temperature. He then tried me again. Too high. So then we stepped in the shade of the guard hut. We waited together for a couple awkward minutes. This wasn’t the first overheated visitor he had dealt with. We tried the temperature gun again. It worked! I was clear to go!

So, there I was, at Elaine’s desk trying to figure out how to use the thermometer, and students started arriving. What a relief! It was 8:15. I had 10 minutes to say hello, greet the students and start taking their temperatures. One student offered to help. We sat together on the floor in the front of the room. She held the clipboard and students simply came up after they had unpacked their bags and I pointed the temperature gun at each child’s forehead. It took me a while to get the hang of it, and it didn’t take long before we had a line. Every student waited as I pointed the thermometer at their forehead, the temperature registered and my student assistant wrote down the temperature. I admit, I had no idea what I would do if a student had a fever, but luckily I didn’t so that was a question I never did find out the answer to. At 8:20, the teacher from next door poked her head in. She needed the thermometer and I needed to hurry up! All of a sudden the situation dialed up the stress level. We quickly finished, and then boom, 8:25, the students were off to Physical Education. The schedule said at 9:05 the students had Language. Great! I thought Language Arts. I know Language Arts.

While the students were gone I looked around. I had been there only 15 minutes and it was already a whirlwind. I started to check what we were going to do next. What are we supposed to do for Language? I saw nothing. Ah well, I walked around the room, knowing about the writing workshop. I looked for a book to use. A little after 9:00, the

students came bounding back, walked in, grabbed a folder, then disappeared. I called out, “Where are you going?”

“Chinese!” a student replied.

Ah, Language. Literally, language. Some were off to study and learn Chinese, others were off to work on their English. I get it. But that left me with more time.

I looked again at the schedule. After Language, Recess. Well, that’s good! Kids should play. Then what?

ITBS. Really? This wasn’t happening. Iowa Tests of Basic Skills? I flew from Iowa to do research in a phenomenal international school in China, and I am going to give the students the standardized Iowa Tests of Basic Skills test? I felt I had gone a long distance to go nowhere at all.

The students came in from recess. They grabbed their water bottles, had drinks, put them away again, reorganized themselves, got the right papers with the right student, and settled in with number 2 pencils. They needed to spread out to different tables; we finally got everyone situated. There I was, pacing around the tables, reading the directions. As the students began and filled in their bubbles, I walked around looking at the tops of their heads as they hunched over their papers. I couldn’t believe it. Kids from all around the world were in this very room. In China. Taking this test. From Iowa. Somehow, through no control of my own, I had found myself implementing both Chinese government policies and American educational testing policies within one morning at ASC.

Being a teacher at an international school certainly makes you stop every once in a while and think about cultural influences. You can be diplomatic, like Richard, making certain everyone is comfortable. You can explore new ways of knowing, like Elaine, being cautious about imposing your own point of view. You can make negotiations like Kate, translating different perspectives for different cultural perspectives, negotiating amongst them. You can be any combination of these on any given day. And there I was,

none of these. I felt like a cultural dictator imposing rule on my subjects. At the same time a puppet. I was also a visitor and a guest. And that is the point. In any story, in any experience there are multiple cultural influences. I will continue to listen to others' stories; teachers, students, people in the market and on the bus. And in the process I continue to strive to develop my "cultural vision."

APPENDIX A
INITIAL INTERVIEW GUIDE

The purpose of the interviews was to gather autobiographical narratives, stories about international living experiences and teaching stories.

Clandinin & Connelly, Narrative Inquiry

Guiding questions for interviews:

What do you think got you interested in teaching overseas?

How did you get started teaching internationally?

What is a favorite story you share with your family and friends back home?

Can you think of any times when you felt tension as an expatriate living overseas?

How do you answer the question, Where are you from?

Can you think of any times when you felt tension as an international teacher?

How do you think you address cultural diversity in your classroom?

Can you think of times where your students behavior may be other than what you expect due to cultural differences?

Are there times when you feel a lot of tension, like at school, how a particular culture is portrayed or addressed?

APPENDIX B
CODING CATEGORIES

Focused Coding/Coding Categories

School
- -reader's workshop
- -writer's workshop
- -social studies units
- -inquiry approach
- -holidays
- -technology
- -policy
- -setting
- -history

Teaching
- -teacher collaboration
- -agency (active change)
- -professional development
- -resources
- -student diversity
- -parent expectations
- -job history
- -pedagogy

Teacher Identity
- -ethnicity
- -language
- -family
- -religion
- -home country
- -roles (teacher, parent, wife, expat etc.

International Lifestyle
- Desire to live overseas
- Friendships
- Socializing
- Shopping
- Housing
- Travel
- Moving
- Entertainment
  - Book clubs
  - TV shows
  - Costume parties
  - Market shopping
  - Movies

-Family Life/Friends

China/Host Country
- -community
- -language
- -neighborhood
- -traditions
- -religion
- -changes
- -politics
- -food
- -history

APPENDIX C
CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

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