Learning the Ropes: A Grounded Theory Study of Children Crossing Cultures

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PATRICIA E. REYNOLDS

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Patricia E. Reynolds
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by

Patricia E. Reynolds

Approved by:

Chair: Susan B. Stillman, Ed.D.
Member: Glen Gatin, Ed.D.
Member: Donna Rice, Ph.D.

Certified by:

School Dean: Cindy Knott, Ed.D.

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Abstract

Educators in American public school settings have tried to determine the best practices to reach an increasingly diverse student population. In this qualitative study using grounded theory design, 13 individuals who have graduated from high schools in northern Virginia were asked to recollect their experiences as they moved through the dual process of language acquisition and acculturation. A grand tour, or open-ended question, began the examination of the 13 participants, who at one time during their educational career were designated Limited English Proficient in U.S. schools. The data were collected and codified to determine the strategies and dispositions used as students integrated into the schools and acquired a new language and a new identity in U.S. schools. The data were examined to determine the behaviors this group of participants engaged in as they moved toward acculturation. A multifaceted, constant comparative analysis of the data led to the categories becoming saturated and providing fit, grab, and relevance to the substantive area of children crossing cultures in educational environments. The generated theory, learning the ropes, became the basic social process students engaged in as they crossed cultures. Four main stages of the basic social process: frozen in time, turtling, painting a new picture, and finding the future was related by all 13 participants. These four stages contributed to the outcome of the new theory grounded in the participants’ actual experiences, recollections and behaviors. Learning the ropes indicated that a strong educational focus on language development contributes to the ways an individual would enter and sustain the acculturation process. The theory suggested that sociocultural aspects of the process should be more carefully integrated into school settings to provide children crossing cultures with a more successful model toward acculturation. Further research in the areas of race, cultural transmission, and teacher involvement were indicated by the findings.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Education for the twenty-first century means education for an increasingly diverse student population in the United States. Understanding characteristics of nonnative speakers of English as well as ethnic minorities who speak a language other than English is becoming a necessity for all educators. Newly immigrated legal, illegal, refugee, and asylee children enter the United States’ school systems and attempt to learn a new language, make new friends, achieve academically, and function in a strange culture. Additionally, because of an unprecedented immigration pattern in the United States over the past 20 years, another group of children must reconcile crossing cultures between the expectations of their first-generation immigrant parents and the expectations of U.S. schools (Abed & Sheldon, 2008; Batalova, 2008). Children involved in the process of crossing cultures, either newly arrived or native-born in the United States, are labeled international students, migrants, transcultural, or cross-cultural children in school settings in the United States. Whereas this term may appear in many ways to diminish the humanity of this subject group of children, for the expediency of explanation and an attempt to clarify the terminology as found in various references, children in the United States schools will be referred to as cross cultural or transcultural children. The current pre-kindergarten through 12th grade (PreK–12) schools in the United States serve children from three through 18 years of age and incorporate various stages of academic and social, as well as personal, growth and development (Woolfolk, 2009). Most educators agree with the assumption that all children experience changes and difficult transitions throughout their development. However, for the population of children of interest in this study, the experience of crossing cultures is tantamount to life altering (Taylor, 2004). Experiences in PreK–12 school environments can best be described as complex or even possibly “incomprehensible” (Granger,
2004, p. 3) in the demands placed on such children. Crossing cultural boundaries may also affect children’s abilities to garner opportunities in their current academic environments and to make constructive decisions about future educational paths (Berk, 2006; Taylor, 2004).

Language acquisition for this group of children has been regarded as the measure of success in the educational arena and the hallmark of progress toward acculturation in the new society (Philip, Oliver, & Mackey, 2008; Shohamy, 2006; Spolsky, 2004). Spolsky (2004) contended most children are perceived as linguistically and culturally developmental throughout their educational experience. Yet, children crossing cultures, when learning the new language of the culture and trying to fit into the new culture struggle to accomplish both of these tasks simultaneously (Philip, et al., 2008). The field of education identifies childhood as comprising different stages and by the various ways children use language for different linguistic and cultural tasks within these stages. Educators now recognize that immigrants and second-generation children are being exposed to a two-fold issue in their education. The difficult processes of both language development and identity development must be achieved simultaneously so transcultural children can progress in educational environments filled with perceptions, subjectivity, and symbolism of cultural belonging (Berk, 2006; Woolfolk, 2009). A gap in educators’ information about these processes may be to the detriment of the children having to experience these developments in educational environments (Philip, et al., 2008).

**Background**

During the past 20 years, the unprecedented immigration patterns, as well as the large numbers of students classified as second-generation immigrants in the United States, have created a sense of concern in the education community (Abad & Sheldon, 2008; Dornyei, 2009; Haynes, 2007; Mencken, 2008). Other periods of immigration in the United States were marked
by overcrowded cities and characterized by individuals who, by law, did not have to attend public education. Today, the new immigrants are moving into suburban and rural areas that are not well equipped to handle large numbers of people with cultural and linguistic needs. Likewise, newcomer families are not prepared to participate in these communities or in the educational opportunities mandated by federal law (Batalova, 2008; Mencken, 2008). The experiences of these immigrants often determine their ability to adapt to U.S. culture and, consequently, acculturate in the new society (Massey & Akresh, 2006). Currently, more than 5 million English Language Learners (ELLs) from all over the world attend public schools in the United States and speak 460 different languages at all grade levels (Mencken, 2008). Given these demographic facts, it is arguable that such students entering schools in the United States are not only demonstrating difficulties with respect to their language proficiency but also with cultural adaptability as they move toward acculturation (Massey & Akresh, 2006, Mencken, 2008).

In addition to the language and cultural dynamics transcultural children face in U.S. schools, they also have been powerless to make decisions regarding participation in the immigration process. To illustrate this point further, Ogbu (1992) clearly defined the difference between voluntary and involuntary immigrants. He referred to adults who have voluntarily made the decision to leave their homeland, for various reasons, and seek better opportunities in a new culture as voluntary immigrants; these adults believed themselves to be making choices that eventually would lead to better opportunities for their families. Ogbu described an involuntary immigrant as one whom by virtue of slavery, colonization, or conquest, with no choice in the decision, leaves his or her homeland with diminished hope of achieving success in the new
location. In a critical analysis of Ogbu’s cultural ecological model, Foster (2004) outlined the basic tenets of Ogbu’s arguments as containing four frames of reference for educators:

- Students’ academic success is affected by community forces and the ways those forces contribute to student success or failure.
- The distinction between voluntary, involuntary, and autonomous minority status.
- The recognition of universal, primary, and secondary discontinuities between students and the schools they attend.
- The idea that involuntary minorities develop survival strategies, some which facilitate and some of which hinder student success. (p. 370)

Children of immigrants are not participants in the decision-making process to leave their homeland and, in effect, do not have the social, psychological, and emotional dispositions in place to make these decisions; therefore, they are involuntarily thrust into a new culture, leaving behind all that is familiar. As a result, they are expected to perform socially, achieve academically, and realize their families’ dreams for the future (Collier, 2008; Haynes, 2007; Philip et al., 2008). Based on Ogbu’s definition, such actions place children in the category of involuntary immigrants who must use survival strategies to achieve family goals. Whereas adult members of their family may have made a voluntary decision to seek better opportunities for the future in a new land, children are not capable of and are not allowed to make migratory choices for their own lives. Due to these transitions, transcultural children face a complicated childhood through adolescence during which they are often expected to be fluent in their native and American languages and cultures (Abad & Sheldon, 2008). Transcultural children are pressured to adopt various features of American culture into their own identity while being influenced by the familial values and the aspirations of their first-generation parents (Farver, Narang, &
Bhadha, 2002). They must successfully make their way through the educational system in order to take part in emerging opportunities as they maneuver through the defining cultures (Abad & Sheldon, 2008; Haynes, 2007; Lovelace & Wheeler, 2006).

Students who consider themselves to be in control of their own academic futures and who see learning success as being within their capabilities become predisposed to do the things that will result in behaviors that lead to success over time (Philip et al., 2008). For transcultural children, the lack of control over their situations may lead to behaviors that either facilitate or hinder their success in the new culture. Transcultural students are often seen as lacking the cultural capital necessary to succeed in the dominant culture (Trueba, 2004). However, as education in the United States moves toward a broader vision of the world and the potential for globalization of industry and society increases, this more diverse, cultural capital may become crucial to the future of the United States. Trueba (2004) aptly described this paradigm when he stated that in a modern, globalized society, there will be a need for individuals who can be resilient with the ability to cross cultural divides as well as master new languages. Trueba envisions this resiliency as new cultural capital that will be crucial in the future not only for the United States but also for global economic sustainability.

Toussaint-Clark and Clark (2008) further asserted that research into the social context as well as power and identity issues of first- and second-generation transcultural children remains relatively difficult to locate. As a consequence, educators’ current awareness of sociolinguistic interactions and the impact they have on learning processes and outcomes are not often part of teacher preparation. This lack of preparation to work with diverse populations leaves educators with gaps in their knowledge about how to maximize education opportunities for children with issues of cultural dissonance. Education communities tasked with the dual development of
language and national identity must decide how to respond in educating transcultural students, which may affect this group of children’s ability to participate in the future of the nation.

**Problem Statement**

Little is known about the effect of crossing cultures on children in an educational environment (Caldwell-Harris, 2008; Dornyei, 2009; Mencken, 2008; Philip et al., 2008). At the outset of any discussion of cross-cultural acquisition in the PreK–12 population, there must be recognition that children, in most instances, have little input into familial immigration or transcultural processes. Transcultural children may not fully comprehend what lies ahead for them because of their lack of personal experience and age-related developmental or emotional stages (Berk, 2006; Spolsky, 2004; Woolfolk, 2009). Continued educational focus on child language development and proficiency diminishes the sociocultural development necessary for identity development (Dornyei, 2009). Caldwell-Harris (2008) argued that the difference between children acquiring language and adults using language is often an overlooked aspect of any cross-cultural acquisition research and debate.

For the most part, common understandings of cross-cultural issues have been developed based on previous research with adults who are choosing to seek educational or employment opportunities in a different culture (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Kohls, 1984; Oberg, 1960). As a consequence, current educational practice continues to be based on models using adult subjects who choose voluntarily to enter into the experience of crossing cultures (Aycicegi-Dinn & Caldwell-Harris, 2009). Therefore, a study that gathered information from actual participants who have had to accomplish both educational and cross-cultural tasks provided new directions for understanding the process of language acquisition in educational environments and how it contributed to incidence of cultural dissonance and acculturation. The reports of children who
have had to accomplish the difficult tasks of second language acquisition (SLA) and identity development in a second culture revealed a theory that has the potential to improve understanding about an area in education that seems elusive and confounding.

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study, using a classical grounded theory design, was to examine the recollected experiences of youth who have had to cross cultures in order to discover a pattern of behavior that describes how these experiences affected students’ ability to acquire language and to move through the developmental stages of identity formation. Although researchers described the effects of cross-cultural processes on adults moving between cultures, there is little research to date focused on the school-age population (Aycicegi-Dinn & Caldwell-Harris, 2009; Mencken, 2008). Petkova (2009) explained that research on the topic of culture stress may look at the process but does not take into account the actual perceptions and experiences of those who have made this transition. A grounded theory based on the experience of children crossing cultures, acquiring a new language, and developing a self-identity may assist educators to develop new ways of viewing the process of acculturation of children crossing cultures in U.S schools. Consequently, interviews using a grand tour question were conducted with 13 participants in Northern Virginia discovering the patterns of behavior and perceptions that contributed to the adaptation of children having to manage cross-cultural boundaries in the current U.S. school environments improved understanding about many of the issues facing educators in the diverse classroom today. Glaser (2002) defined a grounded theory as “a theory of how to generate concepts from data that fit, work, and are relevant” (p. 38). Thus, the purpose of my research was to identify and to categorize behaviors that children recollected using in school settings as they managed their cross-cultural journey.
Theoretical Framework

Few current studies make the distinction between the experience of adults, who have made informed choices to move across cultures, and children who are not able to control their choices because of age, family considerations, cultural background, and other developmental concerns (Philip et al., 2008). According to Turner and Waugh (2007), students in a classroom setting can be viewed as a self-organizing system that acts and reacts to both the external and internal informational signals. In relation to any student’s unique learning-related motivation, behavior, and motions, as well as learning-related cognitions, these are processes that react and interact with the signals and stimuli they are exposed to within the community.

Children’s perceptions of how they self-organized the events they encountered in their transcultural process holds valuable information about some areas that continue to confound researchers in the field of SLA. Philip et al. (2008) described this research as difficult to locate, scattered throughout disciplines and conducted in a less than cohesive manner. Additionally, a more focused look at how children maneuver through the mechanism, process, and outcome of such tasks has shed new light on ways that educational environments can facilitate the information acquisition that transcultural children receive in schools.

Too little attention has been focused on how transcultural children have virtually no input in actual immigration decisions (Mencken, 2008). As a result, they must deal with a family mandate to continue to progress academically even though they may not be in environments that honor, value, or fully understand the process. If researchers attended to these issues in a piecemeal and disjointed fashion, it is arguable that educators working with transcultural children brought a limited and less than effective knowledge base to the task (Berk, 2006). This deficiency places an added burden on classroom environments working with second language
learners to not only focus on language development but also to recognize the classroom may be the one and only place where transcultural children achieve some knowledge of the culture to which they are attempting to adapt (Collier, 2008; Dornyei, 2009; Toussaint-Clark & Clark, 2008). By focusing on the sociocultural aspects of the transcultural children’s experiences in PreK–12 environments, this study examined the factors participants determined were problematic for them as they crossed cultures and developed a social identity.

**Research Questions**

In classical grounded theory design, the primary research questions are not pre-determined, other than the expectation that the researcher may discover patterns of behaviors that explain the main concerns of participants and how concerns will be resolved (Glaser, 1998). Using a grand tour question permits the grounded theory researcher to develop a theoretical sensitivity to words, body language, and other paralinguistic features of the interview, which can affect participants’ responses. A grand tour question allows the concerns of the participants to emerge rather than to force the data into any set of ideas preconceived by a researcher; however, there is still a process that drives the entire conduct of the research. The grand tour question used with participants, “Tell me about your recollections and experiences as you entered school in the United States,” allowed participants to recall events in their school environments that shaped decisions and how strategies were applied to solve their concerns. Whereas questions beyond the grand tour question are determined by the discovery of the core variable and the emerging patterns, the following questions were addressed by all 13 of the participants and therefore aided the research in defining the emergent issues of the participants:

- How do PreK–12 transcultural students recall the experience cross cultural transitions had upon their arrival at and progression through their education?
• What significant events or milestones may initiate or expand a cultural experience for school-age transcultural students?

• What specific aspects of the educational experience are affected by cross-cultural transitions?

• How does the experience in schools influence transcultural student choices of opportunities in the United States?

The answers to questions like these contributed to the development of a more realistic understanding of how transcultural children adapt to their cross-cultural experience as they mature and maneuver through U.S. schools. The answers also addressed how the multicomponential aspects of the educational environment contribute to the psychological, emotional, and social development of cross-cultural students. Cross-cultural students may experience the same four phases of cultural adaptation as adults do in school environments; they simply may be unable to explain these phases existing in the current models (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Kohls, 1984; Oberg, 1960). It also proved true that children face a decidedly different experience than adults. To what extent and at what points transcultural children related these events based on personal experiences and perceptions developed knowledge applications to daily events (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As transcultural children move through the stages of language acquisition and identity development, they may miss fundamental stages of social and emotional development. Such adaptations may affect their personal choices.

Nature of the Study

Few regional areas in the United States are as multinational and multiethnic as northern Virginia (Mencken, 2008). For the past 25 years, a large immigrant population has resided in the immediate 20-mile radius of the nation’s capital, Washington, D.C. Recent history in Virginia
has seen this population gradually and effectively moving south into once rural and suburban areas (Batalova, 2008). Stafford County, Virginia is approximately 45 miles south of Washington, D.C. in the vicinity of the city of Fredericksburg, Virginia; in addition, it is a refugee resettlement center for the northern Virginia suburbs. This combination of demographics leads to school populations in Stafford County that come from widely diverse ethnic backgrounds. Data collection began with recent graduates of the five high schools in Stafford County. Available data indicated the number of graduates from Stafford County Public Schools who have carried the federal descriptor as Limited English Proficient at some point within their PreK–12 school years numbered 72 students (Virginia Department of Education [VDOE], 2008).

Glaser (1978) stated that in classical grounded theory, participants are determined not by preconceived hypotheses or problems but rather based on the general sociological concept that the substantive area exists within the population. Beginning with one data source, using personal interviews and the process of constant comparative analysis (Glaser, 1965), patterns emerge, although the grounded theory researcher has no prior indication where the research may go and cannot preconceive the number of participants needed to saturate the data, as well as other areas in which the data may lead (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This uncertainty is the notion of theoretical sampling. Additional sources of data are added as the theoretical properties emerge from the concerns and issues presented by the participants (Glaser, 1978). Data sources are the categories and their properties that provide conceptual empowerment (Glaser, 1998). Glaser (1978) summarized the grounded theory process as:

The collection of the research data, open coding of the data soon after, theoretical sampling, generating many memos with as much saturation as possible and
emergence of core social psychological problems and processes which then
become the basis for more theoretical sampling, coding, and memoing as the
analyst focuses on the core. (p. 16)

Using qualitative research methodology and a grounded theory design, the researcher
sought to discover from the recollections of these former students who had made the cross
cultural transitions how they managed and resolved the issues of learning a new language and
adapting to a new culture. As this group of students is not representative of just one ethnic or
language group, I expected a variety of strategies and perceptions might lead to discovering a
comprehensive view about how these students resolved their concerns regarding language and
identity development in school environments through the years.

Significance of the Study

Current research in SLA has come under scrutiny over the past 10 years for what it lacks
rather than for what it has discovered (Ortega, 2009). Issues regarding postmodernist thinking
about language acquisition, as well as political policies that assume specific qualities of first and
second language acquisitions have created controversy in this field of study. Because the fields
of first and second language acquisition traditionally have taken monolingual competence as the
benchmark of language development (Ortega, 2009), it would be plausible that the field of
education has missed valuable information about multilingual children and how they develop not
only second language competence but also social identity in school settings. Although many of
the studies reference pedagogy techniques and linguistic feature analysis, as described by
Granger (2004), the general inconclusiveness of the research is telling. Granger further
expanded this topic by stating that language acquisition is a complex process and researchers
must have an ability to tolerate a multiplicity of contributing factors, divergent evidence, and
often surprising conclusions during their investigations. If educational environments continue to view language acquisition from a default monolingual perspective (i.e., work within political context that does not value the multilingual experience or comprehend the cultural boundaries that students must cross), the variables in the process will be ill-defined in educational contexts.

The potential significance of the study becomes apparent in that it addresses the actual experiences of students who have maneuvered through the cross-cultural boundaries, thereby providing factual information that may be a resource for educational environments. Glaser (1998) explained, “Doing grounded theory is experiential” (p. 17). The current research in the field of SLA lacks the experiential reporting of the events by those who have actually experienced the process. This study, which documents the strategies and the subsequent behaviors those students crossing cultures employ throughout the process, brings a theoretical analysis to understanding the factors that contribute to success or failure in educational environments. As a consequence, educators may be able to use this as a tool to develop new practices to work more effectively with students who must cross cultural boundaries.

Definitions

This study contains terms that are unique and specific to the factors that will be examined. The pertinent terms are defined below to provide a clear and mutual understanding of the context in which they will be used throughout this study.

Acculturation. Acculturation is two-dimensional process, in which the relationship with the traditional or the ethnic culture and the relationship with the new culture must be considered; these two relationships may be independent (Brown, 2007, p. 132). Texts often use the term assimilation to describe the process, which assumes one will be absorbed into the other.
Acculturation requires significant change on the part of the first culture as well as the second culture (Ortega, 2009, p. 173).

Asylee. An asylee is an alien in the United States or who upon arriving at a port of entry is found to be unable or unwilling to return to his or her country of nationality. Asylees choose to seek the protection of another country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution. Persecution, or the fear thereof, must be based on the alien’s race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. Request for asylum is made after arrival on U.S. soil (United States Department of Homeland Security [USDHS], 2008).

Cross-cultural children. Children who have had to make cultural adjustments because of familial obligations in which they have no input into transcultural decisions (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). Children involved in the process of crossing cultures, either newly arrived or native-born in the United States, are labeled international students, migrants, transcultural or cross cultural children in school settings in the United States. Whereas this term may appear in many ways to diminish the humanity of this subject group of children, for the expediency of explanation and an attempt to clarify the terminology found in various references, this study will refer to children in the United States schools as cross cultural or transcultural children.

Culture shock. Culture shock is described as the anxiety, frustration, and discomforts that result when an individual leaves familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse and enters a strange culture (Oberg, 1960). It has also been referred to as culture stress, cultural dissonance, or culture adaptability, and refers to phenomena ranging from mild irritability to deep psychological panic and crisis (Smith, 2006).
**Dispositions.** Tendencies to exhibit frequently, consciously, and voluntarily patterns of behavior directed toward a broad goal (Katz, 1993).

**Fit.** In classical grounded theory, all ideas must fit through a process of questioning and comparing the emerging outline of the research. This fit then forces underlying patterns, integration, and multivariate relations between concepts (Glaser, 1978).

**Four Phase Model.** The Four Phase Model of culture shock describes the stages that Oberg presented in 1954 and later elaborated to include four major transitions in the culture shock cycle: first is the honeymoon phase, then the hostility phase, followed by a third phase in which an individual begins to gather some sense of acceptance of his or her situation (however, Oberg cautioned this only happens for those who learn the language of the culture). The fourth phase of the model is adaptability, when an individual accepts the new culture as another way of living (Oberg, 1960). In graphic terms, the four phases are related in the shape of a U. Although more recent explanatory models have developed concepts about issues with cultural dissonance, most have based the actual incidence of culture shock on the original Oberg model of a four-phase passage that individuals go through in this event (Petkova, 2009).

**Grab.** The quality that makes research interesting to the reader and to participants in the substantive area, and provides the basis for relevance to the topic being discovered (Glaser, 1978).

**Immigrant.** Any individual who departs willingly from his or her native land and settles in another nation for various reasons or expediencies or necessity. Under the current provision of the Immigration Act of 1990, there are a variety of statutes that can be applied to individuals seeking to come to the United States; in all cases, these individuals are seeking to acquire permanent status or citizenship in the United States (USDHS, 2008).
**Involuntary immigrant.** An individual who enters or is part of United States society because of slavery, conquest, or colonization and rather than by choice of expectations of a better future (Ogbu, 1992). Although Ogbu’s definition was explanatory for a specific social situation in the United States, this definition has been applied to other sociological phenomena.

**Limited English Proficient.** The federal definition of those who do not speak or use the English language for academic purpose in U.S. schools (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2001). Although this term remains in the federally adopted vocabulary, it has a connotation of an individual who has a deficit, thus the more appropriate term currently in use is English Language Learner (ELL).

**PreK–12 environment.** This refers to any setting within schools, whether private or public, with classes from early childhood through the 12th grade. The current PreK–12 environment in the United States services children ages 3 through 18 and up to age 23 in special circumstances (USDOE, 2001).

**Relevance.** In a classical grounded theory design, allows the core processes and problems to emerge from the data collected instead a research event that is entered with preconceived notions regarding data outcomes (Glaser, 1978).

**Refugees.** Displaced and migratory individual that is unable to return to a homeland for a variety of reasons and conditions. As a rule, individuals seek assistance from the United Nations and apply to nations that accept refugees for resettlement. There are numerous international conventions that protect these individuals (Batalova, 2008).

**Second Language Acquisition (SLA).** The studies of the ways people learn, process information, and function in a second language (Brown, 2007). Ortega (2009) defines SLA as a
scholarly field of inquiry that investigates the human capacity to learn languages other than the first language.

**Voluntary immigrant.** An individual who moves to the United States, or other beneficial location, believing this will result in economic well-being, opportunity, and greater political and religious freedom (Ogbu, 1992).

**Summary**

Educators in the U.S. public school setting are continually questioning and trying to determine the best way to reach and to teach an increasingly diverse student population. Trueba (1989) aptly cautions that ethnic minority groups and waves of new immigrants bring to the educational arena new perspectives and experiences that are changing American culture. The multiethnic quality of this change is being felt by many of the established institutions of American society and the society is stressed by the changes. These collective and personal experiences have posed a significant challenge to academic communities that strive to provide equity in education for all students. Programs and curriculums that have focused on a monolingual, White, middle-class teaching mentality are being recontextualized by issues of language variation, immigrant and refugee concerns, global transitions, and a deepening recognition that not all students learn the same way.

A large number of social and educational research studies during the past three decades have focused on the academic achievement of culturally and linguistically diverse children and the characteristics they manifest in schools (Collier, 2008; Haynes, 2007). As educators struggle to provide opportunities for the academic advancement of students, one area that appears to be misunderstood is why many of these students cannot grasp the opportunities they are being afforded. The ability to bridge two cultures and integration of new familial structures, in
addition to social interactions within different cultural norms, are not areas that many educators are adept at identifying (Haynes, 2007; Philip et al., 2008; Toussaint-Clark & Clark, 2008). An understanding of this population’s cultural adaptability mechanisms, which addresses these important factors, may provide educators with a new tool to transform the educational achievement they desire for their students.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this qualitative study, using a classical grounded theory design, was to examine the recollected experiences of youth who have had to cross cultures in order to discover a pattern of behavior that describes how these experiences affected their ability to acquire language and move through the developmental stages of identity formation. Although researchers describe the effects of cross-cultural processes on adults moving between cultures, there is little research to date focused on the school-age population (Aycicegi-Dinn & Caldwell-Harris, 2009; Mencken, 2008). Petkova (2009) stated that research on the topic of culture stress may look at the process but does not take into account the actual perceptions and experiences of those who have made this transition. As part of the dominant culture, it is easy for educators to dismiss the idea of culture and feel cultureless. It takes a great deal of introspection to look at the status quo and see it as unique rather than ubiquitous. It is easier to think about differences from the dominant culture than to deconstruct a culture to understand its foundations. A grounded theory based on the experience of children crossing cultures, acquiring a new language, and developing a self-identity was instrumental in providing educators new ways of viewing the process of acculturation of children crossing cultures in U.S schools. Thus, a literature review was a way to view the underpinnings and the current thought in the field of education regarding the topic of transcultural children and acculturation.

A literature review is necessary to explain the historical aspects fundamental to this study, even though classical grounded theory avoids the extensive use of literature prior to “the actual emergence of a core category” (Glaser, 2004, p. 7). This literature review was conducted using relevant literature in the sociocultural aspects of education, first and second language acquisition as well as culturally relevant pedagogy. Databases available such as ERIC and Sage,
as well as the library of a local university for text were utilized. Included in this review are not only characteristics of transcultural children and the emotional, psychological and sociological aspects of the difficulties transcultural children may encounter in educational environments, but also how those same environments are reacting to the diversity they are faced with in the current educational climate.

**Culture Shock**

The term *culture shock* is also known as cultural dissonance, cultural adaptability, or culture stress across disciplines in the social sciences (Smith, 2006). The seminal definition of this term came from a lecture about the difficulty of crossing cultural boundaries, which was presented by Kalvero Oberg to the Women’s Club of Rio de Janiero in 1954. This presentation was annotated and reprinted as it came into common understanding as a four phase, U-shaped model that could be applied to the experiences of those who entered different cultures (Oberg, 1960). The culture shock model, as conceptualized by Oberg, contains four distinct periods or patterns through which an individual progresses toward acculturation when entering a new or different environment. There are four major transitions in the culture shock cycle: The honeymoon phase; the hostility phase; and a third stage, acceptance, when an individual begins to assume acceptance of his or her situation, which Oberg cautioned only happens for those who understand the language of the culture. The fourth phase of the model, adaptability, is the point at which a person accepts the new culture as another way of living (Oberg, 1960). Although recent explanatory models have developed concepts about issues with cultural dissonance, most have based the actual incidence of culture shock on the original Oberg model of a four-phase change (Petkova, 2009). Oberg described this experience as the anxiety that results from losing all normal, familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse. The latter half of the twentieth
century has seen a migration of populations throughout the world and interactions between cultures in unprecedented numbers (Batalova, 2008). Therefore, encounters between cultures because of business, trade, educational opportunity, and immigration have placed more individuals in a position to encounter culture shock (Batalova, 2008; Dornyei, 2009).

Over the ensuing years other researchers elaborated on the original four phase, U-shaped model (Furnham & Bochner, 1982; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Kohls, 1984, Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2005). Many of these studies were extensions or reconfigurations of the original four-phase process with emphasis on topics such as social distance (Furnham & Bochner, 1982), adaptability strategies for international business purposes (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Kohls, 1984), and recognition of an added dynamic known as re-entry shock or the shock experienced by an individual after returning to the home culture (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2005).

Additionally, culture shock is considered a disorder by the medical and psychological sciences (Rumbaut, 2007); lacking a cure for this malady, it continues to be a regular event for any individual entering a new culture. Professionals in these fields find it challenging to understand the process and how it affects the individual as trying to acculturate to a new living situation (Brown, 2007; Philip et al., 2008). Culture stress is not easily understood because it encompasses complex and dynamic processes (Jessner, 2008). Granger (2004) questioned the process this way, “Does the individual acquiring a second language and culture also acquire, or create, a second worldview, perhaps even a second identity? What might this imply for the first worldview and the first self-identity?” (p. 41). If the precise factors of culture stress cannot be determined and changed, it becomes a vital factor in any way an individual tries to visit, to work, or become educated in a new culture (Dornyei, 2009; Jessner, 2008).
Cross-Cultural Children

One of the least explored aspects of how culture shock can affect a child comes from recent investigations into what it means to be a cross-cultural child (CCC) (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). Although any new concepts from this research that may emerge from the data collected may prove explanatory, it is worthwhile to note the definition of a CCC has undergone recent redefinitions. CCCs have been examined in recent years because of the growing numbers of children involved in global family movement for work or service within a business organization. According to Pollock and Van Reken (2009), the number of children affected by cross-cultural dissonance had risen to 4 million by 2007. The numbers indicate these children have not adjusted well in environments that are culturally dissimilar. As global life is rapidly becoming a norm for many children, Pollock and Van Reken have attempted to develop understandings about the benefits and challenges for children experiencing the cultural adaptation process. The authors stated, “Experts are trying to predict the outcome of this cultural juggling; looking at the cross cultural child world can help prepare for the long-term consequences of this new pattern of global-mixing” (p. 5). Much of the early research in this area focused on expatriated children, who were held to high expectation by their families and would serve as “little ambassadors” for the time they lived outside of their home country (Useem, 1993, p. 1). Currently, a diversity of approaches to defining cross-cultural juggling, from affective to pedagogical aspects of the experience exist, yet as Granger (2004) explained the process is more complex than just language learning and identity development.

As the paradigm of world movement has changed, so has the definition of CCCs making adjustments as they cross cultures and function both socially and academically. Pollock and Van Reken (2009) asserted that it is no longer an appropriate definition to separate children from one
level of experience or another; rather, their experiences should be viewed as having different quality. The more appropriate definition of children’s experiences may be found in understanding the long-term effects on their psychological, social, and emotional development. Pollock and Van Reken developed a model of CCCs who come from the following environments:

- Traditional: Children of corporate employees, Foreign Service, missionaries, or military families.
- Bi- or multicultural children: Children of parents from different cultures.
- Bi- or multiracial children: Children who are of mixed race or from mixed race families.
- Border–Landers: Children who cross borders on a daily basis to attend school or to accompany parents at work.
- Domestic CCCs: Children exposed to various subcultures within their home culture.
- International adoptees: Children who have been brought from one culture to another to reside with a family from a different culture.
- Children of immigrants: Children of parents who seek new opportunities in a different culture.
- Children of refugees or asylees: Children who by virtue of war, or persecution, cannot live in their home culture.
- Children of minorities: Children who are not a member of the dominant racial group in a culture. (p. 31)

The breadth and depth of this definition sheds new light on the many ways children can be exposed to cross-cultural dissonance. This model also highlights the lack of choice children
face in this process. In addition, Dimroth (2008) conceded knowledge of language and cultural contexts of communication change radically from young children to adolescents to adults as learners gain experiences that are important not only for language learning but also for information organization. If children are exposed to cultural dissonance as a disruption to their well-being (Oberg, 1960), it is arguable that various contexts of communication, including educational environments, are fraught with disruptions as children maneuver through the cognitive and sociocultural tasks that define the experience.

**Voluntary and Involuntary Choice**

The distinguishing features between majority and minority cultures illustrate cognitive and sociocultural tasks that form the framework for children to gather the requisite information and establish an attachment to a new culture (Foster, 2004). In many aspects, this is determined by whether or not the children had input into the decision to leave their homeland. Ogbu (1992) set forth in his cultural-ecological theory of minority student performance that at any time two factors are contributing to a students’ performance; first, how society, including schools, treats the minority and how minority groups respond to these community forces. This model fails to account for children without the ability to make decisions or to engage in these decisions, which is a critical factor when determining the success or failure of a child in a new cultural environment. In addition, children lack the psychological, social, and emotional dispositions to be able to make these decisions and simply must bear the consequences of the transcultural familial movement (Foster, 2004). This scenario is filled with areas in which the needs of the child may not be fully comprehended or understood (Granger, 2004). Although Ogbu (1992) referred to student performance, his model actually outlined the means by which an individual arrived in a new culture as being a defining factor in how they engaged with both the society and
the community. Ogbu saw two distinct groups: those who voluntarily made a decision to leave their homeland for greater economic opportunity and those who involuntarily left their homeland to leave situations outside of their control. Therefore, it is arguable that all children, under parental control and influence, leave their homeland with little input into the actual migration decision (Philip et al., 2008). These transcultural children arrive in the new culture and must assume roles and responsibilities that change not only their cultural environments but also their familial dynamics. They become involuntary immigrants and bring actions and attitudes reflecting their distinct cultural and language patterns that distinguish them from majority cultural behaviors (Foster, 2004).

Although Ogbu’s discussion was focused on African American culture and this group’s struggles in U.S. schools, the same discussion can be applied to the current culturally and linguistically diverse student population predominant in schools across the United States over the past 10 years. Many researchers currently view Ogbu’s defining cultural ecology as missing key aspects of the involuntary reality (Foster, 2004). Hermans and DiMaggio (2004) noted a strong case could be made that the current world migration patterns contribute to dissonance that children bring to the educational experience. Issues of denial, anger, withdrawal, or rebellion demonstrate the involuntary circumstance proves more complicated than the initial conception presented by Ogbu (Edwards, 2009; Hermans & DiMaggio, 2004).

Pollock and Van Reken (2009) determined that this lack of control not only impeded the language acquisition process for CCCs but also may result in uneven maturity issues. These researchers posited that all humans have basic needs, categorized as follows:
The need for strong relationships: a sense of belonging, of being nurtured and cared for, of internal unity, of significance, of being able to make meaningful choices, and a feeling of knowing ourselves and being known by others. (p.142)

Pollock and Van Reken (2009) defined these needs as being the baselines of cultural influence on an individual’s personal identity; clearly, a disruption in these baselines creates a dissonance that can contribute to the individual’s uneven maturity. These areas are the most salient when it comes to the involuntary circumstances CCCs will encounter, rendering difficult their ability to engage in a new culture. Edwards (2009) elaborated on this point by clarifying that an individual’s identity is not only a social component but a cultural one, defined by the social contacts that support personal growth. Because children have immature systems for engaging within cultural contexts, adults responsible for their development make choices for them (Edwards, 2009; Granger, 2004). Unlike native population children functioning within a framework of native cultural norms, transcultural children simultaneously are constantly moving in and out of frames that are familiar and dissimilar.

The actual migration from one culture to another can create a powerful disruption not only in the baselines as described by Pollock and Van Reken (2009) but also in the family dynamics that are supposed to support the individual development of the child within cultural boundaries (Granger, 2004). Oehlberg (2006) acknowledged in most schools there are students who have experienced losses within their immediate circumstances. The cross-cultural process is often sudden, which places the family in crisis. Oehlberg further elaborated by citing role reversal between parent and child, stressful living conditions that disrupt the normal family environment, a lack of routine, and a myriad of new and stressful encounters within the new culture as contributing factors to a child’s sense of loss. Granger (2004) expanded on this issue
by viewing these losses as “conflict manifested in a complex manner” (p. 41). Granger saw this conflict as exacerbating a situation, which a child had no previous ability to prevent, as a contributing factor to how well the child was able to navigate the development of a new self in the new culture.

**Critical Age Theory**

One controversial aspect in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) is the hypothesis that there are specific age-related points in time when the brain loses plasticity for language acquisition (Philip et al., 2008; Caldwell-Harris, 2008). The current belief among scholars is that by the time a child enters adolescence, about age 9, his or her brain becomes less able to acquire the phonology, morphology, and syntax required for successful language acquisition (Dornyei, 2009). Further studies indicate that motivation becomes the driving force toward language development and acculturation (Dornyei, 2009; Philip et al., 2008). This belief implies the actual development of language in educational environments may lack the emotional and extra linguistic factors necessary for success. Age of acquisition effects may not be limited to approximation of the first language sequence or setting, but rather may be developed throughout a lifetime should the learner attempt to achieve a socio-emotional goal (Caldwell-Harris, 2008; Pavlenko, 2006). Educational environments may focus on motivational goals instead of socio-emotional goals for learners, which may prove to be a contributing factor to the dissonance transcultural children experience in schools.

In addition, children come to the educational environment at various stages of development, which may disrupt the home language development process and place children in situations filled with stressors and interrupted linguistic system development. Subsequently, they may enter educational environments that do not appeal to the emotional, social, and
psychological development required for adequate language developments (Dornyei, 2009). One area of this controversy continually revisited by researchers involves viewing the age-to-acquisition effect from a dynamic systems approach. As Dornyei (2009) explained, “Dynamic systems are often characterized by the interaction of subsystems that gradually get aligned with each other” (p. 107). This approach relies on details crucial to understanding what really happens in the process. Larsen-Freeman and Cameron (2008) described the process as a kind of mutual causality, in which change in one system leads to change in another system that continues over time. It is possible the actual process is more of a coadaptation, in which change in one system evokes or causes change in another (Philip et al., 2008). The focus, possibly, should not be on the age the brain loses plasticity but rather on factors to which the child has to adjust over time without the proper dispositions in place. Several researchers cite events that might hinder or even disrupt the coadaptation process, such as classroom teacher behavior, peer group interaction, and wash back in response to the excessive assessment environment currently in schools in the United States (Dornyei, 2009; Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008; Mencken, 2008; Philip et al., 2008). These events all constitute serious disruptions to the acculturation pattern of transcultural children.

**Acculturation**

Many authors have written about the profound effect crossing cultures can have on an individual. From Durkheim’s concept of *anomie*, or feelings of social uncertainty and dissatisfaction, to the great works of Tolstoy, Forster, and London (Brown, 2007; Collier, 2008), cultural dissonance is a powerful disruption to the state of individual well-being. Although Oberg’s (1960) initial description of the Four-Phase model attempted to classify these experiences, the actual impact on the lives of individual transcultural students may not fall into
any of the existing categories, because each child handles the dynamic of culture stress differently. As researchers have demonstrated, culture stress impacts CCCs abilities to not only to acquire language but also to recognize and to realize opportunities that will match their identity development (Rumbaut, 2007). Students who have had to cross cultures were chosen as subjects for this research in anticipation that they would not only communicate their various experiences but also provide a greater insight into the process, including but not limited to how seriously this dissonance affects them, at what stages it has the greatest effect, and how it frames their understanding of their choices in life (Feliciano, 2005; Mahon, 2006). Petkova (2009) asserted little attention has been paid so far to the perception of culture stress and to the different stages that individuals pass through until they fully understand they have experienced culture stress. Clarification of dispositions contributing to the success or failure of CCCs in school environments may determine ways educational settings can develop programs to address these children’s needs in a more proactive manner. Heretofore, programs that address the acculturation issues of first- and second-generation immigrants have been labeled under the educational heading as multicultural or cross cultural, thus rendering them a group dynamic as opposed to individual identity struggles across ethnic boundaries (Edwards, 2009).

**Ethnic Boundaries**

Pavlenko (2006) related that individuals’ cultural perspectives influence their verbal and nonverbal repertoires as they undergo the acculturation process. Often, these same individuals relate feelings of bilingualism but also bi-dimensional emotions about certain behaviors, conformities, and affective impact. Transcultural individuals often refer to a difference of identity between the uses of two distinct languages. Researchers have determined these differences between individuals as they experience the bilingual experience; therefore, it is
relevant for educators to recognize transcultural children also may bring these different perspectives into the classroom (Haynes, 2007; Pavlenko, 2006). The psychosocial aspects of bi-dimensional presentations also may contribute to issues related by Rumbaut (2007) when he described transcultural, bilingual children as being unable at times to engage in the explicit and hidden curriculum monolingual, native speakers take for granted in educational environments. Pavlenko (2006) agreed U.S. schools often develop programs and understandings based on educational psychology without delving further into how these theories are conceptualized by the “Western conceptualization of self in general” (p. 19).

Edwards (2009) contended that one of the threats to understanding ethnic boundaries comes from educators being focused on socioeconomic and social class factors in schools and the dismissal of students who present with ethnic concerns. Simply dismissing these ethnic boundaries would be ill advised because future global initiatives may depend on youth currently attending schools in the United States (Edwards, 2009; Tienda & Mitchell, 2006). Rumbaut (2007) cautioned schools in the United States are constantly reminded that the nation is a global sponge with the ability to absorb various populations from around the world. This ideal is a perception of the means by which the society integrates individuals crossing cultures; the reality of the actual process is not well understood.

The current demographics in U.S. schools indicate the median age of foreign and U.S.-born second generation students is age 12 and numbers in excess of 40 million (Census Data, 2003–2006, USDOE). Whereas this figure represents widely varying contexts and groups, the numbers alone should make the topic researched in this study relevant to educators as they attempt to develop programs and policies for this specific group currently attending schools across the nation. Transcultural children arrive in U.S. educational environments and have to
devise social attachments that will facilitate their education as well as develop strategies that will allow them to fit into the society of which they are the newest members (Rumbaut, 2007). Ortega (2009) further explained a lack of focus on ethnic boundaries may inhibit education policymakers from making sound decisions based on the whole child; instead, they may focus on CCCs abilities to learn a new language. Although a great deal of educational research focuses on how children use language in the classroom, many researchers feel one area missing involves how children use language in society. Dornyei (2009) cautioned a single-minded focus on cognition diminishes an important quality of any language learning event: emotion. Dornyei explained that an individual’s ethnic boundary is an emotional barrier that involves cognition, affect, and motivation; these three subsystems have constant and consistent interaction that cannot be isolated or viewed as single characteristics. As is often the case, the worldview most educational initiatives follow is to look at discrete and isolated issues and attempt to fix them. Linnebrink and Pintrich (2004) suggested that combining the cognitive processes, affective issues, and motivation into one model of learning might better reflect the reality of student learning. This directive would give educational communities a more thorough examination of how ethnic boundaries may hinder or facilitate successful learning for students experiencing transcultural issues.

**Second Language Acquisition**

The field of inquiry known as SLA became a cohesive discipline in the 1960s, bringing together language teaching, linguistics, child language acquisition, and psycholinguistics (Ortega, 2009). SLA has become notable as an autonomous field that examines the acquisition of any language other than the first language, with the focus on how the development of first language skills interact with the ability to acquire a second language. The demographics of
schools in the United States have grown exponentially, with children for whom their first language is not the language of educational environments in the United States; therefore, researchers in this field have been required to make significant contributions to education over the past 20 years (Haynes, 2007). The field of SLA began with contrastive analysis of linguistic structures, but gradually included the areas that examined affect and the learning environment with the assumption that, if the learning environment was more efficient, learning a second language would become a more effective process (Ortega, 2009). Current debates in the field focus on making distinctions between how an individual acquires a second language and how he or she learns a second language in a classroom environment. In addition, current initiatives in the field are enhanced with studies from the fields of sociology, psychology, and neurolinguistics.

Language acquisition is most often defined as a process, a methodology, or knowledge (Granger, 2004). Researchers have stated the use of any language, either the first or second, is a means by which we make sense of ourselves, give meaning to our lives, and how we make sense of relationships around us (Dornyei, 2009; Granger, 2004; Ortega, 2009). Edwards (2009) further explained whichever language we use also is instrumental in the shaping of our identity. However, these are aspects that are not a part of the learning a language dynamic that is inherent in a second-language process. If that is the case, educational environments—the main contexts for second language learning in the United States—may be missing key information not only regarding the methodology but also the process of SLA (Edwards, 2009; Ortega, 2009).

Sociocultural understanding of how individuals master a language in an educational setting used for success in the new culture is an area where schools lack information. Many researchers believe that individuals will use language as either a means to demonstrate social
allegiance or social resistance (Salomone, 2010). The context in which the actual learning is achieved may not be able to imbue the learning event with all the requisite elements for personal identity development. One aspect lacking in school environments may be the transmissions the language carries for the development of beliefs, values and moralities that are mutually understood within the culture (Dornyei, 2009). Cultural transmission is often perceived as a top-down process and is generational information (Ortega, 2009). Lacking access to adequate traditions, values and customs, school environments may find that the development of the language thus becomes an incomplete system.

Emotion is one of the key elements often cited as lacking from educational environments that engage in second-language learning. Caldwell-Harris (2008) stated, “Dominant models of language learning and processing were developed without taking emotional resonances into account” (p. 169). Caldwell-Harris reflected that a student rarely engages in emotional involvement with the second language-learning environment, which is required and also is a strong aspect of first-language development. The following studies conducted using modern technologies have highlighted areas heretofore assumed. The use of skin conductance amplitude devices to measure psycho-physiologic response to language and Positron Emission Tomography (PET) studies have demonstrated a clear connection between language processing and emotional response (Caldwell-Harris, 2008). In a recent investigation into bilingual physiological response to words in either language, Aycicegi-Dinn and Caldwell-Harris (2009) made a clear correlation between emotion and the first language response and the second language translated processed impact. The research found that the first language has more emotional ties with the individual due to three factors: first, the family context that stimulates the learning; second, the amount of connectivity between the language development and the co-evolution of emotional systems; and,
finally, the brain makes clearer connections with the subcortical structures that process language and emotion.

The fact that language remains a contentious issue gives credence to the understanding that not only national identity, as well as a personal identity rests in how an individual uses language in society. When a nation uses a language as a proxy for deeper political issues, the risk of breaching internal and external group boundaries exist (Salomone, 2010). Transcultural children are then faced with a difficult decision to either maintain an identity as a bilingual or isolate their identity from the family and adopt the language of the dominant culture (Ortega, 2009). The breach that occurs in the social and emotional connection to the home language and culture is, not simply the loss of the language, but the culture with all the emotional aspects intact.

The ability of educational environments to facilitate the emotional element into language learning curriculums would be ideal but would pose dilemmas and not be disseminated across contexts (Caldwell-Harris, 2008). Although Ortega (2009) agreed emotion is a key element in the language learning process, she further directed researchers also need to be aware that studies considered definitive must view the significant differences between monolingual groups acquiring a second language, in contexts in which monolingualism is highly valued, and multilingual groups acquiring more than one language for social value. These distinctions define current conflicts within the United States educational system under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) (Mencken, 2008; NCLB, 2001).

**Educational Mandates**

Mencken (2008) viewed the transcultural process currently being facilitated in U.S. schools as nonexistent. She cited various studies, plans, and policies across the nation as being
focused on language development with little desire to become a process. Mencken explained the actual lack of a language policy has created an environment in which language education and federally mandated assessments assumed the place of cohesive language plans and policies. Spolsky (2004) has referred to language testing as “de facto language policy” (p. 8). Spolsky argued the NCLB legislation might in fact promote monolingual language policies in the United States because of its assessment mandates. By focusing on psychometric aspects of educational environments, several researchers have concluded the actual transcultural, identity formation processes elemental to language development are not being met; thus, U.S. schools are failing students enduring this process (Mencken, 2008). If this is the case, it is also true that educators are focused on meeting these types of directives driven by the federal mandates, and lack an understanding and training in the emotion-laden and delicate process of language development and acculturation. Several research studies reference an elusive aspect in findings of pedagogical studies in SLA; perhaps the missing element is the emotional aspect the language learners bring to the entire experience.

**Defining the Process**

One area often discussed in defining and understanding the transcultural process is the meaning of acculturation and how it is understood in various societies. A number of studies over the past two decades have attempted to explain the disconnection between home culture and communication patterns and the communication structures children will encounter in schools. Studies of Native American children in Oregon and investigations into working-class African American family cultural patterns were definitive in describing the differences between home messages and school messages (Dornyei, 2009; Nieto, 2010). As Nieto (2010) further explained, the findings of these studies began the dialog in education that children acculturated differently
at home might have a serious cultural conflict and experience cultural stress in U.S. school environments that were normed on Western culture and middle-class thinking. By acknowledging this, education professionals would begin the process to be more inclusive in their policies and programs, and also embrace multicultural education as a more appropriate response to the needs of all children. Several multicultural researchers at that time confirmed these earlier studies and challenged educators to be more aware of these differences that diversity brought to the classroom (Nieto, 2010). Yet, as Nieto lamented, “The multifaceted, contested, and complex nature of culture sometimes is not taken into consideration even in culturally responsive pedagogy; thus rendering it only cosmetically relevant” (p. 153).

The challenge appears to be the words used to describe the process and the contexts without careful consideration of the definitions. Adaptability implies an individual will enter into the process and at some point accept the change as another way of living (Oberg, 1960). Assimilation, a term often used to describe the end state of immigration, implies an individual will go through a metamorphosis of language, culture, and perspective and become absorbed into the dominant culture (Dornyei, 2009). On the other hand, the term acculturation makes a contextual difference by defining that the two environments must make a significant change and develops dispositions that would lead to understanding and acceptance (Dornyei, 2009, p. 230). Therefore, acculturation is a process and both the individual and the educational environments must change in some visible and significant way. The concept of a process would suggest that simply looking at individual differences might lead to greater understanding; yet, it is the process that requires a dynamic systems approach to accepting change (Linnebrink & Pintrich, 2004). Although the general tendency may be to look at the group struggle with crossing cultural boundaries, it may be the actual process that may not have a definable and finite sequence.
It is anticipated that this research also created new directions for further research should certain aspects reveal that this process is ongoing throughout an individual’s lifetime. Smith (2006) related in an essay regarding his personal cultural adjustment:

How much more is there to learn? Why am I experiencing a lack of social interaction with my classmates? Is this powerful craving for relationships strange? Is it an illness or legitimate? The longer I talked, the more it seemed as if I was truly depressed and searching for someone or something to blame for my sorrow. (p. 39)

Smith also related the acculturation process as a lifetime filled with learning experiences and opportunities for growth. Thus, the possibility exists that acculturation is not a finite process, and that each self-organizing individual deals with the stress, frustration, and anxiety of cultural dissonance in his or her own personal frame and may encounter disruptions in the process throughout his or her life.

A student’s culture influences the way he or she hears, understands, and processes information (Philip et al., 2008). For immigrant students, the desire to acculturate may exist in their abilities to process the information through the filter of the actual experience in the new culture and the motivations affected by those experiences. The continued use of explanatory models based on research conducted with young adults who voluntarily choose to study abroad or choose to seek economic opportunity (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Kohls, 1984) diminishes the experiences of children in school environments. If the reference points in education do not value the emotional, psychological, and social needs of young children experiencing the cultural adjustment processes, as well as identify culture stress as a disruption to children’s
developmental milestones, then cross-cultural, immigrant students may be unable to accept the new culture or become motivated to achieve.

**Motivation in Learning**

The motivation to acquire the English language and to use it in the educational contexts of the United States becomes a driving force of the acculturation process for school-age CCCs. The U.S. school system has become the vehicle for young immigrants and children from culturally diverse backgrounds to understand how and be able to participate in society, and educators become their role models in the dominant culture (USDOE, 2008; Vega de Jesus & Sayers, 2007). Although researchers have tried to explain the most effective pedagogies for ELLs, the one area in which most educators have little prior professional training is the psychological, emotional, and social needs of transcultural students as they navigate the acculturation process and display the phases of culture stress (Collier, 2008; Giambo & Szecsi, 2005; Hamers, 2004; Haynes, 2007; Mahon, 2006; Taylor, 2004). Many experts would argue this is not the responsibility of the education community and is better left to psychologists who have an understanding of the emotional and psychological needs of children in the throes of culture stress (Dornyei, 2009). But the reality exists that schools in the United States bear a greater share of the burden of acculturation for CCCs, and educators should be professionally trained to appreciate this experience and to identify the symptoms and the effect these issues have on the acquisition of a second language (Philip et al., 2008). As most research in this area has been conducted on college-age young adults who have made qualified choices about entering into the experience, it would be relevant to view the conditions in the school environments and the recollections of children who had to maneuver through this process (Hamers, 2004). Students still in the various stages of personal development (Berk, 2006) are unable to grasp the
emotional disturbances they are experiencing. Little information is available about CCCs in school-age groups; what information exists examines issues related solely to language abilities (Collier, 2008).

In many ways, schools within the United States not only have shared this burden but also have struggled with ways to address language and personal development for transcultural students. It is recognized all students bring collective knowledge to their education experience (Moll, 2000); however, to what extent do educators focus on the wide variety of diverse groups they have to educate. Simply identifying a group and applying a categorical list of learning style preferences, ways to communicate with families and strategies to improve teachers’ praxis with transcultural students diminishes the full range of information educators require to understand encounters within group differences (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003). Whereas professional development models attempt to aid the process for educators, they are often programs that simply focus on classroom strategies and do not go in depth into the sociocultural aspects of the cross-cultural process.

The recent research of Ladson-Billings (2001) into teacher preparation programs identified several factors that would improve instructional practice and support educators’ ability to teach in diverse settings. Ladson-Billings further noted that many of these factors were lacking or totally missing in the preparation of educators, which is troubling. The three broad areas that were found to be the most effective knowledge bases for preservice educators included indicators of academic achievement, a deep knowledge of cultural competence, and a thorough understanding of sociopolitical consciousness. Pang (2005) concurred that teachers arriving in classroom with a limited sociocultural context would have a difficult time integrating the curriculum into meaningful learning for diverse populations. Pang advocated the use of a
culturally responsive teaching model, but as Ladson-Billings discovered, these factors were glossed over or not present at all in many teacher preparation programs.

The three broad categories as defined by Ladson-Billings (2001) sought to make the curriculum more culturally responsive and infused with the understanding that all students bring what Moll (2000) posited were their own “funds of knowledge” to the learning event (p. 258). Additionally, Ladson-Billings determined that teacher preparation programs lacked an understanding of the role of culture in education. The lack of support for a student’s culture as a foundation for learning was one factor that Pang (2005) lamented was missing in most preservice teacher preparation programs as well as in any meaningful professional learning for classroom educators. Finally, the broad indicator of sociopolitical consciousness, other than local or national indicators, were totally lacking in new teacher preparation for diverse learning environments (Ladson-Billings, 2001). Some researchers believed this factor may get lost in discrete subject education and may not be viewed as an integral part of interdisciplinary knowledge bases that are necessary for sociopolitical contexts (Moll, 2000; Pang, 2005).

Furthermore, although Ladson-Billings investigated teacher preparation, Pang and Moll viewed this as a more distinct issue for practicing educators and professional learning models. Educational reform to address the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students falls short in developing strategies to provide school environments with effective practices and professional development in these critical areas (Clarke, Hero, Sidney, Fraga, & Erlichson, 2006). Pang cautioned this left teachers with a new set of tricks for teaching but little experiential knowledge that would support and sustain their praxis. Subsequently, this dynamic leaves school leaders focused on language acquisition and federal mandates that show demonstrable progress (Haynes, 2007; Mencken, 2008). In addition, the same dynamic leaves
students relying on survival strategies to accomplish a task that will affect their future opportunities and the direction they will take as they move toward functioning in the dominant culture.

Using survival strategies does not indicate engagement with a process that leads toward acculturation. Granger (2004) describes this as the “liminal self or on a threshold with one foot in one world and one foot in another” (p. 62). Granger described the involuntary imposition of a new self on children may be a contributing factor to their inability to fully engage in the process of acculturation, which is a major focus of this research. Hereetofore, the focus on a child’s language ability in educational environments may have missed an important and relevant factor in the way children position themselves to move through the acculturation process.

Language acquisition, as most scholars agree, for this group of children becomes their measure of success in the academic arena and the hallmark of their progress toward acculturation in the new society (Shohamy, 2006; Spolsky, 2004). These students often are not placed with educators who fully support their needs as they learn a new language, nor do educators comprehend the vast areas of stress and anxiety these children encounter in the acculturation process (Escamilla, Chavez, & Vigil, 2005; Lovelace & Wheeler, 2006; Ogbu 1992; Rumbaut, 2007; Yoon, 2008). Additionally, classroom educators lack a deep knowledge base on language development for bilingual or bicultural children. In the various contexts of life in the United States, how these young people perceive their ability to connect with the dominant culture can affect their long-term patterns of behavior and intergroup relations as well as their motivation for language acquisition (Rumbaut, 2007).
Educational Environment

All learning occurs within the frame of a specific goal or end purpose (Dornyei, 2001; McDonough, 2007). The force that drives a learner through the learning process is motivation, which is a personal characteristic of the learner and something that can be provided or affected by an outside source (McDonough, 2007). The learning process can be redirected if there are disruptions in the extrinsic and intrinsic motivations of a learner. This process can be viewed in three parts: the initial decision to learn the language, the perseverance through the actual learning process, and subsequent evaluation of the entire experience (Dornyei, 2001). In other words, what motivates a language learner in the beginning may change or become internalized over time, and a student may have different motivational needs as the language acquisition process unfolds. In the school setting, the classroom teacher is the main person to alter learners’ self-perceptions of competence and autonomy; the teacher’s instructional style and personal involvement with the learners greatly contributes to the motivational orientation of the students (McDonough, 2007). Much research is available to explain how an individual acquires a second language grammatically, morphologically, and syntactically, but little research describes the sociocultural needs of CCC learners in educational environments as they struggle with the acquisition process (Bialystock & Miller, 1999; Birdsong, 2005; Collier, 2008; Dornyei, 2009). Additionally, the current climate in U.S. schools places CCCs into a situation that is driven by federal mandates to improve education through testing and language proficiency levels (Escamilla et al., 2005; Mencken, 2008; NCLB, 2001). This climate removes the focus from the individual struggle with the language and a new culture and shifts it to their inability to access the curriculum and deficit performances on standards testing. In essence, the children sense their worth exists only as a language learner and diminishes their personal identity crisis (Busch,
The dearth of research on young CCCs leaves questions about how culture stress affects their language development as well as their identity development in the new culture.

Bucholtz and Hall’s (2005) principle of positionality asserted that people develop their identities both individually and through accepting (or denying) identities projected on them by other people, which may hold information on how students are socialized in school environments. Bucholtz and Hall further examined the dilemma that exists when identity development and language development become highly politicized. Tools to examine this type of process would have to be grounded in social meaning. As a consequence, schools are sociopolitical environments that do not take into account the social identities to be developed. The authors saw that language development is only one of the building blocks in the socialization of students. Furthermore, Bucholtz and Hall cautioned that educators would like to view language development as the capstone event of the identity development process, yet without consideration of the social, historical, and political contexts that schools carry, the full picture of how an individual interacts with society is missing.

As the secondary source of socialization, schools explicitly and implicitly teach children the values of the dominant society. For linguistic minority children, teachers instill not only language or content but also the underlying cultural norms that are unfamiliar to students from diverse linguistic or cultural backgrounds. To do this effectively, teachers must be aware of student’s backgrounds and cultural norms and use culturally responsive teaching to address the different learning styles and behaviors of linguistic minority students. Ideally, teachers acculturate students to the dominant culture in school while fostering a positive evaluation of their home culture and the benefits of being bicultural (Clayton, 2003). Moll (2000) stated,
“Schools are not in the business of research and thus do not engage in the type of linguistic ethnographic inquiry necessary to get at the truth” (p. 267). Whereas schools transmit the values of the dominant culture both explicitly and implicitly, most socialization occurs implicitly. When students are told to work independently, to be creative, to ask questions, or are praised for good work, the dominant society’s preference for individualism, democracy, and competition are subtly transmitted. This sociocultural information is continuously conveyed through books and stories, in interactions with peers and teachers, and even in the types of assignments and assessments that children are given (Clayton, 2003). Teachers of linguistic minority children must be aware that students may be from backgrounds with conflicting values and assist them with an awareness and understanding of the dominant culture’s norms so they can succeed in school and in society.

**School Cultural Contexts**

One example of how this might work in a school environment, which has wide-ranging implications for learning styles and classroom behaviors, is the orientation toward collectivism or individualism. In a collectivist culture, the group is more important than the individual; the group’s needs supersede the individual’s needs or wishes and maintaining relationships among group members is of primary importance. In individualist cultures, the individual’s preferences, needs, rights, and identity are paramount (Clayton, 2003). Relationships are maintained or abandoned based on the individual’s self-determination. Students from collectivist cultures may value authority, need more direction, or have difficulty making decisions and setting goals than students from the dominant, individualistic cultures. Students from collectivist cultures also may be more compliant and less assertive, uncomfortable with praise or with being singled out, have little sense of privacy concerning other persons or physical property, or may hesitate to volunteer
answers for fear of shame or group disapproval. Because group relationships are of primary importance, students from collectivist cultures may not tell the truth if doing so will save face or maintain a valued relationship; or, they may share answers with other students in an effort to maintain relationships. In addition, these students often prefer group collaboration and cooperation to individual work and competition (Clayton, 2003). All of these manifestations of cultural values may put linguistic minority students at odds with what is expected of them in the dominant culture classroom. Therefore, it is imperative that teachers are aware of differing sociocultural norms in order to assist students in becoming bicultural operating with one set of norms at school and another at home.

One way to understand culturally responsive pedagogy is to examine the concept of caring. Noddings (2002) highlighted that teachers need to care about students as a foundation for an educator’s sense of justice. In many ways this reflects the concept of emotion in education as presented by Caldwell-Harris (2008) describing language acquisition and how emotion needs to be part of the process. Noddings argued that schools should, as far as possible, use the types of methods found in the best homes to educate students. Noddings envisioned providing students with trust and continuity, which would make the transition from home to school a more even continuum. In addition, culturally responsive teaching involves acknowledging and promoting positive identification with students’ home cultures, matching teaching styles to students’ learning styles, and attempting to bridge the gap between the home and the school culture. The majority of the research describes how cross-cultural students use language in academic contexts and which techniques could be used to develop language within these contexts (Cummins, 2000; Haynes, 2007; Taylor, 2004). However, few studies have viewed the actual experience these students have with culture stress and the effect on their personal, academic, and emotional
development in actual school settings. These developments also are an indicator of how CCCs view their roles for the future and define what Rumbaut (2007) referred to as their ethnic boundaries. He further stated that youth who perceive cultural dissonance will heighten their ethnic boundaries in reaction to perceived threats, persecution, discrimination and exclusion. These delicate areas in education are fraught with areas in which motives, as well as initiatives, could be misconstrued and undermine the fragile balance that is inherent in student–teacher relationships.

Culturally responsive techniques have come under scrutiny as educators move into the twenty-first century for how these techniques continue to perpetuate less than culturally caring models in schools. Gutierrez and Rogoff (2003) explained the dilemma this way:

Culture is not just one thing. Thus, using categorical explanations that conflate culture with social categories such as race/ethnicity and its proxies—language, ability, and social class result in overly deterministic, weak, and general understandings of cultural communities and their members, practices, and ways of knowing. The problem of putting people into boxes in which we link culture to group membership minimizes the tremendous diversity within groups that may share a common social or linguistic history. (p. 24)

Gutierrez and Rogoff (2003) further examined how education and educators “know little about how to account for variation in cultural communities, and there is little empirical work that illustrates how to document and utilize data about regularities and variation in students who come from diverse cultural backgrounds” (p. 24). The implication for educational environments is thus: CCCs suffering from culture stress, combined with educators who do not have access to how this issue affects individual student progress, may not attain school achievement or
expectations in the dominant culture as they struggle through the language learning and acculturation process. Bucholtz and Hall (2005) determined that language and identity do not operate in isolation from other social dynamics, making it necessary for all of the actors to be willing to engage in the interaction.

Philip et al. (2008) argued that current research agendas, in a quest for school reforms, are action-related models that identify a problem, apply a treatment, and determine if the treatment was successful. In this instance, the authors believe that education may be missing important aspects of cognitive, social, emotional, and contextual factors. Gutierrez and Orellana (2006) agreed that this area is not well researched from a sociocultural approach. Gutierrez and Orellana also feared that most studies set out to look for the problem, thus setting contexts for problems to be highlighted and results to determine a deficit. In addition, when many of the questions in education are posed from a multilingual, multicultural, sociocultural perspective, the answers may lead to defining a monolingual and monocultural individual as having a deficit and therefore being at a disadvantage in a global society (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Gutierrez & Orellana, 2006).

Studies abound that define key issues in the education of transcultural children, such as behavior dissonance, familial dysfunction, and low school achievement being related to ethnic personality differences (Collier, 2008; Feliciano, 2005; Ponterotto et al., 2007; Villalba, Akos, Keeter, & Ames, 2007). Most of these studies are intended to improve educators’ abilities to identify issues in the context of cultural adaptability, but few of these studies have informants from the actual population of cross-cultural, immigrant, or first-generation children relating their personal, social, and educational experiences in the dominant culture. These studies are designed to look at linguistic functions and rarely are focused on individual struggles with serious social
issues. Important questions that might be asked include how schools can connect with youths’ everyday multiliteracies; capitalize on their interests in contributing productively to their communities; and leverage social, cognitive, and linguistic skills for their own learning and development as well as for the benefit of others (Gutierrez & Orellana, 2006). Analysis of issues from a culturally responsive, caring, and inclusive perspective might lead educators to examine more closely their repertoire of approaches to what takes hold as youth move within and across tasks, contexts, and spatial, linguistic, and sociocultural borders (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003). Granger (2004) presented the idea that the behaviors or dispositions associated not only with language development but also with the development of a new second language self alters the individual on the outside and the inside as well. The question of how transcultural children use these dispositions to achieve their educational goals in the new culture becomes an important component of understanding how they handle the cross-cultural experience. Katz (1993) asserted, “There are several reasons for suggesting that dispositions should be included among instructional goals and understandings in education; the most important reason is that the acquisition of knowledge and skills does not guarantee that they will be used and applied” (p. 2). Such dispositions also would be understood, in part, as a historical consequence of practices in which multicultural understanding has been a part of individuals’ strategies to negotiate movement within and across a range of developmental tasks and contexts (Gutierrez & Orellana, 2006; Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003). Often educational research will focus on what the data relates but will miss important information that may be gleaned from examining the dispositions for the motivation of the behaviors. Determining how CCCs apply these dispositions to their education gave this study an orientation toward understanding the extent to which their personal experiences are altered in educational environments in the United States.
Sociocultural Factors in Education

One of the aspects often dismissed as having little relevance is the family dynamic that first created the transnational movement. Trueba (2004) has cautioned that educators should not observe CCCs as they would view native-speaking students and apply similar prior knowledge to their understanding. Trueba indicated that the contexts are significantly different for transcultural students between the messages of the home and the messages of the school environment. Should educational communities dismiss the home context, determining it as unreachable, opportunities to comprehend the vast needs of transcultural students may be missed by educational institutions. Trueba further added that by depriving, dismissing and isolating segments of a population, they are denied their basic human rights. If that is the case, it may be that the agencies of a government, struggling with new demographics, deliver a message that denies certain individuals their rights as they enter a new culture. Yoon (2008) discovered teachers’ perceptions of immigrant and first-generation families were the families of transcultural students had no interest in the student’s well-being in schools and felt that adapting these children to U.S. culture was the responsibility of the education community. The attitudes and approaches educators adopted as a result of these perceptions further distanced families from the critical function of education in the life of the transcultural child. In addition, a teacher’s perception that language was a block to meaningful interaction with the family created a sense that this was a part of the child’s experience they chose to not touch. Glaser (1998) discovered that grounded theory held the promise of uncovering “continual, multivariate processing” to discover what is really going on in the participant’s main concern (p. 35). The actual family dynamic may not exist as a separate entity but ultimately may be tied to the ways that transcultural students cross educational, ethnic, and cultural boundaries. These are areas in
which opportunities to understand the child and his or her needs may be lost in educational contexts. Trueba (2004) referred to this group of students as having cultural capital that would be a necessary part of a global society. Trueba believed schools held information important to a democratic society, but educators often lose focus of the main goal that needs to be accomplished. In the case of immigrant and second language children, the goal should be to allow opportunities to acculturate and develop self-identity.

Self-identity development is a lengthy process and is often tied to stages of human development. Research has found children who are bilingual carry multiple identities depending on their communicative and sociocultural context (Pavlenko, 2006; Trueba, 2004). These multiple identities are viewed as the historical factors that brought individuals across nations, economic and social forces that facilitate courage and collaborations that instigated the movements, and family considerations that give individuals impetus to embark on these migrations. The resilience to make these adaptations across cultures may prove to be a valuable and sought after resource in a newly defined American culture in the twenty-first century (Trueba, 2004). An interesting aspect of cross national movements is the lack of research on the native populations who absorb the new demographics and cultural groups (Pavlenko, 2006; Petkova, 2009). In effect, research is lacking a sense of intercultural communication and identity development as both groups move within a post-modernist society. Issues of child-rearing practices, health and nutrition, and behavior and discipline are flashpoints for intercultural conflict within school settings. The school-based practices that are reflective of the dominant culture may in fact create areas that perpetuate and sustain misunderstandings (Pavlenko, 2006). Trueba (2004) saw this situation as being a pathway for schools to reform their practice and to
The outline Trueba proposed implemented five main areas that required attention:

- The first being communication structures both within schools and the community,
- next, planning policies and accountability protocols that are realistic,
- third, a deep understanding of quality learning environments.
- The fourth and fifth stages of this reform initiative were the teachers to work in school environments who were trained to develop students with cultural and linguistic needs and finally, leadership that was determined, resourceful and held high expectations for students. (p. 161)

In most contexts, these initiatives might not seem different than usual requirements for school reform initiative; however, in the context of low-performing schools that serve culturally and linguistically diverse populations represented often by immigrant and first generation student groups, these initiatives become imperatives.

In this study, immigrant and first-generation transcultural children are not seeking employment opportunities in a different culture or personal fulfillment that would eventually lead them back to their home culture; instead, they pursue linguistic and cultural equity within the dominant culture. Therefore, new and more realistic models of understanding the process will have to be developed. In addition, the recognition that children may not be in a position to attend to the dissonance they experience in the transcultural process should be at the forefront of any new conceptualizations of education for a changing population.

**Summary**

Programs and curriculums that have been normed on a monolingual, Western, middle-class teaching mentality have been challenged by issues of language variation, immigrant and
refugee concerns, and global transitions, as well as a deepening recognition that not all students learn the same way. A large number of social and educational research studies in the past three decades have focused on the academic achievement of culturally and linguistically diverse children and the characteristics they manifest in schools. As educators struggle to provide opportunities for the academic advancement of students, one area that appears to be misunderstood is why many of these students cannot seem to grasp the opportunities they are afforded within the new culture. An understanding of this population’s adaptability that examines these important factors may provide educators with a new tool to transform the educational climate and understanding of students who present with cultural dissonance. Pathways to innovative and equitable programs that would lead to greater opportunities for transcultural children would benefit educators and schools in the United States, which currently are struggling to meet federal mandates that at times seem unreachable as well as unreasonable. School reform and contrived initiatives fall short of providing educators with the comprehensive knowledge they will need to acquire as they move toward the twenty-first century skills that require a level of cultural competence in both educators and students (Canagarajah, 2005). Granger (2004) has stated schools are where processes take place, both social as well as intrapersonal. These processes are full of pleasure as well as disillusionment, anxiety, and conflict. Schools are places filled with competing promises, demands, rewards, and disappointments (Granger, 2004). For students crossing cultural and ethnic boundaries as well as acquiring a second language, schools need to recognize and make an effort toward deeply understanding how these processes hinder or support a student’s success.
Chapter 3: Research Method

As more children enter U.S. schools bringing diverse issues into classrooms, educators need to become aware of the various contexts that influence student’s abilities to achieve. Heretofore, many studies that define the experiences of children crossing cultures have focused on language acquisition and the pedagogical concerns that are associated with teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students. Researchers have agreed that often certain dynamics of the learning process for transcultural children are overlooked (Pavlenko, 2006, Petkova, 2009). In addition, there is a current realization that as the demographics in schools change there will need to be a greater recognition, respect for, and attention to cross-cultural diversity in future investigations (Patton, 2002).

For the most part, common understandings of cross-cultural issues have been developed based on previous research with adults who are choosing to seek educational or employment opportunities in a different culture (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Kohls, 1984; Oberg, 1960). As a consequence, current educational practice continues to be based on models using adult subjects who choose voluntarily to enter into the experience of crossing cultures (Aycicegi-Dinn & Caldwell-Harris, 2009). Therefore, a study that gathered information from actual participants who have had to accomplish both educational and cross-cultural tasks provided new directions for understanding the process of language acquisition in educational environments and how it contributed to incidence of cultural dissonance and acculturation. The reports of children who have had to accomplish the difficult task of acculturation into a second culture revealed a theory that may improve understanding about an area in education that seems elusive and confounding. The following chapter outlines the research design of grounded theory in detail, as well as the selection of participants and the instrumentation used during the conduct of the research. In
addition, discussion of why classical grounded theory was the chosen design for the research is explained in detail.

**Design Considerations**

The research design for this study was qualitative methodology and used classical grounded theory design. Grounded theory allowed the researcher to determine the core variable, or the main concern, as related by the participants. How the participants related they managed and strategized to resolve those main concerns was data that led to developing explanatory and abstract answers about the process. Researchers need to think through the philosophical worldview assumptions they bring to a study, the strategy of inquiry that is related to that study, and the specific methods that will translate the approach into practice (Creswell, 2009). Maxwell (2005) further explained that qualitative methods can be used to “credibly draw causal conclusions” by examining the process that leads to outcomes (p. 23). Therefore, moving to a realistic perspective on an existing concept of transcultural dissonance caused these concepts to be socially constructed within the process of their causal relationships in order to understand the experiences of those reporting the event.

Creswell (2009) explained that individuals develop subjective meaning for their experiences and those meanings are directed at objects or things. When those subjective meanings are directed at objects or things (in this case, educational experiences and opportunities in a new culture), children crossing cultures applied various meanings to the events. Many concepts were “in vivo concepts”; that is, they came from the words of the participants in the substantive area (Glaser, 2002, p. 24). The complexity of these concepts, as a part of the recollections of the participants, contained the rich data that allowed for a new understanding of how cultural dissonance affected an individual’s language acquisition and eventual ability to
acculturate into a new, more dominant culture. The proposed study was not an attempt to discredit a theoretical framework used as an explanation for adults with developed social, psychological, and emotional systems making choices; rather, it was an effort to move toward a new understanding that this same paradigm might not be appropriate when applied to children. The multiple realities children placed on their experiences and the recollections of how they processed those experiences were the target data. Categorically codifying the responses with a fresh perspective on how children resolved their concerns in school settings indicated the current patterns of cultural dissonance (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Kohls, 1984; Oberg, 1960) were not explanatory of the ways children construct their self-identity in the acculturation process when exposed to a new language and culture.

Grounded theory is a strategy for handling data in research, providing modes of conceptualization for describing and explaining (Glaser & Strauss, 196). Glaser (2002) further elaborated that a Grounded theory study uncovers patterns of behavior that the individual may not even be aware of as they engage in those behaviors. In addition, the particular context, in this case PreK–12 school environments, played an important role in understanding how the context influences the actions of the participants (Maxwell, 2005). Therefore, the grounded theory researcher anticipated the main concerns of the participants in the study and how they resolved those concerns in school environments.

Research Method and Design

Grounded theory methodology was considered a paradigm shift in qualitative research when it was developed; however, a further shift in the approach to grounded theory design by the two original authors provided different formats for grounded theory methodology (Storberg-Walker, 2007). Morse and Richards (2002) elaborated, “The Glaserian School takes a more
social, scientific approach, emphasizing the study of causal relationships” (p. 57). As Maxwell (2005) explained, understanding the processes and environments rather than demonstrating “regularities in the relationships between variables” is fundamental to a realistic view of the causal explanations (p. 23). Glaser (2002) defined the approach to grounded theory as the generation of emergent conceptualizations denoted by categories and their properties, which through a constant comparison process integrates the concepts into a theoretical construct.

Classical grounded theory, the design method of this study, is defined as an approach to theory development that involves deriving constructs and laws directly from the immediate data the researcher has collected rather than drawing on existing theory (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). By using a classical grounded theory approach, beginning with a targeted group of individuals who had experienced cultural dissonance in their formative years, the data were collected and analyzed to generate a theory that explained how children recalled and then applied their personal, subjective meanings to the event of crossing cultures. Examining how multicomponential environments and the multiple processes required for school success contributed perspective about how cross-cultural students applied meaning to these events. Researchers have suggested it may be more advantageous to examine variations people bring to their involvement in cultures and the practices that are commonplace within a particular cultural experience instead of looking for regularities in a group (Moll, 2000). Grounding the data in recollections of personal experience allowed concepts that had been processed with individual variations to emerge. Those dispositions present at various stages of children’s development as they moved through the cultural dissonance process were suggested or classified by the data.

The data were collected using notes the researcher developed throughout the data collection interview process. These notes then were developed as memos that as Glaser (1998)
explained, calls up data by association which leads to coding, conceptualizing, analyzing, and continuous theoretical sampling, if necessary. In most instances of grounded theory, the data then would be substantiated by the literature. The researcher would then connect the memos into categories that the literature suggested. In the case of this research, the literature had already been accomplished. Therefore, the memos were addressed within the context of the known topics of concern but with the understanding that the research was open to the possibility that other avenues and literature might provide more definitive directions for the generation of the theory. This provided the conceptualization framework for the study.

Tejada, Espinoza, and Gutierrez (2003) suggested a realistic approach limits descriptors because cultural and linguistic settings encourage participants to share their personal experiences. Glaser (2002) agreed that conceptualization transcends all descriptive methods and their associated issues. Glaser further explained, “The two most important properties of conceptualization for generating Grounded theory are that concepts are abstract of time, place and people, and that concepts have enduring grab” and he viewed these properties as an “applied way of seeing events” (p. 24).

**Participants**

Glaser and Strauss (1967) asserted the constant comparison of different groups or subgroups provides data that leads to general concepts, and suggests modifications to make those concepts generalizable to other groups (p. 23). The setting for the initial phase of the study was conducted in one county in northern Virginia. Face-to-face (FTF) personal interviews, Skype™ chats, and email exchanges were conducted with respondents from one geographic area approximately 45 miles south of Washington, D.C. This area was unique because the second-language populations were not clustered by any one dominant language group; thus, the pool of
respondents was not from a specific cultural group but was representative of groups from diverse areas of the world. This area also continues to be a location in which immigrants, refugees, and asylees settle because of the increased opportunities for employment and quality of life. Many children, although born as U.S. citizens, enter schools in this area from heritage language and culture enclaves in the region. In addition, this area has seen growth patterns of second language populations over the past 10 years that have exceeded the national average of more than 7% annually (USDOE, 2008). Stafford County, Virginia is currently the 10th largest school-age, second-language population in the state of Virginia (Virginia Department of Education [VDOE], 2008). During the 2007–2008 school years, 72 graduates from the five county high schools had graduated over the past two years (USDOE, 2008) with the designation of Limited English Proficient (LEP). This group of students was listed by Stafford County at one time within the previous five years as LEP for federal reporting purposes. In addition, all of these students were at one point in their school career identified as requiring support for language development and cross-cultural transition. Properly documented letters of request were sent with a letter of informed consent to be returned to participate in the study. In addition, a self-addressed, stamped envelope was included so participants could return the informed consent in a timely manner. Of the 72 letters sent, 28 were returned but four of those did not contain properly executed informed consent. The responses were tagged by date of return and the theoretical sample was taken at random from those 24 properly executed responses. As is the case with classical grounded theory, this particular group of students began the process known as theoretical sampling (Glaser, 2004, p. 10).

In a discussion of theoretical sampling, Glaser (2004) asserted, “The possibilities of multiple comparisons are infinite, so groups must be chosen according to theoretical criteria” (p. 
In addition, when using a theoretical sample, a researcher must be aware that it is not the sampling of individuals and controlling the variable that leads to the description or theory; rather, it is the concepts related by the participants that assume the role of data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Conventional sampling methods assume the data must come from a set population of participants; in a grounded theory design, a researcher anticipates the concepts that will lead to a variety of sources (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser, 2004). Glaser explained, “Only as the researcher discovers codes, or concepts and tries to saturate them by theoretical sampling in comparison groups, do the successive requirements for data emerge” (p. 51). Interviews began with a group of students who had to acculturate to the dominant culture through school environments and simultaneously acquired a second language. Personal interviews were arranged with 13 participants chosen at random without regard to ethnic background or language proficiency. Although personal interviews elicited some form of response, the participants determined the responses and opened the avenues for further sampling. This led to participants using Skype™ chats or email exchanges for the convenience of the participants not in the regional area at the time the data were collected. In addition, participants provided records, writings, personal journals and other school related documents to support some of their concerns during the interviews. The research sought to understand how the former LEP students strategized in PreK–12 environments to meet their needs from a social, psychological, and emotional perspective. It is through this process that Glaser contended, “Researchers discover the main concern of the participants and how they resolve the concern” (p. 8).

**Data Collection, Processing, and Analysis**

“All is data is a well-known Glaser dictum” (Glaser, 2002, p. 145). In grounded theory, the relevance of all the data cannot be presumed; it must emerge, not so much from the
participants’ stories but rather from the concepts the researcher discovers from the stories that
participants relate (Glaser, 2004). The data collection examined all interviews and documents to
determine those concerns and how the participants strategized to resolve them. Glaser further
stated, “Grounded theory uses all types of interviews and, as the study proceeds, the best
interview style emerges” (p. 5).

Research commenced with initial interviews of participants in the pool of the 13
respondents using the grand tour question; however, these interviews created new questions that
were asked, as well as new venues and documents that had relevant information in the
substantive area. Many of the participants provided documents to support their recollections of
the process. School writing journals and projects about the transcultural event were provided and
were coded for concepts. The interviews were transcribed and placed on a template. The data
then was coded for concepts that were placed on the template matrix. The documents were
analyzed for concepts and also were placed on the overall matrix to begin the constant
comparison stage of the grounded theory process. Memos or theoretical notes about the data
were consistent throughout the process of grounded theory. As these concepts emerged, the
research began the process of constant comparison analysis until it reached what Glaser and
Strauss (1967) referred to as saturation or to the point where no new properties or dimensions
emerged. The constant comparative method was used to analyze the data. In this way the
researcher constantly compares the point of view of the participants looking for similarities and
differences until a theory can be formulated. As an additional step, to ensure the accuracy of the
theory and its division of the stages, four of the participants were re-interviewed. Therefore,
learning the ropes is a fully grounded theory derived directly from the interviews and documents
provided by all the participants in this study. The theory of how children cross cultures in
educational environments emerged from the behaviors related by all participants as they maneuvered through the basic social process.

Using a grand tour question allowed the grounded theory researcher to develop a theoretical sensitivity to words, body language, and other paralinguistic features of the interview, which can affect participants’ responses. A grand tour question allowed the concerns of the participants to emerge rather than to force the data into any set of ideas preconceived by a researcher; however, there was still a process that drove the entire conduct of the research. Glaser (1978) summarized the grounded theory process as:

The collection of the research data, open coding of the data soon after collection, theoretical sampling, generating many memos with as much saturation as possible and emergence of core, social or psychological problems and processes which then become the basis for further theoretical sampling, coding, memoing as the analyst focuses on the core variable. (p. 16)

Simmons (2008) provided a clear outline for the stages that are necessary for the grounded theory process, as follows:

**Preparation.** It is at this stage that the grounded theory researcher minimizes preconceptions, chooses a substantive area, sets aside all bias, and develops a grand tour question.

**Data collection.** Although there is no set timeframe or determined setting for data collection, this process often is conducted in an interview format, but any type of data can be collected for a grounded theory study (Glaser, 1978). Data collection is ongoing until the substantive area is saturated. Theoretical sampling also is continuous throughout this process and may take the research to areas not have considered at the outset of the study (Glaser, 1998).
Most theorists find this aspect of the grounded theory design motivational because the more that is learned about the substantive area, the greater the momentum to look deeper at the concepts (Glaser, 1998).

**Constant comparative analysis.** Indicators are compared to other indicators and lead to codes and categories, which are compared with each other. The researcher prepares to code incidents in a rigorous comparison within the same category, leading to theoretical properties of the category (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

**Memoing.** Comprises theoretical writing about the emerging data, which can be done at any time as theoretical thoughts occur to the analyst; memos then become more conceptual as the study proceeds.

**Theoretical sorting.** The memos that have been written are sorted into a theoretical outline, forming the skeleton of an emergent theory.

**Writing the theory.** Categories and properties begin to integrate and provide the analyst with the framework to clarify the theoretical comparisons (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Simmons (2008) further indicated that many of these stages will occur simultaneously and that they are “ongoing and overlap” (para. 6). The stages of grounded theory analysis are iterative and continuously inform each other.

The emergent theory was evaluated based on the five tenets of classical grounded theory: relevance, grab, fit, workability, and modifiability (Glaser, 1998, p. 9). Through memoing, the core variable began to emerge and could be evaluated. In other words, the framework of the specific methodology did not force data to be interpreted into specific predetermined categories; rather, the substantive codes determined the categories they fit better within as the study progressed toward saturation (Drew, Hardman, & Hosp, 2008). As Glaser and Straus (1967)
described the comparative method of data collection, they viewed it as hypotheses that would quickly integrate with each other. Thus, the data from this grounded theory study was analyzed comparatively until codes and categories were saturated and a theory relating the codes and categories to a core variable, or main concern, emerged. This is an iterative process that provided the research with fit, or as Glaser (1998) contended, “Fit is another word for validity” (p. 18).

**Methodological Assumptions**

The goal of a grounded theory researcher is to discover the patterns of behavior by the participants in a substantive area. Glaser (1998) explained that grounded theory is an inductive approach that calls for emphasis on the experience of the participants. A grounded theory study is not designed to generate measurable findings but to discover the concerns of the participants in a substantive area (Glaser, 1978, 1998, 2004). In grounded theory methodology, the concerns are generated by the participants rather than preconceiving a concern. The approach used to collect data in this design was known as the grand tour question, defined as an open-ended, overarching question that allowed the participants to define the directions and the parameters of the interview (Glaser, 1978, 1998). When examining how the continued uses of models that are based on adult informants differed from the patterns that were actually recalled by children, the following grand tour question, or in other words, a question that was used with “as few predetermined ideas as possible” (Glaser, 1978, p. 3) was: “Tell me about your recollections and experiences as you entered school in the United States.”

Glaser (1978) explained these sensitizing concepts occur at the start of the research and can be used to uncover data that might otherwise be overlooked. Whereas the goal of grounded theory is to type behavior of the participants rather than to type the participants into specific
groups of behavior, grounded theory research is able to make immediate connections that may lead the researcher into areas that were not originally a part of the research construct (Glaser, 1978). This sensitivity to the main concerns of the participants allowed the researcher “to be curious, creative and to trust his or her instincts” as the analysis proceeded (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 16).

The ability to trust one’s instincts with a topic may create a dilemma for some researchers as they proceed with a study. As is often the case, a grounded theory researcher would likely explore an area considered a particularly biased area of study. For this researcher, education was an area of expertise and the better part of a career has maintained involvement with second language learning. Yet, by acknowledging this bias, setting it aside to allow for curiosity and creativity to emerge, the researcher proceeded not from what was already known about the substantive area but with an understanding that there was a great deal more to know and discover about the process of cultural dissonance. In this particular instance, as concepts emerged it was possible for this grounded theory researcher to recognize events as outside of the usual recollections. One of the reasons grounded theory research was so compelling is that it is the relevance of the people in the substantive area understudy (Glaser, 1998). In this way, an educator was able to study the problem that exists for the participants in the main area, not what was supposed to exist or what other professionals deemed worthy of study for this particular group (Glaser, 1998). As the concepts emerged, it was observed that the data did not match with any preconceived notions, bias or previous understood theories and allowed the research to progress forward looking at the substantive area with a new focus.
Limitations

The objective of grounded theory is to conceptualize data to generate a theory explaining the relevance of behavior patterns for participants (Glaser, 1978). Yet, this was not easy to accomplish. A grounded theorist must be open to what is said and also to what is left unsaid by participants. Glaser (1998) cautioned it is not worth the effort for the researcher to think he or she knows what will be relevant before the study. The researcher was open to the element of surprise and willing to follow participants in the research, which was a strong limitation in research protocol, most notably in education, where research often is conditioned to alleviate a problem with a treatment and then the treatment is determined to have been a success or a failure. Consequently, the greatest limitation to this study existed with the researcher being a novice theorist with a background in treatment and data-driven research protocols. The limiting factor was most assuredly that the researcher was learning the process as well as trying to accomplish the research. The element of surprise was evident as the interviews progressed, informed the next steps in the process and allowed the researcher to analyze the data with a new perspective on the basic social process.

Another limiting factor in grounded theory research involves participants’ reactions during the conduct of the research. A grounded theorist must be sensitive in recognizing the data in the concerns of the respondents. Three types of answers are possible: Telling the researcher what he or she wants to hear; relating events to the best of their recollections; and their concerns as they moved through the process, or vague and hedged answers regarding memories too painful to recollect (Glaser, 1998). As a novice researcher, an ability to discriminate between the types of responses was a challenge. Yet after the first few interviews began, it was easier to determine the codes and concepts that eventually led to the theory.
Ethical Assurances

When research deals with human subjects, whether physically present in a room, represented on the Internet, or through personal records, as this research proposed, it is consistent with the protocol of *The Belmont Report* that the subjects be protected at all times (United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1979). Therefore, IRB approval was sought prior to any collection of data for this study. IRB approval was received and the study progressed once it was approved. The participants as former students were a vulnerable population because of factors including cultural considerations and immigration status in the United States. In addition, there were ethical concerns when research delved into personal and often painful recollections, which could have opened old wounds and might harm the subject in the study. These ethical considerations applied to all subjects as the investigation proceeded.

The privacy and the voluntary participation of the participants was a major consideration in the research process. A researcher or interviewer asking a participant to reexamine personal experiences also had to carefully frame the questions to lessen the possibility that any harm might come from a subject’s participation in the research. Utmost care was a primary consideration of this research, and the researcher will strive to respect and to maintain dignity for all participants throughout the process (Gall et al., 2007; Hatch, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2004). The manner of the interview formats and the use of open-ended questioning allowed the participants to be in control of the information they shared and gave them autonomy over the type of information they choose to relate and share with the researcher.

Summary

The principle for making this research relevant to children in school environments was based on the fact that there had been little to any acknowledgement these children have had to
involuntarily enter into the process with minor preparation or recognition of the struggles faced as they became transcultural individuals (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). Students, who perceived themselves as being in control of their own social and academic future and, at the same time, saw learning success as being within their influence became conscious of behaviors that resulted in success overtime. As demographics change in the United States, those individuals who can best function in a diverse society will have an advantage in a global society. The mastery of different languages, the ability to cross racial and ethnic boundaries, and a general resiliency associated with the ability to endure hardships and overcome obstacles will clearly be recognized as effective means crucial for success in a modern, diversified society. The completed study has the potential to enlighten educators to new pathways of understanding the changing demographics and how these agencies can best be structured to facilitate these behaviors. As with all research events, Booth, Colomb, and Williams (2008) cautioned, “You can’t plan an argument supporting the answer to your questions until you have every last bit of data” (p. 108). Consequently, this qualitative study using classical grounded theory was able to develop a new theory of the behaviors children crossing cultures in educational environments employed as they moved toward acculturation in a new culture.
Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this qualitative study, using a classical grounded theory design, was to examine the recollected experiences of youth who have had to cross cultures, in order to discover a pattern of behavior that described how these experiences affected their ability to acquire language and move through the developmental stages of identity formation. This research used an open-ended grand tour question and was designed to elicit responses that would provide insights into the various ways that cross-cultural youth are managing the concerns of crossing cultures. The data revealed a pattern of behavior that emerged from the 13 interviews during the grounded theory study and described a core variable that had the greatest variation and defined how most of the participants were engaging with and solving their concerns as they managed to cross cultures. The concepts in the interviews and the data collected not only from the interviews but also from the documents the participants referenced and offered as data for the study, showed a basic social process was at work as they sought acculturation. The data showed that the primary pattern of behavior, or core variable, most explanatory of the basic social process youth encounter as they cross cultures was best conceptualized as learning the ropes.

Few current studies make the distinction between the experience of adults, who have made informed choices to move across cultures, and children, who are not able to control their choices because of age, family considerations, cultural background, and other developmental concerns (Philip et al., 2008). A disruption in the ability to self-organize may explain some of the unique aspects of motivation, behaviors as well as learning related cognitions and emotions within academic settings and events encountered by children crossing cultures. The 13 participants’ perceptions of how they self-organized the events they encountered in their transcultural process held valuable information about some areas that continue to confound...
researchers in the field of SLA. Additionally, a more focused look at how children maneuver through the mechanism, process, and outcome of such tasks shed new light on ways that educational environments can facilitate the information acquisition that transcultural children receive in schools.

A person entering into a new experience may encounter disruption of expectations about the experience or a basic inability to comprehend current events from previous knowledge and experience base (Pavlenko, 2010). Learning the ropes then becomes the behavior pattern in which the person not only must negotiate the meaning of the new situation but also has to learn new ways of reacting to events. Learning the ropes is a basic social process that may apply to almost any new experience. Dornyei (2009) suggested that a basic social process, such as learning the ropes, inherent with all of the automatisation, skill learning, and declarative as well as procedural knowledge may be difficult to achieve in a classroom setting. However, the data from this study examined how children are crossing cultures and managing learning the ropes in educational environments. The data determined that this may be one of the only locations where they receive the knowledge necessary to achieve acculturation.

This chapter will discuss the theory learning the ropes as a basic social process that emerged from the recollections of the participants in this study. The research questions beyond the initial grand tour question are addressed in this chapter in the contexts that the participants chose to place them within as they related their recollections of how they managed in educational settings. A discussion of each stage and subcategories of each stage are presented with supporting data from participant interviews, document analysis, and follow-up interviews conducted during the course of this research. Two dimensions outside of the basic social process
of learning the ropes that emerged from the data will be briefly discussed as well as an evaluation of the findings will be presented.

Results

In classical grounded theory design, the primary research questions are not pre-determined, other than the expectation that the researcher may discover patterns of behaviors that explain the main concerns of participants and how concerns will be resolved (Glaser, 1998). Using a grand tour question permits the grounded theory researcher to develop a theoretical sensitivity to words, body language, and other paralinguistic features of the interview, which can affect participants’ responses. A grand tour question allowed the concerns of the 13 participants to emerge rather than to force the data into any set of ideas preconceived by a researcher; however, there was still a process that drove the entire conduct of the research. The grand tour question used with participants, “Tell me about your recollections and experiences as you entered school in the United States,” allowed all 13 participants to recall events in their school environments that shaped decisions and how strategies were applied to solve their concerns. The answers also addressed how the multicomponental aspects of the educational environment contributed to the psychological, emotional, and social development of cross-cultural students. To what extent and at what points all participants related these events, based on personal experiences and perceptions, developed knowledge applications to daily events in their recollections (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As the participants were former transcultural children who moved through the stages of language acquisition and identity development, they related experiences that became the discovered stages of social and emotional development described in this theory. Consequently, the actual recollections and retelling of events by all 13 participants as they moved through each stage provided the grounding for this study. Each stage was derived
and triangulated from the clear recollections and documents that were provided as the research progressed. The constant comparative method was used to analyze the data. In this way the researcher constantly compares the point of view of the participants looking for similarities and differences until a theory can be formulated. As an additional step, to ensure the accuracy of the theory and its division of the stages, four of the participants were re-interviewed. Therefore, learning the ropes is a fully grounded theory derived directly from the interviews and documents provided by all the participants in this study. The theory of how children cross cultures in educational environments emerged from the behaviors related by all participants as they maneuvered through the basic social process of learning the ropes.

The learning the ropes pattern of behavior has four main stages with two subcategories in each stage. The four main stages are frozen in time, turtling, painting a new picture, and finding the future. In the frozen in time stage, two categories emerged to be the most significant in the data: breaking the ice and hiding in plain sight. The turtling stage consists of two subcategories, slaying dragons and closing the door. The third stage, painting a new picture, consists of the subcategories getting a new voice and aiming to please. The fourth and final stage, finding the future, was one of the more important stages that emerged from the data because it lacked a finite quality; two subcategories were staying ahead of the game and something always missing. These stages and subcategories will be discussed in detail and with supporting evidence from the data.

Learning the Ropes

The phrase learning the ropes refers to people functioning in a different situation (Collier, 2006). Adjusting to the new direction allows them to achieve a goal or enter into a new position to achieve social success. This pattern of behavior is a common reaction to any new situation, whether it is learning to navigate an unfamiliar location or entering into new relationships. In
In many cases, it is often homogeneity with the known culture that provides clues along the way as people learn the ropes. In some cases, however, if there are factors that interfere, such as culture and language, the basic social process of learning the ropes becomes difficult and exhaustive. The difficulty of this process is not well understood in many contexts and is rarely considered of importance in educational environments where the focus of all acculturation efforts appears to focus on second language development (Menken, 2008).

The conflict for a child crossing cultures then becomes a process that needs to be carefully negotiated toward acculturation. Children do not have the capability to understand message systems that contribute to this conflicted situation. The message the child receives from the home is difficult because, in most cases, it does not match with the message of the dominant culture. In educational environments, children receive the message that the main focus is language development because of the mandates that currently exist in schools (Menken, 2008). The educational environment has expectations for all children but may not honor and comprehend the depth of change that children crossing cultures encounter in this process, nor are schools prepared to deal with children in the throes of these extreme changes. The data supports that there are few resources available to children crossing cultures; in effect, as the stress of the negotiation increases, they are left to attempt to manage these stages alone. In order to accomplish this task, they engage in specific behaviors that provide them with the means to satisfy their goals and to achieve success in the new culture.

**Frozen in time.** In the initial stage of the process frozen in time, a person enters into the new experience and makes an effort to assess the situation and to determine the best course of action. But unlike Oberg (1960), who posited that entry to a new cultural experience will be a “honeymoon,” the data revealed not a sense of euphoria but rather, for these participants, a sense
that time and space were suspended (p.179). Lacking the prior knowledge to be able to make a proper assessment of the situation, people often stand frozen in time. One participant described it this way: “I didn’t know nothing about the school or where to go…you know the classes or what to do or where to get a drink of water even…the water fountain is different. I stood there looking down the halls and could not move.”

Frozen in time contains two subcategories that define this experience: breaking the ice and hiding in plain sight. Individuals have to find a way to break the ice, begin socialization, relieve the initial stress, and develop the strategies to move forward. It then becomes necessary to hide in plain sight so they can begin to determine how they will fit into the new situation.

**Breaking the ice.** It is believed that the main concern for a person entering into a new culture will be a language difference and the great disadvantage this gives people as they encounter a new situation. However, the participants in this study saw a greater challenge in determining the best way to interact with their new peer groups. As with any individual in a new situation, children in this substantive area of crossing cultures seek ways to become comfortable and find people who will provide them an understanding of what is expected of them. One participant described the experience this way: “It was embarrassing not to be able to be who I was. I am somebody but here I was no one. I had to make myself get up and do it or I would have just stayed in bed and done nothing. It would be easier that way.” In effect they have to find a way to socialize so they can develop the strategies that will allow them to move forward. According to the participants, a caring teacher, a funny moment shared with a peer, or a new friend can provide new and interesting motivations that will lead the individual to take some risks.
**Hiding in plain sight.** The second subcategory of frozen in time is hiding in plain sight. Once the ice is broken, people take stock of the new conditions and begin to assess the situation with all of its realities. A participant related, “Well, it feels like I don’t belong here because I don’t understand anything. I was very shy, I would not talk. I would not look at anyone. I was afraid they would not understand what I had to say even if I knew what to say.” In order to make a sound assessment of the situation individuals, tend to keep their distance so they can determine socially acceptable behaviors. This dynamic is not unlike the silent period that is associated with language development and the length can vary for each individual (Ortega, 2009). The guiding behavior of this state, as related by participants is that it may be better to not say or do anything out of the ordinary to minimize mistakes. As the individual begins to develop new ideas, value systems, and ways of behaving in the new culture, they often inadvertently collide into the next major stage of turtling, in which people try to live in two worlds comfortably and discover that this is hard to achieve.

**Turtling.** Home represents one culture where the safety and comfort of what has always been known is possible, yet people know, just like a turtle, they cannot remain in the shell forever and daily have to stick their neck out in order to continue to acquire the behaviors they will need to survive in the new culture. The description of this was provided by a participant who stated, “I was like a turtle when I came to the United States. I could go back to my shell and be Bolivian at home but I had to come back out and be strong, have a hard shell to go to school and make it through with my life and my friends here. They did not really know me.”

Most people see home as the place that is safe and comfortable; the sights, the sounds, the smells are familiar and solace can be found in this environment. Storti (2007) described transcultural events as “layers of toleration that can lead to cultural incidents” (p. 43). Once a
comfort zone is disrupted, tolerance levels have a tendency to lessen, and individuals become frustrated by the events surrounding them, thus forcing them to turtle and seek a safer environment. Children lack levels of development to process these events; the comfort of home is a stark contrast between the two cultures, and children find it difficult to understand the conflicting messages they receive in both environments. Two subcategories of turtling, slaying dragons and closing doors, explain ways that children crossing cultures develop coping mechanisms and move forward to a better understanding of their experience.

**Slaying dragons.** Slaying dragons refers to people feeling as though they are fighting conflicts all the time. Children involved in these conflicts explained that they would become engaged in the overwhelming fight to maintain a comfortable existence in the home environment and to understand the outside environment. It is often a balancing act because neither of the two environments understands each other. Children crossing cultures also have to slay dragons in and outside of the home and in school or work as well. A participant recalled, “I was always fighting, like killing dragons, my parents told me one thing then I get to school and they tell me another. I didn’t want to fight, I had to.” The battle that ensues is personal, as people attempt to develop a new identity while staying true to national, religious, or value systems that have heretofore been a guiding light in their lives (Pavlenko, 2010). A serious conflict happens for most people when they have to make changes in either their personal or professional lives. The data supported that after slaying dragons, an individual who has been tested emerges with a sense of purpose. Through this balancing act children are renegotiating shifts, struggling with changing circumstances with parent and peers, and a new identity begins to emerge.

**Closing the door.** Individuals who have been tested discover a new direction and close the door, the second subcategory of turtling, on what has gone before to begin a new life with a
fresh approach to the situation. Individuals now are ready to apply learned skills and strategies to the new situation; however, they have to put the past into perspective, which, and for many, means closing the door on everything they have believed heretofore and incorporating a new way of thinking. Suarez Orozco, Suarez Orozco, and Sattin-Bajaj (2010) referred to this as the “challenging process of bicultural identity development as more mainstream elements of the new culture are incorporated into the youth’s life” (p. 547). A recognition that a new image of who and what he or she had hoped to be in the future has changed due to circumstances beyond the child’s control was evident in the data. Participants referred to the experience of closing the door as: “I feel like I have closed doors all the time. My mother closed doors to keep the U.S. out of our home, doors closed to me in school because my English wasn’t good, and I keep closing doors on what might have been so I can be able to keep going forward.” People close doors when they have been through a particularly stressful experience so they are able to advance and to begin the process of painting a new picture.

**Painting a new picture.** Individuals who have been through a life-changing experience may find themselves at a crossroads and feel the need or desire to recreate their persona or appearance. Whereas Oberg (1960) indicated that this would be the point in the acculturation process when an individual would become hostile or angered by their situation, the data does not support this theory. Rather, it is at this point, after the door is closed on the previous life, people begin the process of making a new self or painting a new picture. This process has two subcategories of exploration that explain how individuals engage to make this transition. The first subcategory is getting a new voice; in which they begin to self-advocate with autonomy and self-promotion. Once they find their new voice, they work at aiming to please, or doing
whatever is necessary to gather the information they need to get the support necessary in their new lives.

People have a need to find their way in any new situation, such as appropriate clothing choices to fit in or taking risks that they might not undertake in previous situations. Risk taking requires a level of support and a metacognitive functioning that will allow a person to decide if the risk taking is beneficial. The data revealed at this point individuals are ready to explore the life they will have to build for themselves in the mainstream culture.

**Getting a new voice.** Being able to speak with a new voice or self-advocate is a very empowering experience. This has little to do with language development but does appear to have some relevance to the dynamic known as basic interpersonal communication skills (Cummins, 2008). Individuals can now engage with society in meaningful ways, as it provides a sense of autonomy that all people seek (Ortega, 2009). The data indicates this as a period of adjustment allowing the child to focus on larger goals instead of basic needs. In order to use the new voice, the individual must engage with peers and mentors in meaningful, social discourse beyond simply meeting basic requirements. This is not unlike the way people enter into a new social situation, such as a marriage or contract; people want to put their best foot forward and engage with those around them. Participants in my study spoke of the experience this way: “It was exciting. I felt like I was in an American movie. I liked it because I could play with the language barrier.” This newfound voice then leads people to express themselves in new, different ways and aim to please those around them.

**Aiming to please.** The second subcategory of painting a new picture is known as aiming to please. Individuals aiming to please another will do anything in their power to ensure those around them are happy to accept them and to provide them with assistance. The support system
can be the family at home, the classroom teacher, or the peer group. Lacking long-term relationships, people will engage in aiming to please behavior so as not to lose their fragile foothold in the new situation. During this stage, the data supported that these newly developed skills and strategies were strengthened by pleasing people in their environment, which, in turn, bolstered these relationships. This relationship allows people to gather the requisite information to explore a new future, to accept the guidance provided, and to stay ahead of the next steps or “work the system” (Stillman, 2008, p. 13) they will encounter. The data also indicated this is a stage of realignment of morals and values that will imprint a new identity on individuals. For example, if the home message was that a woman would not work outside of the home, individuals would discover solace in finding a job and moving past old meta-messages. Participants referred to this stage as “things they never hoped to be able to be doing their whole life.” These new skills and strategies allow individuals to determine a direction toward finding a new future.

**Finding the future.** Seeking, searching, and trying new ideas becomes a venue for individuals in a meaningful way. The final stage for learning the ropes does not have a finite adaptation, acculturation, or assimilation. The data showed that there is a solemn recognition the process may never end for many children crossing cultures. However, despite this lack of finality, individuals are able to look at the possibilities for the future and employ the newly acquired skills and strategies that will assist them in achieving success. Once a person has been tested, they are ready for whatever the next evolution will require. Recognizing the lack of finality is maturing for most of the respondents. Participant’s most common response was “I just have to keep going.” Whether that means to school, to work, to making new friends, there is a desire to not see the process end abruptly or until some level of success has been achieved.
One of the interesting facets the data revealed is at this stage some of the decisions about future directions become very clear. Now that the new culture has come into some focus, an individual is able to set directions with the confidence they will be able to accomplish goals they set for themselves. It is during this stage that decisions about the role they will assume will be decided. It is not clear which path will be chosen: Some will determine a completely unexpected path; some may choose to give up and remain close to the home culture community, and others decide it is going to be too difficult to accomplish. In addition, some may choose to band together with others who have had to make the same journey, in which there is, a sense of safety that the experience will be understood and continue separateness from the dominant culture. Meanwhile, another path chosen is to move closer to the dominant culture while still retaining as much of the home culture as possible. No matter what path is chosen, people decide they have to survive by staying ahead of the game. During this stage the social and cultural resources that arrived with the child as well as the dual frame of reference that has allowed them to negotiate the difficult transitions begins to emerge in the new identity. The recognition that something may always be missing is confronted as the future begins to clarify.

Staying ahead of the game. One subcategory of finding the future is staying ahead of the game. When people try staying ahead of the game, they may mistakenly assume the hard part is over. The data pointed to the fact that this is not true. As one participant related, “It was now harder than before because I had to do something. I couldn’t hide anymore and everybody expected something from me.” Another participant related, “My family needed me to get a good education, a good job, and help them for the future. I had to figure out a way to be somebody.”

Whether it is academic knowledge, pragmatic use of language or social and emotional skills that will not allow individuals to stand out in a crowd, people must stay ahead of the game.
to avoid making mistakes. It is also in this stage that individuals recognize to succeed in the new environment; they have to be better because they are working from a deficit of information. A participant described it this way: “Yeah, people would make fun of me for not knowing what a word meant or because I had never heard of it before…even today people still question how I did not know something.” It is in this deficit position that the realization occurs that there will always be something missing, something that will not be comprehended—a feeling that always there will be discreet bits of knowledge that they were not able to acquire because they were not a part of the mainstream culture.

**Something always missing.** The other subcategory under finding the future is called something always missing. As people move through the various passages of life and discard notions that are no longer relevant in any new stage, they recognize something may be missing along the way. Participants related this may be a path not taken or a friendship lost that cannot be recovered, which alters how individuals approach the future. This feeling must be evaluated or it might lead to feelings of depression. A participant stated it this way: “I will never be what I want to be or what I thought I would be…a piece of my life is gone and it won’t come back but I have to be here because my country is so awful.” This realization will surface from time to time and only can be explored from the new perspective. It is a recognition that the future must be made with an integration of what is lost and what has been gained in the process.

**Dimensions**

Two dimensions emerged from the data that do not fit into the basic social process but were relevant to the participants in the substantive area and the ensuing theory. *Coloring the world* refers to the dimension concerning race, and the dimension *talking about the past* referred to the sense of catharsis participants felt after discussing their cross-cultural journeys.
Moderating variables alter the basic social process for some of the participants and contribute to unique understanding that may influence the passages of the process for others. According to MacKinnon and Lambert (2010) moderator variables are those that “transmit the effect of an antecedent variable on to a dependent variable, thereby providing a more detailed relationship among variables” (p.18). These dimensions, although relevant, were external to the stages process of the theory yet added a complexity to the learning the ropes behavior for many of the participants. Nonetheless, the significance of these dimensions to the participants is notable.

**Coloring the world.** Participants of various ethnicities and races discussed that the color of their skin carried some very interesting components in the acculturation process. The color of a person’s skin appears to hold a quality to the way the acculturation process is accomplished: the darker the color, the harder it is to make the transitions in the basic social process easily. Individuals in this study sought strategies to maintain a distance or to hide behind other parts of their persona, such as maintaining an accent that would define them as not being part of any specific minority culture. One participant related, “I will never lose my French accent because then people stop and listen to me in the stores and ask me where I come from.” The recognition that society is stratified, and that these stratifications can lead to less than successful outcomes, does appear to contribute to the maintenance of certain first culture behaviors. This dimension may hold some valuable information as to the ease with which the process is accomplished and is an area that requires further investigation.

**Talking about the past.** The second dimension of the data that emerged that did not fit into the stages of the basic social process had to do with the feelings expressed by the participants at the end of the interviews and the ability to unburden their experiences. Talking about the past gave participants clarity of remembrance that made the recollection of the total
experience less painful. The facility with which participants were able to recollect these experiences they had as children engaging with the process was remarkable to me as a researcher. It was also a means for participants to discuss a part of their lives with a new sense of pride in the accomplishments made. The findings clearly demonstrated that the participants had never been asked to recollect how they managed this part of their life. Consequently, these students provided this research with rich data that was useful to understanding the basic social process. When questioned about why they had never spoken about the experience previously, participants related that “No one had ever asked them how this felt.” It was notable that throughout their educational careers, surrounded by adults in schools as well as classmates of the dominant culture, children crossing cultures had not been asked about their feelings. This dimension was troubling and related quite clearly to what Noddings (2008) referred to as “caring…as important to social and emotional learning in schools” (p. 289).

**Evaluation of Findings**

The purpose of this qualitative study, using a classical grounded theory design, was to examine the recollected experiences of youth who have had to cross cultures in order to discover a pattern of behavior that described how these experiences affected their ability to acquire language and moved through the developmental stages of identity formation. Although researchers have examined the effects of cross-cultural processes on adults moving between cultures, little research has focused on the school-age population (Aycicegi-Dinn & Caldwell-Harris, 2009; Mencken, 2008). Petkova (2009) stated that research on the topic of culture stress might have looked at the process but did not take into account the actual perceptions and experiences of those who made this transition. What appears to be lost in the educational environment is the recognition of the basic process as an emotional experience. Although recent
explanatory models have developed concepts about issues with cultural dissonance, most have based the actual incidence of culture shock on the original Oberg (1960) model of a four-phase change (Petkova, 2009). Mencken (2008) cautioned that this continues to assume the process of cultural dissonance is overgeneralized as well as continues to ignore the fact that this process is being accomplished by children in school settings. Pavlenko (2006) agreed U.S. schools often develop programs and understandings based on educational psychology without delving further into how these theories are conceptualized by the “Western conceptualization of self in general” (p. 19).

A grounded theory based on the experience of children crossing cultures, acquiring a new language, and developing self-identity should assist educators to develop new ways of viewing the process of acculturation of children crossing cultures in U.S. schools. Glaser (2002) defined a grounded theory as “a theory of how to generate concepts from data that fit, work, and are relevant” (p. 38). Thus, the purpose of my research was to identify and to categorize behaviors that children recollect using in school settings as they managed their cross-cultural journey. The basic social process of learning the ropes is relevant to educational environments; the data fit within the process and worked to explain a dynamic that is currently not well understood in U.S. schools.

Upon evaluation of the data it became clear that educational environments not only have difficulty understanding this basic social process but also are not well prepared to meet the challenges children crossing cultures bring to the environment. The data reinforced that although educational environments in the U.S. schools are focused on the language acquisition of students, they fall short when it comes to understanding and providing the social and emotional learning support necessary as children crossing cultures seek acculturation. All of the participants in this
study indicated that this was the information that they lacked and had a difficult time finding in schools, which was their first and primary introduction to the new culture. Whereas they gathered information from peers who had to make the same adjustments, they found understanding and support for the basic social process of learning the ropes to be almost nonexistent in schools. Many of the participants clarified that they did not fear learning the new language but lacked the ability to be able to determine how to go about acculturating into the new society. One participant described it this way: “Here I was learning my third language. I could do that, but I didn’t know how to be an American.”

The significance of the theory learning the ropes then becomes a disconnection from the current praxis in schools, which is focused on language development with little to no regard for the sociocultural needs of students as they cross cultures. Whereas other disciplines such as psychology regard cultural dissonance as a social and emotional concern, school environments seem to be unable to comprehend the depth of the impact on the child crossing cultures (Mencken, 2008). The continued use of models that relate the stages of cultural dissonance to the adult experience are not useful in school environments as they simply describe another paradigm.

Educators must become not only sensitized to the language development needs of students crossing cultures but also to their personal identity development needs as well. It may be that one of the factors lacking in educational environments is the strong social and emotional needs children crossing cultures exhibit because they have little adult guidance about what they are feeling and experiencing. In addition, educational environments provide specific counseling services to the native speaking population and may be incapable to provide these same services with a multicultural focus. Children crossing cultures were confronted with a new paradigm that
they must incorporate into their personal identity for success in the new culture. According to Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, and Sattin-Bajaj (2010),

To effectively support these students’ academic achievement and development, educators require a firmer grasp of the cultural psychology of crossing cultures, the vicissitudes of immigrant academic language acquisition, a greater degree of pedagogical flexibility, cultural competency, and responsiveness than has been previously demanded of them. (p. 537)

A new focus must be developed on the social and emotional needs of this population of students, which will require a more in-depth understanding by teachers that the basic social process is evolutionary and requires more sociocultural support than previously understood.

In the United States, the country with the largest number of immigrants in the world, approximately one-fourth of all youth are of immigrant origin (16 million in 2010), and it is projected that by 2040 more than one third of all children will be growing up in immigrant households (Hernández, Denton, & Macartney, 2007). This staggering figure will have a significant impact on the educational environments these children attend. The research conducted in my study supports the need for schools to develop strategies for working toward understanding these needs in greater depth and with a better focus on the resources brought by children crossing cultures and the support they need to create an identity in the new culture. They will need to learn the ropes to become better citizens of the United States and enjoy the benefits that these educational institutions can provide. A continued view that learning the language is the best means of acculturation diminishes the enormous human capital that may be lost in the process (Jaffe-Walter, 2008). In further evaluation, as schools implement greater reforms to meet the challenges of a global society replete with the need for cultural currency and
sociocultural competency, children who have had to make this journey may provide educators with the best examples of how globalization is changing their classrooms and, consequently, the future of the nation these institutions serve.

Summary

Learning the ropes is a basic social process that emerged from the data in the substantive area of children crossing cultures. The various stages and categories of this process were clearly sequential in the data and demonstrated that this process is not as simple as entering into a new culture and learning a language. As children cross cultures and engage with the process in school environments, they are experiencing significant identity and personal changes that create changes for them as they move through the key stages. These key stages, within which they learn the ropes such as frozen in time, turtling, painting a new picture, and finding the future, indicated that the basic social process is more complex in school environments than previously understood. Dornyei (2009) discussed a dynamic systems approach but cautioned that this is an uncharted area in the social and cognitive sciences. He further cautioned that just as acculturation assumes that two systems would need to make adjustments as the process occurs, a dynamic systems approach would have to determine how “self-organization contributed to the entire interconnectedness of the system” (p. 108). Consequently, viewing the basic social process known as learning the ropes from a dynamic systems approach raises it above the descriptive and offers analysis and explanation of the process by identifying the different components of the system and how they adapt to each other. The key points of the process became clear as the data indicated interconnectedness of the stages and demonstrated the self-organization that individuals must engage within the basic social process.
Learning the ropes is not finite and has stages that may reoccur at various periods throughout a lifetime. The lack of finality appears to be the most difficult part of the process for children crossing cultures, requiring constant readjustment. In addition, the two dimensions that emerged in the data are significant areas for further research. Finally, this research of children crossing cultures gave a needed depth to understanding not only the pedagogical needs but also the social and emotional needs of students whose very existence in schools are challenging these institutions daily.
Chapter 5: Implications, Recommendations, and Conclusions

The purpose of this qualitative study, using a classical grounded theory design, was to examine the recollected experiences of youth who had to cross cultures in order to discover a pattern of behavior that describes how these experiences affected students’ ability to acquire language and to move through the developmental stages of identity formation. Although researchers describe the effects of cross-cultural processes on adults moving between cultures, there is little research to date focused on the school-age population (Aycicegi-Dinn & Caldwell-Harris, 2009; Mencken, 2008). Petkova (2009) explained that research on the topic of culture stress may look at the process but does not take into account the actual perceptions and experiences of those who have made this transition. A grounded theory based on the experience of children crossing cultures, acquiring a new language, and developing a self-identity may assist educators to develop new ways of viewing the process of acculturation of children crossing cultures in U.S schools. Consequently, exploring and discovering the patterns of behavior and perceptions that contributed to the adaptation of children having to manage cross-cultural boundaries in the current U.S. school environments may improve understanding about the contextual contingencies facing educators in the diverse classroom today. Glaser (2002) defined a grounded theory as “a theory of how to generate concepts from data that fit, work, and are relevant” (p. 38). Thus, the purpose of my research was to identify and to categorize behaviors that children recollected using in school settings as they managed their cross-cultural journey.

Broadly speaking little has been known about the effects of crossing cultures on children in educational environments (Caldwell-Harris, 2008; Dornyei, 2009; Mencken, 2008; Philip et al., 2008). At the outset of the discussion of this study of cross-cultural acquisition in the PreK–12 population, there was recognition that children, in most instances, had little input into familial
immigration or transcultural processes. Transcultural children did not fully comprehend future challenges because of their lack of personal experience and age-related developmental or emotional stages (Berk, 2006; Spolsky, 2004; Woolfolk, 2009). In addition, the current federal mandates for language proficiency testing and instruction have created an environment in which children crossing cultures in U.S. schools are focused on language acquisition without benefit of current research knowledge in the field of sociolinguistics (Salomone, 2010). The federal mandates currently in Title III of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 have been controversial for the research they ignored and excluded from the establishment of the law (Menken, 2008). Many scholars in the field of SLA thought that continued educational focus on child language development and proficiency diminished the sociocultural development necessary for identity development (Dornyei, 2009). Given this highly varied group of students, as well as the varied contexts for learning, some scholars believed that the difference between children acquiring language and adults using language was often an overlooked aspect of any cross-cultural acquisition research and debate.

Common understandings of cross-cultural issues were advanced based on previous research models that used adults who were choosing to seek educational or employment opportunities in a different culture (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Kohls, 1984; Oberg, 1960). Due to the lack of adequate development of models to explain children crossing cultures and how this influences their identity development in schools, led to an exclusion of this research from most political debates about the topic (Salomone, 2010). As a consequence, current educational practice continues to be based on models using adult subjects who chose voluntarily to enter into the experience of crossing cultures (Aycicegi-Dinn & Caldwell-Harris, 2009). Though now antiquated and often not reflective of what actually occurs in schools, these models
are common explanatory tools of the transcultural process and are still being used to establish to educators how the stages would progress to a final result known as assimilation (Gutierrez & Orellana, 2006).

The research for this study used qualitative methodology and classical grounded theory design. The application of grounded theory allowed the core variable as related by the 13 participants to emerge from an analysis of the participants’ recollections. How all the participants reported they managed and strategized to resolve their anxieties led to conceptualizations that developed an explanatory, conceptual theory about how participants viewed their main concerns and worked to resolve them in school settings. The basic social process known as learning the ropes became a new theoretical conceptualization of how the basic social process of crossing cultures is managed by children in educational settings. Whereas models of cultural processes are often viewed as sociological constructs, learning the ropes does not have a finite end in assimilation but appears to be a consistent forward process toward acculturation. The forward movement toward acculturation allowed for the integration of two cultures while retaining elements of both cultures; the data showed that individuals seeking acculturation would have to change and the society they acculturated into would have to accept new perspectives as the process evolved. The theory reveals that the process of crossing cultures is complex, in-depth, and transferable to other situations once it has been acquired.

Research was conducted in Stafford County in Northern Virginia. This area is known to have large cross-cultural populations that are not grouped by any particular ethnicity or language dominance. Theoretical sampling led to interviews with 13 individuals who had graduated within the past two years from the five local high schools in Stafford. Issues relevant to the study had been a major concern for these individuals during their educational careers.
Individuals were sent invitations to participate in the research and, as per IRB instruction, attendance was limited to those who responded to the invitation and provided informed consent. At all times, the conditions of this study were cognizant of the need for the protection of the 13 participants as well as comfort for the respondents’ recollections. Each participant was asked the grand tour question, “Tell me about your recollections and experiences as you entered school in the United States.” Whereas the grand tour question was the initial starting point of the interviews, the research questions outlined previously were answered to some degree through the grounded theory analysis. The subsequent responses provided the research with rich data that was coded, categorized, and saturated to a theoretical framework that had grab and fit and was relevant to the substantive area of children crossing cultures (Glaser, 1978).

In this chapter, I discuss the implications of the grounded theory, learning the ropes, which was a basic social process along with moderating variables that provided the research with two additional dimensions outside of the learning the ropes process. Recommendations for application of the theory and future research directions in the substantive area will also be discussed. In addition, the theory learning the ropes will be discussed within the context of the tenets of classic grounded theory; relevance, grab, fit, and modifiability (Glaser, 1978). The conclusions from this study were significant in an area that has been elusive and confusing for educators, as children crossing cultures become a greater percentage of students in classrooms in the United States (Hernández, Denton & Macartney, 2008). Educating cross-cultural children to enter the economy and society of the 21st century is a task of immense challenge and critical importance (Holdaway & Alba, 2009).
Implications

As Glaser (1998) stated, “The goal of grounded theory is to generate a theory that accounts for the pattern of behavior which is relevant and problematic for those involved: the generation of the theory occurs around a core category” (p. 93). The ability to conceptualize is vested in an analyst’s ability “to generate concepts from data and then relate them to model of theory in general” (Glaser, 1978, p17). Learning the ropes, which requires negotiating meaning in a new situation, is the core category of this theory. Whereas current education practice is focused on second language development for ELLs, the data from the study revealed this issue is not the main concern of children crossing cultures. All participants reported the language issue to be of minor consequence to them; many were confident they would be able to acquire a second language over time. The belief of the participants that they would learn a second language with facility was a complete disconnect from the pedagogical praxis that is the current norm in most educational institutions. The data indicated the process is complex and contains stages outside of the existing methodologies in educational environments. All of the participants related their major concerns included relating with the mainstream culture and ascertaining how to garner success in the new culture. Whereas the language was a determinant in the acculturation process, participants expressed anxiety concerning a deeper understanding of how to reinvent their identity in the new culture. The patterns of behaviors in which students engaged were determined by the variables related to the core category. Glaser (1978) related, “Only variables that are related to the core will be included in the theory” (p. 94), a delimiting factor of the core category that demonstrates “the necessary relationship is to resolving the problematic nature of the pattern of behavior” (p. 93). Consequently, although language was a factor, this
was only a minor segment of how children crossing cultures resolved their concerns in educational settings.

Learning the ropes became the core variable, which served as a theoretical framework for the process these students went through as they engaged with the new culture and determined their path through the initial stages of acculturation. The most interesting revelation from the data was that arriving at a stage of parity with the new culture is not a finite process but rather a lifelong search for ways to continuously engage with the new culture in changing situations. All of the participants were not convinced that they would ever be mainstreamed into the culture for a variety of reasons and were always aware they had more to learn about the new culture. However, the attitudes expressed indicated that many participants had successfully transitioned through the stages of overcoming hurdles, making life choices as well as defining a new identity, and since they had moved through the stages once, they would be capable of transferring those skills and strategies to future challenges.

**Stages of the Theory and Implications**

The grounded theory core variable known as learning the ropes has four major stages, with subcategories in each of the main core categories. This core variable explains the basic social process that the participants engaged in as they entered a new culture in educational environments. Frozen in time, turtling, painting a new picture, and finding the future were major behavior stages in which participants engaged in as they resolved their concerns. A grounded theory offers a conceptually abstract explanation for a latent pattern of behavior in the social context under study. It explains, rather than describes, what is happening in the social context of schools (Glaser, 2004).
Frozen in time is the initial stage participants engage in when they arrive in schools. Whereas educators tend to focus on ensuring language is the first skill for students crossing cultures, the data indicated that it is impossible for these students to engage in a meaningful manner with the transcultural process as they are unable to absorb the new environment. This situation places students crossing cultures in a deficit or diminished position, which sets the stage for perceptions that the student cannot function effectively in the new surroundings. As Nieto (2010) lamented, often education defaults to a deficit approach as a way to blame students rather than address the root causes of the problem. A possible solution would be to focus on the sociocultural needs of students crossing cultures in the initial stages of the process rather than the linguistic needs that will eventually develop. Additionally, the two subcategories of this stage of the process indicate a period of adjustment is required as students are breaking the ice and then hiding in plain sight as they enter the new environment. The greater need at the initial stage is to help students develop the sociocultural strategies and lower the affective filter that will support them as they engage with all the new encounters they face in schools.

The second stage, known as turtling, is indicative of the way children crossing cultures straddle their two worlds. More effective approaches that educators could take to turtling include a closer interaction between the home and the new cultures so the messages the child receives in both environments are consistent and supportive of the child in unfamiliar circumstances. Respondents felt as though they existed between two worlds and that the messages they received in the home and school environments did not match, placing the children in tenuous and confusing positions. This conflict also added anxiety to an already stressful and fragile situation. The implication was clear that a greater community support system for individuals crossing cultures within family structures needs to exist, including heritage language
programs, teachers trained in programs that provide outreach for students caught in the dilemma of familial expectations, and multicultural counseling services, which would be beneficial to both children and families crossing cultures. These tools would not only support the mission of the schools but also assist the families through the stressful aspects of the acculturation process. One participant related that his family would wait for him to return home from school daily to read to them important documents. He stated, “I was 14 years old, learning English, and I couldn’t have read those papers in Korean, let alone in English!” Providing flexible services and resources to support newcomer families within the community would eliminate the need for children to assume adult responsibilities in the acculturation process.

The third stage, painting a new picture, is explanatory of how very few resources are available to children crossing cultures as they attempt to integrate old and new identities. Becoming American is not an easy task, especially if a person does not know how to access the social, moral, and value system of the culture. As reported by Salomone (2010), “Identity refers to the pattern of meaning by which we structure our lives; Identity develops through recognizing a concept of self as both an individual and in contrast to others in the society” (p. 69). This is a fluid, multidimensional, and self-defining understanding that is a heavy burden on children for whom identity is not a fully developed concept. What is retained and lost as children crossing cultures develop a new identity was a relevant behavior with which all participants grappled as they worked through entry to the new culture. It was during this stage that the greatest conflicts arose because they lacked the knowledge to fully comprehend how to apply meaning as they structured their new lives. The two subcategories of this stage, getting a new voice and aiming to please, were explanatory of the searching that children crossing cultures engage in as they attempt to become autonomous and determine their self-worth in the new culture. A possible
solution would be for schools to focus less on the linguistic needs of children and more on the social and emotional aspects of the process. Whereas social and emotional learning techniques are available to students from the dominant culture, the educational systems appear to have an inability to apply those same principles to those who may have ethnic differences. A factor in the process that was disturbing not only to the participants but also to the researcher was the blatant disregard that these are children with social and emotional needs, rather than automatons only learning a new language. The most concerning implication was the lack of cultural transmission, or the transmission of preferences, beliefs, and norms that is the result of social interactions across and within generations (Bisin, Pattichini, Verdier, & Zenou, 2006). The data signified that without these cultural guideposts, children crossing cultures were left to develop identities that imitate rather than adapt to the mainstream culture. Children crossing cultures often referred to their experience as watching life go by or “living in an American movie” yet never actually understanding the essence of being in the culture. This led to a quality of life that imitated the dominant culture rather than incorporating the culture into the new identity.

The final stage of the basic social process, finding the future, becomes the point at which difficult decisions are made by children developing their identities. The data indicated there are three major pathways in which children crossing cultures engage as they move forward. The first path is undertaken by those who are willing to take what they have learned from their experiences and keep moving forward with confidence that they will learn more and find success in the new culture. A level of determination develops within this group that they have already learned the basic social process, which also allows these individuals to apply the basic social process of learning the ropes to future situations. The second path is one in which individuals have made a determination that they have enough knowledge to be functional in the new society
but find that remaining within the home culture structure is to their benefit. They virtually give up the acculturation process and remain within heritage culture norms and appear to default to the turtling stage. The third path was chosen with like-minded peers who no longer feel a part of the home culture and cannot find the motivation to keep progressing forward in the new culture. This group finds solace in banding together by the shared experience of identities that are neither the new nor the heritage culture. The implications of these chosen paths clearly indicate that educational environments are lacking support systems to assist children crossing cultures as they try to define their futures in the new culture. Counseling services in schools do not have the adequate resources or the trained counselors to assist students as they struggle with these decisions. This dilemma was described by Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, and Sattin-Bajaj (2010):

All too many youth crossing cultures encounter a myriad of challenges, among them economics stressors, language difficulties, and familial separations, under resourced neighborhoods, segregated schools, undocumented status and xenophobia. These students frequently struggle to gain their bearings in an educational system that all too often puts them on a path to marginality, anomie, and frustrated ambitions. (p. 538)

Recognition that children crossing cultures represent a significant cultural capital that is being lost in the shuffle may stimulate action toward a better understanding of their social and emotional needs.

Implications of the Dimensions

Glaser (1978) defined classical grounded theory as methodology that remained inductive and, in order to uncover the substantive area one must retain theoretical sensitivity to the end of
the theory to determine how concepts relate to each other. Within the analytical construct of the theory, it is not unusual for some of the concepts to fall outside of the stages of the process but retain a moderating factor on the theory as it is generated. Two dimensions emerged from the data that have a relevance to the theory but fall outside of the basic social process: coloring my world and talking about the past.

Coloring my world was a dimension that was relevant only to those who were ethnically or racially different in appearance in the new culture. Some of the participants stated they would retain certain aspects of their home culture forever so as not to be assigned a minority role within the new culture. This perception, described by Ogbu (1992) as the difference between voluntary and involuntary immigration, was striking. As referred to earlier in a critical analysis of Ogbu’s cultural ecological model, Foster (2004) outlined the basic tenets of Ogbu’s arguments as containing four frames of reference for educators:

- Students’ academic success is affected by community forces and the ways those forces contribute to student success or failure.
- There is a distinction among voluntary, involuntary, and autonomous minority status.
- Universal, primary, and secondary discontinuities exist between students and the schools they attend.
- Involuntary minorities develop survival strategies, some which facilitate and some which hinder student success. (p. 370)

Academic success is influenced by the outward appearance of racial and ethnic traits (Foster, 2004). The retention of some traits, such as native dress or the maintenance of an accent, were survival strategies which were maintained to determine separateness from minority cultures (Foster, 2004). In this way, students crossing cultures were able to make themselves
distinct from those minorities and used the traits that would give them a recognizable difference in the new culture. Many participants in this study saw these strategies as facilitative. Moreover, the recognition that the color of their skin, their accent, or the native dress they continued to wear provided them an identity in the new culture they could use to greater advantage. Upon reflection of these recollections, many participants revealed they had a realization early in the process that they wanted to maintain separateness because the alternative was to be subsumed into a minority U.S. culture. A further investigation of how this dimension affects the acculturation patterns of students crossing cultures would provide new understanding of the manner in which racial and ethnic characteristics affect the process of learning the ropes.

A second dimension that emerged from the data was talking about the past. At the end of every interview, the participant would relate they were to glad to be able to share their recollections. In many ways, this was cathartic and released old feelings about their process of learning the ropes. Most notable was they had never shared these feelings with another educator; all participants related they had never been asked to discuss this with anyone. The implication of this was quite unsettling to the researcher because it demonstrated a lack of empathy and comprehension that these were children attempting a difficult multidimensional process within the confines of institutions that are tasked with guidance. It was notable that surrounded by adults and members of the dominant culture, not one of the participants had engaged in an opportunity to discuss their emotions with another person in their schools. Clearly, support groups with trained counselors would provide children crossing cultures with a venue for sharing these emotions. Moreover, recognition that the social and emotional needs of children crossing cultures are as critical to the acculturation process as language development would provide educators with tools that have heretofore lacked in education environments.
Recommendations

Although participants had different recollections, the core variable of learning the ropes emerged in the various stories they told about the experience of crossing cultures. It was clear the main vehicle for the acculturation of youth into U.S. society is through educational institutions, and these same institutions are not meeting this challenge and expanding opportunities as this population grows (Ortega, 2009). One of the major understandings that came as a result of this study is that educational environments have limited knowledge of how to respond to and work with a population of children crossing cultures. Educational policies and decisions made in schools are influenced by various constituencies that play essential roles in determining the scope of further studies in the substantive area. Nevertheless, three themes define the recommendations for this study: First, the lack of focus on social and emotional needs and learning in education environments; second, the lack of understanding of the acculturation process among educators, schools, and communities; and third, the loss of human capital that will deprive the United States of well-educated, participating citizens if these issues are not addressed. Each of these sections will discuss the focus this study determined as well as suggest pathways for further investigation of the cross cultural concerns in educational environments.

Social and Emotional Focus

The continued reliance on models of acculturation based on adults freely making choices to engage in cross-cultural events for opportunity does not have explanatory power when applied to children crossing cultures in schools. These antiquated models view this as an experience that individuals complete and find parity within the new culture until they leave and return to the home culture. Yet, for the current populations of children crossing cultures in U.S. schools, there will not be a return to the homeland in most cases, and these children must establish a new
identity as they also attempt to acculturate into the unfamiliar society. Thus, the reaction that schools have adopted as a response to these needs is that students must learn English to become conversant and academically fit as rapidly as possible. Although this is an important factor, it diminishes the social and emotional needs that children require as they manage a stressful transition in their lives. There are few programs that recognize identity development for children crossing cultures to provide them with a better understanding of the new culture and enhance their desire to acquire the language. According to Caldwell-Harris (2008), language development is an “emotional response,” a factor lacking in second language learning (p. 169). She further posited, “The emotionality of words and phrases suggests that their neural patterns might be associated not just with the meanings of other words in their sentential environment, but with the sounds, smells and resonances of the extra-linguistic environment” (p. 170). Current programs used in schools for language development do not take this important fact into consideration. More inclusive programs to develop not only the language but also the reasons for and use of the language within the society would be advised. The social and emotional connections necessary to achieve curricular changes would require teachers to be sensitive to the emotional needs of the students as they process language and cultural transmission, which is inherent in the study of language. Currently, cultural transmission is assumed but may have to be more specific for a population that is attempting the multidimensional process of acculturation. Ortega (2009) found that learners suffer from “amotivation” and their performance in formal learning settings can be predicted to suffer from it too (p. 177). The data suggest that a more sociocultural model of language development would enhance the development of self-determination and intrinsic motivation. Consequently, further studies and action research that would value the sociocultural as well as the emotional needs of children in
the educational contexts would assist educators as they work with this challenging and growing population.

**Educational Focus**

Whereas grounded theory is an inductive research method that uncovers the core variable and is explanatory of the behaviors that are the main concerns of the participants in a study (Glaser, 2002), similar issues often exist within larger systems and address the complexity of how organizations address changes (Simmons & Gregory, 2003). A grounded theory study is an explanatory theory of a core variable whereas a grounded action is an operationalization of the factors that inhibit or promote change within an actual organization (Simmons & Gregory, 2003). Furthermore, grounded action research based on the findings of this study would be a means to demonstrate, implement, and evaluate programs to meet the emotional and social needs of children crossing cultures as well as provide educators with a deeper understanding about what is actually happening in the learning the ropes process. Programs, such as described, would be a change from the current praxis in schools. Grounded action research would require teacher training, determination of curricular changes, and new models of assessment because the current practice assumes monocultural thinking in schools whereas children crossing cultures bring a more diverse, sociocultural perspective to the event. Grounded action research also would allow for stakeholders to be able to determine how best to fashion programs that meet with the cultures of their school environments.

The lack of understanding in schools and from educators and communities about acculturation was the most disturbing aspect of this research. As the participants related their recollections, it was obvious that they had met frequently with adults who were less than supportive or caring in schools and communities. In addition, the data suggested, although these
students attended U.S. schools, there was little interaction with the members of their peer group from the dominant culture. The need to belong to a community with the relatedness, certain external values, behaviors, and beliefs that have to be adopted, refined, and internalized is a balancing act for children crossing cultures, which is not well regulated nor understood in educational contexts (Ortega, 2009). It is a human desire to belong to and to be a part of the group (Van Reken & Pollock, 2009). Current practice is focused on culturally relevant pedagogy, with the emphasis on diverse populations (Nieto, 2010). Yet, the sociocultural aspects of educational environments are failing children crossing cultures by placing them into these environs without preparing the people surrounding them with the requisite skills to be able to appreciate their needs. At the very least, educators must be given the skills and strategies necessary to engage this population of children in meaningful dialogue about the process. Sociopolitical attitudes need to be examined through cross-cultural education for educators.

Moreover, sociopolitical attitudes define the third theme for children crossing cultures. This population is viewed as hindrance rather than an enhancement to the current educational debates that are engaged in the United States (Menken, 2008). Until there is a paradigm shift that enlightens the general population about the skills children crossing cultures bring to the U.S. economy and their value to future societal endeavors in a global society, educational environments will maintain a perspective that these individuals arrive in a deficit position simply because they do not speak the native language. Many of the participants related they felt “stupid, embarrassed, or confused” by their transcultural experience. Respondents often cited they were not given a chance to show what they knew in school. By 2040, 30% of classroom populations will contain children who have crossed cultures; therefore, we must develop programs and assessments that provide educators with a more comprehensive view of students’ prior
education, as well as understandings about how these experiences will translate into U.S. education (Menken, 2008).

**Global Focus**

Continued failure to recognize the versatile skills and strategies are parts of the repertoire that provide children crossing cultures with resilience and sustainability in a global world is to the detriment of U.S. society. The historical argument to this dynamic is that others before have found success, but a more global and technological approach to the world has made at the minimum a high school diploma a necessity (Holdaway & Alba, 2009; Suarez-Orozco et al, 2010). Thus, the stakes are high, and children who have crossed cultures may hold important information about how we can move comfortably into a global society. Research initiatives in this obvious intersection of the political and educational environments are difficult to locate. Important aspects of the variety of resources including social networks and community based resources are areas that would benefit from research studies to clarify needs. More comprehensive cross-cultural skill assessments need to be developed, determined, and applied so educators can gather a better understanding of how children crossing cultures fit within the curricular demands of U.S. schools and ultimately into the society as a whole. Issues as far ranging as bilingual education, socioeconomics, as well as the role of the federal government in a system of state defined school districts necessitate further examination as to the equity they provide to children crossing cultures (Holdaway & Alba, 2009). To continue to view this population from a deficit perspective will not provide the United States with a well-educated, participatory population willing to offer the twenty-first century with their skill sets that can only improve our global participation and understanding of our world.
Conclusions

A grounded theory study is developed on the principle of theoretical sensitivity so that data can determine the core variable and allow the patterns of behavior of participants to emerge. To remain open-minded, the biases and any preconceptions of the researcher must be set aside so the emergent process can occur. Once a theory emerges from the patterns of behavior of the participants in the study, the theory then is tested for fit, grab, relevance and modifiability (Glaser, 1978, 1992, 1998, 2002; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). From the outset of a grounded theory study the analyst must continuously question: What is this study about? What is actually happening in the data? What are the patterns that are emerging from the data? (Glaser, 2002). I will discuss the conclusions from the perspective of the four criteria for a grounded theory study: fit, grab, relevance, and modifiability (Glaser, 1998) in the final section of this paper.

Relevance

The United States holds as a basic birthright of all children access to an equal and quality education (Holdaway & Alba, 2009). However, the overriding fact that was clear from this research was this cherished belief does not appear to be embraced by all children currently attending schools in the United States. Educational environments are not equipped to provide equal access because they do not comprehend what this means for any group other than that representative of the native population (Ortega, 2009). Moreover, this belief is exacerbated by social and political policies that currently view those not members of the mainstream, dominant culture as problematic and deficient (Menken, 2008; Suarez-Orozco et al, 2010). Why these discontinuities exist was not a focus of this research but most assuredly was addressed by the participants in the study; instead, the major focus of the study was the process of acculturation which the participants found lacking because communities do not have adequate services
available to support this process for children. Whereas educational environments are focused on language development as the means of acculturation, the core variable, learning the ropes, implies that language was not the main concern and points to a more sociocultural process of how to become a participating citizen of the nation as the most relevant behavior for children crossing cultures. In addition, when a focus on language development is the sole means of support for entry to the new culture, major milestones of identity integration are missed leaving the individual to imitate rather than to acculturate within the new culture. Less than adequate models of cultural transmission have implications regarding the population dynamics of cultural traits. Thus, the relevance to a topic of current concern in any argument regarding education praxis and reform was striking.

**Grab**

As the United States grapples with issues of social class, race, ethnicity, and poverty, the needs of individuals making transcultural migrations are somehow subsumed into stereotypes and labeling. Consequently, the end result is that children crossing cultures are placed into schools unable to comprehend how the actual process affects individuals’ ability to develop identity and intrinsic motivations to maintain the acculturation process. Schools have prided themselves as leveling the playing field in U.S. society, yet the data indicated that this not the case for all and certainly not for those crossing cultures. Furthermore, there was notable grab indicated by the data that suggested the current curriculums in schools in the United States have possibly missed important understandings about a variety of populations. If that is the case, then the frameworks of the achievement gap, Title I and Title III initiatives, have dismissed the depth of what it means to be a child crossing cultures. In addition, follow-up interviews and
discussions after the emergence of the theory with participants evoked a strong connection to the theory of learning the ropes. Many participants stated, “That is exactly how it feels.”

**Fit**

My career in education has spanned 28 years of classroom experience; the better part of my career was spent as a second language educator. The prior knowledge I brought to the research was quickly overridden by the depth to which the participants related the emotional toll they had encountered as they tried to learn the ropes. It was humbling to recognize that my engagement with children crossing cultures had been focused on language development and, throughout my career, I had made assumptions about how students were gathering the information they required to become viable members of the new culture. The depth of the emotion provided learning the ropes with a fit to what the participants recounted, as well as answered some persistent questions I have had as an educator working with children crossing cultures. Often I would wonder why even the slightest disruption would send a student back to either a home culture perspective, or why a child crossing cultures would simply give up and default to the home culture. Learning the ropes was such a multidimensional process and finally fit that this does not have finality for an individual who has had to accomplish this task.

From my perspective as a long-time educator, I found the most concerning aspect of the research data was a child having to attempt this process without adult guidance. The home cultural environment is in distress and families do not understand the types of challenges children face in schools. Children crossing cultures then look to the schools they attend daily to provide them with answers; however, they are met with disinterest and misunderstanding. Moreover, schools cannot fulfill the purpose they were purportedly designed to meet, which leads to a lack of the all-important cultural transmission that would improve the motivational
aspects of the acculturation process. Consequently, current praxis does not meet the needs of all students attending schools in the United States because this knowledge is lacking among educators.

**Modifiability**

What began as a theoretical framework that language development was a major issue disappeared as the research progressed and it became more apparent that the main concern for participants was the lack of information about the culture they were trying to enter. Although professionals in the field of second language acquisition are aware of the sociocultural needs of language development, the general education population is not well informed about these needs. The resultant deficits become more involved than simply the development of a new language for academic success. Children crossing cultures lack information about how to best restructure their identity in the new culture so they can become participating members of the society. Consequently, this aspect provided the research conducted with a level of modifiability, meaning that further operational changes might be able to make the situation better as well as inform educators about how learning the ropes affects students in our schools. As is the case with many advocacy issues, these are aspects modifiable through information sharing or consultations. The lack of understanding of the needs of children crossing cultures is a failure on the part of the political entities tasked with equal opportunity for all through education, and from state and local community organizations that view certain populations as problematic and society as a whole that has somehow forgotten these are children attempting a process that is challenging.

Current programs have met this challenge by assuming that language development holds the key to future success. As Salomone (2010) aptly stated, “Schools demonstrate a lack of understanding about how languages used in daily life construct and confirm personal identity in
ways subtle and profound and how language ideologies within society shape a sense of national belonging” (p. 69). The current praxis in U.S. education environments has failed to recognize that learning the language is only useful for intragroup communication and representation. Thus, by focusing on academic language development, schools have failed to provide the access to cultural transmission that characterizes how individuals position themselves in relation to others. Lacking these key understandings individuals go through the motions of imitating the mainstream culture rather than fully engaging with the process of acculturating to the full dynamism of what it means to be a member of the society. The obvious intersection of political and social systems is remarkable and in conclusion appears to be the point at which there are diminished levels of support within communities, to include educational environments. At some point, the United States must become comfortable with the gift of diversity that exists within its shores and can provide the nation with new perspectives as global society rapidly develops. The diversity of children crossing cultures in educational environments in U.S. schools shows no sign of abating. Insofar as students present with various social, emotional, and psychological needs, the contexts they must function within must rise to the immense challenge of educating this population of students to take their rightful place in 21st century America.
References


Appendixes
Appendix A: Ethical Assurances

When research deals with human subjects, whether physically present in a room, represented on the Internet, or through personal records, it is consistent with the protocol of *The Belmont Report* that the subjects be protected at all times (United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1979). The research methods proposed in my study follow the basic ethical principles of research as described in *The Belmont Report*: respect for persons, meaning subjects are provided sufficient information and may choose to voluntarily participate or cease participation at any time during the research; beneficence, which demands participants are treated in an ethical manner; that benefits outweigh any risks from participation in the study; and justice, which requires fairness in selection and treatment of participants (United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1979). Therefore, IRB approval will be sought from Northcentral University prior to any collection of data for my study. Participants will be provided an approved informed consent letter, which addresses the purpose of the study, voluntary participation, confidentiality and security of information provided, withdrawal from participation, contact information, permission to record, and interview transcript availability. Participants will be informed of their option to decline to answer any of the interview questions and to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty (see Appendix B). In addition, the conduct of this research will be academically transparent and mindful of the honesty and integrity of my profession.

The participants as former students are a vulnerable population because of factors that include cultural considerations and immigration status in the United States. Therefore, there are ethical concerns when research delves into personal and often painful recollections, which can open old wounds and may harm the subject in the study. These ethical considerations will apply
to all subjects as the investigation proceeds. The privacy and the voluntary participation of the participants will be a major consideration in the research process. I also will have to carefully proceed with the study to lessen the possibility that any harm may come from a subject’s participation in the research. Utmost care will be a primary consideration of this research, and the research will strive to respect and to maintain dignity for all participants throughout the process (Gall et al., 2007; Hatch, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2004). The manner of the interview and the use of open-ended questioning will allow the participants to be in control of the information they share and will give them autonomy over the type of information they choose to relate.
Appendix B: Participant Informed Consent Letter

Dear Participant:

You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted by a doctoral candidate from Northcentral University in Prescott Valley, Arizona. The purpose of this study is to determine factors that may contribute to an individual’s ability to adapt to new cultures and maintain motivations to learn a new language in a new culture. This research will explore the experiences second-language students have in schools and the effect this may have on their abilities to acclimate to a new culture.

Researcher: Patricia Reynolds, Instructor of TESOL, University of Mary Washington. My telephone number is 540-720-7805; or, email at preynold@umw.edu. This research is not connected in any way with the University of Mary Washington, Stafford County, or any school entity in that county.

Participation Requirements: Participation is voluntary. Participants will be interviewed by the researcher. Interviews will be at a time and place determined most convenient for the participant. Participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty; however, please notify the researcher if you will be unable to attend the interview.

Potential Risk/Discomfort: Although there are no known risks in this study, some of the information is personally sensitive, as it includes questions about school-age experiences, which may be distressing to some people. However, participants may withdraw at any time and may choose not to answer those questions deemed too personal.

Potential Benefit: There are no direct benefits for participating in this research and no incentives, tangible or financial, are offered. A copy of the results will also be made available to all participants, if requested.
Anonymity/Confidentiality: The data collected in this study are confidential. The analysis instrument and all data are coded so identities are not directly connected with answers. In addition, the coded data are made available only to the researcher associated with this study.

Signatures

I have read and understand the above description of the Cultural Adaptation study and understand the conditions of my participation. I am 18 years of age and able to sign consent. My signature indicates that I agree to participate in this study.

Participant’s Printed Name: _____________________________ Date _______________

Participant’s Signature: _________________________________________________

Researcher’s Printed Name: _____________________________ Date _______________

Researcher’s Signature: _________________________________________________

Dr. Susan B. Stillman

Dissertation Committee, Chair

Northcentral University

Prescott Valley, Arizona