WHEN TWO CULTURES CROSS: PERCEPTIONS OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERS ON THE FACTORS THAT SUPPORT MISSIONARY KID’S RE-ENTRY PROCESS TO THEIR HOME CULTURE

Cassidy Skylar Isch
B.S. Colorado State University, 2008
M.S. Colorado State University, 2009

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A Dissertation

by

Cassidy Skylar Isch

Approved by Dissertation Committee:

_______________________________
Rose Borunda, Ed.D., Chair

_______________________________
Dan Melzer, Ph.D.

_______________________________
EunMi Cho, Ed.D.

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Student: Cassidy Skylar Isch

I certify that this student has met the requirements for format contained in the University format manual, and that this dissertation is suitable for shelving in the library and credit is to be awarded for the dissertation.

_______________________________, Graduate Coordinator ____________
Caroline Turner, Ph.D.                                                                 Date
DEDICATION

To the countless Missionary Kids around the world who, without consent, spent their formative youth growing up in a foreign country, living an experience that undoubtedly shaped and formed their adult years.

To the Missionary Kids who are yet to come, it is my prayer that they would be strengthened by their unique experience in a foreign country. It is my hope that they would be encouraged by the work of their parent(s) and moved closer to knowing and trusting the Lord.
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CURRICULUM VITAE

Education

B.A. Health and Exercise Science, Colorado State University, 2008
M.S. Biomedical Science, Colorado State University, 2009

Professional Employment

Community Director, Occidental College
Residence Life Coordinator, California State University, Sacramento
Abstract

WHEN TWO CULTURES CROSS: PERCEPTIONS OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERS ON THE FACTORS THAT SUPPORT MISSIONARY KID’S RE-ENTRY PROCESS TO THEIR HOME CULTURE

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This qualitative study examines the perceptions of educational leaders working at secondary schools around the world and seeks to understand the support systems in place for Missionary Kids (MKs). The purpose is to add to the body of knowledge surrounding challenges for MKs as well as highlight model structures being used to address those defined challenges. A qualitative survey sampled fourteen secondary schools administrators from nine different countries. A psychosocial development framework was utilized to understand the unique challenges for adolescents. Furthermore, social cognitive theory and retention theory were used to comprehend how students learn and what keeps students in school systems.

Findings add to the current practices in place to support MKs at secondary schools. Teachers, counselors, and administrators said that systems must be in place for leaving MKs to understand and talk about the challenges that they will face when re-entering their home country. These forums ranged from workshops, retreats, classes, and seminars. Additionally, parents and younger students were valuable populations to target.
for encompassing the larger scope of support systems. Lastly, multiple research participants commented on the need for incorporating alumni into the teaching process to share valuable information with current MKs.
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

“When two lines or colors cross in art, a new image is created that is greater than its parts. But when two cultures cross, the nexus is often a homeless land with its children feeling less than whole” (Shannon, 1988).

Background

There are a significant number of students who live for a substantial portion of their developmental years in a culture that is different from their home culture and then they transition back to their home culture. Examples of children and youth who experience this include those whose parents are employed in the military, missionary work, or international business/affairs. There can be inherent rewards and challenges for these students upon their transition(s). Students leave the experience understanding multiple languages, comfort traveling in foreign countries, and a broader world-view. For example, at a young age students can learn different philosophical and political perspectives living in Eastern culture as compared to Western culture (D. C. Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). However, students can also experience challenges, as they lack the skills by which to adjust to the home culture, such as the interpersonal relationship skills to make new friends or fit in with new peers, as well as navigating the emotional realm of leaving their old life behind (Sand-Hart, 2010).

Resentment towards their parents because of their decision to pack up and move can result in internal pain and confusion for the child. This can be an issue for children
of all ages, and the specific problems are dependent on specific age ranges, each having its own set of developmental conflicts, changes, and events. Students who are in the 12-18 age range (adolescence) experience identity development in a unique way compared with their younger peers, particularly as those peer relationships are often marked by conflict and rivalry (Campione-Barr & Smetana, 2010).

The focus of this study was on the experience of Missionary Kids (MKs) who are sometimes called Third Culture Kids, Trans-Cultural Kids, Cross-Cultural Kids, or Global Nomads. For my research purposes I used the term Missionary Kids. This term is the most common name referring to this population within the literature. Furthermore, the term Missionary Kid best represents who these individuals are; children of missionaries. Missionary Kids are a people subgroup of Third Culture Kids.

Third Culture Kids (TCKs) are a distinctive group of youth who were raised outside of their parents’ home country for a significant portion of their developmental years. The term Third Culture Kid best represents the idea of combining two distinct cultures and allowing the creation of a third culture that is unique to that person’s own experiences. TCKs experience a variety of rewards and challenges. They live in a new culture because of the requirements and conditions of their parents’ occupation. Typically these occupations fall into one of three categories: missionary, military, and international business. Each group has its own common language, common attributes, and common experiences that are unique only to that population. Missionary Kids (MKs) are a population subset of TCK and their experience and re-entry from host culture to home culture was the focus of this research. I chose to focus on MKs as this is the student
population that I will work directly with upon completion of this degree. I will be working in a secondary school setting in the housing department providing a safe and loving environment for the MKs to thrive in their development. I have never lived in a different country nor do I have parents who were missionaries, therefore, I believe that studying this distinct population will give me a valuable perspective on the realities of who the MK population is.

The world’s population and the number of Third Culture Kids are rapidly growing as technology and mobility advances (Kinder, 2014). We are living in a highly global world and family units are able to move around with more ease. Furthermore, there are many complexities even within the TCK community which make navigating self-identity challenging for youth. Some of those complexities include TCKs who are part of a minority group in their home country, TCKs who go to a host country for reasons other than their parents’ career, and issues of biracial or bicultural TCKs (D. C. Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). There has recently been a shift in global culture and parenting which impacts the vulnerability of youth's identity development and peer relationships (Willms, 2002). The problem of youth identity development is not limited to the United States. Specifically, this means that a family (and the children) may not live in the same city or the same country for the entirety of a child's developmental years.

This is not just an issue present in California, nor in just the United States. This is an issue experienced by children throughout the world, living in countries anywhere in the world (Quick, 2010). As they are growing through their developmental years these children are more vulnerable to struggling through difficult transitions because of the
fragility of their cognizance. There is a broad range of ages for children experiencing these transitions; however, the focus of this research was on children age 12-18, a time frame commonly referred to as adolescence.

Mu Kappa is a coeducational fraternal organization located on college and university campuses across the US with the intention of encouraging Missionary Kids to successfully face adjustments to college life in their cross-cultural transition. They understand that "MKs desire not to be distinctively foreign, but to integrate into the overall student life" (MuKappaInternational, 2013). MKs are often perceived as invisible groups of students on campus; meaning that the students look just like and blend in with the rest of the student population. However, these MKs have unique needs related to their experiences of growing up overseas.

By 1959 there were an estimated 10,000 children of North American missionary families and by the 1970s, there were over 100 schools around the world that were educating MKs (Orr, 1959). There was a reduction in the frequency of missionaries boarding their children in international schools in the 1980s due to the mission community retracting from large mission compounds. This caused missionary families to be more isolated which caused education settings to feel a strain on their staff and students. In the 1980s a catalyst for change in MK education was the successful start of the International Conference on Missionary Kids (ICMK) which occurred in Manila, 1984; Quito, 1987; and Nairobi, 1989. The implementation of the international conferences caused a new direction to be established and in the 1990s the number of MKs in missionary schools began to rise again (Andrews, 2004). The success of the
international conferences caused regional conferences to take place every three years for MK school personnel. International Children's Education (iCHED) is an organization located out of Dallas, Texas that works directly with international schools that educate children of missionaries as well as missionary sending agencies. iCHED is a department of SIL International and holds the purpose of sharing resources and supporting families and teachers overseas. iCHED maintains extensive communication with these schools to understand their current needs and trends for the students. Collecting data from 285 international schools, there were over 128,000 MKs attending schools worldwide in 2005 (InternationalCHED, 2014). All of these students (historically and present day) go through varying levels of transition, depending on their varying cultures, timing, and personal development.

Figure 1.1, Examples of Cross-Cultural Kids, shows the over-arching umbrella term Cross Cultural Kids and the multiple groups and sub-groups that are encompassed. A Cross Cultural Kid is an individual “who has lived in – or meaningfully interacted with – two or more cultural environments for a significant period of time during developmental years” (D. C. Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). This also shows the Missionary Kid category within the Third Culture Kid subgroup.
Figure 1.1 Examples of Cross-Cultural Kids
Figure 1.2 shows some of the specifics of what Cross-Cultural Kids (CCK) experience in their unique lifestyles and how there is some overlap between the shared backgrounds. Although there are differences between the living environments for the different CCK populations, it is clear that each person clearly experiences a cross cultural lifestyle or environment that they must acknowledge.
The Third Culture Kids are one of the only groups of children who are defined by their parent’s profession. They fit within the larger umbrella of Cross-Cultural Kids, in which defining these populations is not assimilation, rather it is to celebrate the differences and allow everyone to be their unique self.

**Figure 1.3 The Third Culture Model**

The Third Culture Model is helpful in understanding what "third culture" means. These cultures can represent geographical cultures, deaf/hearing cultures, corporate culture, and so on. Additionally, in some situations these circles don't represent just one culture. For example, a child might have a home culture of growing up in the United States with one parent who is from Brazil and one parent who is from Spain. Just in that one Home Culture, or "First Culture," circle there are three cultures blended together even before any moving has happened. Similarly, the Host Culture, or "Second Culture," could include a blending of multiple cultures because there could be multiple smaller moves within a specific country/culture. This means that a missionary family could move
to Papua New Guinea (a Host Culture) and live in the highlands region, then move to the coastal area. Both these areas have their own culture, even though they are in the same country. These moves add to the complexity of how children see and understand their surroundings.

The Interstitial Culture, or "Third Culture," is creating a new culture of customs, expectations, and beliefs. This is a new grouping of people who all belong to something based on their similar circumstances and experiences in which they were raised and live. The connections that are made are very relationally based. Sometimes there can be damage that is felt internally by TCKs because of their new interstitial culture and environment. In other words, the children can feel like a second priority for their parents as compared to the priority of their parent’s occupation. This creates a sense that the parents are not responsive to the youth’s needs and can cause emotional pain (Steinberg, 2014). It is in the Third Culture that the children live their day-to-day lives.

Some general characteristics of Third Culture Kids include:

- They learn early on what is acceptable.
- They are at home everywhere and nowhere; the average child has lived in 8 different places by the age 18.
- They are bilingual or multilingual.
- Almost 100% of them want to return "home" to their host country.
- They are very observant; don't make quick judgments, and are good judges of character.
• In college, their close friends are usually other TCKs or foreign students.
• Academically, they are usually higher achievers than their US counterparts.
• They have a "service desire." While they are not necessarily religiously oriented, most generally end up working in areas of service helping others.
• They recognize and appreciate the personal enrichment and growth of living in a foreign country.
• They have a more global worldview than their mono-cultural peers.

(InternationalCHED, 2014)

Clearly the life of a Third-Culture Kid has unique challenges that come at a time of their life when they are already trying to explore and understand who they are. This quote from a TCK who grew up in 3 distinct countries helps to shed light on the TCK perspective in terms of handling the “every-day” conversations and interactions:

“In the life of a TCK, even the simplest of questions can be met by the deepest sense of dread. “Where are you from?” is a very common question passed around socially, but for me there is no simple way to answer it. My reply can range anywhere from a one-word answer to a mini-version of my life story. My mood generally determines my reply, and I often have to discern whether people are really interested in me as a person, or if I am just the subject of their small talk.”-(Sand-Hart, 2010).

Previous Research on the Issue

There is limited research of the curriculum and programs in place that contribute to the success of students’ transition from a boarding school to their home country. However, in a broader perspective, there is quality research regarding re-entry shock, stress levels, and supportive environments. Furthermore, there has been research
demonstrating that MKs clearly understand the unique challenges as they begin their re-entry to their home country. This same research shows that although the MKs understand they have challenges, they do not fully understand how to deal with them (Thurston-Gonzalez, 2009).

In one study of adult missionaries, data suggested that re-entry to the home country could be supported with more frequent home-country visits and increased exposure to the home country culture (Fuller, 1994). These strategies could directly influence the patterns and techniques of supporting MKs before they re-enter their home country by providing a new foundation for re-entry programs. Another qualitative study of college-age MKs regarding their college choice demonstrated that MKs fully understand the need for adjustment in order for them to successfully navigate the oncoming challenges. This was revealed as MKs knew they would experience unique challenges as they were making their college choice (Thurston-Gonzalez, 2009).

Furthermore, factors related to the environment into which missionary families re-enter upon their return home also have an impact on MKs successful transition. A 2010 study, conducted by Kimber, showed that just under half of missionary families enter into non-supportive communities after years away from their home country. In this study, supportive communities referred to the care, support, and involvement of friends, family, and work colleagues. The lack of supportive communities was prevalent regardless of the missionary family’s communication of expected issues prior to their re-entry (Kimber, 2010). The frequency of non-supportive communities shows a greater need for
communication and responsiveness to intentionally meeting the needs of missionary families.

There is a shortage of literature related to support mechanisms for MK’s successful re-entry. There has not been research from MK student perspectives or from leaders who serve MKs on what techniques work best to support MKs in their time of transition. One goal in my research was to begin to address part of this gap in the literature by surveying teachers and school administrators regarding the tools, programs, and plans they used to care for and assist MKs in anticipation of their re-entry to their home culture. This research endeavor provided a means by which to identify best practices used by well-established schools that could be shared with other schools focusing on educating MKs.

**Problem Statement**

“A transition can be said to occur if an event or non-event results in a change in assumptions about oneself and the world and thus requires a corresponding change in one’s behaviors and relationships” (Schlossberg, 1981).

The problem is that students are living in their home country, then relocating and adjusting to another country, then moving back to their original home country. These transitions can be problematic for students especially as they are in their developmental stages of life. During the developmental stages of 12-18 years old there are many self-identity issues that must be explored (Steinberg, 2014) as well social-identity orientations
that needs to be solidified (Ettinger, 2009). Specifically, students who are in the age range of 12-18 experience existential questions including "Who am I?" and "Who can I be?" as they grow and develop (Browning, 2008). They seek to know and understand where they fit and exist in society, their friend circle, and in their family. There can be significant trouble for youth (and adults) when there is confusion about what to base belief and identity in. “When you don’t know what you believe in, you don’t know who you are. You have no idea why you’re here. You can’t see where you’re going” (Bolman & Deal, 2001).

The groups that are impacted by the issues previously defined are Third Culture Kids. These are young people who typically come from families in one of the following categories: Foreign Service Kids, Corporate Brats, Missionary Kids, and Military Brats, all terms uniquely named, defined, and embraced by the specific populations. Due to the parent(s) employment the families need to make a major relocation and move during the children's life, sometimes relocating multiple times before they move out of their parents' home.

The problem can be significant for young people. There can be challenges with adjusting to new friend circles, problems adjusting to new teaching and learning styles, and struggles with adjusting to new social expectations (Grych & et al., 1992). Typically students perform better academically when their learning style matches the teaching style (Brown & Clearinghouse, 2003). Therefore, when students move from school to school and experience varying teaching styles that are different than their own, there is often learning failure, frustration, and confusion from the student (Reid, 1987). Particularly
growing up in multiple countries can cause unique challenges for youth (Fail, Thompson, & Walker, 2004). “If we take a look at the impact of a globally mobile childhood on a child who grows up in that internationally mobile environment, we can examine the longer term impact of trying to learn personal and cultural identity when the mirror around is always changing its message to tell children who they are” (Sand-Hart, 2010). Furthermore, because of the adjustment, some Missionary Kids feel resentment towards their parents for being the catalyst for their relocation. The way that children deal with resentment is different depending on the age of the student. In the 12-18 age range, adolescents can feel extra resentment because of the strained peer relationships the result from moving transitions. Both the foreign student and Missionary Kid population have demonstrated feelings of separation, culture shock, and isolation as they transition during their adolescent age range (Moss, 1985). Furthermore, as children get older and they gain more independence, the feeling of self-reliance is increased and children can feel less of a need for their parents.

The Cultural Iceberg Model can help to understand the issue that is presented specifically for Missionary Kids living abroad. Figure 1.4 shows that there are multiple levels, or cultures, and some are seen from the surface yet many of them are unseen from a quick overview. It is not until one spends significant time in the new culture that they are able to dig deeper to understand the common humanity, values, beliefs, and meaning of life for the culture.
Figure 1.4 The Cultural Iceberg Model

This represents a piece of the relevant transitions that Missionary Kids go through as they change from one culture to another culture. They too need to spend time in the culture to understand the concealed worldviews and commonalities of the culture.

Nature of the Study

The focus of this research was to discover what programs and curriculums are best in preparing Missionary Kids for the transition they will face from international
secondary schools to their home country. I was looking for patterns of best practice among the secondary school administrators and faculty that I gathered data from.

My four primary research questions were as follows:

1. What are secondary school educational leaders’ perceptions regarding the challenges Missionary Kids face in their re-entry process to their home country?
2. How are secondary school leaders responding (in terms of curriculum and program) to support and assist Missionary Kids prior to their re-entry process?
3. What challenges do MKs face that secondary school educational leaders recognize as not being addressed?
4. What resources are necessary to implement the changes mentioned in the previous question?

I utilized inductive qualitative research. This consisted of looking for themes from collected data in order to determine and give a rich description of the current best practices being used in multiple schools (Boudah, 2011). This encompassed a broader aspect than just academics. There were curricular features as well as programs and plans that focused on the relational, emotional, and practical needs of the students.

I reached out to multiple international boarding schools for data collection. I had an administrator and/or a faculty member complete a free-response survey to determine what programs and curriculums are intentionally being set in place to prepare students for their transition from the school to their home country.
Within the open-ended qualitative survey, I had the schools describe all their related curriculums and practices; then I analyzed to see if there were patterns from multiple schools that consistently show up at the top. The most difficult part was making the argument that these indeed were the best practices; but I there proved to be connections with the literature.

The twenty-seven schools that I sent the open-ended qualitative survey to included representation from twenty-four different countries on 6 continents. There were schools from the northern and southern hemispheres. The map below is a graphic depiction of the countries represented that were solicited to participate in the qualitative survey. That being said, I ended up having sixteen educational leaders from ten different countries participant in the research.
The approach of using an open-ended qualitative survey was appropriate because it allowed the possibility of gathering a range of valuable data including copies of handouts, forms, and action plans from each school. Ultimately, these supplemental documents were included in the appendixes to allow other school administrators to use the defined best practices. This shared resource added to the significance of the research study.

**Theoretical Framework**

There are three theoretical frameworks that have applications towards my research. Each concept brought a valuable perspective to the research and added new context to the way to think about support systems for MK re-entry.
Social Cognitive Theory: Focuses on how individuals learn by observing others and modeling their behavior on those that they identify with. This is also known as "social learning theory." Specifically, this theory explains that people learn new behaviors and mannerisms not just through observing the rewards and punishment that they experience from their own choices. Rather, they also learn new behaviors and mannerisms by replicating what they observed in others. When perceived outcomes do not match observed outcomes there is a self-reflection learning that inspires and creates thought for new behavior. Another important aspect of Social Cognitive Theory is that of reciprocal determinism. This is when the environment and the individual behavior both influence each other (Bandura, 1976).

Retention Theory: Argues that a student's choice to persist or withdraw from an institution is driven by the student's academic success, definition of goals, and social integration (Tinto, 1987). The theory states that students must fully integrate into formal and informal academic and social systems. There is a need for meaningful faculty-student interactions and relationships for students to feel a sense of community within the school. Furthermore, students need to be introduced to student clubs/organizations, campus resources, and other forms of involvement. This demonstrates the need for valuable academic connection and social connection (Tinto, 2004). Retention Theory was developed with the college/university setting in mind but can be applied to the secondary school setting with adolescent youth. Retention has similar threads of resilience, which is an important concept in MK’s transition. If students are able to adapt to their changes in their local and global environment effectively, they will successfully retain in the new
environment (Bowers, 1998). This is the case for students in terms of academic and social systems. When students feel like they have a place, or a fit, they will typically decide to fight through the challenges and hardships rather than give up and leave the potentially difficult environment. So it is critical to explore the unique reality from a perspective of resiliency and retention.

Stages of Psychosocial Development: Shows that in each specific stage of human development there are key issues that must be explored and balanced. As Figure 1.6 demonstrates, each developmental stage builds upon the previous, pointing to the importance of solid development in all stages, regardless of the external environment.
The 12-18 year old range is commonly referred to as adolescence or being a Teenager. Specifically in this Teenager stage the basic conflict is represented with Identity versus Role Confusion. Teenagers need to continuously search for and develop a sense of self and personal identity. This is built on the result and perseverance towards conflict in earlier life stages. Failure in this stage is the inability to synthesize all their previous stages into one stable identity, thus resulting in role confusion and a weak sense of self. Success in this stage leads to an ability to stay true to one self (Erikson, 1963). As an example, adolescents make an effort to create their own identities and see themselves as distinct from their parents in the way that they dress or talk.

The most important aspects of the preceding theoretical concepts are how the adolescents adapt and transition to the looming location change and their new environment. Specifically, prominent aspects of the study focused on how the youth develop skills and capacity for successful adjustment from engaging with their peers. This behavior is related to Social Cognitive Theory. The success of the transition for the teenagers can also be dependent on the support mechanisms that schools put into place both academically and socially (Tinto, 1987). Furthermore, understanding the MK teenager’s unique thought-processes and emotional state is critical to understanding what techniques can prepare them for their re-entry process. It is also important to note that the school personnel participating in the study worked exclusively with the secondary school students. This narrowed the focus of who participated in the open-ended survey to match the focus of the research questions (12-18 age range).
Operational Definitions

Boarding Home Parent

Cross-Cultural Kids

Culture

Home Culture

Host Culture

Interstitial Culture

Missionary Kids

Re-entry

Third Culture

Third Culture Kid

**Boarding Home Parent**: a married couple who raises a number of children and adolescents in their home while the youth's parents are away for a determined period of time.

**Cross-Cultural Kids (CCKs)**: a young person who is living or has lived in two or more cultures for a significant portion of their childhood.

**Culture**: customs and civilization of a particular people or group. A group of people who have something in common with each other.
**Home Culture**: the "first culture" that a young person is exposed to, often the country of birth. The culture that begins shaping the young person's perspective on their reality.

**Host Culture**: the "second culture" that a young person is exposed to which has new cultural and social expectations.

**Interstitial Culture**: the "third culture" with shared commonalities of those living an internationally mobile lifestyle.

**Missionary Kids (MKs)**: a group under TCKs who are living abroad because their parent’s occupation working as a foreign missionary requires it.

**Re-entry**: the transition for a TCK to relocate from their host culture back to their home culture.

**Third Culture**: a general term applied to an approach to life that is cultivated in the borders or spaces between societies.

**Third Culture Kid (TCKs)**: a young person who lives for a significant portion of their developmental years in a culture that is different than their parent’s culture, typically due to their parent’s career choice.

**Limitations**

This study consisted of an open ended survey that was completed by one administrator and/or one teacher at each K-12 school as indicated earlier in this chapter. These 27 schools that were selected to participate were located in 24 different countries,
representing every continent. They were selected because of their English curriculum as well as their long standing history of working with missionary sending agencies and missionary families. The selection of these schools provided a broad range of cultural and geographical representations for curricular and programmatic practices.

Only one individual in the role of administrator and of educator were required to participate from each school. Subsequently, there was a great dependence on securing accurate information from each individual. Furthermore, I had no personal connection to any of the international schools at the time of the research. This made it difficult to get the international schools to open up to being collaborative without knowing me. Additionally, the schools may have tried to put themselves in the best light possible despite known shortfalls or areas of needed growth. Administrators and faculty might have over embellished their designed programs and curriculum beyond the actual scope of their own success.

Another limitation was my lack of student voice in the research design to compare what students perceived as the most helpful strategies in aiding in their individual transition. Although students have a valuable perspective on what is best for their own transition, they may not fully understand the comprehensive approach that schools take to aid in their re-entry transition. For example, a student may believe that programs A, B, & C worked better for them than programs D, E, & F; when in reality they didn't even know that the school also implemented curriculum X, Y, & Z to assist their transition.

I assumed that individuals that I made contact with would be inclined to be open and honest with me in their free-responses on the survey. I assumed this because I
anticipated that they would take into account my passion and interest in best serving MKs due to my future career goals as a Boarding Home Parent.

The biggest assumption was being able to accurately assess what the best practices are in meeting the re-entry needs of MKs. Reliance on the voice and perceptions of administrators and faculty underscored the determination of how “best practice” is defined. Nonetheless, patterns in survey results as well as outliers in what administrators and faculty reported as their practices provided further knowledge related to this topic.

Internal bias possibly surfaced as schools administrators and teachers conveyed “best practices.” These same schools were possibly inclined to put themselves in the best possible light, which may potentially have altered their responses and feedback in their individual survey.

I have never lived in another country for an extended period of time. Additionally, I am not a Third Culture Kid, therefore, I do not have the self-understanding of what a TCK experiences growing up. This was a limitation, but also a benefit because I didn't have biases with previous experiences from my life.

**Significance**

This completed research identified gaps in the current literature of determining best practices for preparing youth in their transition from a boarding school in a host culture to their home culture. There was clearly a need to support teenagers in their time
of transition from one school to another school, particularly when those schools are in different cultures. The gap that this research filled is the understanding of how to best support the MKs before they make their vital transition back to the home culture. This is also known as re-entry. From this research study there is insight as to the conversations that teachers should be engaging with youth; the intentionally framed cultural experiences youth should have; and what services should be provided by identified individuals such as school personnel or clergy upon the youths’ arrival to their home culture.

Many groups can benefit from this research, from individual parents and children to organizations and schools. Schools (including those surveyed and those not surveyed) will directly benefit from the research as they are able to use the findings as a guide for creating or developing their plans for assisting students in transition. Schools can find this research useful for their curriculum development, their faculty and staff training, and various student or parent workshops. Included in the research are documents and examples of programs for developing a transition plan for students.

In summary, I conveyed the significance of the problem that Missionary Kids experience in their unique lifestyle, specifically in the time that they transition from their host culture to their home culture. In Latin America the number of international schools increased from 27 in 1986 to 68 in 1991, an increase of over 150 percent (Hayden & Thompson, 1998). Due to the increasing number of schools that focus on MK education, this is clearly an issue that many youth around the world experience.
Conclusion

Adolescents are asking themselves the life questions of “Who am I?” and “Who can I be?” and need to be supported through their own identity development. The research design and research questions were explained as having a focus on seeking to understand the best practices used by 27 secondary schools which focus on MK education. This data was collected by means of qualitative open-ended survey questions to administrators and teachers. The theoretical frameworks applied to research in the following ways. Social Cognitive Theory focuses on how individuals learn by observing others and modeling their behavior and identity on perceived outcomes. Retention Theory explores the need for sufficient academic and social integration for students to be successful in a new setting. The Stages of Psychosocial Development Theory describes the normal development over the entire lifespan with emphasis on the adolescence stages in this research. I based my research on the assumption that the survey participants were able to accurately select and describe their own best practices at the school they work at. Lastly, it was my goal that many organizations, educators, parents, and youth are able to benefit from the research; all being able to better understand the MK transition experiences and the support mechanisms needed and in practice for successful re-entry.
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

“They are “hidden immigrants” – they look like they belong in their passport country, but they don’t feel like they belong there entirely” (Aisenbrey, 2014).

Introduction

Missionary Kids (MKs) are children of missionaries who grow up in a different culture than their home culture because of their parents’ career choice. At some point in the MKs life they will re-enter back to their home country and this re-entry process comes with significant challenges in terms of identity, socialization, and transition. In Chapter 1 I explained that the research design was an inductive qualitative study in which I created and distributed an open-ended survey which was completed by secondary school educational leaders. The survey examined their perceptions on Missionary Kids’ (MKs) transitions and sought to ascertain their current practices to support the MKs before their re-entry process. This topic is significant, particularly for adolescent MKs, because of the developmental changes they are going through. There is little research that addresses the specific topic of this study. However, there is a great wealth of knowledge in select related areas that I have referenced throughout this chapter to provide a holistic picture of the background on this topic.

In order to best understand who Missionary Kids are and how they transition to their home culture, it is important to look at the historical perspective of schools around the world designed for MKs. Next, I review a comprehensive body of literature about the background of the type of students that are Third Culture Kids, and more specifically
Missionary Kids. The third theme focuses on the current research on the re-entry process, expanding to include valuable information beyond just Missionary Kids’ perspectives and experiences. I then describe the limited descriptions of existing programs and curriculums that are set up at current schools to assist children of missionaries with their transition to their home country. I conclude this chapter with a thorough review and explanation of the theoretical frameworks relevant to this study, including Erik Erikson’s Stages of Psychosocial Development, Vincent Tinto’s Retention Theory, and Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory.

**Theme 1 – Background and History on Missionary Schools**

International schools that are designed for children of missionaries are a unique type of education for many reasons. There are approximately 285 schools around the world that provide the educational preparation to missionary children (InternationalCHED, 2014). A thorough database of these 285 schools was located through the International Children's Education (iCHED). iCHED works collaboratively with missionary sending agencies and schools for missionary children in an effort to maintain records, understand the needs of the schools, and to provide resources for families at the schools. These schools range in number of students from 14 students at the New Tribes Mission School in Brazil to 2600 students at the Jakarta International School in Indonesia.

In the 17th century, with the movement of Protestant missionaries traveling abroad, the education of children of missionaries was not a primary focus. Typically
families chose one of two options for their children’s education. Either the children would stay in the home country or they would travel with the parents to the new country and be educated by one of the parents, most typically the mother. The more common practice was having children stay in the home country so that both the mother and father could solely focus on their ministry work abroad. Although the preference was for education in the home country, many families had limited options when they began to expand their family with the births of infants in the foreign country. The new children born in the foreign countries created a rising need for focused education for children of missionaries in their foreign country of service (Andrews, 2004).

The first school of this type, called Woodstock School, was started in 1854 in India primarily for Protestant girls who were able to board at the school site as well. The Woodstock School was closed for three years due to insufficient funds to staff the school. However, it reopened in 1874 and has been educating students ever since. The second school, the Chefoo School, designed for children of missionaries, was started in 1880 in China. This began a movement of new regional schools for missionary children and increased admission applications. With the schools being located in closer proximity to the parents, children were able to visit and have closer connections. In 1906, President Roosevelt played an important role in the development of the oldest African school for missionary children, the Rift Valley Academy in Kenya.

The prevalence of schools designed for children of missionaries grew at the same time as missionaries expanded into areas of the world that had previously been closed off. Researchers found that missionaries with children were able to break down cultural
barriers easier than missionaries without children (Andrews, 2004). Therefore, the idea of a missionary bringing their children to a foreign country and enrolling them in a school specifically considered for them no longer seemed rare. By the 1970s, in total around the world, there were approximately 70 primary schools and 30 secondary schools for Missionary Kids. Most of the schools were patterned after American public schools. In the 1980s the mission community began to attack the idea of boarding Missionary Kids because of potential cultural isolation that resulted from large missionary compounds (Andrews, 2004). The mission community’s theoretical disapproval resulted in three international conferences for Missionary Kid education, occurring in 1984 in Manila, 1987 in Quito, and 1989 in Nairobi. The final conference included 700 delegates from 127 Missionary Kid schools. The conferences resulted in a renewed intentionality on educational options for Missionary Kids as well as other support systems for missionary families. A realization from the conferences was that important characteristics of MK school personnel were not the academic technical skills as much as they are relational capacities. This is important to recognize considering that educational communities tend to excel when they are led by relational leaders (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 1998). Specifically, characteristics include a nurturing environment, exceptional patience, relational boundaries, and life stability (Andrews, 1999). These same outcomes from the international conferences 25 years ago still hold as foundations for MK education today. Another result of the conferences was the opening of the Association of Christian Schools International, a full-time office to address the needs of MK schools and services to MKs (Andrews, 1993).
One of the unique challenges for these types of schools is the frequent turnover in student population (Langford, 1999). Due to the parent’s missionary service in any particular country, a child could be attending a given school from as short as 6 months to as long as 12 years. This results in an altered childhood of transiency and international movement (Langford, 1999). That being said, MK children typically have gaps in their education as a result of their parents move to a new location and/or move to their home country for a short period (6 months – 1 year). It is difficult for teachers to teach and students to learn in environments with many distractions (Barbeta, 2005). Similarly, the regular moves and transitions in and out of the classroom by students can cause challenges for the teachers to create a consistent environment for learning to take place.

The twenty-seven schools that I selected to survey were some of the oldest schools designed for missionary children. The schools each had a minimum of 100 students consistently in attendance and also had a consistent connection with long standing missionary-sending organizations. There is much intentionality that goes into the staffing patterns at these schools. In addition to typical Instructor/Teacher and Tutor roles, there are specific persons such as Academic Coordinator, Education Consultant, Multilingual Education Consultant, Academic Training Consultant, and Literacy and Education Consultant (Wycliffe, 2014). Lastly, all of the selected schools designed and implemented their curriculum in English, meaning that the student population is fluent in English regardless if that was their primary language.
Theme 2 – Unique Characteristics of Missionary Kids

A child who grows up in a culture other than his or her parents’ passport cultures (the country from which they reside) is sometimes called a Third Culture Kid, Trans-Cultural Kid (TCK), Cross-Culture Kid (CCK) or a Global Nomad. The term Third Culture Kid can initially be misleading, causing readers to think that TCKs are young people who grew up in a “Third World” country. This may or may not be the case for all TCKs. In fact, the Third Culture Kid term describes the reality of life for people in this category better. It begins to shape an understanding of two cultures coming together to form a third culture, one unique specifically to the population in this research. It is for these reasons that I selected to use this term and remained referring to the term Third Culture Kid throughout the research.

A child that grows up in a culture that mixes the norms of both cultures, from their country of origin and the host country, into an original and different “third” culture, eventually becomes a combination of cultures (Useem, 1973). The TCK could feel that they have membership with all of the cultures they have lived in and experienced life in, yet they could also feel that they are missing a genuine membership to any one culture. These children might feel culturally separated from their parents and other non-TCKs and they can find comfort and support in others like themselves. The TCK lifestyle can be described by the quote “roots are not embedded in a place, but in people” (Gordan, 1993). This means that the people they meet and interact with are of more importance to their identity than the country name or city environment they live in. “Third Culture Kids feel most at home when they are with others from similarly mobile backgrounds” (Gilles,
Furthermore, many seek out relationships, living environments, and work settings outside of their home country. “Where they feel most like themselves is in that interstitial culture, the third culture, which is created, shared, and carried by persons who are relating societies, or sections thereof, to each other.” (Useem, 1973). This is particularly challenging for adolescents who are still developing their sense of identity. When thinking about the unique group of Third Culture Kids and all the sub-groups that are encompassed within, it is important to recognize that the goal of creating categories and groups is not integration; rather it is to revel the differences and allow others to be unique.

The culture that children experience in their formative years is a major influence on their sense of belonging, their identity, and their confidence. If a child understands the common rules and how to fit in, they will feel a part of the group rather than an outsider. Therefore, with a sense of identity in mind, a Third Culture Kid must quickly learn the cultural rules to be seen as an “us” rather than a “them.” There is not a desire for the same identity for all youth. There are three identities that Third Culture Kids often gravitate to when adjusting to a new culture. The “chameleon” tries to blend in and find the same identity as others they are around. The “screamer” tries to create their own identity and be different from the others they are around. Lastly, the “wallflower” tries to find non-identity among those they are around. There can often be confusion around issues of identity, particularly hidden identity such as an observed identity that Third Culture Kids often take on (Van Reken, 2001).
A common perception about those living in a different culture is that there are many natural advantages such as gaining a variety of insights and international experiences, learning to become accepting of diversity, and being on the cutting edge of multicultural education. However, the international and intercultural experience is often times so wasted and not put to good use for enhancing communities afterwards (Brislin, 1995). Nevertheless, it is challenging specifically for youth who feel as if they have no home; who feel like they will never be monocultural and thus may have a hard time with identity (McCluskey, 1994). Gleason defines creating an identity as “the process by which a person comes to realize what groups are significant for him, what attitudes concerning them he should form, and what kind of behavior is appropriate” (Gleason, 1983). A traditional living environment for the non-TCK is easier, particularly when seeking answers to identity forming questions. For example, if a child asks, “What nationality am I”? he or she will accept their country membership and the ready-made attitudes that go with it. However, a TCK asking his or her parent, “What am I?” may receive contradictory answers because the complexity of the multiple cultures and environments. Furthermore, the parent may not fully understand the struggle the child is facing in trying to combine and make sense of two different cultural values and attitudes. Parents may not see their child struggle because as adults they have already formed their identity and are confident in it, whereas the child is in a more critical and vulnerable age.

Although TCKs can fit into two or more cultures, and their causes for living abroad can differ, there are many similarities shared by all TCKs. “Each of these subcultures, community of expatriates, generated by colonial administrators,
missionaries, businessmen, and military personnel—had its own peculiarities, slightly different origins, distinctive styles, and stratification systems, but all were closely interlocked” (Useem, 1973). Some mutual personal features of TCKs include a large world view, language attainment, gaining a cultural connection, a sense of rootlessness, feeling restless, and sensing an association with others who share similar backgrounds. There is a common sense of home being everywhere while it is also nowhere.

Children grow up globally in an environment where they get treated differently than adults (Richards, 2011) and manage stress and trauma differently than adults (Leffy, 2001). As a TCK it can be very isolating being in another country because there may not be many other children from their home country. There can also be substantial trials adjusting back to their home culture after being away for some years (Stirling, 2008). Their home does not feel like their home, because they are still trying to shape what “home” looks like. For example, when an American TCK goes home, they can look American, dress American, talk American, but don’t feel American because they don’t understand the culture. The children look the same and talk the same as the other Americans, but they don’t feel the same on the inside (ISMK, 2010). After living in England, India, and Norway as an MK, Sand-Hart described the sense of home as follows: “I myself am unsure which nation feels most like home. The truthful answer is that home is wherever my family members are” (Sand-Hart, 2010).

Within the umbrella term Third Culture Kid is the sub-group of Missionary Kid (MK). The term Missionary Kid literally means a kid who is a missionary, but practically it refers to a child of a missionary (InternationalCHED, 2014). They are defined in many
ways, with their parents’ occupation being one of their unique characteristics. Missionaries are usually pioneer types, those who are willing to travel into foreign, unknown areas and potentially sacrifice luxuries to share about their strong convictions and values. They are also often highly educated, which values a quality education for their children, the MKs (Andrews, 2004).

The family unit is defined differently for MKs because of their unique travel and living situations. Colleagues of their parents often inherit the title and role of “aunt” or “uncle” and in a sense become part of their extended family. Additionally, MKs form very deep and significant relationships with their peers because they recognize that they can relate to each other like no one else can. Their peer relationships become like siblings while they are in the host country together. Lastly, as spiritual faith is a crucial part of their parents vocation, their own faith is one that has extra attention given to it compared to their non-MK peers. That being said, even though MKs are the children of missionaries, their faith still needs to be made their own and it cannot be assumed that they will necessarily follow the path of their parent’s faith (InternationalCHED, 2014).

**Theme 3 – Current Practices in Preparation for the MK Re-Entry Process**

The everyday stresses of life can be difficult for an adolescent to manage. Moving from one culture to another culture challenges nearly every aspect of someone’s life, including physical, emotional, psychological, spiritual, social, developmental, and financial aspects. The everyday challenges are exaggerated when combined with a
cultural change for adolescents who are moving to their “home country” after recently living in a different culture. There can often be feelings of excitement and adventure as well as isolation and confusion when re-entering into one’s home country.

In order to understand the feelings of re-entering and the preparation for the re-entry process, it is important to examine the stresses inherent to these processes. In this section I have unpacked the re-entry process from multiple perspectives that are relevant to Missionary Kids.

There has been a limited amount of research on factors that impact the stress level and shock of Missionary Kids re-entering their home culture. Much of the research focuses on Missionary Kids’ lifestyle, psychological wellbeing, and cultural exposure. The following studies are summarized and evaluated as they relate to the focus of this research study. While there has not been substantial research on factors that support MKs as they prepare for their re-entry transition this gap is what this research was intended to address.

In a research design with 87 participants aged between 17 and 20 years old, Fuller (1994) investigated re-entry shock of youth who had lived abroad for at least one year and were now living in the U.S. again. Fuller used four independent variables which included psychological development, depth of acculturation to the host culture, time overseas, and family functioning. The sample was comprised of 26 males and 61 females and regression analysis demonstrated MK adjustment was affected by amount of American cultural exposure, number of visits to the United States, and amount of U.S. contact. Host country region, age and years in host country, type of schooling and contact
with host nationals, involvement in ministry, cultural identity, political unrest of host country, primary language in home, and age of reentry were not related to MK re-entry adjustment. These findings suggest that MK re-entry adjustment can be improved by increasing MKs’ American cultural exposure and U.S. visits and contact. These research findings from Fuller suggest that positive social change can be achieved by providing missionary organizations with ways to improve re-entry adjustment, increasing the psychological wellbeing of MKs (Fuller, 1994).

In a qualitative study on the educational transition of eleven college-age students from Latin America to a U.S. college, Thurston-Gonzalez (2009) showed that predicting challenges was an easy task for the students. Throughout the questionnaires and interviews, many students recognized multiple adjustment issues to be one of the challenges they would have to face. The results of this research shows that the MKs know enough about themselves and their transition to know that there will be challenges. This emphasizes the developmental maturity of MKs to think beyond the present and into the future of challenges that they may likely face (Thurston-Gonzalez, 2009).

In Kimber’s 2010 research regarding missionary re-entry, over one hundred missionaries responded to a questionnaire that correlated levels of stress, cultural adaptation, and transition. Sixty two men and forty women completed the questionnaire, all having lived overseas for more than four years and successfully transitioned back to the U.S. The study found numerous non-predictors of re-entry distress including gender, period of time overseas, and cultural adaptation to the host culture. The study also found a substantial relationship between re-entry preparation and decision to return home from
the mission field. Those missionaries who reported higher levels of re-entry distress also described a lack of support from their receiving community in the U.S. Community can be described as a “social group that not only shares an identity and structured pattern of interaction, but also a common geographical territory” (Goodman, 1992). Almost half of the research participants (43%) indicated they didn’t return to an understanding and compassionate community. This large number of long-term missionaries who didn’t return to a supportive community demonstrates that there is a misunderstanding regarding the importance of communication and sympathetic communities for missionaries and their families. In adults, a major factor of the successful re-entry is the supportive community in which the MK is returning to (Kimber, 2010). Similarly, adolescents who are nearing young adulthood are also in need of an environment which embraces and celebrates the unique life experience they have had.

Lastly, a research study comparing transition experiences of Missionary Kids and foreign students explored issues of loneliness and college adjustment. Moss (1985) surveyed over 400 new U.S. college students and asked questions regarding their own perceptions on their transition from a foreign country to college in their home country and how they were supported. The results showed that Missionary Kids and foreign students experienced very similar feelings of isolation, culture shock, and loneliness. There were very few formal processes for comparing and supporting the adjustment problems for these transitioning students of similar backgrounds. This demonstrates the importance of discovering what traditionally successful MK schools do to support their students before the re-entry process begins (Moss, 1985).
There is not much formal research related to the practices that work best for supporting MKs before their re-entry transition. Some suggested tips for helping MKs transition include: age appropriate levels of communication, giving MKs opportunities to have input and make decisions, establishing a supportive peer group, quickly re-engaging into a new environment, and having a positive attitude and outlook. This is not research based advice; rather it is anecdotal from the International Children’s Education Department (iCHED). iCHED also recommends the participation of 4 adults involved in the life of an adolescent to help with emotional stability. The involvement of 4 invested adults can create a sense of meaning and self-worth for MKs who find themselves in a world of ever changing expectations, languages, and cultures.

**Theme 4 – A Review of Theoretical Frameworks**

There are a variety of frameworks that address the relevant topics surrounding the preparation for Missionary Kids to re-enter into their home country that were used in this study. These frameworks all brought valuable perspective to the MK experience and each highlighted specific pieces of support needed prior to re-entry transitions. The frameworks that were utilized include Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial Development, Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, and Tinto's Retention Theory.

The first framework focused on the potential identity crisis experienced by MKs during their adolescent years as seen through the lens of Erik Erikson’s Stages of Psychosocial Development. Erikson focuses on favorable outcomes of each of the multiple life stages (i.e. Infant, Toddler, Pre-schooler, Grade-schooler, etc.). There is then
an exploration of other theorists who researched their frames as a result of Erikson’s original theories.

A discussion related to the topic of “identity” is explored. A few of the wide-ranging terms that initially form regarding “identity” include physical features which are clearly visible to onlookers such as age, race, sex, ethnicity, height, weight, and ability. Additionally, the notion of identity comprises non-visible features like country of origin, sexual preference, sexual orientation, and socio-economics status.

Identity is a major function of Erik Erikson’s most famous theory in Psychosocial Development. In this theory which was developed in 1963, Erikson demonstrated an outline of the normal psychosocial development for 8 stages of one’s lifespan. These stages highlight critical personal and social tasks that must be mastered in order to move along to the next developmental stage. In each stage there are conflicts and crisis which individuals must explore and Erikson states that the response to the conflicts and crisis is part of what shapes themselves into who they are (Erikson, 1959). As it pertains to the research on MKs, the stage of most significance is that of adolescence. This stage has individuals who range in age from 12-18 and are all working to figure out their own identity. As adolescents progress through this stage, if they are unsuccessful in synthesizing their multiple roles they will experience role confusion and a sense of identity crisis (Erikson, 1963).

“Identity crisis” is a concept developed by Erikson in 1963 which is different than dual identity. As it pertains to identity, this is a concept that is very complex and is hard to get a firm handle around, however; it is also an important concept to make attempts at
understanding by grasping for understanding our own and others’ identity. One of the underlining questions with identity is, “Who am I?” and this is often asked, if not audibly, by adolescent youth, particularly MKs in transition. This was useful as I began my research for an understanding of what self-identity questions MKs might be wrestling with and how school leaders are designing support systems to address the real identity questions.

Erikson was an integral figure in spreading the term and suggested that it is a concept which is hard to grasp. Identity involves a continuing interaction between the individual’s personal development and their participation in society. This involves adopting culture, understanding the other statuses, and playing the different roles demonstrated by that society. In other words, a person goes back and forth amongst who they believe that they are and who they believe that society thinks/wants them to be. There are clearly unique challenges for adolescents and a delicate balance between pushing views/guidelines must be made with providing room for exploration. This is the stage that sets the direction and tone for an individual’s adulthood.

One characteristic that makes humans unique from other mammals is their incredible and sustained capacity to learn (Coons, 1970). One way that humans learn is by observing other human behavior. With this in mind, another framework that was relevant to the successful transition process for MKs is the Social Cognitive Theory. In this theory, individuals learn how to shape their behavior based on the observations of those around them. Specifically, children learn to model their behavior on what they hear and observe in their parents. For example, if a parent demonstrates abusive or other
negative characteristics, it is likely that the child will also demonstrate similar characteristics (Ettinger, 2009). The cognitive portion of Social Cognitive Theory comes from the storage of observations. When an individual observes a behavior, they store cognitive depictions in their memory. When the time presents itself, that individual will then recall on the stored memory and act in a similar fashion as what they originally observed.

Although the roots of this theory come from 1931, likely the most famous example of Social Cognitive Theory comes from the work of Albert Bandura. Bandura ran an experiment in which one group of children observed adults punching an inflatable BoBo doll while another group of children were a control condition. After the observations, the children who had seen the aggressive behavior by the adults then modeled similarly aggressive behavior towards the BoBo doll while the children who did not observe the aggressive behavior did not act out in this way. Their replication of the aggressive behavior was unprompted and almost seemed to come naturally after what they observed (Bandura, 1977).

Additionally, observations which are cognitively stored in memory then become reinforced based on what seems appropriate for given situations. Bandura created a framework of 4 steps for how the observations become part of reinforced learning. First, there must be attention given to the modeled behavior. Second, the modeled behavior is cognitively stored in one’s memory. Third, an event triggers the memory to be recalled
and put into action. Fourth, the actions are reinforced and become a part of the normal repertoire (Bandura, 1985).

Lastly, it is important to explore how Social Cognitive theory directly applies to MKs. Just as adolescents go through life learning new skills and behaviors based on observations, MKs go through their adolescence learning particularly unique skills that are distinctive to their experience. These skills include making worldwide connections, becoming culturally intelligent, thinking creatively, developing another language, and becoming a self-entertainer. Furthermore they also learn the skills needed to cope with grief and loss caused by their frequent moving. These learned talents can come from many sources, their peers, their parents, their school teachers, and their community. When the time is right for MKs to make a decision, they will rely on their observations of models and consider the positive and negative outcomes from their recalled observations.

A third framework is that of Retention Theory, developed in 1993 by the distinguished professor at Syracuse University, Vincent Tinto. The roots of Retention Theory are in suicide ideation research and individuals leaving society. Tinto understood that there is a higher incidence of suicide among individuals who do not feel a connection to their community and feel detached from other members of the community (Tinto, 1973). The individuals who are not connected to social groups are left with very few social goals and models, and thus committed suicide at higher rates (Durkheim, 1897). This prolonged sense of not belonging is reflected in the Egotistic suicide theory. Similarly, Tinto’s retention theory has applications to the higher education setting and
describes the needs that students have for connections in both their academic and social settings to feel a sense of belonging (Tinto, 2004). It is not until the students feel fully integrated in both settings that they feel they can effectively progress in their school environment and not have conflicting feelings to drop out. It is important to understand this student development theory as it can provide a valuable lens for school teachers and leaders to see through (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). They can then best understand how to support their student population in ways consistent with student development theory (Schaller, 2010). There can be important components to understanding student relationships and how they interact with others.

Although the Retention Theory from Tinto was developed with higher education students in mind, the theory can also be applied to K-12 settings. As it applies to Missionary Kids, there will likely be many transitions to a new school for MKs. The students must be supported holistically, socially and academically, for them to feel connected to the school. This can allow for them to be more successful and continue as a student after their transition. The application means that educational leaders must look at students, specifically Missionary Kids, as a whole person and support them as such.

Conclusion

In summary, the education of Missionary Kids has greatly evolved and developed over the last two centuries. There has been more intentional focus on the unique challenges that MKs face in their life and in their education system. As a result of their
experience MKs have exciting and relationship-focused adolescent years, but also go through very real challenges such as identity development issues, social isolation, and unresolved grief. There are multiple theoretical frameworks that help to shape the understanding of MKs experience including the Stages of Psychosocial Development, Social Cognitive Theory, and Retention Theory.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

“You may have heard the world is made up of atoms and molecules, but it’s really made up of stories. When you sit with an individual that’s been here, you can give quantitative data a qualitative overlay” (Turner, 2010).

Introduction

The re-entry process for children of missionaries into their home country is a route filled with great challenges and rewards. Missionary Kids (MKs) need to learn to adequately transition from one culture to a significantly different culture while navigating their own developmental stages. It is important to support MKs before they re-enter their home country by intentionally focusing on workshops, programs, curriculum, and conversations designed for assisting the unique challenges experienced during MKs’ re-entry transition. Schools that provide the education of MKs may be best positioned to have the insight as to practices, proven over time, that work well in helping MKs before their re-entry. In this chapter I outlined the methodological description for my research design and approach of the study. Additionally, I clearly revealed my four primary research questions. I defined the setting and sample of my survey participants then described how I investigated themes of techniques that promote good MK re-entry by administering open ended surveys to administrators and faculty members at select MK secondary schools around the world. Before concluding I pronounced the measures taken for creating protection and anonymity for participating educational leaders.
Research Design

“To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is both inductive and deductive and establishes patterns or themes.”

- John W. Creswell (Creswell, 2013)

I selectively used a qualitative research design with open ended survey questions designed to uncover perceptions and best practices related to supporting MK re-entry. Qualitative research originates from disciplines in psychology and philosophy, and writers report on how participants in the study view their shared experiences similarly or differently (Moustakas, 1994). There are many advantages to using the inductive process of a qualitative research design for this study. Since my goal was to gain extensive knowledge on Missionary Kid re-entry, using the qualitative study allowed me to ask deep and significant questions to school administrators and faculty who work closely with MKs on a daily basis.

Creswell states that the researcher is one of the key elements in conducting qualitative research (Creswell, 2013). Creswell goes on to explain that “the qualitative researchers collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behavior, and interviewing participants. They may use an instrument, but it is one designed by the researcher using open-ended questions.” The open ended questions gave me insight to potentially vague and ambiguous subjects. Merriam explains that there are often multiple
realities, perceptions, and interpretations that qualitative research can observe and understand more clearly (S. B. Merriam, 2009). This meant that I was able to focus on the naturally occurring events that led up to MK re-entry and understood the sense of “real life” without interfering with the process.

Furthermore, by using a qualitative research study I focused on and described what perceptions, practices, and realities exist amongst my participants. This research design also allowed me to take the data collected from participants and develop an explanation and tease out themes and patterns amongst. “This description consists of “what” they experienced and “how” they experienced it (Moustakas, 1994).

**Role of the Researcher**

As the researcher, I brought a fresh perspective to the design because I am not an MK, nor have I ever worked in a setting designed specifically for MKs. Although it is an area that I am passionate about and interested in, it did not skew my techniques when collecting and analyzing data. When collecting the data, I maintained my unbiased perspective as to ensure the research was not skewed. I had no previous contact with any of the administrators or faculty at any of the schools sites I selected. My correspondences and interactions with these participants was strictly research and data gathering focused. I was the writer of the research survey questions, the formatter of the electronic survey tool, and the administrator of the survey to my participants. Due to the fact that the participants are completed their free responses in the survey directly, there was no need for me to send each participant a copy of their received response for review. I am assured
that the responses provided the first time were the true reflections of what the participants were intending to convey. I also coded and analyzed the data collected from the participants.

**Research Questions**

The research questions have been worded carefully as to not confuse the participants. The use of open-ended questions allowed for more honesty and a tailored meaning specific to that participant’s experience (Schutt, 2012). My research included four primary questions:

1. What are secondary school educational leaders’ perceptions regarding the challenges Missionary Kids face in their re-entry process to their home country?
2. How are secondary school leaders responding (in terms of curriculum and program) to support and assist Missionary Kids prior to their re-entry process?
3. What challenges do MKs face that secondary school educational leaders recognize as not being addressed?
4. What resources are necessary to implement the changes mentioned in the previous question?

**Setting, Population, and Sample**

There are 285 international schools that have been acknowledged as primarily serving children of missionaries (International CHED, 2014). International Children’s
Education Department (iCHED) maintains a current database of the 285 international schools and allowed me to have access to the database. This database holds useful demographic data including school size, location, principal name, and contact information. Based on the 285, there were twenty-seven international secondary schools that I identified (in twenty-four different countries) which I contacted for surveys. These are schools with an English language curriculum, a long standing history of serving children of missionaries, and partnering with well-known missionary-sending agencies.

I made direct contact through email with the school principal first and asked for the open-ended survey to be shared with one administrator and one teacher who worked closely with the MKs and their re-entry transition at each school. The principal was able to serve as the administrator and complete the survey, but they were also able to share it with a curriculum coordinator, youth ministry worker, or another school administrator who worked closely with the MKs. My population was all the teachers and administrators at the twenty-seven identified schools while my sample consisted of those who participate in the open-ended survey.

**Data Collection and Instrumentation**

Prior to data collection, all methods, survey questions, and samples were approved by the California State University, Sacramento Institutional Review Board (IRB). The data was collected through an electronic open-ended survey which was comprised of four primary questions. The electronic survey was provided through an email directly from me. Participants typed their responses to the questions into the
electronic survey and after saving the survey sent it directly back to me via email. Once received, the raw data underwent open coding analysis in a detailed line by line fashion to determine any themes, patterns, or repetitions (Esterberg, 2002). Open coding, also known as initial coding, is breaking down qualitative data into smaller parts, observing at them, and considering for similarities and differences (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I read through my data multiple times to identified connections in the responses by the various participating educational leaders. I looked for powerful quotes that accurately described the experience and consensus of other participants’ data. My goal as the researcher was to stay open to any potential theoretical directions that emerged from analyzing the data (Charmaz, 2006). I deeply reflected on the details and distinctions of the data and began to know and understand the feelings and reflections of the research participants. While analyzing the data, I anticipated discovering elements of possible or developing categories. These possible or developing categories could have turned into the major themes, dimensions, or properties as the data analysis continued (Saldana, 2009).

To address issues of reliability, all surveys were administered in the same way. The electronic survey was first sent to the school principal who then sent the survey to one administrator and one teacher at the school. Additionally, after collecting the data and completing open coding analysis, I compared the written data with the theories already in literature.

While collecting data from my participants I conducted an initial review before completing my full data analysis. If I had discovered that any data returned was
contradictory to the frameworks, I would have acknowledged the discrepancy and explored the different perspective from that participant.

**Data Analysis**

As I gathered my data from the received surveys, I began to organize results based on themes and patterns that naturally emerged. The patterns were not organized based on existing theory; rather, they were selectively based on the meanings that emerged from the perspective of the participant through the data. I used strategies to identify and explain the themes from the data in an effort to provide a general description of the experience. I paid close attention to the details of the words and meanings of the data provided. I read through each response in a line-by-line fashion, a “microanalysis” of the collection of texts (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). My process for data analysis came from open coding which means “coding the data for its major categories of information” (Creswell, 2013).

**Protection of Participants**

Each participant who committed to take the survey also agreed to complete an informed consent form acknowledging that they read and understood the focus, and design of the research. This Informed Consent form was clear to understand and was also approved by the California State University, Sacramento IRB. No coercive techniques were used to gain participants in this study. Email was the primary method of
communications with participants which allowed for a sense of minimal pressure from myself. Collected data was stored on an external hard drive which was kept in a locked office; the data was additionally backed up on a secured network file. Upon completion of the data analysis and the written conclusions, all original collected and stored data will be destroyed within one year to help protect the anonymity of the participants.

Due to the nature of the tight-knit community of MK education and the ease of gathering information, I took extra measures to work with descriptions of the participants. When describing the perspectives of participants, I only used job titles if desired by the participant. The use of job titles was to maintain a sense of closeness to the participants while also preserving their privacy. The distinction between secondary school administrators and secondary school teachers was made to highlight some of the unique perspectives from these groups. However, the distinction between groups did not allow one to be uniquely identified because of the data presented in this study.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I explained the details of the research design and methodology for the implementation. This was an inductive qualitative research design with the intention to understand perspectives of secondary school educational leaders as they assist Missionary kids in their re-entry process. I clarified how I gathered the data and how I used open coding analysis to gain a deeper understanding of patterns and themes from the participants. Lastly, Chapter 3 ended with an account of techniques used to ensure protection and anonymity of the study’s participants.
Chapter 4

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

“MKs struggle with who are they and they struggle with the loss of a whole world” (Heinsman, 2014).

Introduction

The purpose for this research was to gather information from current secondary schools that focus on supporting and educating Missionary Kids (MKs) so that the following research questions could be addressed:

1. What are the primary challenges for MKs re-entry process,

2. What are the systems in place to support MKs, and

3. What resources are needed to implement new support systems.

Data collected from current practicing counselors and teachers who work directly with MKs before they re-enter their home country provides the basis for addressing these questions.

Surveys were sent out by e-mail to twenty-seven schools around the world that educate Missionary Kids. The data was generated from the completed surveys by educational leaders who understand the specific needs unique to Missionary Kids. They completed the survey in the comforts of their own setting, nowhere near or influenced by me. Once the participants completed the qualitative survey, they sent the results, along with an Informed Consent Form, directly to me via email.
When I received the completed surveys from participants, the first step was to initially review that data to ensure that there were no blatant errors or sections left blank. After this step, I responded to the participants email and thanked them for their participation. I then saved the Informed Consent Form and the participant survey to a secured hard drive. I transferred the needed data from the participant survey and Informed Consent Form to a master file containing all responses and information from all participants, used for data analysis and coding. I also kept track of which schools were sending in responses and which had not participated. Four weeks after the initial request for secondary schools to participate in the research, I followed up with a second email to those schools in which a response had not been received to the original request.

The system used for deriving meaning of the data was implemented after the 16 participants sent in their results. I sorted all responses by the four questions in the survey and analyzed the responses one question at a time. This means that I analyzed every response to question one before moving on to analyzing every response to question two. I used multiple coding filters to look at and understand the data from different perspectives (Saldana, 2009). For example, when exploring the data from question two: Is your school preparing and supporting Missionary Kids for the challenges they will face in their re-entry?, I first used the lens on content that schools were addressing, followed by using the lens of populations that the content is applied to, and lastly by using the lens of the teaching professional of the content.
Furthermore, I used structural coding to understand the content and concepts from the phrases used by the research participants (MacQueen, MClellan-Lemal, Bartholow, & Milstein, 2008). Topics of analysis were applied to sections of data that connected to specific research questions. This is how patterns, themes, and relationships were discovered for each question between the participants. Lastly, I used a post-coding technique of analyzing the most vivid and representational quotes from the study (Saldana, 2009). These extracted quotes, regardless of their applied codes, were examined with a fresh lens with reflections on small details to large picture. The removed data during the post-coding analysis helped to shape the research story-telling by providing a different way of structuring the information.

**Qualitative Data**

The data for this research endeavor was collected from sixteen Missionary Kid educational professionals of which nine were female and seven male. These sixteen participants have an average of over twelve years of experience working at their current school with a range of experience at their current school spanning from two years to twenty-five years. This signifies that the participants are very familiar with the current practices for supporting MKs at their school. Job titles for the sixteen participants and the number within each classification include: Director, Assistant Superintendent, Vice Principal, Principal (5), Teacher (4), Guidance Counselor (3), and Dorm Parent. Twelve of the participants self-identified their nationality as being from the United States of
America while the other participants identified Educator, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia to be their nationality.

Figure 4.1 Participants Years at School
Figure 4.2 Participants Gender

The sixteen participants work at eleven different schools around the world. The countries that these eleven schools represent include the following: Cameroon, Ecuador, Germany, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Mexico, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Senegal, and Taiwan. The variety of countries that are represented in this study allows for a diverse body of information to base results on.
Results for Research Questions 1-4

Question 1 – What do you think are some of the challenges for Missionary Kids during their re-entry process to their home country?

There were five main areas that participants discussed in their responses. The challenges that the survey participants described included identity issues between Missionary Kids and their non-MK peers. Furthermore, participants discussed behavioral differences in cultural norms and specifics that are related to adolescents and relationship building. Multiple participants mentioned challenges related to technology as well as MKs lacking opportunities to develop skills that are needed in their home country. Lastly, the survey participants stated that there are real stresses with moving to a different country, losing a solid friend base, and adjusting to new cultures and customs.
When asked about challenges that MKs face in their re-entry process, Clive Hsu, a High School Guidance Counselor at Morrison Academy in Taiwan said:

“Although they may identify and relate to aspects of their home country, they are not fully comfortable in it. They are considered Third Culture Kids (TCK’s) because they don’t fully belong to any one culture. As a result, they look like everyone else but on the inside they think differently, have a broader worldview, and have cultural values and differences that they will feel internally. The result is a longer and more difficult transition process.”

The most reoccurring problem revealed is the idea of looking like the people of the home country, but not really feeling like or fitting in with them. When referencing the challenges for Missionary Kids as they re-enter to their home country, one Vice Principal said, “Especially if they look and speak the language people may not understand why they don’t “get it.” The MK looks like they fit in, but don’t understand the cultural norms and don’t know how to connect with the people whom they look like. A Middle School Teacher said, “They "look like" their home country peers but have so many experiences different from their peers that make it difficult for them to know where they belong or how they fit in back in their home country.” It is as if they visually appear to belong in the home culture, but were raised in a foreign land. So when MKs go from the foreign land to their home country, there is a sense of confusion. This confusion is escalated when the same language is spoken in the home country and the foreign land.
Another challenge that was frequently addressed is the different interpersonal behaviors between the host country and the home country, particularly around the content which has to do with relationship building. Multiple participants commented on observing MKs develop relationships quicker than the cultural norm in their home country. This is perceived as normal in the host country, specifically when surrounded by other MKs. However, when MKs re-enter to their home country the pace of relationship building is different and important social phases must be implemented to fit in. The above mentioned steps needed for building meaningful relationships in the home country are perceived as shallow and unnecessary to the MKs. Eric Sturgis, a Lead Guidance Counselor at Black Forest Academy in Germany said that “MK’s tend to “go deeper” faster skipping some culturally important steps that might be perceived as “odd” in the home culture."

Another issue addressed by multiple participants was that MKs lack the natural opportunities to practice needed life-skills they will need in their home-country. For example, getting a driver’s license, opening a bank account, exchanging money, and using technology are all skills and experiences that MKs are expected to have when they return to their home country but don’t have natural opportunities to develop them. This concept of not having experiences in an MKs home country is emphasized by one School Principal who said “For some of our students it is a re-entry process, for others it is really the first time they have ever lived for a long period of time in their country of origin, or their parents’ country of origin.”
Almost half of the participants commented on the very real stresses that come naturally when moving. The challenges that were described include moving away from family and friends who had previously served as built-in support systems. Furthermore, moving to a different country (although it is their home country) forces MKs to face the unknown and navigate various surprises along the way. Participants described the stresses caused by MKs’ changes in their usual food, water, shelter, school, home, and climate. These changes take more emotional energy and leave MKs at risk in their physical health, spiritual life, and emotional health. These stresses can cause an MK to feel like they are experiencing the loss of a whole world.

Multiple participants suggested that technology has allowed MKs to be connected to their home countries, but only on a superficial level. Without actually being in their home country, they are missing the nuances and subtleties that can only be understood by living in the context of that country. As a result, when the MKs return to the home country their perceived understanding is different than reality.

**Question 2** – Is your school preparing and supporting Missionary Kids for the challenges they will face in their re-entry? If yes, how so? If no, why not?

Every school that participated had some kind of program, class, seminar, or workshop to help aid in the transition for MKs to their home country. The length of the programs ranged from an intense two-day retreat to a yearlong seminar for seniors. When asked about the support systems in place for MKs, one School Principal said “This
involves a range of activities and programs that help prepare students for the transition from school to life after school – both in terms of career choice and university applications, as well as practical sessions on understanding the transition process: who they are, where they are coming from and where they are going to!”

There were a variety of specific topics described that were a part of the schools’ transition training programs. The two over-arching themes included leaving well and entering well, of which many schools focused on both elements.

In terms of leaving well, multiple schools made an intentional point of saying farewell to every student who was leaving as well as creating space for students to say farewell to those who they were leaving behind. Additionally, students were given ample time to say things that they felt they needed to say before leaving. Some schools also provided students practical sessions on understanding who they are and where they are coming from. One school required every student who was leaving to produce a prayer calendar that they could share with people who would commit to praying for them.

The other major theme of transition was entering well. The topics most commonly covered included dating, personal foundations, LGBTQ issues, university applications, college life, and career choice. Independent living classes teach MKs the basics of money, food clothing, and housing. Furthermore, an academic focus was emphasized by ensuring that students would be prepared for the writing expectations as well as understanding the historical contexts of their home countries.
These trainings were accomplished using teachers, outside speakers, and alumni. Using the returning alumni to present their learned skills and information provides a sense of attainable achievement for the MKs. Additionally; overnight retreats were implemented at some schools to emphasize the importance of the information being presented regarding the MK’s upcoming transition. One school implemented an S.W.O.T. (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) Analysis and the R.A.F.T. (Reconciliation, Affirmation, Farewell, Think) Model to process the transition issues with their juniors and seniors.

The majority of the schools focused their transition training on graduating seniors exclusively. However, some schools have created a program focused on students younger than senior status. For example, one school went out of their way to include younger students. The administrator who participated in the research said that “As a school we actively identify those who are leaving us each year, highlighting this and encouraging students (those staying and those going) to be active in bring closure to relationships.” This is to address transition issues for students who re-enter to their home country before graduating secondary school. This scenario could happen if the MKs parents need to return to the home country for re-assignment, medical issues, or a variety of other reasons.

Lastly, two schools reported including parents in the training process. Specifically, at one school parents are encouraged to help the students with the re-entry
process. At another school a transition specialist was invited to speak to the parents of MKs.

**Question 3** – Is there anything that your school is not currently doing that would help students in their re-entry transition?

All the schools who participated are well aware of the transition issues facing MKs and are working in various ways to address them. When referring to the re-entry issues for MKs, Gregory Barkman, a Principal at Ukarumpa International School in Papua New Guinea, said “I often think about cultural re-entry in terms of re-entry from space into the earth’s atmosphere. It can be bumpy, and those returning have a larger perspective on their world.” There were four main areas presented in the data that schools want to be addressing but are currently not. The areas for improvement include efficiency, effectiveness, expansion, and inclusion.

First, multiple schools referenced wanting to fit more workshops, classes, and retreats into students schedules so they could have more exposure to transition issues. However, in an already overloaded and overworked community, fitting in more is sometimes not a reality. Karl Steinkamp from Dalat International School said “We could make the senior transition retreat longer so that we could go deeper into the subjects but two days away from school already puts pressure on them academically.” The root solution would be for more efficient use of time with the workshops, classes, and retreats that are currently taking place.
Secondly, several schools mentioned connecting alumni to current students and measuring the follow up of transition programs with alumni. A built in evaluation process would determine the effectiveness of the efforts being made to support MKs before they re-enter. This would allow schools to easily identify what is not being addresses by their current program (Gardner, Tobolowsky, & Hunter, 2010). This would also provide a means for knowing if bringing alumni to speak to current students is beneficial or not. Through the official follow-up program, if it is determined that alumni are not transitioning well the schools can decide to stop bringing in alumni to speak with current students.

The final topics of improvement focused on expanding current programs and including more individuals into current programs. Specifically, one school mentioned making their senior transition retreat longer to go deeper into the topics. One school is interested in creating a summer exchange program for their students to visit their home country, ideally creating exposure to help ease the transition later. Another school mentioned incorporating families into the awareness of transition issues that that the whole family unit can transition well, rather than just the graduating student. Lastly, two schools have recognized the need to offer a support system for students who are leaving their school before graduation. A Middle School teacher said “re-entry issues hit all TCKs and needs to be addressed on an every year basis” which points to the need for expanding training to incorporate more students. Furthermore, one School Principal said “We don’t have anything for students who will experience re-entry before they graduate. We only provide it for our soon-to-be graduates, but many times families return to the
United States or other country of origin when the students are younger.” One of these schools is exploring ways to include the younger students into the re-entry transition talks so that they can get exposure to the issues at a younger age.

**Question 4** – What resources would be necessary to implement these changes mentioned in the previous question?

There were multiple resources needed to implement the changes to better serve MKs as listed in question three. The two primary resources listed were more staff personnel and alumni connections. The other resources mentioned were information resources, time, money, and training. Five school participants stated that they would like to have more staff members who could be dedicated to supporting a re-entry program. There seems to be the need for someone who can spend the time getting to know students who will be leaving and discuss re-entry issues with them. As one school administrator discussed, there is a need for “A systematic approach to sending individual students to someone who can assist them with gaining insight into returning to their particular country.” This person would ideally focus exclusively on providing MKs awareness and vision into returning to their home country.

The other human-related resource that four participants described needing was more connections with their alumni who have successfully transitioned to their home country. Julie Heinsman, a Counselor and Teacher at Morrison Academy in Taiwan said “The most valuable resource is recent graduates returning to speak with our graduating/
leaving students. This is always very useful and helpful.” Many schools described that it would be helpful for them to have alumni return to the school and speak to graduating and leaving students about the re-entry process. Another participant said that if they had an alumni database they would be able to follow up with their former students, checking in on their wellbeing and providing follow up resources.

The other resources that were infrequently mentioned included resources, time, money, and training. Three schools described a need for more knowledge and information regarding re-entry to add to their current transition curriculum. They currently have re-entry and transition programs, but would like to enhance them with more relevant and data based information. Another resources needed by one school is information about career counseling. Another two schools described the need for more time particularly with prioritizing and scheduling re-entry support efforts. One English Teacher said “our school year is already short due to breaks and sports so we feel the pressure to do our primary job of education but then we also see the urgency for re-entry prep.” Another school said that they need more teachers trained to incorporate the re-entry concepts into their subjects while another school believed that money was their limited resource due to their relatively small budget.

**Evidence of Quality**

As the researcher, I recognized the importance of quality data and took multiple measures to ensure value of the qualitative study. One goal of the study was to assess the reality of challenges faced by Missionary Kids. The interpretation of this reality was
accessed directly through data collected by educational leaders around the world who work directly with MKs. The participants of the survey are incredibly close to the study’s subject, therefore, the interpretation of the participant’s reality was a strength of the research (S. Merriam & Associates, 2002).

Ethically I made attempts to convey accuracy to the potential research participants. The actual purpose of the study was well described in the informed consent form. There were multiple options provided for the participants to choose their level of anonymity.

To address issues of reliability, I controlled all surveys to take place in the same fashion. First, the electronic survey was sent to the school principal who then identified one to two administrators or teachers at the school to complete the survey. There was no coercion for participation either by myself or by the school principal.

In this research study, a formal peer review process was not implemented. However, in one sense, the Dissertation Committee which was comprised of varying levels of expertise in the field of MK re-entry served as a peer review. As the researcher I became saturated in the data collection and data analysis process. There was enough time spent in the data that I began to read and see the same findings over and over again.
Conclusion

The purpose of the qualitative research study was to identify challenges for Missionary Kids and support systems to address the said challenges. Another goal was to determine what other support systems and resources need to be put in place for MKs. This was to be accomplished by gathering rich data from educational leaders who currently work with MKs before they re-enter their home country.

Sixteen participants completed the survey and treasured information was recorded. In summary, the participants identified major challenges for MKs to be stress related, lack of opportunities to get accustomed to their home country, a disconnect of identity, and a changed pace of life. All schools that participated were making attempted to support MKs before their re-entry process in a variety of ways. Their techniques included retreats, workshops, and semester or yearlong classes. The audience for these varied as well; primarily being focused on graduating seniors, but occasionally including younger students as well as parents. Schools identified systems that could additionally be implemented to create more support for their leaving MKs. These systems revolved around being more effective, being more intentional, incorporating more audiences, and being innovative with their techniques. Items that were identified to put these changes into place comprised of staffing resources, time, money, and training. Particularly, with the staff resources, multiple schools acknowledged the value in having alumni MKs revisit their school to speech as well as having a designated staff person to solely focus on MK transition issues.
Chapter five will address the interpretation of the findings, multiple recommendations for further study, as well as a reflection from me.
Chapter 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

“It takes a lot more emotional energy to be in transition so that means less cognitive space left for things like creativity, memory, absorbing sudden reversals and changes, etc” (Smith, 2015).

Overview of the Study

There were four main questions that were intentionally addressed in the study. I wanted to understand what the challenges are for Missionary Kids in their re-entry process from the perspective of educational leaders at secondary schools serving MKs. Additionally, I sought to know what support systems are in place to address the stated challenges for MKs. Furthermore, there was inquiry regarding systems that could help MKs with their re-entry process that are not yet in place as well as the resources needed to implement those described support systems that are needed.

In summary, all the participants discussed a variety of challenges that are unique to Missionary Kids in transition. Specifically, themes of identity crisis, transition stress, opportunity to adjust, pace of life, and relationship building were richly described by the educational leaders who participated. Unequivocally, participants made no distinction between challenges that were faced by MKs because of the country of origin or country that the MK was in school. All students experience challenges that are unique to MK populations. Furthermore, it was discovered that secondary schools do have systems in place to support MKs with the expected transition issues during their re-entry process.
Schools have built in re-entry seminars and workshops for their soon-to-be leaving students as well as classes which cover transition topics during the senior year. In addition to presenting to graduating seniors, it seemed to be useful to have transition topics discussed with younger youth and parents. There were some support systems that schools would like to offer but don’t currently have resources to offer. These included career counseling, time to discuss re-entry with younger students, and an opportunity to follow up with alumni who have recently left the school. Lastly, the participants described a great need for human resources including more staff to dedicate to the transition needs in the MK re-entry and alumni to return to campus and talk about the real challenges that they faced. Participants also discussed the need for time, money, training, and educational resources to begin implementing their support system changes.

**Interpretation of Findings**

This section addresses the qualitative themes uncovered and the connection with the relevant literature reviewed. The findings of this study are based on the analysis of data retained from qualitative four-question surveys that sixteen educational leaders completed. The educational leaders work in ten different countries in teaching and administration capacities at secondary schools that directly support Missionary Kids. Twelve of the sixteen participants identified themselves as being from the United States while the other four participants said they were from Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and Ecuador. This provides an opportunity to view the participant’s responses with a
larger context in mind, specifically, in context to the larger body of literature and theoretical frameworks. Although the words used by in the survey by the different educational leaders were not the same, the concepts and the messages that they shared resounded with a clear and consistent message.

**Question 1** – What do you think are some of the challenges for Missionary Kids during their re-entry process to their home country?

When asking this question, there is an automatic inherent assumption that Missionary Kids have challenges upon re-entering into their home country. The assumption is that the MK experience is so unique and difficult that educational leaders have begun to identify and discuss the challenges. This assumption was proven to be correct by the results of the surveys.

Findings from the participants about the challenges related to five different areas. These five areas include Identity, Opportunity, Pace of Life, Stress, and Technology. Some of the survey participants described multiple challenges, while other participants only choose to comment on one challenge.
When addressing identity topics one participant said “coming to a culture that they only know superficially is a big challenge” while another participant said “media and technology have made it possible for them to be a part of their home culture. That said they have not experienced that culture and so do not understand its subtleties and nuances.” These statements came from educational leaders at two different schools in two different countries. This means that educational leaders are recognizing the real identity struggle that Missionary Kids face. The MKs have a limited understanding of reality of their home country. This makes for a more difficult integration and mixing with peers when they return home. The most frequently commented issue is the concept of fitting in with the peers of the home country, but not truly fitting in or feeling like them. The MKs look like they belong, yet are not comfortable with understanding the home cultural standards. Understanding that there are multiple cultural identities that go along with the
multiple locations that MKs live in, it is easier to grasp the longer term impacts on MKs as they try to learn personal and cultural identity when that message is always changing (Sand-Hart, 2010). When MKs move from the host country to their home country, there is a real sense of confusion and misperception. This confusion is intensified when the same language is spoken in the home country and the host country. Questions of willingness to accept are raised when the confusion is present amidst the same language (Goldoni, 2013). Clearly there is a need for exploring the topic of receiving MKs well into their home country.

Additionally, the Psychosocial Development Theory explains that when adolescents experience changes in puberty and demands from society (Steinberg, 2014) the result is an identity crisis. If the identity crisis is not handled successfully, there can be a weak self-esteem and identity confusion at later stages in life (Erikson, 1963). The findings about identity are clearly the most significant and most wide spread amongst all cultures. If this is not supported, Missionary Kids can struggle with their identity and sense of meaning through their adulthood.

When asked about challenges that MKs face in their re-entry process, another common issue addressed revolved around stress. A common emotional experience in many people is their own concern about the appropriateness of their behavior and feelings of stress often ensue (Brislin, 1995). There are well documented social and psychological stresses associated with re-adjusting to a community after a meaningful international experience (Ivory, 1997). Therefore, there is little surprise that the educational leaders described multiple fashions of stress related to MK re-entry. Having a
specific person, or caregiver, to demonstrate support tremendously helps to relieve stress when individuals are in a transition process (Nelson, 2012).

Participants discussed the very real stresses that come as expected when moving. The encounters that were labeled include moving away from family and friends who had earlier been a support system. Additionally, moving to a new country (though it is their home country) forces MKs to face the unknown and traverse many revelations along the process. Considering the need to support youth in multiple avenues in order for them to remain successful in their transition (Tinto, 1987), there must be intentional support for MKs during their already stressful transition. The stress that MKs experience during transition can threaten their physical health, spiritual life, and emotional health (Davis, 2012). These stresses can be the basis for an MK feeling like they are losing their entire world. The change from host culture to home culture is a major transition. A transition in this case is the letting go of the old character and old personality and coming to a new character and new personality that goes with the new experiences (Bridges, 2003).

Another challenge that survey participants frequently addressed centered on the different paces of life between the host country and the home country. Multiple participants mentioned observing MKs progress relationships quicker than the cultural norm in their home country. There is a sense of trust that is developed quickly among other MKs. Considering the Social Cognitive Theory, this seems to be a learned behavior from observing other MKs and seeing what works best for them (Bandura, 1976). Developing deep relationships quickly is perceived as normal in the host country amongst other MKs. Conversely, when MKs transition to their home country relationships are
built at a different pace and MKS can interpret relationship building patterns that they are unaccustomed to as shallow.

One final main issue that multiple participants addressed was that MKs don’t have natural opportunities to practice some needed life-skills they will be expected to have in their home-country. Specifically, getting a driver’s license, opening a bank account, exchanging money, and using technology are examples of skills that youth would normally have. However, MKs don’t have natural opportunities to experience or develop those skills. Bearing in mind learning theories and how individuals gain skills, it is critical to provide opportunity for youth to be successful as they grow into adulthood (Trilling & Fadel, 2009).

**Question 2** – Is your school preparing and supporting Missionary Kids for the challenges they will face in their re-entry? If yes, how so? If no, why not?

As expected, every school that participated in the survey made some kind effort to help assist MKs transition to their home country. The details and the length of the different programs ranged from a concentrated two-day retreat to a yearlong seminar for graduating seniors. As a researcher who is highly interested in this topic, it was with great excitement to see that schools are working hard to support MKs. There were a variety of specific themes described that were a part of the schools’ transition training programs. There were four main areas that the participants went into any detail about in this category. The four areas included 1. defining the primary population that the support
systems are in place for (Audience), 2. describing what individuals/groups facilitate to support systems (Presenters), 3. detailing the multiple forums for support systems (Style), and 4. specifying the various subjects that made up the support systems (Topics).

![Primary Focuses for Support Systems](image)

**Figure 5.2 Primary Focuses for Support Systems**

When describing the audience that schools focus their support systems on, the majority of schools focus solely on graduating seniors. Only four of the sixteen schools mentioned support efforts being directed to younger students. For example, one school offered workshops before younger students leave and another school had small sessions for Middle School students who remained at the school. Obviously there is the need to support graduating seniors before they leave the school; these are the students that absolutely will be leaving the school. It seems logical to direct attention on support systems for the graduating senior population. However, there are also times when a
student may leave the school before they are a graduating senior. These examples could include their parents finishing their ministry causing them to return home early, a health-related issue causing an early return home, or a number of other reasons. With this in mind, it is critically important to have some support structures in place to address re-entry issues with younger students before they leave. Furthermore, there were two schools that mentioned including parents in the seminar talks. The idea behind including parents was that if parents were informed of what struggles their children would be facing when they re-enter their home country, the parents could serve as an educated support for the MK in the home country. This seems to be a valuable resource that is undeveloped at many schools.

There was little discussion and little variety in terms of presenters who facilitated the said support systems. Primarily, the four individuals or groups that taught the MKs were counselors, teachers, recent graduates returned, and specialist guests from outside the school. Using the returning alumni to present their learned skills and information provides a sense of attainable achievement for the MKs. Additionally, counselors have an essential role in supporting international students with their transition to their home country (Arthur, 2003). Other than mentioning the personnel titles associated with the support systems, there was no further discussion on the presenters. There was no description for the rational as to selecting the individuals at the specific schools. In no instances did a school use multiple types of presenters; rather, they exclusively used only one of the four types for all their re-entry systems. There was no comprehensive support system model that represents more than one educator who focuses on training and
informing MKs. Although a team approach can work to better train adolescents, no schools are using a multi-faceted method to MK transition issues.

The greatest variety of answers from participants came when discussing mechanisms of support systems to get the information to the chosen audience. Schools used any type of training with a range of time lengths including a one-day Senior Day, a weekend retreat, a week-long of activities, a semester long Senior Topics class, as well as a curriculum focused on re-entry topics all year long. Specifically; overnight weekend retreats were carried out at a few schools to stress the importance of the re-entry topics being presented to MKs. The retreat experience allows adolescents to begin to grapple with upcoming topics in an open, safe setting that supports their emotional growth (Collins, 1998). It appears that being away from the normal school setting permits students to go deeper in discussing possible challenges and solutions with their re-entry process. Additionally one school also recommended students attend various “re-entry camps” within their home country if possible.

The last theme within this section was the topics that the participants described as being covered. Some of the specific topics included career choice, university/college selection, Biblical foundations, GLBT issues, partying in the home culture, saying goodbye, dating, and other life skills. Independent living classes teach MKs the basics of money, food clothing, and housing. Various participants said that their school made a deliberate effort of saying goodbye to every student who was leaving as well as making space for students to say goodbye to those who they were departing from. In these
instances, students were given designated spaces and times to say things that they felt in their heart before leaving. This was often done on the final day of school outside of the classroom.

A few schools provided their leaving students with practical sessions on considering and understanding who they are and what their home culture is like. One school required every student who was leaving to produce a prayer calendar that they could share with people who would commit to praying for them. Furthermore, an academic focus was highlighted by ensuring that students would be ready for the writing expectations and historical frameworks of their home country. One school employed a S.W.O.T. (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) Analysis and the R.A.F.T. (Reconciliation, Affirmation, Farewell, Think) Model to have junior and senior students think through the transition issues they would likely be facing. The R.A.F.T. Model comes from research on Third Culture Kid transitions but has been applied to a variety of other transition situations. The first step, reconciliation, encourages individuals to address issues with people before their leave, otherwise they will carry the grief and stress later on. The second step is affirmation which is designed to create space for telling others how important they are to the person who is leaving, also allowing for individuals to become aware of skills they have gained from their peers. The third step is farewell and encourages people leaving to ensure that there is closure by saying their goodbyes; regardless of how comfortable they are with the situation. The final step, think destination, is meant to be a time which individuals can turn the corner and begin to look forward (D. C. Pollock & Van Reken, 2009).
Below is a table which summarizes what is being done programmatically to support Missionary Kids at each of the schools that participated in the research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Process or Technique</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth Program</td>
<td>Focus on Re-entry issues before their Senior year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off Site Retreat</td>
<td>Intentional seminars focused on transition issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Topics/Class</td>
<td>Semester long exploration of needed life skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.A.F.T. Model</td>
<td>Acronym used to help individuals transition well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent/Family Program</td>
<td>Education to emphasize holistic support of MKs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Meetings</td>
<td>Discuss transition and entering the home culture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 5.3 Summary of Programmatic Efforts**

**Question 3** – Is there anything that your school is not currently doing that would help students in their re-entry transition?

All the schools who participated seem to be well aware of the transition issues that MKs face. In the last question, they all addressed multiple ways that they were supporting MKs through the transition issues. Surprisingly, there were six of the sixteen participants that answered the question in a way that demonstrated that they felt there was no need for improvement, including one participant who didn’t answer the question. After analyzing the results from the participants who provided constructive feedback,
there are four main areas that schools would like to begin addressing. The areas for improvement include 1. fitting more of what is already happening into their current routine (Efficiency); 2. including more individuals into their current systems (Expanding Audiences); 3. adding new components onto their current systems (Expanding Programs); and 4. bringing new awareness (Training). Each category will be described in detail as follows.

![Areas to Begin Focusing On](image)

**Figure 5.4 Areas to Begin Focusing On**

First, there were three schools which referenced a desire to fit more workshops, classes, and retreats into students’ schedules so they could have more of an introduction to re-entry issues. However, in a school setting that is already encumbered and timeworn, squeezing in more is not always a reality. There needs to be a balance between re-entry issues with what the primary topic is in the classroom. The solution of a more efficient use of time with the workshops, classes, and retreats that are currently taking place
sounds lofty. Actually changing the level of efficiency would require a feedback loop of making essential changes and alterations based on acknowledged insufficiencies in the system (Guarna, 1971). Making this a reality would take a concerted effort by multiple school administrators and teachers.

The second area that participants recommended to focus on was based on including more individuals into the current programs. Two schools have acknowledged the need to offer valuable support system for students who are leaving their school before their graduating senior year. One of these schools is attempting to identify ways to include the younger students into the re-entry transition talks so that they can get exposure to the issues at a younger age. There are times when specialist guest come to the school to present on transition issues, but don’t have enough time to speak with anyone except the graduating seniors. Another school mentioned incorporating families into the awareness of transition issues that that the whole family unit can transition well, rather than just the graduating student.

The third area addressed focused on adding elements to the current programs offered at schools, specifically in areas of alumni connections, teaching specialists, exchange programs, and evaluation programs. Several schools mentioned connecting recently graduated alumni to current students in order to give a forum for alumni to talk about their transition experiences. The belief is that students will be more likely to listen to recent alumni who have recently been in school than a teacher or counselor. Also, determining ways to measure and assess the effectiveness of transition programs with alumni was a recommendation from one participant. They discussed having a built in
evaluation process to determine the helpfulness of the support systems provided to MKs before they re-enter. Furthermore, one participant wants their school to create a summer exchange program for their MKs to experience their home country for a short period of time, ideally creating an introduction to help streamline the transition later.

The final topic of improvement focused on expanding the training for school staff and community members. There was a desire to have more awareness of transition issues conveyed so that multiple people could be holistically assisting MKs (Heretick & Doyle, 1983). This is needed as one of the first steps in assisting students is understanding what makes the student population unique and understanding their specific problems and concerns (Gardner et al., 2010). Therefore, the training that the one participant requested clearly is an important first step to assisting their MKs.

**Question 4** – What resources would be necessary to implement these changes mentioned in the previous question?

The survey participants identified multiple resources that are needed to implement the desired changes listed in question three. The two primary resources listed were 1. more information available to schools (Information Resources) and 2. more staff dedicated to the MK support systems (Staff Personnel). The five other resources mentioned were 1. opportunities to connect with recent alumni (Alumni Follow-up), 2. bringing recent graduates to campus to speak with graduating seniors (Graduate Speakers), 3. more financial resources (Money), 4. more time available to make change (Time), and 5. training for all teachers (Training).
There were five schools that had participants who, among other resources, said that they would like to have more staff members who could be dedicated to supporting MK re-entry. It is valuable that the schools have recognized that more staff members are needed to add on extra support systems and address the student needs ("Race to the Top," 2012). There seems to be an apparent necessity for a staff member who can dedicate time getting to know MKs who will be departing the school. This staff member would need to focus on providing MKs vision and understanding on the reality of returning to their home country. The other commonly addressed need had to do with getting more informational resources. Four schools called attention to the need for more information and data regarding MK re-entry. The participants sought to enhance their current transition curriculum to better support MKs. They discussed having contacts at other schools, data bases for sharing resources, and resources on counseling and transition.
Evaluating resources, then sharing them with partner educational organizations is important for improving transition services for students (Thompson, 1994). The schools surveyed currently have re-entry and transition programs, but would like to improve them with more appropriate and robust information.

The other lesser mentioned resource included alumni follow-up, graduate speakers, money, time, and training. Two participants described the need to make more connections with their alumni who have successfully transitioned to their home country. They said that they would like to know where in the world they are and check in with them to ensure they are doing well. This idea demonstrates the desire to support MKs in their transition, even after they have left the school.

One school described that it would be helpful to have recent alumni return to the school and provide their experience and perspective to future transitioning students. Alumni are able to provide a reflection and awareness of the current issues facing students transitioning out of K-12 schools (Petrovich & Lowe, 2005). The other resources that were infrequently mentioned included time, money, and training. Two participants described the need for more time specifically when arranging and scheduling re-entry support efforts. One participant said that they want more training for all of their teachers to integrate the re-entry concepts into their subjects. One participant thought that money was a needed resource because of their moderately sized budget that limited their ability to provide additional support services for MKs.
Program Objectives and Recommendations for Action

This qualitative research identified that there is clearly a need to support youth in their time of transition as they re-enter into their home culture. The research expanded the current literature on transition issues and challenges for Missionary Kids. Additionally, the research also filled a gap in the literature about understanding of how to best support MKs before they make their vital transition back to their home culture. Valuable insight as from teachers, counselors, and school administrators who engage with youth provided a framework for what services are provided and what services should be provided before leaving for their home culture.

The significance of this problem is that Missionary Kids experience a unique lifestyle, specifically during their re-entry to their home country which they are relatively unfamiliar with. Furthermore, the re-entry typically occurs while moving from grade-school to adolescence, a time which youth experience much physical growth, mental growth, and emotional growth. Due to the increasing number of schools around the world that focus on MK education, there are clearly challenges that many youth around the world experience and need to be amply supported through. There needs to be value placed on the MK experience and the global perspective that MKs bring to work and life communities.

The recommendations presented are based on the themes that developed from the educational leader participants who communicated their experience on the challenges and
support systems needed for Missionary Kids. Presented are six recommendations for educational leaders at schools that focus on MK education.

Recommendation #1: Be Intentional About Supporting MK Re-entry

Missionary Kids have unique challenges and can sometimes feel like they are all alone in their experience (Arouca, 2013). The challenges that MKs face with identity issues are real and all the challenges they face need to be addressed. In order for schools to support MKs in their re-entry to their home country, educational leaders need to be intentional about supporting them. There cannot be an “out of sight, out of mind” outlook. Rather, educational leaders need to have the care and concern for their students to ensure that they are supported and taken care of even after leaving their school (Martin, 2013). Students feel best supported when they have advocates and support systems coming from multiple avenues (Tinto, 1987). This means support systems in class, in extra-curricular activities, and at home. MKs, who are in a unique developmental context, need to feel the support from teachers, coaches, administrators, parents, and even from peers. Successful approaches to supporting students with complex challenges come from a holistic approach. These holistic approaches are ones that are purposely integrated in the school to meet the student needs (Di Cecco & Di Cecco, 2007). This means having all teachers, regardless of the subject topic demonstrating support, assistance, and guidance for MKs. This also means having parents, or boarding home parents, being aware of the challenges and tools needed to support MKs. To create and maintain a successful re-entry, schools need to consider the retention theory and remember the multi-faceted approach to supporting youth (Tinto, 2004). In a larger, bigger picture
perspective the effort that educational leaders and teachers will go through is highly valuable to adequately support MKs for their long-term success.

In addition to being intentional in supporting MK in the host culture, there is a need to support MKs once they arrive to their home culture. This means that support systems need to be in place at colleges and universities to aid MKs in their transition. This means educating people in the home culture about the unique challenges that MKs face in re-entry. Furthermore, counseling textbooks need to include relevant information to MKs, and Third Culture Kids, and how to best support their transition. Although the home country side of the re-entry was not the focus of this research, I would be missing a key piece by not mentioning the need particularly as it relates to holistic support.

Recommendation # 2: Ensure that All Teachers and Parents are Trained

Building on the previous recommendation, if there will be an expectation for holistic support of MKs, then there must be an expectation for all school administrators, faculty, staff, and parents to be informed on relevant MK re-entry issues. One of the participants who discussed better teacher training specifically touched on the connection between the class subject and the real life word. One teacher said they would want to see more Biblical integration emphasized to allow students to identify commonalities and differences among faiths. Furthermore, another example of integration could include incorporating MK re-entry issue topics into other class subjects (e.g. relationship building in Psychology class or practice with relevant technology skills in Computer class). This is highly relevant for MKs who have a global perspective. In order for relatively small
schools to be successful and empower rather than over extend the staff, teachers need to focus on collaboration and cooperation (Schmuck & Schmuck, 1992). Furthermore, for teachers who are new to schools, there needs to be mentoring partnerships in place to support the new teachers (Guise, 2013). Parents should be invited to MK re-entry seminars so that they are aware of the information their youth receive. When parents are educated on the topics, they can be having support related conversations with their youth at home.

Furthermore, for counselors who work with Third Culture Kids, there needs to be exposure and training to allow counselors to be ready to support the needs of TKCs and MKs. This is new to the body of literature as there currently are not a variety of training tools for counselors in this area.

Recommendation #3: Focus on Re-entry Issues Before the Senior Year

The majority of the schools that participated in the qualitative research held re-entry success programs exclusively for their graduating senior students. Clearly it is needed to talk with the graduating seniors about re-entry issues. However, there are multiple instances in which a student could leave the school before reaching their senior year. If a student does leave the school before their senior year and they have not been exposed to the re-entry support programs, the experience will be much more difficult than it could have been. MKs could possibly leave a school before their senior year for reasons related to student/family health, completion of the parent’s ministry work, or crisis/emergency evacuation needs. In any of these situations, if the MKs were exposed to
transition challenges and coping strategies ahead of time, their re-entry process would be easier. Furthermore, learning new skills takes time, particularly for students at risk (Woelfel, 2005). With this considered, schools need to begin exposing youth in advance of just one year for them to fully retain information. (C. F. Pollock, 2009). This will allow them to build on the knowledge and skills from year to year. As young as middle school, which coincides with the youngest age of adolescence, is when schools should begin talking about MK re-entry issues. Not only will this new recommendation assist the MKs re-entry, but it will also aid the school in terms of efficiency. If schools expand their training to MKs before they senior year, they will not need to have such intense sessions and training can be distributed more evenly.

Recommendation #4: Role Play Scenarios for Successful Transition

People experience transitions every day and Missionary Kids in their adolescent years are no exception. Using scenario-based role play, people can begin to grasp the understanding of a practiced transition and begin to better develop their coping skills (Ozenc, 2011). Examples of role play scenarios that would be beneficial for MKs include task skills like getting a driver’s license and opening a bank account as well as relational skills like making new friendships and sharing about a lived international experience. It is important to create opportunities for exposure to the home culture (Martin, 2013). This helps MKs to understand the culture that they have likely only been exposed to on a limited, superficial level. Role playing also allows MKs to become socially connected with their peers and work on building relationships (Wandersee Wiemer, 2011). Some scenarios for MKs to practice in role playing include the following:
• Answering the typical question: “Where are you from?”
• Handling unsupportive responsive from new peer relationships.
• Practicing country specific date formatting (i.e. writing the day/month/year compared to writing the month/day/year).
• Performing money exchange for the home culture currency.

Furthermore, setting community-related goals before leaving can be a practices skills to help in transition (Stanojevic, 1989). Setting small, attainable goals lets individuals to see progress in their transition and begin to build confidence. That is confidence that will be needed as Missionary Kids re-enter to their home country, a land that may feel foreign to them.

Recommendation #5: Share Resources Online for Parents and Schools

Multiple survey participants expressed interest in having more information resources at their school to enhance their re-entry support systems. Even in the early stages of the dissertation writing, it was difficult to find resources for techniques to support Missionary Kids in re-entry transition. Rather than focusing on getting by in one’s own school setting, I recommend schools and leaders collaborating to share valuable resources with each other. There is not much collaboration and information sharing happening between parents and schools in a formal setting right now. Beginning this would open the doors for many individuals, families, and schools to be better equipped to support MKs. In addition to opening up the wealth of information to MK schools, this will also avail relevant information to MK parents. This shared collaboration
between a school and parents strengthens the community and maximizes the opportunity to support students (Stone, 1993). MK parents are frequently traveling; therefore, having a shared resource database would be far more valuable than having to carry around a hard copy of support systems for their youth.

Recommendation # 6: Implement a Follow-up and Evaluation Program

After a student leaves a school, transfer, drop out, or graduate, the focus of the educators steer away from that student. With special student populations like Missionary Kids, the recommendation is not to steer attention away from students after they leave. Instead, the recommendation is to continue to track students and follow up with them after leaving the school. This is important for multiple reasons. It is important to follow up with students to 1. continue to support systems, 2. assess the success of the support systems in place, and 3. maintain relationships with alumni. Many times, MKs are not being completely forthcoming with reporting how difficult of a transition they are having (Weigel, 2010). It is important to thoroughly follow up with MKs after they have left the MK school and transitioned somewhere else likely without the amount of intentional support. Doing systematic follow up of MKs who have left the school will allow educational leaders to evaluate the efficacy and success of their re-entry support programs. Lastly, this provides schools with a current list of recent graduates who have successfully transitioned; these are individuals who may likely be able to return to the school to present of their experience and re-entry skills.
These recommendations would make significant improvements to any school serving Missionary Kids. The conclusions from the data analysis and the body of literature drew me to the recommendations. Ultimately, they will make improvements to individual students, schools, communities, and the MK culture.

There are many groups will benefit from this research including individual parents and children as well as organizations and schools. Schools (including those surveyed and those not surveyed) who focus on Missionary Kid education will directly see value from the results of the research as they will be able to use the findings as an assessment of their own practice as well as a guide for creating or developing their plans for assisting MKs in transition. Schools may also discover this research as useful for their curriculum improvement, their faculty and staff in-service and training, as well as various student and parent workshops.

This information can best be shared with principals and other top level school administrators at Missionary Kid schools around the world. The information from this qualitative research may be best disseminated in a more brief writing so that the above mentioned school principals can have a quicker “overview glance” at the recommendations. With an “overview glance” type of information briefing, school principals can share this with their teams to assess and make needed changes on their campus.
**Recommendations for Further Study**

There is still much work to be done to fully analyze and understand the changing challenges and support systems needed to aid Missionary Kids in their re-entry process. In a very real way, every MK is different and will experience their re-entry differently. However, that should not deter researchers, educators, and parents from attempting to understand MKs and how to best assist them. This section briefly summarizes recommendations for further study.

On the macro level, specific MK challenges need to be more deeply explored. The first recommendation addresses the issue of alumni connections. It was clear from data that there is sometimes a loss of connection for MKs when they leave their secondary school and return to their home country. There was also a clear benefit of having recently graduated alumni return to their secondary school and present to the younger students about their experience including their challenges and their learned skills for transition. What needs to happen is that schools needs to be exploring the best ways to connect with alumni and bring them to campus to provide a forum for them to present their knowledge.

The second recommendation focuses on bridging support systems from the host culture to the home culture. A replicate study conducted at colleges and universities asking the same questions would shed light on the awareness and support systems incorporated into the interchange between the host culture and the home culture. First, there would be more clarification if colleges and universities are aware of the transition issues for their new Missionary Kid students. Secondly, the reproduced study would
allow educational leaders to understand the systems in place at colleges and universities and how they are similar or different than systems in the K-12 level. Ultimately, educational leaders would be able to make connections between the support systems in the K-12 system and the college/university system and synchronize them so that MKs feel supported the whole way through.

The third recommendation would explore multiple avenues of technology and how to best use it in the secondary school level. From the data, it is clear that many schools are using technology for teaching and learning as well as for connecting with friends and family of MKs in their home country. There are obvious benefits to the use of technology, and in some instances, more technology needs to be instilled so that MKs can fully keep up with technological advances in their home country that they will be expected to understand. The potential reservation to this progression is the possibility of creating a false setting for MKs in thinking that they understand the nuances and subtleties of their home culture. Therefore, the recommendation is to explore the best ways of implementing technology while still maintaining a realistic understanding of the limitations of understanding the home culture via technology.

Finally, a study needs to be created to determine the effectiveness of the support systems that are currently in place. Although the analysis has been completed from the educational leader’s perspective, there needs to be an investigation from the Missionary Kid perspective. Ultimately, the question that needs to be addressed is “do support
systems currently in place assist in the transition for MKs from the perspective of the MK.”

On the micro level, further exploration needs to be done at each specific secondary school that participated to explore ways to begin the changes addressed in question 3 by the participants. There needs to be an investigation to see how the time, money, training, information resources, and staff resources can be utilized to better support MKs who will be going through transition.

Lastly, although the experience of each Missionary Kid will be uniquely different in their transition, there needs to be a road map for MKs to begin to understand the challenges that they will soon need to navigate. This can be something that would be personalized for each MK with their home country, host country, and other specific perceived challenges they anticipate coming their way. Additionally, the road map could have areas to address the apparent trials that will come in their transition, as to serve as an accountability tool.

**Limitations**

There are a small number of limitations to this research study. The first is that there is a large reliance of the participants to determine the biggest challenges and most useful support systems for Missionary Kids. There is an assumption in having the
participants be able to accurately assess what the best practices are in meeting the re-entry needs of Missionary Kids.

Internal bias may have surfaced as participants answered the question: “Is there anything that your school is not currently doing that would help students in their re-entry transition?” There was the possibility that participants would seek to represent their school in the best possible light at the expense of not being fully candid with their responses. Four of the sixteen participants responded in such a way which caused me to consider this as a limitation. The responses are as follows: “I think we do as much as we can.” “..we think we are doing a pretty good job and our alumni have agreed.” “..we do address the issues fairly extensively during the second half of the school year and especially with students we know are leaving.” A fourth participant chose not to respond to the question. These responses lead me to wonder if their responses were answered in a way as to which shed more positive attention on the represented school.

Although the focus of the study was not to analyze the participants, some identity categories are underrepresented in this study. I recognized that there was a possible turn off for participants to complete the survey as the number of questions increased. Therefore, I attempted to limit the number of demographic questions to Job Title, School of Employment, Years at School, Gender, Ethnicity, and Nationality. As a result, the breadth of information about the participants is limited. Furthermore, there is a high proportion of participants who identified their nationality as being from the United States. It is important to consider why more participants were not selected with a more diverse
range of nationalities. Further research could be explored in this area as the importance of a global perspective in recognized in the global Missionary Kid field.

**Reflection on Research Process**

The research process has proven to be a valuable and rewarding experience. When I first embarked on the dissertation journey there were many topics of interest and wide visions for writing. As I began to meet with committee members and other experts in the field I narrowed my topic into one which I began to feel more passionate about. There were instances in which I didn’t want to look at the data one more time, followed by times that I wanted to re-read and share the results with anyone around me. I believe that I feel closer to Missionary Kids and their experiences as a result of the research process, yet still not fully knowing the experience as I have not lived it myself.

Understanding that upon completion of the dissertation process I would be moving around the world to actively work with and support Missionary Kids, I have been interested in the success of this work. I will serve as a Boarding Home Parent for junior high and senior high students in Papua New Guinea while their parents do Bible translation work in remote villages. I am incredibly excited to have the opportunity to apply the knowledge from my own research into supporting Missionary Kids on a daily basis. That being said, my future career move has not clouded or biased my research process. I refrained from sharing this information with any participants before they submitted their survey results, thus preventing any impact on their participation.
As a result of this study, I have certainly grown deeper in my understanding of challenges faced by Missionary Kids. I have a greater sense of the rewards that come from the MK experience as well as the critical decisions that must be made by MKs regarding their own acceptance of being an MK. Yet at the same time I have also grown to understand that there is a wide range of topics and information related to the research study. I have a newly developed interest in research and data analysis and will be continuing similar projects in the future. I am confident that I will begin informal and formal research with the Missionary Kids that I work with in Papua New Guinea. I will attempt to understand the challenges and valuable support systems from the perspective of the MK. My thinking has changed as a result of this study to reflect a more supportive framework towards MKs. I now have a new understanding of the fragility of adolescents’ youth and the valuable importance of support systems that can be in place.

Summary and Conclusion

The experience of a Missionary Kid is one that only a Missionary Kid can truly understand. Missionary families make great sacrifices to achieve their goals and ambitions; the children of missionaries are not always included in the decision making process of whether or not to move forward with the sacrifices. Educational leaders at schools which focus on Missionary Kids have one of the best insights to the challenges that MKs face. It is clear that there are major challenges for MKs that reach far beyond their peers of the same age, with different experiences. Their challenges are more than
“normal” adolescence or moving from one city to another city. It is critical to adequately support this unique population of youth through the use of experienced teachers, trainers, workshop coordinators, and guided reflections. The challenges reach past the MKs, but also reach into parental challenges. Auspiciously, the adult population who works directly with Missionary Kids is often aware of the unique challenges and fully committed to taking an extra step to supporting MKs in their re-entry transitions.
Appendix A

Participant Email Request

Sunday, December 7, 2014

Principal <Principal First Name> <Principal Last Name>
<School Name, School Country>

Dear <Principal First Name>,

I am a doctoral candidate working towards my degree in Educational Leadership. I am conducting qualitative research on best practices of secondary schools focused on Missionary Kid (MK) education. I have identified your school as fitting into my criteria of research to describe your best practices.

It is my goal to gain a robust understanding of practices that secondary schools use to assist MKs before they re-enter their home culture. I am seeking your support in this effort and would like to have up to two of your staff members (one administrator and/or one teacher) complete the brief open-ended survey which I have attached. Will you please forward the survey to two staff members who you believe would have the best insight? Again, my goal is to focus on the positive aspects that are taking place to assist MKs.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns about my request. My desire is to have the surveys completed and returned by December 31, 2014. Completed surveys should be returned through email to cassidy.isch@csus.edu. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Cassidy Isch
Doctoral Candidate
California State University, Sacramento
Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

Title: When Two Cultures Cross: Perceptions of Educational Leaders on Factors that Support Missionary Kids’ Re-entry Process to their Home Culture.

Researcher: Cassidy Isch
California State University, Sacramento
6014 J Street
Sacramento, CA 95819
cassidy.isch@csus.edu
(916) 278-5419

You are invited to take part in a research project entitled “When Two Cultures Cross: Perceptions of Educational Leaders on Factors that Support Missionary Kids’ Re-entry Process to their Home Culture”.

This form is designed to provide you the general idea of what the research is about and what involvement will include. This pronounces the purposes of the research, what participants’ roles will include, and research possibilities available to participants. Please contact the researcher, Cassidy Isch, if you have any questions about the study or for more information.

It is completely up to you to choose whether to take part in this research. If you choose not to participate in this research or if you decide to withdraw from the research once it has started, there will be no undesirable or adverse consequences for you.

Introduction
As part of my Doctorate in Educational Leadership dissertation, I am conducting research at the California State University, Sacramento.

This study is intended to examine the perceptions and practices of educational leaders (teachers and administrators) towards the re-entry process for Missionary Kids (MKs). Participants can expect to understand how their provided information aligns with other secondary schools that focus on MK education.

What you will do in this study:
I plan to ask four open-ended survey questions to educational leaders who work at secondary schools educating Missionary Kid (MK). I will ask a question about perceptions on the re-entry process, a question on what tools and techniques are used to assist in the re-entry process, and a question about what still needs to be done to support MKs in re-entry. The open-ended survey questions will be purely informational in an attempt to collect information about the educational leader’s perceptions and experiences and their school’s practices and procedures.

**Length of time:**
Participants can expect to commit approximately 10 to 20 minutes answering the survey questions, depending on the depth of answers provided.

**Possible risks:**
There is no possible physical, psychological, or privacy risk involved in the study. There is very minimal sociological risk involved if the results that came from the survey portrayed the participant’s work place in a negative light. If this were the case, a participant’s employability could potentially be questioned because of what they shared in the survey. Furthermore, there is possible risk associated with the use of an electronic survey but information will be kept confidential to the degree allowed by technology.

**Recording of Data:**
The open-ended survey questions will be completed electronically in written form by the participant. The participants’ answers will be saved and sent to the researcher for data analysis.

**Questions:**
You are welcome to ask questions at any time during your participation in this research. If you would like more information about this study, please contact: Cassidy Isch at (916) 278-5419 or cassidy.isch@csus.edu. You may also contact the research sponsor: Dr. Rose Borunda at (916) 278-6310 or rborunda@csus.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research project you may contact the office of Research Affairs at (916) 278-5674 or irb@csus.edu.

**Consent:**
Your signature on this form means that:
- You have read the information about the research provided in this form.
- You understand what the research is about and how you will be involved.
- You understand that you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

**Your signature:**
I have read and understand what this study is about. I have had adequate time to think about this and had the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered.
☐ I agree to participate in the research project understanding the risks of my participation, that my participation is voluntary, and that I may end my participation at any time.
☐ I agree to type my responses to the survey questions and send them electronically to the researcher.
☐ I agree to the use of quotations and that my name may be identified in any publications resulting from this study.
   or
☐ I agree to the use of quotations but do not want my name to be identified in any publications resulting from this study.
   or
☐ I do not agree to the use of quotation.

_________________________________________  __________________________
Signature of participant                        Date
Appendix C

Participant Survey

Missionary Kid Re-Entry Survey

Use this form to provide insight on your perspective and experience as an educational leader at a secondary school focusing on Missionary Kid education. This information will be published and featured as model programs that best prepare Missionary Kids for their re-entry process.

Survey Participant Demographic Information

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<th>Name:</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Question</th>
<th>Participant Answer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>What do you think are some of the challenges for Missionary Kids during their re-entry process to their home country?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Is your school preparing and supporting Missionary Kids for the challenges they will face in their re-entry? If yes, how so? If no, why not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Is there anything that your school is not currently doing that would help students in their re-entry transition?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
112

| 4 | What resources would be necessary to implement these changes mentioned in the previous question? |

**Follow-up Questions:**  
**Participant Answer**

| Would you be willing to do a follow up study for the researcher to gain more in-depth knowledge of your program? |  |

| Would you be willing to share your resources (i.e. program design, curriculum focused on re-entry support, etc.) to be featured as model programs? |  |

After you have entered the necessary information to complete this survey, please email the document to the researcher Cassidy Isch at cassidy.isch@csus.edu.
Appendix D

List of Schools Participating in the Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
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<td>Rift Valley Academy</td>
<td>Kenya</td>
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<td>Dalat International School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oaxaxa Christian School</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ukarumpa International School</td>
<td>Papua New Guinea</td>
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<td>Faith Academy</td>
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<td>Dakar Academy</td>
<td>Senegal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Morrison Academy</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
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Appendix E

Best Practices Compiled by Participating Schools

(These lists are not in a value-sorted order)

Most Important Topics for a 3-day MK Retreat

1. Understanding the TCK Profile and How MKs Fit

2. R.A.F.T. – Reconciliation, Farewell, Affirmation, Think destination

3. Accepting Grief and the Grieving Process

4. Relationships & Friendships – Keys to Success

5. Understanding Identity – Symbolic, Global, & Personal

6. Group Problem Solving

7. Exploring Culture and Communication

8. Arrival to the Home Country – Transition Models

9. Practical Experiences at Home – Money, Driving, School, Media, & Values

10. Recent Alumni Question & Answer Panel
Most Valuable Mindsets for MKs

1. I will believe that I am not weird, but I am complex.

2. I will recognize that I am not special—I am privileged.

3. I will allow myself to fail publicly and privately.

4. I will stay connected in some way to my other cultures.

5. I will apply the same curiosity, exploration and acceptance to my passport culture that I apply to foreign cultures.

6. I will be versatile in my relationship-building methods.

7. I will use my experiences to enrich and not diminish others.

8. I will strive to distinguish between human failure and God’s character.

9. I will choose to exercise gratitude, but won’t ignore the hardships.

10. I will acknowledge that being an MK alone won’t get me through life—having an intimate, trusting relationship with God will.
How to Pray for MKs in Re-entry Transition

1. Pray for good closure and positive farewells as they leave the country.

2. Pray for good mentors to help with adjustment to new surroundings.

3. Pray for finances necessary for further schooling and living expenses.

4. Pray for good friendships to be built with people of the new culture and with other MKs.

5. Pray for good communications with home and the ability to be honest about what they are feeling and experiencing.

6. Pray for God's direction as they make many difficult decisions.

7. Pray for the ability to distinguish between Christianity and culture.

8. Pray for an ever-deepening reliance on and understanding of God.

9. Pray for them to find a good church home where they will grow in Christ.

10. Pray for the ability to enjoy their new cultures without getting caught up in the sin that is acceptable in those cultures.
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