

Consensual Qualitative Investigation into the Repatriation Experiences of Missionary Kids



Kocheleva, J., King, D., Chang, G. C., McKenzie, A., Roenicke, C., Campbell, V., Eckard, K., & Bikos, L. H.
Seattle Pacific University

Introduction

Beginning in the 1960s when Useem coined the term “Third Culture Kid” (TCK) a growing body of literature has documented the repatriation difficulties of children who have spent some portion of their developmental years outside their passport country. This cultural crisis is particularly evident for the repatriated missionary kid (MK). Much of the foregoing research, however, was researcher driven (i.e., MKs responded to surveyor determined hypotheses) and fraught with statistical problems. Our study responded to these issues with a research designed from a constructivist-interpretivist frame using Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR).

Method

Participants

The participants ($N = 13$) included 9 MKs (4 males and 5 females) and 4 MK supporters (1 male and 3 females). MKs ranged in age from 9 to 28 ($M = 22.1$, $SD = 3.1$) and were around 18 years old ($M = 18$, $SD = 0.5$) at the time of repatriation. Three of the supporters were parents or guardians of MKs, and one was previously a dorm parent.

Interview Questions

We developed a start list of questions that were used in semi-structured interviews and covered: (a) missionary assignment experiences; (b) home leave/vacation experiences; (c) first impressions of home country nationals; (d) adjustment issues; (e) support systems; (f) factors that aided in preparation for repatriation; and (g) factors that could have helped ease repatriation.

Data analysis.

Researchers used Hill et al.’s CQR method (1997, 2005) to analyze the data. The CQR method specifies a series of procedures for coding data.

Results

Table 1
Summary of Domains, Categories, and Frequencies for MKs

Domain	Category	Frequency	Respondents	Units
Adjusting to the Home Country	Challenges and success of fitting into the dominant culture	General	9	164
	Advice and wishes to improve the repatriation process	General	9	45
	Navigating activities of daily living	General	9	37
	Value-laden perceptions and cultural comparisons between home and host countries	Typical	8	27
	Value-neutral perceptions and cultural comparisons between home and host countries	Typical	8	25
		Typical	7	30
MK Identity and Personal Growth	Unique challenges of being an MK	General	9	76
	Emotional functioning	General	9	26
	Reflections on the sense of home	Typical	7	16
	Plans for the future shaped by the MK experience	Typical	6	16
	Expression of thankfulness for the experience of being an MK	Typical	5	11
		Typical	4	7
Support Systems in the Repatriation Process	Family	General	9	74
	Friends	General	9	19
	Organizational support	Typical	8	25
	Role of faith in challenging times	Typical	8	25
		Typical	4	5

Note. $n = 9$. General = applicable to all cases; Typical = applicable to at least four cases; Variant = applicable to two or three cases.

Table 2
Summary of Domains, Categories, and Frequencies for MK supporters

Domain	Category	Frequency	Respondents	Units
Adjustment	External influences promoted adaptation	General	4	33
	Difficulty understanding, engaging, and adapting to a new culture	General	4	12
	Changes in mental health/negative emotionality	General	4	10
	Personality as a factor in adjustment	General	3	8
		Typical	2	2
Identity	Struggling with MK label	General	4	22
	Faith and repatriation	General	4	9
	Identifying with host culture	General	4	5
		General	3	3
Relationships	Connecting with family and friends eased the repatriation process	General	4	23
	Technology promoted relational connections	General	4	14
	Difficulty forming friendships	General	4	5
	Relational outlook was expanded	General	3	4
		Typical	2	5
Support Systems in the Repatriation Process	Lack of support and/or connectedness to resources	General	4	25
	Christian organizations were helpful and should reach out to MKs	General	4	9
	Desire for support from friends and family	General	4	5
	Some support programs were patronizing	Typical	2	6
	Concern that MKs are ignored during missionary field work	Typical	2	2
		Rare	1	3

Note. $n = 4$. Rare = applicable to one case; Typical = applicable to two cases; General = applicable to three or four cases.

Discussion

We found a number of similarities between the experiences of the MKs and the observations of the MK supporters, as well as a number of differences. The similarities were around friendship, navigating everyday life, stigma attached to the MK label, home, faith and repatriation, family, supportive organizations and structures, and technology. There were differences in opinion between MKs and supporters regarding cultural differences, fitting in, and personality influences.

Limitations

Although we have taken great care to conduct this project in a manner that is trustworthy, qualitative endeavors have their limits. Hill et al. (2007) clearly locate CQR in the constructivist philosophy of science, “with some postpositivist elements” (p. 197). The constructivist position holds that there are, “multiply, equally valid, socially constructed versions of ‘the truth’” (p. 197). Consequently, the outcome of our investigation is undoubtedly affected by the personalities and interactions of the participants and researchers.

References

- Hill, C. E., Knox, S., Thompson, B. J., Williams, E. N., Hess, S. A., & Ladany, N. (2005). Consensual Qualitative Research: An update. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 52*, 196-205.
- Hill, C. E., Thompson, B. J., & Williams, E. N. (1997). A guide to conducting Consensual Qualitative Research. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 25*, 517-572.