THIRD CULTURE KIDS: EXAMINING THEIR IMPACT IN SCHOOL

COMMUNITIES, A CASE STUDY

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by

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled:

THIRD CULTURE KIDS: EXAMINING THEIR IMPACT IN SCHOOL

COMMUNITIES, A CASE STUDY

presented by Erinn A. Magee,

a candidate for the degree Doctor of Education

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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Dr. Paul Watkins, Major Advisor

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Dedication

I owe a huge debt of gratitude to the founders of Balboa Academy for supporting me in this endeavor and for always believing in me. Mil gracias for your love and trust: Gloria Ducreux, Vanessa De Gracia, Rocio Fernandez, Melissa Jimenez, Tamara Matheney, Carmen Smith, Karla Rees, Angelica Vaccaro, and Marcella Vallarino.

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Abstract

The purpose of this case study is to explore the impact that Third Culture Kids have on one international school community. Third Culture Kids or TCKs are children who live in a culture that is not the culture of their parents (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999). Not to be confused with immigrants, these children move from country to country and do not settle in a single place. At the same time, they grow up expecting to return to their passport country (Cockbum, 2002). These children's lives are influenced both by their parents' culture (which they may have limited first-hand experience with) and the culture (s) they have grown up surrounded by. The result of the constant exposure to different cultures develops into a unique, "third," culture for the child. (

Nineteen Third Culture Kids in an international school in the Republic of Panama were interviewed in order to explore with the aim of understanding how their experiences as transient students affected their school community. The Third Culture Kids in this study have lived, at a minimum, in two different countries. Neither the children nor their parents held passports from Panama.

Combined, the nineteen students speak ten languages fluently: English, Spanish, Italian, French, Korean, Mandarin, Portuguese, Arabic, Singhalese, and Hebrew. The students speak an average of 2.8 languages each, with one child speaking five languages fluently. Every student spoke at least two languages. In their brief lives, they have lived in 28 countries: Argentina,

Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, France, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Jamaica, Mexico, Netherlands, Panama, Peru, Rwanda, South Korea, Spain, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, United Kingdom, United Arab Emirates, United States, Venezuela, and Zimbabwe. On average, the students have lived in 3.8 countries each, with two having lived in six countries.

These children understand the advantages of being Third Culture Kids. They understand that as a whole, they are more tolerant, mature, have a wider worldview, and they appreciate human differences. In the international schools they have attended, they observed how challenging it is to make friends in schools without other Third Culture Kids, and they feel they can make the biggest difference when they are in a school includes other TCKs.

The case study found that TCKs contribute greatly to a school's culture. They attribute this to their willingness to participate in efforts to create an open and caring attitude. More than one TCK expressed that they feel free to be himself or herself in this particular school, in contrast to other international schools they have attended. Despite published results that suggest difficulty in establishing friendship with local students, they report making great friends not only with fellow TCKs, but also with Panamanians students.

In understanding how TCKs can be embraced and introduced into a school's efforts to create an inclusive environment, academic institutions can instill openness, maturity, and a broader worldview in students who are not TCKs. In such an open community, instead of remaining on the sidelines, TCKs and their accepting attitudes can influence the entire school--building a powerful community of children whose collective interests and experiences reflect the need for inclusiveness to spread throughout the entire globe.

SECTION ONE:

INTRODUCTION TO DISSERTATION

Background

With the flux of international businesses and an increasingly globally mobile population, the number of people living outside of their home countries has grown tremendously in the past twenty years. Many families move together internationally. The children who grow up living from country to country are a unique part of our world population. These children, known as Third Culture Kids or TCKs, are children who live in a culture that is not the culture of their parents (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999). Not to be confused with immigrants, these children move from country to country and do not settle in a single place. At the same time, they grow up expecting to return to their passport country (Cockbum, 2002). These children's lives are influenced both by their parents' culture (which they may have limited first-hand experience with) and the culture (s) they have grown up surrounded by. The result of the constant exposure to different cultures develops into a unique, "third," culture for the child. Increasingly, this "third" culture is further extended by the online global friendships students are able to maintain over time, long after they or their friends have moved to other places on the planet (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999).

Also known as global nomads and sojourners, TCKs are sometimes referred to as the prototypical 21st century global citizen. Characteristics of these children raised in different cultures include open-mindedness, flexibility, tolerance towards difference, and linguistic abilities (Choi, Bernard, & Luke, 2013). The most famous TCK in the world is U.S. President, Barack Obama. Born to an American mother and a Kenyan father, he attended the International School of Jakarta in Indonesia for several years. As a Third Culture Kid, President Obama epitomizes the definition of a person who has a larger global perspective, is socially adaptable,

intellectually flexible, able to think outside of the box, and yet, a bit restless and aloof (Dewaele & Oudenhoven, 2009).

Third Culture Kids typically attend international schools in the countries where they reside. International schools usually offer English-language instruction and curriculum modeled after either the U.S. or British systems. These international schools are unique because of the diversity of their student populations—they often have students from more than thirty nations in attendance. Added to the international student population are often a percentage of host country nationals who are able to afford the expensive costs of international school tuition. The host nation students are typically in attendance in these schools for most of their schooling, while the Third Culture Kids come for more temporary residencies and are often only in any given school for two to five years (Alviar-Martin, 2011; Hayden & Thompson, 2008; McLachlan, 2007).

Because of the transience of the international student population and the permanence of the local student population, international schools often undergo unique community building processes. There can be tensions between the host country national students who are in the school all their lives and those TCKs who are constantly coming and going. These schools can have trouble forming cohesive communities due to the complicated student population dynamics (Limberg & Lambie, 2011). Evidence also suggests that TCKs have a hard time forming any real bonds with their peers, and this further complicates their sense of belonging in their schools (Mi Choi, Bernard, & Luke, 2013).

Statement of the problem

Only recently have any studies emerged to examine exactly how the unique life experiences of Third Culture Kids affect them and the communities in which they belong. The current literature mostly focuses on how the transience of TCK childhoods influences the formation of

their identities and how they form relationships. Because they live in so many places and move frequently, TCKs often form very complex identities that are very different from those formed by people living in one single culture (Fail, Thompson, & Walker, 2004; Grimshaw & Sears, 2008; Greenoltz & Kim, 2009; Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011; Moore & Barker, 2012). Their constant mobility also affects how they make friends—some studies suggest that TCKs form friendships very quickly, but without depth (Choi, Bernard, & Luke, 2013; Cockbum, 2002; McDonald, 2010; Pollock & Van Reken, 2001). Other studies suggest that TCKs cannot form relationships easily unless it is with other global nomads who share their same world experiences (Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011; Moore and Barker, 2012; Sheard, 2008; Walker & Auton-Cuff, 2009). Some studies also focus on how TCKs adapt to the college experience and how their global mobility affects their approach to education (Bikos, et. al, 2009; Cottrell, 2002; Davis, et. al, 2013; Firmin, Warner, & Lowe, 2006; Hervey, 2009; Moore & Barker, 2012; Peterson & Plamandon, 2009). Much of the literature finds that the Third Culture Kids' experience of living in multiple countries influences their personalities. They tend to be more open, tolerant, and globally minded (Gerner & Perry, 2000; Lam & Selmer, 2004; Lee, 2010; Lyttle, Barker, & Cornwall, 2013; Melles & Schwartz, 2013).

Problem of Practice

International educators are not well informed about this unique population within their schools. Often, how teachers and student peers welcome a Third Culture Kid into the school community makes an impact on how willing the TCK is to contribute to his/her new setting. Teachers underestimate the importance of building a strong climate of acceptance and openness in international schools. International school educators need to understand how TCKs think and respond to their new environments in order to fully take advantage of the unique skill set these

children possess and can offer to their school communities. To the contrary, TCKs typically do not integrate with non-TCKs and prefer to make friends only with other TCKs.

Gaps in the Literature

There are gaps in the research as to how this unique population affects school and other communities. No studies address the impact that having large populations of TCKs can have on building community within a school, as is the case of many international schools worldwide. Also lacking are quantitative studies that can apply their findings more universally to the approximate 6.2 million TCKs in international schools today (Hayden & Thompson, 2008). Overall, it is necessary to understand how TCKs form identity and develop relationships with their peers in order to begin to study and understand how their presence affects the community building in the schools in which they spend their youth.

<p style="text-align:center">Purpose of the study</p>

The purpose of this study is to explore how TCKs uniquely contribute to their school communities and affect community building within their schools. TCK's global awareness and broader cultural understandings affect the communities where they belong. It is important to understand what impact their unique life experiences have on their friendships at school and their relationships with their peers and teachers. A knowledge gap exists in understanding how these international experiences affect the climate and community of a school.

Third Culture Kids are used to being "the new kid." Because they move multiple times in their lives, they have developed unique relationship-building skill sets. It is suggested that while they learn how to develop relationships very quickly, these relationships are often superficial and lack deep human connections (Choi, Bernard, & Luke, 2013; Cockbum, 2002; McDonald, 2010; Pollock & Van Reken, 2001). However, TCKs tend to develop their deepest relationships with

other TCKs and their families (Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011; Moore and Barker, 2012; Sheard, 2008; Walker & Auton-Cuff, 2009).

The unique life experiences of TCKs influence every element of their lives. They tend to develop either multiple senses of identities or no definable identity at all (Fail, Thompson, & Walker, 2004; Greenoltz & Kim, 2009; Grimshaw & Sears, 2008; Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009). Every move marks the identity of a TCK. Because of these experiences, TCKs tend to be much more accepting of other cultures and easily adapt to diverse environments (Gerner & Perry, 2000; Lam & Selmer, 2004; Lee, 2010; Lyttle, Barker, & Cornwall, 2013; Melles & Schwartz, 2013). International school administrators, teachers, and counselors need to have a special skill set to be able to help TCKs with their unique needs as they come and go from international schools. They need to understand how this population of student will affect the overall community building process of their school, and harness the positive traits of these children to build a stronger, more tolerant, school community. Schools need to be very careful not to allow the tendency of TCKs to only bond with each other and therefore to create rifts between international and local schoolchildren, as is often the case.

Research questions

The guiding questions to this study are:

- How do the life experiences of Third Culture Kids influence community building in their school communities?

- How does having a transient population of Third Culture Kids affect school community building?

Conceptual Framework

Being a part of a community is essential to learning. If schools cannot help foster a sense of belonging and community for their students, then learning cannot take place. The culture of the school can facilitate this community for children or can impede the integration of these children into the community. In fact, studies show that sense of belonging is the only significant predictor of student academic grades (Ma, 2003). In order to understand how schools develop culture, a strong understanding of organizational culture is necessary.

Organizational culture is defined by Edgar Schein (1990) as, "(a) a pattern of basic assumptions, (b) invented, discovered, or developed by a given group, (c) as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, (d) that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore(e) is to be taught to new members as the (f) correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems" (p. 111). Organizational culture is critical for determining an organization's "capacity, effectiveness, and longevity" (Woodbury, 2006, p. 46). Strong connections exist between the organization's culture and its performance (Ghinea & Bratianu, 2012).

Organizational cultures evolve and change over time. Organizational cultures typically go through two stages: the original, historical culture established by the founder(s) of the organization and the current organizational culture. The key to strong organizational cultures is that they be both stable and flexible. The culture of an organization must be stable in upholding the mission and vision of the organization, and yet flexible enough to change in accordance to internal and external forces (Ghinea & Bratianu, 2012).

People often are unaware of their own culture until they experience other cultures. As organizations become increasingly more globally diverse (as is the case with all international schools), it is important to not only look at the organization's culture, but also the cultural intelligence of the organizations' members. Cultural intelligence can be defined as, "an ability that makes it possible for the individual to be effective in cross-cultural interchanges" (Balogh, Gaal, & Szabo, 2011, p.100). Schools with a high percentage of students who are TCKs have the advantage that TCKs have a tendency to be more culturally intelligent because of their life experiences (Gerner & Perry, 2000; Lam & Selmer, 2004; Lee, 2010; Melles & Schwartz, 2013; and Lyttle, Barker, & Cornwall, 2013).

Because of the transience of the international student population and the permanence of the local student population, international schools often undergo unique community building processes. Tensions can arise between the host country national students who are in the school all their lives and those TCKs who are constantly coming and going. These schools can have trouble forming cohesive communities due to the tendency for TCKs to not make friends with peers who are not also TCKs (Limberg & Lambie, 2011). Evidence also suggests that TCKs have a hard time forming any real bonds with their peers, and this further complicates their sense of belonging in their schools (Mi Choi, Bernard, & Luke, 2013).

Each organization (school) creates its own cultural system, which naturally incorporates characteristics of the national culture (Saseanu, Toma, & Marinescu, 2014). For the TCKs moving from country to country, adapting to each unique cultural system influenced by the national culture can be particularly daunting. However, change is the ironic constant for TCKs (Hervey, 2009). In understanding how each international school creates its own organizational culture, taking into consideration both the transience of the TCKs and the permanence of the host

nationals, we can better analyze how TCKs contribute to the community within these organizations.

Design of the Study

Setting

In order to gather data on how TCKs form communities within international schools, a qualitative particular case study was conducted. Merriam (2009) defines a case study as an "in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system" (p.40). The case study examined the community building experiences of TCKs in a single, independent, proprietary, international school located in Panama City, Republic of Panama. The international school offers an American-accredited curriculum from PreK-12th grade. With a student population of 960, approximately 32% of students hold Panamanian passports, 25% hold U.S. passports, and the remaining 53% hold passports from 38 other countries. The researcher estimates that approximately 68% of the student population can be defined as TCKs. The student demographics of this school is typical of international schools worldwide.

Participants

To gather rich data, the researcher focused on the experiences of TCKs in high school (grades 9-12), which consists of approximately 290 students. In order to identify TCKs, the high school electronic student database was examined. High school students were classified as TCKs if they:

- Do not hold a Panamanian passport

- Do not have parents who are Panamanian

- Have lived in at least one other country since they started school

Data Collection

Once the TCKs in the high school population were identified, a convenience sampling was used to select students. Nineteen students were interviewed individually. The interviews were semi-structured. Certain basic information was gathered from each subject, and then a loosely designed interview protocol was followed that allowed for flexibility based on student responses. A gender balance of 10 boys and 9 girls was sought in order to reduce any possibility of gender bias, as well as sampling from all four high school grade levels. Six students were in their senior year of high school, four were juniors, seven tenth graders, and two were in ninth grade. Because the research subjects were minors, both the parents and students were asked to give written consent (Appendix A and B).

The design for the study was emergent and flexible. According to Creswell (2009), in an emergent and flexible research plan, the phases of the process to collect data might shift once the researcher has entered the field. The researcher began with the preliminary interviews, and refined interview questions based on the interview responses received (Appendix C).

Because the researcher was the school director at the time of data collection, safeguards for the reliability and validity of the study were put into place. The researcher held a significant position of power and authority over the students participating in the study, and it was important to ensure that student participation was voluntary and that no one felt obligated to participate. In order to eliminate the risk of positional power, the researcher sought the assistance of a proxy to conduct the actual interviews. The proxy interviewer does not work at the school, but does have experience working as a high school Spanish and English teacher. The proxy also has experience conducting research and holds a Ph.D in Spanish Literature. The interviews were recorded and the researcher transcribed the transcripts and interpretation of the data collected. Through the use

of a proxy for the interviews, the researcher hoped to avoid any problems with positional power and the students being interviewed.

Data Analysis

Limitations and Bias

The greatest limitation of this Case Study is the fact that it only provides information from one single international school. In the interviews conducted in this case study, students repeatedly reported that this school, Balboa Academy, was different from other international schools. This study would need to be replicated in various international schools across the globe to see if results are consistent, regardless of the school in which the interviews are conducted.

The bias of the researcher will be clearly stated and analyzed as data is interpreted. The researcher, originally from the United States, has taught for 18 years in international schools in Central America and has never taught in any other type of school in any other region. The researcher has worked at the school selected for the case study for the past 14 years. She was high school principal for nine years, and is in her second year as school director at the time of data collection for this study. The researcher's limitations include lack of experience working in schools that are not international and that do not contain high percentages of TCKs. While not a TCK, the researcher did participate in study abroad programs in both High School and college, and has lived her entire adult life outside of the United States. In order to ensure accurate data analysis, the researcher relied on respondent validation to ensure there is little misinterpretation of data collected.

Definitions of Key Terms

Third Culture Kids

Third Culture Kids or TCKs, are children who live in a culture that is not the culture of their parents (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999). Not to be confused with immigrants, these children move from country to country and do not settle in a single place. At the same time, they grow up expecting to return to their passport country (Cockbum, 2002). These children's lives are influenced both by their parents' culture (which they may have limited first-hand experience with) and the culture (s) they have grown up surrounded by. The result of the constant exposure to different cultures develops into a unique, "third," culture for the child. Increasingly, this "third" culture is further extended by the online global friendships students are able to maintain over time, long after they or their friends have moved to other places on the planet (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999).

International Schools

International schools typically follow a national or international curriculum different from that of the host country. Additionally, an emphasis is placed on international education and global citizenship. Generally accepted criteria for international schools include:

Transferability of students' education across international schools

A moving population (higher than in national public schools)

Multinational and multilingual student body

An international curriculum

International accreditation

A transient and multinational teacher population

Non-selective student enrollment

Usually English as the language of instruction (Nagrath, 2011).

School Climate

School climate can be defined as the "personality" of the school. This personality is created by teachers and students and impacts the attitudes and behaviors of all members of the school community (Halpin and Croft, 1963).

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Significance of the study

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Practice

Only coined in 1999, the term Third Culture Kids designates a growing percentage of the population that reflects the large number of families living abroad (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999). This population has increased tremendously in the past twenty years. Children who are raised in multiple countries and away from their home nations develop unique identities. These unique characteristics impact the communities where they live and more research is needed on how specifically these communities are affected. Understanding how large percentages of TCKs within an international school organization impacts community building can have important implications not only for international school communities, where TCKs tend to be concentrated, but also for emerging diversity within U.S. schools.

With a greater understanding of how these children integrate into communities, more of the special characteristics of TCKs can be tapped by school communities worldwide. The increased cultural intelligence of TCKs and their broader worldviews help them integrate into diverse cultures. These children have a heightened global understanding and tolerance that many communities could learn from (Gerner & Perry, 2000). Schools can use their talents to lead programs that emphasize tolerance and inclusion among diverse student groups.

Better understanding of the roles TCKs play in their communities will be beneficial for international and U.S. school communities, alike. Because TCKs typically have the hardest time when returning to their passport countries for college, it is important that U.S. schools and universities have a better understanding of who these hidden immigrants are. Programs of support need to be in place for TCKs as they navigate their homelands in order to help them find a sense of belonging.

Scholarship

Great gaps in the research exist regarding how this unique population affects school and other communities. No studies address the impact that having large populations of TCKs can have on a school community, as is the case of many international schools worldwide. International schools provide access to community to families who are internationally mobile, and yet a surprisingly small amount of research exists on TCKs within these international school communities. Also lacking are quantitative studies that can apply their findings more universally to the approximate 6.2 million TCKs in international schools today (Hayden & Thompson, 2008). Overall, it is necessary to fully understand how TCKs form identity and develop relationships with their peers in order to begin to study and understand how their presence affects the school climate of the school communities in which they spend their youth

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Summary

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TCKs make up large percentages of the populations in international school communities worldwide. However, TCKs are not the only group—students from the local population also attend international schools. While there is some research on international schools, little focuses on the impact TCKs make on the school community overall. Student learning is most effective when students feel part of a larger community. In order to understand how students are

incorporated into the school community, the organizational culture of the school must be understood. The cultural intelligence of the school community members must also be taken into consideration, as well. It is important to understand how TCKs can be incorporated into international school communities in order to better facilitate the learning for all students within these schools.

By learning more about the community building process of TCKs in international schools, other kinds of schools can benefit from these models of diversity and tolerance. Many areas in the world that have historically had a homogenous population are facing demographic changes that have added great diversity to their communities. In understanding how other greatly diverse communities integrate everyone without hostility, these communities facing change can develop programs based on the international school community building models. The more that is understood about how TCKs navigate their different schools, countries, and communities, the more this information can be used to benefit the rest of the world's communities.

SECTION TWO:

PRACTITIONER SETTING FOR THE STUDY

Introduction

International schools are often defined as a school that offers a curriculum different from the national curriculum. These schools are mostly English-speaking, and typically emphasize global perspectives within their curriculum. In the year 2000, there were approximately 2,584 International schools with 1 million students. In 2014 the number of schools had grown to 6,887 with an approximate student population of 3.5 million students. By 2024, there will be a projected 6.9 million students enrolled in international schools worldwide (Clark, 2014).

History of the Organization

Balboa Academy (BA) is an international, English-language school located in Panama City, Panama. Its mission reads, "Balboa Academy provides a U.S. standards-based curriculum in which English is our language of instruction. Our comprehensive and engaging educational program is dedicated to fostering innovative, intellectual growth. We honor individual differences and diversity, while focusing on the development of the whole child. Our nurturing community inspires students to become responsible global citizens with integrity and compassion." The organization's vision, "Together we cultivate a caring community of lifelong learners, independent thinkers, and builders of a promising future," emphasizes the importance of community.

 BA teaches a U.S./International curriculum to students Pre-K-12 and graduates typically attend universities in the United States including Duke, Stanford, UC Berkeley, Notre Dame, Georgetown, etc. The school has a 100% graduation rate. Teachers are mostly U.S. or Panamanian citizens and unlike most international schools, BA does not recruit teachers from job fairs abroad. Jobs in BA are coveted in Panamanian educational circles. The student population is 960 with approximately 40% of students carrying a U.S. passport, 30% with a Panamanian

passport, and 40% holding a third country passport. Most students have lived in multiple

countries and English is the primary language for 40% of BA's student body.

BA was founded in 1999 by a group of eleven teachers who all taught in the Department

of Defense Dependent Schools (DoDDS) in the former Panama Canal Zone. According to the

terms of the Torrijos-Carter Treaty of 1977, the United States gave Panama full control of the

Panama Canal in 1999 and all DoDDS schools closed their doors. These teachers wanted their

children to continue with their U.S.-style education and so founded this school. As part of their

mission to educate their own children, all founders/owners of the school agreed to work in the

school as teachers, vowing to always maintain a non-owner administrative staff. They wanted

the governance of the school to be as objective as possible.

<center>**Organizational Analysis**</center>

The current organizational structure of Balboa Academy is a model of Helgeson's web of

inclusion (Boleman & Deal, 2008). With eight of the nine founding owners working as regular

teachers, their leadership is both dispersed and deferred to seven administrators. From their

positions above and within BA, founders maintain watchful eyes and constant communication

with all school stakeholders. There is no clear hierarchical pyramid; instead, owners,

administrators, and teachers are all closely connected. The mostly female leadership team

displays characteristics found to be typical of women leaders: democratic, participatory, and

nurturing (de la Rey, 2005).

The Human Resource Frame

Balboa Academy is founded by a very unconventional group of mavericks whose basic

modus operandi has been to do things their way. Their way is heavily vested in individual

personalities. As the school expands and matures, the result of this formation has been a lack of

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systems and structure. This dilemma can be best seen through the human resource framework. The administrative team needs to embrace the values of the founders as they reform the organizational structure and they must empower more than just the administrative team into making these changes.

The organization's leadership needs to capitalize on the existing strengths of the school, particularly the people who work there. BA has fostered a culture where people want to work. The school has always been receptive to the needs of its employees. This sense of community is shared by all school stakeholders. Typically, the school's administration and founders have fully embraced what is referred to in Bolman and Deal (2008) as the Y Theory of management, by which human needs are prioritized by the organization.

The school director must establish a strong bond with the board of founders and needs to provide them with guidance on how to plan and prepare for the future. The founder's current governance depends on their active roles as founders and owners of the school. However, many founding members are now in their early-to-mid sixties and they will not be working at BA forever. The school director needs to help guide the owners in selecting their successors who will take over for them when they retire or can no longer work within the school or on the board. Chances are, these new board members will be from within the BA community and identification and training of these members is necessary in order to keep the current structure working for the organization.

The Symbolic Frame

Balboa Academy's Founding Director (1999-2013), Jean Lamb, is a personification of Bolman and Deal's (2008) definition of symbolic leader. In faculty meetings, Jean frequently delivered her messages in the form of stories. Her anecdotes always gave direct references to

specific people on campus: students, teachers, staff, or parents. At the first faculty meeting of every year, Jean always told a story about the founding of the school. Her stories always had a hidden meaning, though it sometimes took a few days before the bottom line was fully realized by those present.

Central themes were always present in Jean's messages as a leader. These themes were so consistent over the years that recently tee shirts were printed with her messages on the back. Teachers and staff wore the tee shirts at our teacher field day in May 2013. The messages were simple: Because Nice Matters, Flexibility is my Middle Name, No Child is Disposable, Research says…, You've Got to Peel the Onion, What's Best for Kids? These catch phrases were central to the beliefs and culture at BA. Anyone who has ever spent a week on campus can attest to hearing at least three of these sayings from teachers, students, and parents who were part of the school community. Subsequent directors have the task of continuing to uphold these symbolic messages. Their actions will be judged by how well they fit into the phrases so proudly printed on the tee shirts.

As educational leader, Jean was always reading. The entire school always knew what her favorite book was because not only would she walk around with the book, showing it to everyone, but she would buy extra copies and share her books freely with everyone she felt would benefit from that particular book's message. Jean lead by example, showing us all what a lifelong learner looked like, sounded like, and felt like. Her messages were deliberate, planned, thoughtful, and ever-present. The new director faces the challenge of leading a staff and community used to a leader full of stories and symbols, with messages that constantly shaped the culture of the school.

Leadership Analysis

While some lament that there are many obstacles preventing women from leading organizations, Balboa Academy, in fact, offers the exact opposite. Owned by nine women and run by an administrative team consisting of five women and two men, Balboa Academy is a veritable laboratory of female leadership.

For the first fourteen years, Balboa Academy operated under the leadership of the founding Director, Jean Lamb. Jean Lamb was transformational within the symbolic and political frameworks of the organization. In just over a decade, Mrs. Lamb was able to steer a brand-new school into becoming a brand-name within the Republic of Panama. Politically, Jean managed and maneuvered the school owners by means of her convincing personality and the respect they had of her knowledge gained through 40+ years of experience in the educational field. Few policies and procedures were firmly developed and most decisions were made on a case-to-case basis.

With Jean's retirement in June 2013, Balboa Academy and its leadership team are in a period of transition and empowered to make many necessary and significant changes, primarily within what Boleman and Deal (2008) would call the Structural Framework. Among the nine women owners and seven administrators, five of whom are female, the styles of Balboa Academy's leaders are diverse and sometimes not very compatible. Balboa Academy as a school is very much a study of female leadership in action.

Another unique feature of the leadership team at Balboa Academy is its large compilation of Third Culture Kids or individuals who have lived all of their adult lives in another country. Two administrators and five school owners are TCKs. Five administrators have lived all of their adult lives in countries different from where they grew up. The remaining four owners are

Panamanians who have always lived in Panama. This broad scope of international experiences among the school leaders puts them in a unique position to be highly sensitive to the educational needs of their students who are Third Culture Kids.

Implications for Research

The conditions at Balboa Academy are unique in its leadership and organizational structure, and its school demographics make a perfect case for a Case Study of Third Culture Kids. As a school, they place great value in creating a sense of community, and this emphasis can be seen throughout the organization's history. The fact that the leadership team is also primarily female in gender, with a great percentage of leaders either TCKs themselves or individuals who have lived a great period of their lives abroad, help generate a natural empathy for the specific emotional needs of TCKs as they adapt and integrate into new school communities. The publication of a case study of community building among TCKs at Balboa Academy will contribute greatly to the research literature currently available to international educators.

SECTION THREE:

A SCHOLARLY REVIEW

Introduction

There is not much research yet published on the topic of Third Culture Kids. Only recently have any studies emerged to examine exactly how the unique life experiences of Third Culture Kids affect them and the communities in which they join. The current literature mostly focuses on how the transience of TCK childhoods influences the formation of their identities and how they form relationships. Because they live in so many places and move frequently, TCKs often form very complex identities that are very different from those formed by people living in one single culture (Fail, Thompson, & Walker, 2004; Grimshaw & Sears, 2008; Greenoltz & Kim, 2009; Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011; Moore & Barker, 2012). Their constant mobility also affects how they make friends—some studies suggest that TCKs form friendships very quickly, but without depth (Choi, Bernard, & Luke, 2013; Cockbum, 2002; McDonald, 2010; Pollock & Van Reken, 2001). Other studies suggest that TCKs cannot form relationships easily unless it is with other global nomads who share their same world experiences (Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011; Moore and Barker, 2012; Sheard, 2008; Walker & Auton-Cuff, 2009). Some studies also focus on how TCKs adapt to the college experience and how their global mobility affects their approach to education (Bikos, et. al, 2009; Cottrell, 2002; Davis, et. al, 2013; Firmin, Warner, & Lowe, 2006; Hervey, 2009; Moore & Barker, 2012; Peterson & Plamandon, 2009). As adults, much literature finds that the Third Culture Kids' experience of living in multiple countries leads to their personality characteristics as being more open, tolerant, and globally minded (Gerner & Perry, 2000; Lam & Selmer, 2004; Lee, 2010; Lyttle, Barker, & Cornwall, 2013; Melles & Schwartz, 2013).

Great gaps in the research exist regarding how this unique population affects school and other communities. No studies address the impact that having large populations of TCKs can

have on a school community, as is the case of many international schools worldwide. International schools provide access to community to families who are internationally mobile, and yet a surprisingly small amount of research exists on TCKs within these international school communities. Also lacking are quantitative studies that can apply their findings more universally to the approximate 6.2 million TCKs in international schools today (Hayden & Thompson, 2008). Overall, it is necessary to understand how TCKs form identity and develop relationships with their peers in order to begin to study and understand how their presence affects the school communities in which they spend their youth. In order to do so, a conceptual framework of organizational culture building will be implemented. This conceptual framework will help understand the role of the school community in working with this transient population of unique children.

Third Culture Kids

Understanding the definitions given for Third Culture Kids is critical to understanding the topic at hand. Pollock and Van Reken coined the term, Third Culture Kids, in 1999. For people not familiar with international education, it is easy to confuse TCKs with immigrant children. While the two populations might share some similar traits and characteristics, there are important differences that make TKCs unique and relevant to study as a separate population. These children often live in more than one country and they generally attend international schools, not local public schools. The general expectation is that these children will eventually end up living, or returning to their home countries. Their experiences are unique in that they are not necessarily trying to assimilate into a new culture, and yet, they cannot quite keep their home culture intact, either. Hence, the label, "Third" culture (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999).

Identity building and Third Culture Kids

Two primary conclusions may be drawn from the literature regarding the identity construction of TCKs. The majority of studies argue that Third Cultural Kids create confused and incomplete cultural identities because of their multiple international moves (Fail, Thompson, & Walker, 2004; Greenoltz & Kim, 2009; Grimshaw & Sears, 2008; Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009). An emerging faction of the most recent literature argues that TCKs do not have confused cultural identities; instead, they have multicultural identities (Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011; More & Barker, 2012).

Fail, Thompson, and Walker's (2004) qualitative study examines 11 TCKs who attended international schools. Through in-depth interviews, Fail, Thompson and Walker conclude that TCKs feel like outsiders where they live all their lives, even when they live in their passport countries as adults. They report that TCKs do not identify with any one culture. The researchers label this permanent sense of not belonging and lack of permanent identity "encapsulated marginality" (p. 332). However, they also conclude that in spite of the lack of a solid cultural identity, these TCKs for the most part do not find their lack of clearly defined roots as negative. They tend towards a "constructive marginality" in which they can feel comfortable living anywhere in the world (p. 333).

Grimshaw and Sears (2008), Greenoltz and Kim (2009), and Walters and Auton-Cuff (2009) argue that even in adulthood, most TCKs have unresolved cultural identities. Grimshaw and Sears' (2008) analytical review of the available literature concludes that TCKs form their identities through their constant moves through different countries. However, these TCKs' identities are not grounded in any single culture and much more research is needed to fully understand the implications of this lack of single cultural identity. Greenholtz and Kim (2009)

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consider this multiple cultural identity to be a paradox of sorts—these TCKs can seem at home in any cultural context, and yet they never actually feel at home anywhere. Walters and Auton-Cuff (2009) conclude that TCKs have either a multiple sense of belonging, or no sense of belonging at all. On the other hand, Hoersting and Jenkins (2011) and Moore and Barker (2012), challenge the conclusions that TCKs possess confused or lack cultural identities. They posit instead that TCKs posses multiple cultural identities, and that this is an identity in and of itself.

Hoersting and Jenkins' (2011) study includes 475 participants who have spent at least two years before the age of 18 in a country different from their parents' home country. These TCKs completed an online survey that specifically explored their identity development. The study finds that the more countries where these TCKs lived as children, the higher their self-defined identity will be multiple and not singular.

Moore and Barker's (2012) study clearly refutes the prior conclusions that TCKs possess confused cultural identities or no cultural identity. Through a qualitative study consisting of in-depth interviews with TCKs, the researchers specifically examine the cultural identity formation of these individuals and how their experiences moving through cultures has impacted their identity development as adults. They find the TCKs in their study to identify with multiple cultures and that this experience does not leave them feeling confused or rootless about their cultural identity. They argue that prior studies that conclude that the TCK experience leads to negative cultural identity formation are mistaken in light of recent research on multiple cultural identity development possibilities.

Relationship building and Third Culture Kids

Another segment of the literature available on Third Culture Kids looks closely at the relationships they develop with others. Because they are constantly moving and used to being the new kid, TCKs develop new relationships quickly, but they are often superficial and lack deep human connections (Choi, Bernard, & Luke, 2013; Cockbum, 2002; McDonald, 2010; Pollock & Van Reken, 2001). Additionally, TCKs develop their closest ties with their families and other TCKs (Greenholtz & Kim, 2009; Hervey, 2009; Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011; McLachlan, 2007; Moore & Barker, 2012; Peterson & Plamandon, 2009; Sheard, 2008; Walker & Auton-Cuff, 2009).

McDonald's (2010) study looks most completely at the relationship characteristics of TCKs. The researcher defines TCK relationships as having four major characteristics: "they are continuously changing, they are associated with grief, they provide a 'sense of roots' where there are none, and they are based on the common experience of difference" (p. 42). McDonald concurs with previous studies that conclude that TCKs build new relationships quickly, while at the same time, keeping emotional distance and building only superficial relationships (Cockbum, 2002; Pollock & Van Reken, 2001).

Choi, Bernard, and Luke's 2013 qualitative study of female college TCKs and the characteristics of their relationships also support the finding that TCK relationships, while formed quickly, are less emotional and without intimacy. They suggest that this "forced exclusion" (p.132) is a psychological coping device to help with the pain of constantly having to make new friends and lose old friends. They point out that TCKs are adept at knowing just what to say in order to get to know new people quickly in their new environments.

Because TCKs travel through the world with their families, most literature suggests that TCK families are more united than non-TCK families (Hervey, 2009; McLachlan, 2007; Peterson & Plamandon, 2009). The definitive study is McLachlan's (2007) look at TCK families in transition. Because the actual transition of moving from country to country can be very painful for children who say goodbye to their friends, parents feel very guilty for putting their children through this repeated pain and suffering. Parents of TCKs bond closely with their children because of the absence of extended networks of family and close friends. These close-knit nuclear families are known as a "family bubble" (p. 236) and are typical of families who transition from country to country.

Just as TCKs bond closely with their families because their families have gone through the same experiences, the literature consistently suggests that the true community and culture in which all TCKs feel most comfortable is that formed with other TCKs (Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011; Moore and Barker, 2012; Sheard, 2008). The biographical phenomenological study conducted by Walters and Auton-Cuff (2009) provides excellent insight into the importance of TCKs finding other TCKs to form relationships and community. The study finds that TCKs overwhelmingly discover their sense of identity, community, and belonging when they are with other TCKs. They do not define their sense of home in geographic terms, rather in human terms, with other TCKs. They also find a sense of self when reading about the TCK experience, and their own understanding of who they are has helped them better understand themselves. The multi-method case study conducted by Greenholtz and Kim (2009) confirms this. The researchers conclude that Lena, the subject of the study, feels most comfortable when with other TCKs:

despite her strong Korean cultural identification and pride, family ties, and ongoing

activity as an ambassador for Korean culture, might be rooted in the fact that she felt

most comfortable and happy among people who shared her multi-faceted, international

background; the universal experience of global nomads [TCKs]. (p. 397).

The Challenges of Repatriation of Third Culture Kids

Predominant in the literature regarding Third Culture Kids are studies of their

experiences when they leave the international world where they have lived and return to their

passport country to pursue higher education (Bikos, et. al, 2009; Cottrell, 2002; Davis, et. al,

2013; Firmin, Warner, & Lowe, 2006; Hervey, 2009; Moore & Barker, 2012; Peterson &

Plamandon, 2009). These studies are convenient for researchers in U.S. Higher Education

settings, and repatriation for college is reported by most TCKs as their most difficult time of

their lives. Third Culture Kids go to college at much higher rates than the rest of the U.S.

population. Cottrell (2002) reports that of the 603 TCKs who responded to her survey, 81% had a

Bachelor's degree. This is in great contrast to the 21% of the U.S. population who also had

Bachelor's degrees at that time. Eleven percent of TCKs also reported having a doctoral degree

(Cottrell, 2002). Cottrell attributes this high incidence of higher education among TCKs to the

wealth of their diverse experiences, access to excellent international schools, and the high

expectations of their educated parents (Cottrell, 2002). However, this college experience for

most is one of great social difficulty.

Highlighted among TCKs as the hardest part of returning to their passport countries for

college is their experience of looking like everyone else, and yet being different (Bikos, et. al,

2009; Moore & Barker, 2012). Known as "hidden immigrants," these TCKs face a very difficult

repatriation (Hervey, 2009, p. 10). Bikos' (2009) study finds that things college students who

have lived abroad found most difficult were often some of the easiest tasks to their passport country natives: driving a car, filling up with gas, and learning how to do laundry. University students also report finding their fellow classmates to be cold and indifferent to their lack of experience in the United States. TCKs are bitterly disappointed when they have always thought that they belonged in their passport country, but then realize that they do not fit in culturally (Fail, 2004). TCK students who feel isolated in college due to their outsider status are unlikely to seek help (Hervey, 2009). They try very hard to conform to the university culture around them in an effort to fit in, but usually find that they only feel comfortable when they find fellow TCKs, confirming the results of other TCK identity analyses (Firmin, Warner, & Lowe, 2006).

Openness, Tolerance, and Third Culture Kids

After college, wherever Third Culture Kids end up living as adults, there is much evidence in the literature to support that their experiences as children living in multiple countries have made them into tolerant, open, and globally minded humans (Gerner & Perry, 2000; Lam & Selmer, 2004; Lee, 2010; Melles & Schwartz, 2013; and Lyttle, Barker, & Cornwall, 2013). Melles and Schwartz (2013) point out that most of the research that concludes that TCKs are more tolerant is qualitative and anecdotal in nature. These researchers point out that quantitative studies are needed to prove these qualitative findings.

So far, only two quantitative studies have been conducted that conclusively find that TCKs are individuals that are more tolerant. Lyttle, Barker, and Cornwall's (2013) survey of 142 TCKs finds that they have significantly higher social sensitivity than mono-cultural individuals and that mono-cultural individuals have a higher emotional sensitivity. Gerner and Perry's (2000) quantitative study finds that TCKs identify themselves more culturally accepting, more interested in travel, more open to learning other languages, and more interested in an

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international career than their counterparts in the United States. This is one of the only quantitative studies conducted with Third Culture Kids and is one of the few research projects that studies TCKs living outside the United States. To collect this data, Gerner and Perry surveyed 1,076 students from three different categories: adolescents who have always lived in the United States, adolescents of U.S. origin living abroad, and adolescents not from the U.S. but also living abroad from their home country. Their findings are the first that compare TCKs with adolescents of comparable socio-economic backgrounds who have never lived outside of their home country.

International Schools and Third Culture Kids

While TCKs live outside their home countries, their community center with other TCKs and families is often the international school that they attend. Literature is beginning to emerge that places importance on the experience of the TCKs within their international school community (McLachlan, 2007).

Now, there are between 2,000-4,000 international schools worldwide. However, because there is no over-reaching regulatory group that controls these schools, an exact number is hard to find and the numbers are growing. It is estimated that by 2022 there will be more than 6.2 million students enrolled in international schools around the world (Hayden & Thompson, 2008). International schools serve an ethnically diverse population and most explicitly promote civic consciousness based on intercultural and global understandings. Some researchers suggest that these school settings provide "emergent conceptions of citizenship" (Alviar-Martin, 2011, p. 39).

McLachlan (2007) examines the role of international schools in the lives of TCKs and their families. This researcher emphasizes that international schools play a major role in the lives

of these globally mobile families by providing them access to other expatriate families. However, there is very little in the literature that examines this relationship. Because international schools are where TCKs spend most of their time while abroad, there is a great need to better understand how these students integrate into the school community that is composed majorly of other TCKs.

Theoretical Framework

Organizational Community Building

Being a part of a community is essential to learning. If schools cannot help foster a sense of belonging and community for their students, then learning cannot take place. The culture of the school can facilitate this community for children or can impede that these children integrate into the community. In fact, studies show that sense of belonging is the only significant predictor of student academic grades (Ma, 2003). In order to understand how schools develop culture, a strong understanding of organizational culture is necessary.

Organizational culture is defined by Edgar Schein (1990) as, "(a) a pattern of basic assumptions, (b) invented, discovered, or developed by a given group, (c) as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, (d) that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore(e) is to be taught to new members as the (f) correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems" (p. 111). Organizational culture is critical for determining an organization's "capacity, effectiveness, and longevity" (Woodbury, 2006, p. 46). There are strong connections between the organization's culture and its performance (Ghinea & Bratianu, 2012).

Organizational cultures evolve and change over time. Organizational cultures typically go through two stages: the original, historical culture established by the founder(s) of the organization and the current organizational culture. The key to strong organizational cultures is that they be both stable and flexible. The culture of an organization must be stable in upholding the mission and vision of the organization, and yet flexible enough to change in accordance to internal and external forces (Ghinea & Bratianu, 2012).

People often are unaware of their own culture until they experience other cultures. As organizations become increasingly more globally diverse (as is the case with all international schools), it is important to not only look at the organization's culture, but also the cultural intelligence of the organizations' members. Cultural intelligence can be defined as, "an ability that makes it possible for the individual to be effective in cross-cultural interchanges" (Balogh, Gaal, & Szabo, 2011, p.100). Schools with a high percentage of students who are TCKs have the advantage that TCKs have a tendency to be more culturally intelligent because of their life experiences (Gerner & Perry, 2000; Lam & Selmer, 2004; Lee, 2010; Melles & Schwartz, 2013; and Lyttle, Barker, & Cornwall, 2013).

Because of the transience of the international student population and the permanence of the local student population, international schools often undergo unique community building processes. There can be tensions between the host country national students who are in the school all their lives and those TCKs who are constantly coming and going. These schools can have trouble forming cohesive communities due to the tendency for TCKs to not make friends with peers who are not also TCKs (Limberg & Lambie, 2011). Evidence also suggests that TCKs have a hard time forming any real bonds with their peers, and this further complicates their sense of belonging in their schools (Mi Choi, Bernard, & Luke, 2013). Each organization (school)

creates its own cultural system, which naturally incorporates characteristics of the national culture (Saseanu, Toma, & Marinescu, 2014). For the TCKs moving from country to country, adapting to each unique cultural system influenced by the national culture can be particularly daunting. However, change is the ironic constant for TCKs (Hervey, 2009). In understanding how each international school creates its own organizational culture in spite of, or perhaps because of, the transient nature of the lives TCK and blended with each national culture, we can better analyze how TCKs find community with each other within these organizations.

Summary

In conclusion, the emerging literature on Third Culture Kids reflects the relative newness of this unique group of children. Only coined in 1999, the term Third Culture Kids designates a growing percentage of the population that reflects the large number of families living abroad in this world that has increased tremendously in the past twenty years. Children who are raised from country to country and away from their home nations develop unique identities. These unique characteristics influence the communities where they live and much more research is needed on how specifically these communities are affected. Understanding how their school communities affect TCKs can have important implications not only for international school communities, where TCKs tend to be concentrated, but also for emerging diversity within U.S. schools. The increased cultural sensitivity of TCKs and their broader worldviews help them integrate into diverse cultures with heightened understanding and tolerance that many communities could learn from. Better understanding the roles TCKs play in their schools will be beneficial for international and U.S. school communities, alike.

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SECTION FOUR:

CONTRIBUTION TO PRACTICE

WHITE PAPER

Third Culture Kids: Unique Contributors to International School Communities

Table of Contents

Abstract

The purpose of this case study was to explore the impact that Third Culture Kids have on one international school community. This case study specifically interviewed nineteen Third Culture Kids in an international school in the Republic of Panama to understand how their experiences as transient students affected their school community. The Third Culture Kids in this study have lived in a minimum of two different countries, and neither the children nor their parents held passports from the country in which they were residing at the time of the interview.

Combined, the nineteen children speak ten languages fluently (English, Spanish, Italian, French, Korean, Mandarin, Portuguese, Arabic, Singhalese, and Hebrew). Not a single child is monolingual; the students speak an average of 2.8 languages each, with one child speaking five

languages fluently. In their short lives, they have lived in 28 countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, France, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Jamaica, Mexico, Netherlands, Panama, Peru, Rwanda, South Korea, Spain, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, United Kingdom, United Arab Emirates, United States, Venezuela, and Zimbabwe). In average, the children have lived in 3.8 countries each, with two having lived in six countries.

These children understand how important their lives are as Third Culture Kids (TCKs). They understand that as a whole, they are more tolerant, mature, have a wider worldview, and appreciate and understand human differences. They see differences in the international schools they have attended—they have seen how hard it is to make friends in schools without many other Third Culture Kids and they feel they make the biggest difference when they are in an environment with other like-minded TCKs.

The case study found that TCKs contribute greatly to the school community. They attribute their willingness to participate and contribute to their teachers' open and caring attitudes, to being surrounded by other TCKs, and because even the children who are not TCKs are open and tolerant to others. More than one TCK attributed a feeling of being able to be himself/herself at this particular school, in contrast to past international schools they had attended. Despite published results to the contrary, they report making great friends not only with fellow TCKs, but also with local Panamanian students.

In understanding how TCKs can be embraced and accepted into school communities, schools can help instill this openness, maturity, and broad worldview in students who are not TCKs. In an open school community, instead of remaining marginalized on the sidelines, TCKs

and their attitudes can take over the entire school, building a powerful community of children whose collective interests and experiences span the entire globe.

Introduction and Definition of Third Culture Kids

With the flux of international businesses and an increasingly globally mobile population, the number of people living outside of their home countries has grown tremendously in the past twenty years. Many families move together internationally. The children who grow up living from country to country are a unique part of our world population. These children, known as Third Culture Kids or TCKs, are children who live in a culture that is not the culture of their parents (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999). Not to be confused with immigrants, these children move from country to country and do not settle in a single place. At the same time, they grow up expecting to return to their passport country (Cockbum, 2002). These children's lives are influenced both by their parents' culture (which they may have limited first-hand experience with) and the culture (s) they have grown up surrounded by. The result of the constant exposure to different cultures develops into a unique, "third," culture for the child. Increasingly, this "third" culture is further extended by the online global friendships students are able to maintain over time, long after they or their friends have moved to other places on the planet (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999).

Also known as global nomads and sojourners, TCKs are sometimes referred to as the prototypical 21st century global citizen. Characteristics of these children raised in different cultures include open-mindedness, flexibility, tolerance towards difference, and linguistic abilities (Choi, Bernard, & Luke, 2013). The most famous TCK in the world is U.S. President, Barack Obama. Born to an American mother and a Kenyan father, he attended the International School of Jakarta in Indonesia for several years. As a Third Culture Kid, President Obama

epitomizes the definition of a person who has a larger global perspective, is socially adaptable, intellectually flexible, able to think outside of the box, and yet, a bit restless and aloof (Dewaele & Oudenhoven, 2009).

Third Culture Kids typically attend international schools in the countries where they reside. International schools usually offer English-language instruction and curriculum modeled after either the U.S. or British systems. These international schools are unique because of the diversity of their student populations—they can often have students from more than thirty nations in attendance. Added to the international student population are often a percentage of host-country nationals who are able to afford the expensive costs of international school tuition. The host nation students are typically in attendance in these schools for most of their schooling, while the Third Culture Kids come for more temporary residencies and are often only in any given school for two to five years (Alviar-Martin, 2011; Hayden & Thompson, 2008; McLachlan, 2007).

Because of the transience of the international student population and the permanence of the local student population, international schools often undergo unique community building processes. There can be tensions between the host country national students who are in the school all their lives and those TCKs who are constantly coming and going. These schools can have trouble forming cohesive communities due to the complicated student population dynamics (Limberg & Lambie, 2011). Evidence also suggests that TCKs have a hard time forming any real bonds with their peers, and this further complicates their sense of belonging in their schools (Mi Choi, Bernard, & Luke, 2013).

Statement of problem

Only recently have any studies emerged to examine exactly how the unique life experiences of Third Culture Kids affect them and the communities in which they belong. The current

literature mostly focuses on how the transience of TCK childhoods influences the formation of their identities and how they form relationships. Because they live in so many places and move frequently, TCKs often form very complex identities that are very different from those formed by people living in one single culture (Fail, Thompson, & Walker, 2004; Grimshaw & Sears, 2008; Greenoltz & Kim, 2009; Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011; Moore & Barker, 2012). Their constant mobility also affects how they make friends—some studies suggest that TCKs form friendships very quickly, but without depth (Choi, Bernard, & Luke, 2013; Cockbum, 2002; McDonald, 2010; Pollock & Van Reken, 2001). Other studies suggest that TCKs cannot form relationships easily unless it is with other global nomads who share their same world experiences (Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011; Moore and Barker, 2012; Sheard, 2008; Walker & Auton-Cuff, 2009). Some studies also focus on how TCKs adapt to the college experience and how their global mobility affects their approach to education (Bikos, et. al, 2009; Cottrell, 2002; Davis, et. al, 2013; Firmin, Warner, & Lowe, 2006; Hervey, 2009; Moore & Barker, 2012; Peterson & Plamandon, 2009). Much of the literature finds that the Third Culture Kids' experience of living in multiple countries influences their personalities. They tend to be more open, tolerant, and globally minded (Gerner & Perry, 2000; Lam & Selmer, 2004; Lee, 2010; Lyttle, Barker, & Cornwall, 2013; Melles & Schwartz, 2013).

Problem of Practice

International educators are sometimes not well informed about this unique population within their schools. Often, how teachers and student peers welcome a Third Culture Kid into the school community makes an impact on how willing the TCK is to contribute to their new setting. Teachers underestimate the importance of building a strong climate of acceptance and openness in international schools. International school educators need to understand how TCKs think and

respond to their new environments in order to fully take advantage of the unique skill set these children possess and can offer to their school communities. To the contrary, TCKs typically do not integrate with non-TCKs and typically prefer to make friends only with other TCKs (Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011; Moore and Barker, 2012; Sheard, 2008).

Findings

Third Culture Kids embody a unique and open worldview that, when allowed to dominate a school community mindset, can be harnessed to build a welcoming and tolerant school culture. Both students and teachers need to participate in this process, and from the interviews conducted in this case study it is evident that TCKs make important decisions about schools on their very first day at the new school. Just as TCKs are adept at knowing just what to say in order to get to know new people quickly in their new environments, they are also quick to size up the school culture their first day to understand what is needed to fit in (Choi, Bernard, & Luke, 2013).

In total, nineteen TCKs were interviewed. The names used in this study are pseudonyms to protect their identities and pseudonym name choice is not tied to ethnicity or country of origin.

How do life experiences of TCKs influence community building in their school communities?

Third Culture Kids come to their new schools ready to incorporate themselves into the existing school community, and they bring with them ideas that they have learned in their various other schools. Because TCKs tend to socialize primarily with other TCKs (Choi, Bernard, & Luke, 2013 and Limberg & Lambie, 2011), this case study sought to discover how the life experiences of TCKs influence community building in their new school communities. In the interviews conducted in this case study, TCKs commented on how both the local kids and the TCKs worked together to raise awareness and support for both local and international causes

(*Xiao Wei,* personal communication, April 7, 2017). While this collaboration between local students and TCKs is not necessarily the case in all international schools, students interviewed in this case study found this to be a characteristic of Balboa Academy.

At Balboa you don't see the division between Panamanian and international kids. Students are very included. They do things as a team and some kids have done very interesting things at their other schools and they bring these ideas to our school. Sometimes the kids whose parents are very influential can help us when we are trying to organize an event for the school or clubs or organizations. Each part has its advantages. Panamanians and people who have been in Panama a long time have a lot of contacts and those who have moved around a lot have a lot of experience with other clubs and it brings people together and it just works. It is not easy to explain, but if you had to summarize it in a quick manner, you could say that when you come into Balboa the school is just kind of set up to welcome people. There are a lot of clubs and organizations and sports and it is just very inclusive. They are forced to interact with each other regardless of where they come from and it allows for them to work together in an environment that they feel safe in. They aren't confronted with any hostile or ostracizing behaviors so they can work together and they don't get left out or anything like that (*Carlos*, personal communication, April 7, 2017).

According to *Lee*, the experience described by Carlos is unique. Lee has lived in many other countries and attended multiple international schools and according to him, "we (TCKs) see many schools where they discriminate against different races or if you are different, they would tend to be fearful or discriminate, but I didn't really feel that here. I think that would be a big problem for other kids who were not so lucky to study here. Even in Korea, they consider me half Latino. I would still feel like a foreigner anywhere." (*Lee*, personal communication, April 7,

2017) One of the things that Lee spoke most about in his interview was how much he feels he benefits by working with so many different people from different cultures. He pointed out that had he grown up only in Korea, his passport country, he would have never learned the leadership skills he has gained by dedicating himself to the various service organizations he has been a part of in Balboa Academy. He feels this experience will help him greatly in his future and he is grateful that he did not simply spend his adolescence studying, as he would have had he grown up in Korea.

Additionally, when the broader worldview of TCKs is accepted and embraced in international school communities, the accepting attitudes of TCKs can transfer to the local student population. According to *Raj,*

> (as a TCK) I have always viewed it as you have an open mind and it is easier for you to relate to people from other cultures. I think that you definitely get a more accepting mindset. I understand a lot of different cultures and religions because I have been exposed to them. I think that is a definite advantage. I think it is a skill that becomes very useful. I think that you also develop this mentality that wherever you live in the world, you are going to make a life out of it. I totally approach it that way. I do not mind where I live as long as I have a purpose for being where I am. Right now, my purpose is to learn as much as I can so that once I go off to college I can use that and learn skills there to go on and apply them in life no matter where I am. I think that being a Third Culture Kid has given me a very open mentality towards life in general and what I can do in life and how I can relate to other people and help them in life (*Raj*, personal communication, April 7, 2017).

Gloria, a student from Cancun, Mexico, expressed a similar experience: "(being a TCK) I have been more tolerant in accepting other people. I have had to learn to let it go and let them be. There are people here who have different cultures and I have to accept them and talk to them and let them be." (*Gloria*, personal communication, April 7, 2017)

If an international school can prevent the TCKs from isolating themselves with other TCKs by nurturing an environment of acceptance, students like *Kim* can help make important changes within the entire school community. "Nowadays, I think it is very normal to be a TCK. Most of my friends are TCKs. I think that as the world progresses, the TCKs will grow. Compared to my Korean friends, I am much more open-minded. I have a bigger vision of the world. I have a bigger mission." (*Kim*, personal communication, April 7, 2017)

Deliberate community building within an international school that actively seeks integration of TCKs, can build an environment such as that found at Balboa Academy. According to *Valeria*,

I think that Balboa is the best school I have been to, and I have been to lots of schools. I think the community—the people in Balboa—are what make it special. The fact that people are so open and there is no bullying and there is no judging, there is no saying "you are too weird" or "you are different so you are not cool." It's a place where the people embrace the fact that you can bring something new to the table—you can talk about things that maybe we don't know about. And I think that does help in creating that sense of community because we know that we are so different, we know that people have different ideas and we can create something with these different ideas. If we were all the same, maybe we would be focused on the same thing. But everyone is different and they are focused on their own thing and they are all creating something different, building new projects and starting new clubs and

everything is sort of happening kind of fast, but everyone knows that if the other club needs

help, we will help them. It is that sense of community that makes Balboa so special. The fact

that the people who come here have been to so many different places, they have so many

different experiences to share, and that makes it special and different (*Valeria*, personal

communication, April 7, 2017).

How does having a transient population of TCKs affect school community building?

Not all international schools have large percentages of TCKs. In this Case Study, Balboa

Academy's TCK population is approximately 60% of all students. With a local population of just

under half, the balance of students from other countries is something that is deliberate and

monitored closely by the school director and the Admissions office. It is assumed that once the

balance of local and international students tips more toward the local side, then the rich, diverse,

community that has been so carefully cultivated, could possibly be changed. The interviews with

TCKs confirm this assumption. One TCK, *Emily*, expressed that being a new student is easier

when there is a blend of TCKs and local students. She felt that she could be herself and not have

to pretend to be another person (*Emily*, personal communication, April 7, 2017).

Other TCK interviews echoed Emily's observations. According to *Roger*, "When I was in

Chile, everyone was from Chile and knew each other. I was the outsider. Here, they (the

students) are used to it. There's no limit to the world. When kids are already used to meeting

students from other countries, they are more open-minded and they accept us." (*Roger*, personal

communication, April 7, 2017) *Kim* concurs, "This is a very inclusive school. There are no

special crews. There are crews, but everyone's very nice to each other. It is a very nice

environment. I think the mix of people helps the people. They are just very inclusive themselves.

They are very open-minded about other cultures. This helps all cultures." (*Kim*, personal communication, April 7, 2017)

For TCKs used to moving from international school to international school, they felt the openness of Balboa Academy from their first days on campus. "Here it isn't rare for people to come from other countries, so everyone was super nice and everything." (*Sandra*, personal communication, April 7, 2017) "When I got here, there were all of these cultures—Americans, Asians, people from India and from all over the world. In a sense, that created a strong sense of community because for the first time I felt that people understood that I was new and there was an acceptance. It was the first time I experienced this. It was a much more open community to new kids. I felt included the first week, which almost never happens. You usually just sit and watch on the sidelines for a while." (*Valeria*, personal communication, April 7, 2017)

International schools that harness the unique qualities of Third Culture Kids, stand to gain greatly from this vibrant group of young people. According to *Elena*,

> I think I am and most other TCKs are just very very tolerant. We are just very open-minded and when we see something different, we don't back away from it. We are just very open and willing to try new things, because I think that in this kind of life if you are not, it is just very, very hard. I also think that in this kind of life, you have a lot of inner angst because you don't really know where you fit in. I also think that TCKs are very good at adjusting themselves to any situation and they are very flexible and basically just trying to make the best out of things. They are good at fitting in and adjusting to different cultures (*Elena*, personal communication, April 7, 2017).
>
> The presence of TCKs is even evident in classroom discussions:

I think that since there is such a big international community, the discussions both inside

class and outside class extend very much beyond what happens locally. A lot of people,

for example, I have a friend who loves to talk about problems in the Middle East, and

another friend talks all about problems in Korea, where he is from. I think that because

people have lived in so many places, it creates a maturity in the conversations (Valeria,

personal communication, April 7, 2017).

The importance of culturally aware/sensitive teachers

One of the characteristics of International Schools is that they, too, tend to have a blend

of local and international teaching staff. However, the attitudes and leadership roles that these

teachers model cannot be underestimated. Within the classrooms, international schools need to

listen to the comments that TCKs have about their teachers. Many TCKs in the case study

interviews highlighted the role that teachers play in building community in international schools.

According to *Xiao Wei*, the multicultural teachers allow for TCKs and local kids to blend. The

teachers are always willing to improve and change—something *Xiao Wei* has not seen at her

other schools (*Xiao Wei*, personal communication, April 7, 2017).

Susana concurs, "Teachers really help the (local) students who have been here to make

the new person feel welcome." She also thinks that having international teachers helps build a

community of empathy (*Susana*, personal communication, April 7, 2017). "The teachers here

are a lot more friendly than the teachers at my other schools." (*Elena*, personal communication,

April 7, 2017)

In the interview with *Valeria*, she was asked why the conditions at Balboa Academy are

somehow more conducive to building a strong community than in other international schools.

She has a hard time explaining what is different, just that something is different at this school:

I don't know why this works here (the blending of local and TCKs). I know that a lot of international schools have a hard time mixing the cultures. I think that the common trait in all Balboa students is that they are very open. They are very willing to meet people who are different from them. No one says, "Oh, no, this person is weird, I'm not going to hang out with them." Maybe it's the classes—in my old school, we used to have homerooms and that sort of creates a little group. But in Balboa, you have classes with all sorts of people—seniors and freshmen and there are a lot of teambuilding exercises like Dragon Days, and that sort of creates a common ground for people. I think it might be the people, or maybe the teachers. I don't know—there is just a definite vibe of openness. They don't mind that people are different. They just see them for who they are, I guess (*Valeria*, personal communication, April 7, 2017).

The importance of open-minded local students

The Case Study found that when building community with a large percentage of TCKs, not just the attitudes of the TCKs and the teachers are important, but the attitudes and perceptions of the local student population is important, as well. "Even local kids leave behind their closed minds when they walk into the school. The contact the local kids have with their teachers and TCKs makes them open up." (*Xiao Wei*, personal communication, April 7, 2017) "(Here) I was welcomed very well and everyone was really excited to meet me. But in my other schools it was harder to make friends." (*Jennifer*, personal communication, April 7, 2017)

"When I moved here, it was probably my easiest move. I made friends right away, I didn't have to worry about it. It only took me about a week to get to have my group of friends and get to know people. This was my ninth move. They are very open to new people, so I didn't feel ostracized. It was an open environment that I just felt I could jump into." (*Carlos*, personal

communication, April 7, 2017) *Elena* echoes *Carlos*, "I met a lot of kids from Panama and a lot of kids not from Panama. It was easy to meet new people because they were a lot more open." (*Elena*, personal communication, April 7, 2017) "Compared to my (last) school in the U.S., I feel the people here are a lot more mature. They are more accepting and open-minded." (*Raj*, personal communication, April 7, 2017)

First day impressions

Because Third Culture Kids are used to being the new kid at school, these students judge their new communities very quickly. They noticed differences between their first day at Balboa Academy and their past schools—primarily that they were welcomed from Day One and not made to wait on the sidelines to be accepted. Most students explained that they met their best friends on the first or close to first day of school. *Gloria* was "surprised at the kindness of people. In my old schools, if you were new, they would put you in the back and not talk to you for three months." (*Gloria*, personal communication, April 7, 2017)

"My first day (here) was very different. All of my schools had been French schools and this was my first American school. I didn't speak English too well, yet. I was very nervous. It was a huge change from India to here. I had never worn a uniform before. It was a very big change, but I still enjoyed it. I had friends when I first got here and everyone was really nice, so it was really good." (*Juan*, personal communication, April 7, 2017)."

On Sarah's first day of school, she explains, "So, I sat in an empty table and I took out my book and I was like, I don't know anyone here, so I am just going to pretend to read so I don't look weird. And then people started coming over because at this school it's like, NEW PERSON! And I met most of my friends in the first ten minutes of class." (*Sarah*, personal communication, April 7, 2017)

Practical Implications for International Educators

In summary, it is very important that international schools recognize and understand the unique opportunities that come with having a population of Third Culture Kids within their mix. Third Culture Kids are quick to adapt—cultural chameleons, if you will. They know how to blend in and not make waves. They have learned to keep things to themselves and only open up to other Third Culture Kids who really understand them. This voluntary censorship of TCKs is something to avoid, if possible, as an international school. As much as is possible, the openness and willingness to accept that which is different should be openly embraced in international schools. Only then will TCKs come out of their isolation to infect the rest of the school community with their open-mindedness and high acceptance of difference and diversity.

Within the school community, it is important not to underestimate the powerful role that international schoolteachers play in creating this culture of inclusion and acceptance. In the interviews conducted in this case study, repeatedly, the students commented on the importance of having open-minded and accepting teachers. When teachers are culturally diverse and able to project true attitudes of inclusion and acceptance, Third Culture Kids follow their lead and rise to the occasion. However, when TCKs see that the teachers are not as accepting of difference and diversity, they will adapt to this environment and contain their true ideas and potential only among other like-minded TCKs.

When allowed to flourish and shine, TCKs bring with them a wealth of experiences and ideas that few adults can equal. International Schools should strive to build the kinds of communities where the TCK ideas are shared openly with all other members of the school community. If this tone is not set, there is no detriment to the TCK—they will learn and thrive in spite of being part of a community that does not foster the use of their talents. However, the local

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students in the school will miss the opportunity to adapt the tolerance and maturity of their more-traveled peers. Such accepting communities allows for the spread of the TCK worldview to children who have not benefitted from these experiences directly. International Schools can be great places to foster the ideas of acceptance and tolerance among our future generations, if they only generate conditions that encourage TCKs to step out of their shells and teach their peers the wisdom they have gained at such young ages.

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SECTION FIVE:

CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOLARSHIP

Target Journal and Rationale for this Target

My goal of publication for this dissertation-in-practice is with the Journal of Research in International Education. The Journal of Research in International Education is a peer-reviewed journal with a double-blind peer review process. Its goal is to "advance the understanding and significance of international education. It sets out to undertake a rigorous consideration of the educational implications of the fundamental relationship between human unity and human diversity that 'education for international understanding' requires. (http://jri.sagepub.com)"

I have found that this journal has provided me with some of the most useful research on Third Culture Kids, and I feel that my case study will be a significant contribution to the existing research. I know that the readers of this journal will be the ones most likely to benefit from reading about this study on how TCKs integrate into their international school communities.

The submissions the journal are interested in should be research-based, and contribute to the development of arguments that should relate to theory and practice. Articles need to conform to the SAGE Harvard reference style and the guidelines are clearly outlined on their website.

Third Culture Kids: Unique Contributors to International School Communities

With the flux of international businesses and an increasingly globally mobile population, the number of people living outside of their home countries has grown tremendously in the past twenty years. Many families move together internationally. The children who grow up living from country to country are a unique part of our world population. These children, known as Third Culture Kids or TCKs, are children who live in a culture that is not the culture of their parents (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999). Not to be confused with immigrants, these children move from country to country and do not settle in a single place. At the same time, they grow up expecting to return to their passport country (Cockbum, 2002). These children's lives are influenced both by their parents' culture (which they may have limited first-hand experience with) and the culture (s) they have grown up surrounded by. The result of the constant exposure to different cultures develops into a unique, "third," culture for the child. Increasingly, this "third" culture is further extended by the online global friendships students are able to maintain over time, long after they or their friends have moved to other places on the planet (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999).

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Review of the Literature

Little research has been published on the topic of Third Culture Kids. Only recently have any studies emerged to examine exactly how the unique life experiences of Third Culture Kids impact them and the communities in which they belong. The current literature mostly focuses on

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how the transience of TCK childhoods influences the formation of their identities and how they form relationships. Because they live in so many places and move frequently, TCKs often form very complex identities that are very different from those formed by people living in one single culture (Fail, Thompson, & Walker, 2004; Grimshaw & Sears, 2008; Greenoltz & Kim, 2009; Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011; Moore & Barker, 2012). Their constant mobility also affects how they make friends—some studies suggest that TCKs form friendships very quickly, but without depth (Choi, Bernard, & Luke, 2013; Cockbum, 2002; McDonald, 2010; Pollock & Van Reken, 2001). Other studies suggest that TCKs cannot form relationships easily unless it is with other global nomads who share their same world experiences (Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011; Moore and Barker, 2012; Sheard, 2008; Walker & Auton-Cuff, 2009). Some studies also focus on how TCKs adapt to the college experience and how their global mobility affects their approach to education (Bikos, et. al, 2009; Cottrell, 2002; Davis, et. al, 2013; Firmin, Warner, & Lowe, 2006; Hervey, 2009; Moore & Barker, 2012; Peterson & Plamandon, 2009). As adults, much literature finds that the Third Culture Kids' experience of living in multiple countries leads to their personality characteristics as being more open, tolerant, and globally minded (Gerner & Perry, 2000; Lam & Selmer, 2004; Lee, 2010; Lyttle, Barker, & Cornwall, 2013; Melles & Schwartz, 2013).

Gaps in the research exist regarding how this unique population affects school and other communities. No studies address the impact that having large populations of TCKs can have on a school community, as is the case of many international schools worldwide. International schools provide access to community to families who are internationally mobile, and yet a surprisingly small amount of research exists on TCKs within these international school communities. Also lacking are quantitative studies that can apply their findings more universally to the approximate

6.2 million TCKs in international schools today (Hayden & Thompson, 2008). Overall, it is necessary to understand how TCKs form identity and develop relationships with their peers in order to begin to study and understand how their presence affects the school communities in which they spend their youth. In order to do so, a conceptual framework of organizational culture building will be implemented. This conceptual framework will help to better understand the role of the school community in working with this transient population of unique children.

Third Culture Kids

Understanding the definitions given for Third Culture Kids is critical to understanding the topic at hand. Pollock and Van Reken coined the term, Third Culture Kids, in 1999. For people not familiar with international education, it is easy to confuse TCKs with immigrant children. While the two populations might share some similar traits and characteristics, there are important differences that make TKCs unique and relevant to study as a separate population. These children often live in more than one country and they generally attend international schools, not local public schools. The general expectation is that these children will eventually end up living, or returning to their home countries. Their experiences are unique in that they are not necessarily trying to assimilate into a new culture, and yet, they cannot quite keep their home culture intact, either. Hence, the label, "Third" culture (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999).

Building Identity

Two primary conclusions may be drawn from the literature regarding the identity construction of TCKs. The majority of studies argue that Third Cultural Kids create confused and incomplete cultural identities because of their multiple international moves (Fail, Thompson, & Walker, 2004; Greenoltz & Kim, 2009; Grimshaw & Sears, 2008; Walters & Auton-Cuff,

2009). An emerging faction of the most recent literature argues that TCKs do not have confused cultural identities; instead, they have multicultural identities (Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011; More & Barker, 2012).

Fail, Thompson, and Walker's (2004) qualitative study examines 11 TCKs who attended international schools. Through in-depth interviews, Fail, Thompson and Walker conclude that TCKs feel like outsiders where they live all their lives, even when they live in their passport countries as adults. They report that TCKs do not identify with any one culture. The researchers label this permanent sense of not belonging and lack of permanent identity "encapsulated marginality" (p. 332). However, they also conclude that in spite of the lack of a solid cultural identity, these TCKs for the most part do not find their lack of clearly defined roots as negative. They tend towards a "constructive marginality" in which they can feel comfortable living anywhere in the world (p. 333).

Grimshaw and Sears (2008), Greenoltz and Kim (2009), and Walters and Auton-Cuff (2009) argue that even in adulthood, most TCKs have unresolved cultural identities. Grimshaw and Sears' (2008) analytical review of the available literature concludes that TCKs form their identities through their constant moves through different countries. However, these TCKs' identities are not grounded in any single culture and much more research is needed to fully understand the implications of this lack of single cultural identity. Greenholtz and Kim (2009) consider this multiple cultural identity to be a paradox of sorts—these TCKs can seem at home in any cultural context, and yet they never actually feel at home anywhere. Walters and Auton-Cuff (2009) conclude that TCKs have either a multiple sense of belonging, or no sense of belonging at all. On the other hand, Hoersting and Jenkins (2011) and Moore and Barker (2012), challenge the

conclusions that TCKs possess confused or lack cultural identities. They posit instead that TCKs possess multiple cultural identities, and that this is an identity in and of itself.

Hoersting and Jenkins' (2011) study includes 475 participants who have spent at least two years before the age of 18 in a country different from their parents' home country. These TCKs completed an online survey that specifically explored their identity development. The study finds that the more countries where these TCKs lived as children, the higher their self-defined identity will be multiple and not singular.

Moore and Barker's (2012) study clearly refutes the prior conclusions that TCKs possess confused cultural identities or no cultural identity. Through a qualitative study consisting of in-depth interviews with TCKs, the researchers specifically examine the cultural identity formation of these individuals and how their experiences moving through cultures has impacted their identity development as adults. They find the TCKs in their study to identify with multiple cultures and that this experience does not leave them feeling confused or rootless about their cultural identity. They argue that prior studies that conclude that the TCK experience leads to negative cultural identity formation are mistaken in light of recent research on multiple cultural identity development possibilities.

Building Relationships

Another segment of the literature available on Third Culture Kids looks closely at the relationships they develop with others. Because they are constantly moving and used to being the new kid, TCKs develop new relationships quickly, but they are often superficial and lack deep human connections (Choi, Bernard, & Luke, 2013; Cockbum, 2002; McDonald, 2010; Pollock & Van Reken, 2001). Additionally, TCKs develop their closest ties with their families and other

TCKs (Greenholtz & Kim, 2009; Hervey, 2009; Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011; McLachlan, 2007; Moore & Barker, 2012; Peterson & Plamandon, 2009; Sheard, 2008; Walker & Auton-Cuff, 2009).

McDonald's (2010) study looks most completely at the relationship characteristics of TCKs. The researcher defines TCK relationships as having four major characteristics: "they are continuously changing, they are associated with grief, they provide a 'sense of roots' where there are none, and they are based on the common experience of difference" (p. 42). McDonald concurs with previous studies that conclude that TCKs build new relationships quickly, while at the same time, keeping emotional distance and building only superficial relationships (Cockbum, 2002; Pollock & Van Reken, 2001).

Choi, Bernard, and Luke's 2013 qualitative study of female college TCKs and the characteristics of their relationships also support the finding that TCK relationships, while formed quickly, are less emotional and without intimacy. They suggest that this "forced exclusion" (p.132) is a psychological coping device to help with the pain of constantly having to make new friends and lose old friends. They point out that TCKs are adept at knowing just what to say in order to get to know new people quickly in their new environments.

Because TCKs travel through the world with their families, most literature suggests that TCK families are more united than non-TCK families (Hervey, 2009; McLachlan, 2007; Peterson & Plamandon, 2009). The definitive study is McLachlan's (2007) look at TCK families in transition. Because the actual transition of moving from country to country can be very painful for children who say goodbye to their friends, parents feel very guilty for putting their children through this repeated pain and suffering. Parents of TCKs bond closely with their children because of the absence of extended networks of family and close friends. These close-knit

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nuclear families are known as a "family bubble" (p. 236) and are typical of families who transition from country to country.

Just as TCKs bond closely with their families because their families have gone through the same experiences, the literature consistently suggests that the true community and culture in which all TCKs feel most comfortable is that formed with other TCKs (Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011; Moore and Barker, 2012; Sheard, 2008). The biographical phenomenological study conducted by Walters and Auton-Cuff (2009) provides excellent insight into the importance of TCKs finding other TCKs to form relationships and community. The study finds that TCKs overwhelmingly discover their sense of identity, community, and belonging when they are with other TCKs. They do not define their sense of home in geographic terms, rather in human terms, with other TCKs. They also find a sense of self when reading about the TCK experience, and their own understanding of who they are has helped them better understand themselves. The multi-method case study conducted by Greenholtz and Kim (2009) confirms this. The researchers conclude that Lena, the subject of the study, feels most comfortable with other TCKs:

> despite her strong Korean cultural identification and pride, family ties, and ongoing
> activity as an ambassador for Korean culture, might be rooted in the fact that she felt
> most comfortable and happy among people who shared her multi-faceted, international
> background; the universal experience of global nomads [TCKs]. (p. 397).

In spite of the desire to bond with other TCKs, they are also remarakably open and tolerant to those who are not Third Culture Kids.

Openness, Tolerance, and Third Culture Kids

After college, wherever Third Culture Kids end up living as adults, there is much evidence in the literature to support that their experiences as children living in multiple countries have made them into tolerant, open, and globally minded humans (Gerner & Perry, 2000; Lam & Selmer, 2004; Lee, 2010; Melles & Schwartz, 2013; and Lyttle, Barker, & Cornwall, 2013). Melles and Schwartz (2013) point out that most of the research that concludes that TCKs are more tolerant is qualitative and anecdotal in nature. These researchers point out that quantitative studies are needed to prove these qualitative findings.

So far, only two quantitative studies have been conducted that conclusively find that TCKs are individuals that are more tolerant. Lyttle, Barker, and Cornwall's (2013) survey of 142 TCKs finds that they have significantly higher social sensitivity than mono-cultural individuals and that mono-cultural individuals have a higher emotional sensitivity. Gerner and Perry's (2000) quantitative study finds that TCKs identify themselves more culturally accepting, more interested in travel, more open to learning other languages, and more interested in an international career than their counterparts in the United States. This is one of the only quantitative studies conducted with Third Culture Kids and is one of the few research projects that studies TCKs living outside the United States. To collect this data, Gerner and Perry surveyed 1,076 students from three different categories: adolescents who have always lived in the United States, adolescents of U.S. origin living abroad, and adolescents not from the U.S. but also living abroad from their home country. Their findings are the first that compare TCKs with adolescents of comparable socio-economic backgrounds who have never lived outside of their home country.

International Schools and Third Culture Kids

While TCKs live outside their home countries, their community center with other TCKs and families is often the international school that they attend. Literature is beginning to emerge that places importance on the experience of the TCKs within their international school community (McLachlan, 2007).

Now, there are between 2,000-4,000 international schools worldwide (Hayden & Thompson, 2008). However, because there is no over-reaching regulatory group that controls these schools, an exact number is hard to find and the numbers are growing. It is estimated that by 2022 there will be more than 6.2 million students enrolled in international schools around the world (Hayden & Thompson, 2008). International schools serve an ethnically diverse population and most explicitly promote civic consciousness based on intercultural and global understandings. Some researchers suggest that these school settings provide "emergent conceptions of citizenship" (Alviar-Martin, 2011, p. 39).

McLachlan (2007) examines the role of international schools in the lives of TCKs and their families. This researcher emphasizes that international schools play a major role in the lives of these globally mobile families by providing them access to other expatriate families. However, there is very little in the literature that examines this relationship. Because international schools are where TCKs spend most of their time while abroad, there is a great need to better understand how these students integrate into the school community that is composed majorly of other TCKs.

Current Case Study

The purpose of this case study was to explore the impact that Third Culture Kids have on one international school community. This case study specifically interviewed nineteen Third

Culture Kids in an international school in the Republic of Panama to understand how their experiences as transient students impacted their school community. The Third Culture Kids in this study have lived in a minimum of two different countries, and neither the children nor their parents held passports from the country in which they were residing at the time of the interview.

The nineteen children combined speak a total of ten languages fluently (English, Spanish, Italian, French, Korean, Mandarin, Portuguese, Arabic, Singhalese, and Hebrew). Not a single child is monolingual; the students speak an average of 2.8 languages each, with one child speaking a total of five languages fluently. In their short lives they have lived in 28 countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, France, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Jamaica, Mexico, Netherlands, Panama, Peru, Rwanda, South Korea, Spain, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, United Kingdom, United Arab Emirates, United States, Venezuela, and Zimbabwe). In average, the children have lived in 3.8 countries each, with two having lived in six countries.

These children understand how important their lives are as Third Culture Kids. They understand that as a whole, they are more tolerant, mature, have a wider worldview, and appreciate and understand human differences. They see differences in the international schools they have attended—they have seen how hard it is to make friends in schools without many other Third Culture Kids and they feel they make the biggest difference when they are in an environment with other like-minded TCKs.

The case study found that TCKs contribute greatly to the school community. They attribute their willingness to participate and contribute to their teachers' open and caring attitudes, to being surrounded by other TCKs, and because even the children who are not TCKs are open and tolerant to others. More than one TCK attributed a feeling of being able to be

himself/herself at this particular school, in contrast to past international schools they had attended. Despite published results to the contrary, they report making great friends not only with fellow TCKs, but also with local Panamanian students.

In understanding how TCKs can be embraced and accepted into school communities, schools can help instill this openness, maturity, and broad worldview in students who are not TCKs. In an open school community, instead of remaining marginalized on the sidelines, TCKs and their attitudes can take over the entire school, building a powerful community of children whose collective interests and experiences span the entire globe.

Methods

In order to gather data on how TCKs form communities within international schools, a qualitative particular case study was conducted. Merriam (2009) defines a case study as an "in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system" (p.40). The case study examined the community building experiences of TCKs in a single, independent, proprietary, international school located in Panama City, Republic of Panama. The international school offers an American-accredited curriculum from PreK-12th grade. With a student population of 960, approximately 32% of students hold Panamanian passports, 25% hold U.S. passports, and the remaining 53% hold passports from 38 other countries. The researcher estimates that approximately 68% of the student population can be defined as TCKs. The student demographics of this school is typical of international schools worldwide.

Participants

To gather rich data, the researcher focused on the experiences of TCKs in high school (grades 9-12), which consists of approximately 290 students. In order to identify TCKs, the high

school electronic student database was examined. High school students were classified as TCKs if they:

- Do not hold a Panamanian passport

- Do not have parents who are Panamanian

- Have lived in at least one other country since they started school

Data Collection

Once the TCKs in the high school population were identified, a convenience sampling was used to select students. Nineteen students were interviewed individually. The interviews were semi-structured. Certain basic information was gathered from each subject, and then a loosely designed interview protocol was followed that allowed for flexibility based on student responses. A gender balance of 10 boys and 9 girls was sought in order to reduce any possibility of gender bias, as well as sampling from all four high school grade levels. Six students were in their senior year of high school, four were juniors, seven tenth graders, and two were in ninth grade. Because the research subjects were minors, both the parents and students were asked to give written consent (Appendix A and B). Pseudonyms were used in the publication of findings to protect the identities of the students.

The design for the study was emergent and flexible. According to Creswell (2009), in an emergent and flexible research plan, the phases of the process to collect data might shift once the researcher has entered the field. The researcher began with the preliminary interviews, and refined interview questions based on the interview responses received (Appendix C).

Because the researcher was the school director at the time of data collection, safeguards for the reliability and validity of the study were put into place. The researcher held a significant position of power and authority over the students participating in the study, and it was important

to ensure that student participation was voluntary and that no one felt obligated to participate. In order to eliminate the risk of positional power, the researcher sought the assistance of a proxy to conduct the actual interviews. The proxy interviewer does not work at the school, but does have experience working as a high school Spanish and English teacher. The proxy also has experience conducting research and holds a Ph.D in Spanish Literature. The interviews were recorded and the researcher transcribed the transcripts and interpretation of the data collected. Through the use of a proxy for the interviews, the researcher hoped to avoid any problems with positional power and the students being interviewed.

Results and Discussion

Third Culture Kids embody a unique and open worldview that, when allowed to dominate a school community mindset, can be harnessed to build a welcoming and tolerant school culture. Both students and teachers need to participate in this process, and from the interviews conducted in this case study it is evident that TCKs make important decisions about schools on their very first day at the new school. Just as TCKs are adept at knowing just what to say in order to get to know new people quickly in their new environments, they are also quick to size up the school culture their first day to understand what is needed to fit in (Choi, Bernard, & Luke, 2013).

How do life experiences of TCKs influence community building in their school communities?

Third Culture Kids come to their new schools ready to incorporate themselves into the existing school community, and they bring with them ideas that they have learned in their various other schools. Because TCKs tend to socialize primarily with other TCKs (Choi, Bernard, & Luke, 2013 and Limberg & Lambie, 2011), this case study sought to discover how the life experiences of TCKs influence community building in their new school communities. In

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the interviews conducted in this case study, TCKs commented on how both the local kids and the TCKs worked together to raise awareness and support for both local and international causes (*Xiao Wei,* personal communication, April 7, 2017). While this collaboration between local students and TCKs is not necessarily the case in all international schools, students interviewed in this case study found this to be a characteristic of Balboa Academy.

At Balboa you don't see the division between Panamanian and international kids. Students are very included. They do things as a team and some kids have done very interesting things at their other schools and they bring these ideas to our school. Sometimes the kids whose parents are very influential can help us when we are trying to organize an event for the school or clubs or organizations. Each part has its advantages. Panamanians and people who have been lived in Panama a long time have a lot of contacts and those who have moved around a lot have a lot of experience with other clubs and it brings people together and it just works. It is not easy to explain, but if you had to summarize it in a quick manner, you could say that when you come into Balboa the school is just kind of set up to welcome people. There are a lot of clubs and organizations and sports and it is just very inclusive. They are forced to interact with each other regardless of where they come from and it allows for them to work together in an environment that they feel safe in. They aren't confronted with any hostile or ostracizing behaviors so they can work together and they don't get left out or anything like that (*Carlos*, personal communication, April 7, 2017).

According to *Lee*, the experience described by Carlos is unique. Lee has lived in many other countries and attended multiple international schools and according to him, "we (TCKs) see many schools where they discriminate against different races or if you are different, they would tend to be fearful or discriminate, but I didn't really feel that here. I think that would be a

big problem for other kids who were not so lucky to study here. Even in Korea, they consider me half Latino. I would still feel like a foreigner anywhere." (*Lee*, personal communication, April 7, 2017) One of the things that Lee spoke most about in his interview was how much he feels he benefits by working with so many different people from different cultures. He pointed out that had he grown up only in Korea, his passport country, he would have never learned the leadership skills he has gained by dedicating himself to the various service organizations he has been a part of in Balboa Academy. He feels this experience will help him greatly in his future and he is grateful that he did not simply spend his adolescence studying, as he would have had he grown up in Korea.

Additionally, when the broader worldview of TCKs is accepted and embraced in international school communities, the accepting attitudes of TCKs can transfer to the local student population. According to *Raj,*

>(as a TCK) I have always viewed it as you have an open mind and it is easier for you to relate to people from other cultures. I think that you definitely get a more accepting mindset. I understand a lot of different cultures and religions because I have been exposed to them. I think that is a definite advantage. I think it is a skill that becomes very useful. I think that you also develop this mentality that wherever you live in the world, you are going to make a life out of it. I totally approach it that way. I do not mind where I live as long as I have a purpose for being where I am. Right now, my purpose is to learn as much as I can so that once I go off to college I can use that and learn skills there to go on and apply them in life no matter where I am. I think that being a Third Culture Kid has given me a very open mentality towards life in general and what I can do in life and how

I can relate to other people and help them in life (*Raj*, personal communication, April 7,

2017).

Gloria, a student from Cancun, Mexico, expressed a similar experience: "(being a TCK) I

have been more tolerant in accepting other people. I have had to learn to let it go and let them be.

There are people here who have different cultures and I have to accept them and talk to them and

let them be." (*Gloria*, personal communication, April 7, 2017)

If an international school can prevent the TCKs from isolating themselves with other TCKs

by nurturing an environment of acceptance, students like *Kim* can help make important changes

within the entire school community. "Nowadays, I think it is very normal to be a TCK. Most of

my friends are TCKs. I think that as the world progresses, the TCKs will grow. Compared to my

Korean friends, I am much more open-minded. I have a bigger vision of the world. I have a

bigger mission." (*Kim*, personal communication, April 7, 2017)

Deliberate community building within an international school that actively seeks integration

of TCKs, can build an environment such as that found at Balboa Academy. According to

Valeria,

I think that Balboa is the best school I have been to, and I have been to lots of schools. I

think the community—the people in Balboa—are what make it special. The fact that people

are so open and there is no bullying and there is no judging, there is no saying "you are too

weird" or "you are different so you are not cool." It's a place where the people embrace the

fact that you can bring something new to the table—you can talk about things that maybe we

don't know about. And I think that does help in creating that sense of community because we

know that we are so different, we know that people have different ideas and we can create

something with these different ideas. If we were all the same, maybe we would be focused on

the same thing. But everyone is different and they are focused on their own thing and they are all creating something different, building new projects and starting new clubs and everything is sort of happening kind of fast, but everyone knows that if the other club needs help, we will help them. It is that sense of community that makes Balboa so special. The fact that the people who come here have been to so many different places, they have so many different experiences to share, and that makes it special and different (*Valeria*, personal communication, April 7, 2017).

How does having a transient population of TCKs affect school community building?

The importance of lots of TCKs

Not all international schools have large percentages of TCKs. In this Case Study, Balboa Academy's TCK population is approximately 60% of all students. With a local population of just under half, the balance of students from other countries is something that is deliberate and monitored closely by the school director and the Admissions office. It is assumed that once the balance of local and international students tips more toward the local side, then the rich, diverse, community that has been so carefully cultivated, could possibly be changed. The interviews with TCKs confirm this assumption. One TCK, *Emily*, expressed that being a new student is easier when there is a blend of TCKs and local students. She felt that she could be herself and not have to pretend to be another person (*Emily*, personal communication, April 7, 2017).

Other TCK interviews echoed Emily's observations. According to *Roger*, "When I was in Chile, everyone was from Chile and knew each other. I was the outsider. Here, they (the students) are used to it. There's no limit to the world. When kids are already used to meeting students from other countries, they are more open-minded and they accept us." (*Roger*, personal communication, April 7, 2017) *Kim* concurs, "This is a very inclusive school. There are no

special crews. There are crews, but everyone is very nice to each other. It is a very nice environment. I think the mix of people helps the people. They are just very inclusive themselves. They are very open-minded about other cultures. This helps all cultures." (*Kim*, personal communication, April 7, 2017)

For TCKs used to moving from international school to international school, they felt the openness of Balboa Academy from their first days on campus. "Here it isn't rare for people to come from other countries, so everyone was super nice and everything." (*Sandra*, personal communication, April 7, 2017) "When I got here, there were all of these cultures—Americans, Asians, people from India and from all over the world. In a sense, that created a strong sense of community because for the first time I felt that people understood that I was new and there was an acceptance. It was the first time I experienced this. It was a much more open community to new kids. I felt included the first week, which almost never happens. You usually just sit and watch on the sidelines for a while." (*Valeria*, personal communication, April 7, 2017)

International schools that harness the unique qualities of Third Culture Kids, stand to gain greatly from this vibrant group of young people. According to *Elena*,

I think I am and most other TCKs are just very very tolerant. We are just very open-minded and when we see something different, we don't back away from it. We are just very open and willing to try new things, because I think that in this kind of life if you are not, it is just very, very hard. I also think that in this kind of life, you have a lot of inner angst because you don't really know where you fit in. I also think that TCKs are very good at adjusting themselves to any situation and they are very flexible and basically just trying to make the best out of things. They are good at fitting in and adjusting to different cultures (*Elena*, personal communication, April 7, 2017).

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The presence of TCKs is even evident in classroom discussions:

I think that since there is such a big international community, the discussions both inside

class and outside class extend very much beyond what happens locally. A lot of people,

for example, I have a friend who loves to talk about problems in the Middle East, and

another friend talks all about problems in Korea, where he is from. I think that because

people have lived in so many places, it creates a maturity in the conversations (*Valeria*,

personal communication, April 7, 2017).

The importance of culturally aware/sensitive teachers

One of the characteristics of International Schools is that they, too, tend to have a blend

of local and international teaching staff. However, the attitudes and leadership roles that these

teachers model cannot be underestimated. Within the classrooms, international schools need to

listen to the comments that TCKs have about their teachers. Many TCKs in the case study

interviews highlighted the role that teachers play in building community in international schools.

According to *Xiao Wei*, the multicultural teachers allow for TCKs and local kids to blend. The

teachers are always willing to improve and change—something *Xiao Wei* has not seen at her

other schools (*Xiao Wei*, personal communication, April 7, 2017).

Susana concurs, "Teachers really help the (local) students who have been here to make

the new person feel welcome." She also thinks that having international teachers helps build a

community of empathy (*Susana*, personal communication, April 7, 2017). "The teachers here

are a lot more friendly than the teachers at my other schools. (*Elena*, personal communication,

April 7, 2017)."

In the interview with *Valeria*, she was asked why the conditions at Balboa Academy are somehow more conducive to building a strong community than in other international schools. She has a hard time explaining what is different, just that something is different at this school:

> I don't know why this works here (the blending of local and TCKs). I know that a lot of international schools have a hard time mixing the cultures. I think that the common trait in all Balboa students is that they are very open. They are very willing to meet people who are different from them. No one says, "oh, no, this person is weird, I'm not going to hang out with them." Maybe it's the classes—in my old school, we used to have homerooms and that sort of creates a little group. But in Balboa, you have classes with all sorts of people—seniors and freshmen and there are a lot of teambuilding exercises like Dragon Days, and that sort of creates a common ground for people. I think it might be the people, or maybe the teachers. I don't know—there is just a definite vibe of openness. They don't mind that people are different. They just see them for who they are, I guess (*Valeria*, personal communication, April 7, 2017).

The importance of open-minded local students

The Case Study found that when building community with a large percentage of TCKs, not just the attitudes of the TCKs and the teachers are important, but the attitudes and perceptions of the local student population is important, as well. "Even local kids leave behind their closed minds when they walk into the school. The contact the local kids have with their teachers and TCKs makes them open up.' (*Xiao Wei*, personal communication, April 7, 2017) "(Here) I was welcomed very well and everyone was really excited to meet me. But in my other schools it was harder to make friends." (Jennifer, personal communication, April 7, 2017)

"When I moved here, it was probably my easiest move. I made friends right away, I didn't have to worry about it. It only took me about a week to get to have my group of friends and get to know people. This was my ninth move. They are very open to new people, so I didn't feel ostracized. It was an open environment that I just felt I could jump into." (*Carlos*, personal communication, April 7, 2017) *Elena* echoes *Carlos*, "I met a lot of kids from Panama and a lot of kids not from Panama. It was easy to meet new people because they were a lot more open." (*Elena*, personal communication, April 7, 2017) "Compared to my (last) school in the U.S., I feel the people here are a lot more mature. They are more accepting and open-minded." (*Raj*, personal communication, April 7, 2017)

First-day impressions

Because Third Culture Kids are used to being the new kid at school, these students judge their new communities very quickly. They noticed differences between their first day at Balboa Academy and their past schools—primarily that they were welcomed from Day One and not made to wait on the sidelines to be accepted. Most students explained that they met their best friends on the first or close to first day of school. Gloria was "surprised at the kindness of people. In my old schools, if you were new, they would put you in the back and not talk to you for three months." (Gloria, personal communication, April 7, 2017)

"My first day (here) was very different. All of my schools had been French schools and this was my first American school. I didn't speak English too well, yet. I was very nervous. It was a huge change from India to here. I had never worn a uniform before. It was a very big change, but I still enjoyed it. I had friends when I first got here and everyone was really nice, so it was really good.' (Juan, personal communication, April 7, 2017)

On Sarah's first day of school, she explains, "so, I sat in an empty table and I took out my book and I was like, I don't know anyone here, so I am just going to pretend to read so I don't look weird. And then people started coming over because at this school it's like, NEW PERSON! And I met most of my friends in the first ten minutes of class." (Sarah, personal communication, April 7, 2017)

Limitations

The greatest limitation of this Case Study is the fact that it only provides information from one single international school. In the interviews conducted in this case study, students repeatedly reported that this school, Balboa Academy, was different from other international schools. This study would need to be replicated in various international schools across the globe to see if results are consistent, regardless of the school in which the interviews are conducted.

Implications for International Educators

In summary, it is very important that international schools recognize and understand the unique opportunities that come with having a population of Third Culture Kids within their mix. Third Culture Kids are quick to adapt—cultural chameleons, if you will. They know how to blend in and not make waves. They have learned to keep things to themselves and only open up to other Third Culture Kids who really understand them. This is something to avoid, if possible, as an international school. As much as is possible, the openness and willingness to accept that which is different should be openly embraced in international schools. Only then will TCKs come out of their isolation to infect the rest of the school community with their open-mindedness and high acceptance of difference and diversity.

Within the school community, it is important not to underestimate the powerful role that international schoolteachers play in creating this culture of inclusion and acceptance. In the

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interviews conducted in this case study, repeatedly, the students commented on the importance of having open-minded and accepting teachers. When teachers are culturally diverse and able to project true attitudes of inclusion and acceptance, Third Culture Kids follow their lead and rise to the occasion. However, when TCKs see that the teachers are not as accepting of difference and diversity, they will adapt to this environment and contain their true ideas and potential only among other like-minded TCKs.

Conclusion

When allowed to flourish and shine, TCKs bring with them a wealth of experiences and ideas that few adults can equal. International Schools should strive to build the kinds of communities where the TCK ideas are shared openly with all other members of the school community. If this tone is not set, there is no detriment to the TCK—they will learn and thrive in spite of being part of a community that does not foster the use of their talents. However, the local students in the school will miss the opportunity to adapt the tolerance and maturity of their more-traveled peers. Such accepting communities allows for the spread of the TCK worldview to children who have not benefitted from these experiences directly. International Schools can be great places to foster the ideas of acceptance and tolerance among our future generations, if they only generate conditions that encourage TCKs to step out of their shells and teach their peers the wisdom they have gained at such young ages.

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SECTION SIX:

SCHOLARLY PRACTITIONER REFLECTION

How has the dissertation influenced your practice as an educational leader?

Writing this dissertation and participating in the courses in this program have completely changed me as an educational leader. When I began Cohort 9, I was in my eighth year as high school principal. Now that I am finishing the program, I am in my second year as school director (superintendant). I have found collaborating with fellow educators, reading articles and books for the courses, and writing reflective and analytical papers have greatly contributed to my growth as a professional. I am simply a better educational leader now than I was before.

In focusing my dissertation on Third Culture Kids, I have learned a great deal about what traits are important in international schools to allow for TCKs to feel comfortable, welcomed, and part of the community. I have been able to confirm certain "hunches" that I have always had about the importance of school climate, and see how important it is that this climate be set by the students with the broadest worldviews and most open minds. I have shared my findings with my teachers and staff and we all are actively working to continue to create the conditions necessary for a strong, positive school climate for even our most transient of students.

I have also become a bit of a TCK expert, and will be presenting at an international conference in Saudi Arabia on the importance of building a strong school community. As a professional, I do not think I would have even applied for this opportunity before joining this program. I have gained confidence in my own professional knowledge and abilities. This program has made it possible for me to feel confident in sharing my knowledge with my peers and I look forward to working with international educators both within my community and internationally for many years to come.

As a school director, I have found that the deeper understanding of organizations and leadership has given me a stronger foundation for making day-to-day decisions. I am able to

understand the complexities of my job in a broader sense and I sincerely believe that everything I have learned with Cohort 9 has contributed greatly to making me a stronger and better school leader. I am more aware of how I frame situations, and frequently try to re-frame them to see if I can find the best solution. I have seen that my awareness as a leader has grown, and I no longer underestimate the impact that I can have at my school with sometimes even the slightest of actions.

How has the dissertation process influenced you as a scholar?

The dissertation process gave me a chance to read much more research than I would normally read and opened my eyes to how much I can contribute to the field as an international educator. I see a tremendous need for more educational research to be conducted outside of the U.S. in international schools, and I plan to continue with research even after the dissertation is finished. I have been inspired to continue contributing where I can to the field of international education. I feel that my work as an international educator needs to be shared on a scholarly level, and I need to make time in my life to continue contributing as a scholar to the broader international educational community.

PARENTAL CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

INVESTIGATOR'S NAME: ERINN MAGEE
PROJECT #

STUDY TITLE: THIRD CULTURE KIDS: EXAMINING THEIR IMPACT IN SCHOOL COMMMUNITIES.

INTRODUCTION

We ask for permission that your child be allowed to participate in a research study. This research is being conducted to find out more about the impact that Third Culture Kids have in international school communities. You have the right to be informed about the study procedures so that you can decide whether you want to consent for your child to participate in this research study. This form may contain words that you do not know. Please ask the researcher to explain any words or information that you do not understand.

You have the right to know what your child will be asked to do so that you can decide whether or not to include your child in the study. Your child's participation is <u>voluntary</u>. They do not have to be in the study if they do not want to. You may refuse for your child to be in the study and nothing will happen. If your child does not want to continue to be in the study, they may stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which they are otherwise entitled.

We ask that you read this form and ask any questions that you may have before allowing your child to participate in this study.

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH

Your child has been invited to be in this study because he/she is a Third Culture Kid. This is defined as living in a country that is different from the country where his/her parents are from. Your son or daughter has also gone to an international school in another country prior to moving to Balboa Academy in Panama.

PROCEDURES OF THE STUDY
If you agree to have your child be a part of the study, they will be asked to do the following:
> Participate in a one on one interview. This will be done during the school day and will take approximately 30 minutes.

HOW LONG WILL MY CHILD BE IN THE STUDY?
This study will take approximately two interview sessions to complete. One interview will be one on one, and one interview will be with other students present. Your child can stop participating at any time without penalty.

HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL BE IN THIS STUDY?
Twenty high school students have been selected to participate in this Case Study.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH?
- Your child's participation will benefit international educators and other Third Culture Kids.
- There are no direct benefits of this study to your child.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF THE RESEARCH?
There are no risks of this research to your child.

PARTICIPATION IS VOLUNTARY
Participation in this research study is voluntary. You may refuse to allow your child to participate or withdraw your child from the study at any time. Your child may also refuse to participate or withdraw themselves at any time. Your child will not be penalized in any way if you decide not to allow your child to participate or to withdraw your child from this study.

WHAT ABOUT CONFIDENTIALITY?
We will do our best to make sure that your child's answers to these questions are kept private. Information produced by this study will be stored in the investigator's file and identified by a code number only. The code key connecting your child's name to specific information about you will be kept in a separate, secure location. Information contained in your child's records may not be given to anyone unaffiliated with the study in a form that could identify your child without your written consent, except as required by law.
Your child will be audio recorded during this study. You will be given the opportunity to listen to the audiotapes before you give your permission for their use if you so request.

WHO CAN I TALK TO ABOUT THE STUDY?
If you have any questions about the study or if you would like additional information, please call Erinn Magee, 302-0035 X100 or email emagee@balboa.edu.pa.

You may contact the University of Missouri Institutional Review Board (which is a group of people who review the research studies to protect participants' rights) if you have questions regarding your child's rights as a research and/or concerns about the study, or if you feel under any pressure to enroll your child or to continue to participate in this study. The IRB can be reached directly by telephone at number (573)882-9585 and e-mail umcresearchcirb@missouri.edu.

CONSENT

I have read this parental consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give my permission for my child to participate in this study. I understand that, in order to for my child to participate, they will need to be able to give their consent also. I understand that participation is voluntary and I can withdraw my child at any time without penalty or loss of

benefits. You will be informed of any significant new findings discovered during the course of this study that might influence your child's health, welfare, or willingness to continue participation in this study.

Parent/Guardian signature_____ Date: _____

Child's Name: _____

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records.

CHILD ASSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

INVESTIGATOR'S NAME: ERINN MAGEE

PROJECT #

STUDY TITLE: THIRD CULTURE KIDS: EXAMINING THEIR IMPACT IN SCHOOL COMMMUNITIES.

This is a study about the impact that Third Culture Kids have in international school communities.

Why YOU are invited

You are invited to be in this study because you are a Third Culture Kid. You are living in a country that is different from the country where your parents are from. You have also gone to an international school in another country prior to moving to Balboa Academy in Panama.

What will happen?

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to do the following:

> Participate in a one on one interview. This will be done during the school day and will take approximately 30 minutes.

Can anything good happen to me?

There are no expected benefits from your participation in this study.

Can anything bad happen to me?

No.

What if I don't want to do this?

If you say you do not want to be in the study, you just have to tell us. No one will be mad at you. You can also say yes and later if you change your mind, you can quit the study. The choice is up to you.

Who will know my answers?

We will do our best to make sure that your answers to these questions are kept a secret. Your parents or guardian will get the information.

Who can I talk to about the study?

You can ask questions any time. You can ask now. You can ask later. You can talk to me or you can talk to someone else, at any time during the study. Here is the telephone number to reach us 302-0035 X 100 Erinn Magee

Do you want to be in the study?

☐ *YES*   ☐ *NO*

Signature of Child   **Date**

A copy of this form will be given to you.

Appendix C

Third Culture Kids: Interview Protocol

1. Where were you born?

2. What passports do you have?

3. Where were your parents born?

4. What countries have you lived in? For how long?

5. What languages do you speak?

6. Where do you consider "home"?

7. How many schools have you gone to so far?

8. Tell me about your typical first day of school in a new school.

9. Tell me about your first day of school at Balboa Academy. How did it compare to other first days of new schools?

10. How do you compare your friendships at school here with the friendships you have had in other international schools?

11. Do you feel there is a social gap between the international students and the Panamanian students?

12. Who are your friends here? Are they mostly other international students? Panamanians? Both?

13. Do you ever see yourself coming back to visit your friends here at Balboa Academy, even after you have moved away?

14. Do you ever go and visit friends from other schools? Why? Why not?

VITA

Erinn Magee was born in Cedar Falls, Iowa and has represented Iowans throughout her life around the globe. She is currently Director of Balboa Academy, a private, K-12 international school in Panama City, Panama. She has taught and studied for the past twenty years in Ecuador, Nicaragua, and Panama and regularly attends and presents in conferences for international educators across the globe. While not a Third Culture Kid herself, she was an exchange student to Chile and Ecuador before she turned 19 and she would like to be a Third Culture Kid in her next life.