ABSTRACT

This study investigates middle school students as they transitioned into an elite international boarding school. A case study approach was used to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of the participants in the study. Twelve middle school students were selected for this study based upon their grade level, gender, familiarity with English, nationality, and number of siblings to represent a maximal variation with the school. All twelve participants participated in one individual and one focus group interview about their experiences in coming to the new school. The data was analyzed inductively and five themes emerged. This study explores the acculturation process into an elite international boarding school, the effects that language learning has on this process, how this process produces independent individuals, how students must overcome fears throughout the process, and the effects that siblings have on transitions. The data suggest that elite international boarding schools have much in common with the elite boarding schools found in the US, and more research should be conducted at other elite international schools to further investigate these relationships.
DEDICATION

To my wife Emily, who puts up with me.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Globalization is changing the world at a rapid pace, and international schools, with their diverse mix of students, provide us with a glimpse of what our future may look like. It is important to study the experiences of international students because they represent one of the most extreme examples of globalized education in action. This study emerged out of my experiences and interactions with students as a science teacher at an international boarding school in India. I came to the school having never visited any country outside of North America, and I found my experiences outside of the classroom to be foreign and eye-opening. What surprised me most was finding that many of my students who seemed acculturated to living in India appeared to be uncomfortable with the culture inside my Western classroom. Fascinated with the process of how students transition between educational systems, I sought to investigate this process through the eyes of my former students. As the study progressed it became clear that what happened within classrooms was the tip of the iceberg for new students transitioning into this boarding school. The study expanded to find out how students experience the process of transitioning into an elite international boarding school focusing on what aids and hinders these students.

International schools have existed in different forms throughout history, but there has been a major expansion of international education since 1945, evidenced by growth in the number of international schools and by the increasing popularity of the International Baccalaureate. There is a growing body of literature on international schools, but there is a lack of empirical data to back up many of the claims made by leaders in the field. Significantly missing are the actual voices of the students at international schools (Hayden, 2006). Several studies have looked at the stories of adults reminiscing about their past growing up internationally (Fail, Thompson, & Walker, 2004; Hervey,
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2009; Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009), but there is still a gap in the literature dealing with the lived experiences of current international students. This is especially important because international schools evolve and the reflections of an older generation will no longer represent the realities of life for current students who have access to different technology to aid in their transitions.

There is also a gap in the literature on elite boarding schools in an international context. Elite boarding schools have been studied within the context of the United States, most notably by Cookson & Persell (1987), but very little research has been conducted internationally. Many international boarding schools were started by Western missionaries to provide a safe environment for their children to attend school. The job of elite boarding schools is to prepare students as future leaders for a nation (Cookson & Persell, 1987), and elite international boarding schools provide a glimpse of the future leaders in our international world. Elite boarding schools provide an important source of social connections for students at a young age (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2009), and the social connections that students forge at international elite boarding schools provides them with a wide range of contacts across the globe. Studying the power structures and how they are reproduced plays an important role in “studying up” to gain a better understanding of how our world works (Priyadharshini, 2003). This research study helps to show how elite international boarding schools produce and reproduce global elites; students who do not come from elite families develop friendships and contacts with those who do.

The research was conducted at an international boarding school in India. Like similar institutions, the school was established to serve the missionary population within India, but has changed its focus in the past thirty years to serve a wide range of clientele from twenty-two different countries. The school does not claim to be elite, but many parents send their children to the school because of the access it provides them to Western universities. All students must adjust to the
particular climate of education at the school. This study focused on the transitions of sixth grade students with the following research questions:

- How do new students transition into an elite international boarding school?
- What aids and hinders the process of transitioning?
- What effects do siblings have on the process of transitioning?

To answer these questions, twelve participants were selected from the research site’s middle school. They were selected for maximal variation to represent the different populations and ages within the school, but each of the twelve had entered the school in their sixth grade year. Each participant took part in a one-on-one interview as well as a focus group with questions revolving around their experiences during their first few weeks at the school. The interviews and focus groups were transcribed and then coded inductively. The participants in the study were given opportunities to see the copies of the transcripts, and acted as co-creators in producing many of the suggestions for helping new students coming to the school.

After the introductory first chapter, the second chapter reviews relevant literature on the population of students commonly found at international schools, often referred to as global nomads or Third Culture Kids (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999). Although this concept originated in North America, it is an important baseline for comparing the students at other international schools with the students at the research site. Since the participants in the study are early adolescents, literature on identity formation is explored. Erik Erikson saw identity formation as the great challenge for early adolescents (Stevens, 2008), and growing up at an international boarding school may cause students to form a different identity because of their different environment. The relevant literature on cultural adaptations and transition can help illuminate the experiences of children entering a new school. Finally the
organizational cultures of boarding schools and international schools are explored. Since there is a lack of research on international boarding schools, this literature review attempts to find the important aspects of both types of schools as a source for comparison.

The third chapter explains the research methodology for the study. This is a case study, bounded by location, participants, and time. A historical background of the school is detailed, as well as its current situation. I bracket my biases as a researcher as well as describe the limitations of the study. The methodology also describes the selection methods used to gain maximal variation. I also detail considerations that were made to ensure that the research was conducted in an ethical manner, which is especially important when working with minors. The chapter describes the data collection methods as well as my role as a participant-observer within the research site. The data analysis is explained as well as the measures taken to ensure validity.

The fourth chapter describes the major findings of the study as well as the discussion relating the findings to the current literature. The major themes that emerged were: the acculturative process, learning English, becoming independent, overcoming fears, and gaining social and cultural capital through siblings and other relatives. The first theme explores how acculturation occurs in dorms, classes, and the physical environment, how overcoming homesickness and exclusion is vital to the process, and the importance of student agency and peer groups in student adjustment. The second theme explores the effect that being an English language learner has on the special difficulties these students face; how it affects them in their non-ESL classes; how the ESL program provides the necessary support; and the language learning that occurs outside of the classroom. The third theme explores the role that boarding schools play in creating independent individuals. It examines how dorms provide students with opportunities to look after themselves, how classes promote independent
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thinking, how students view independence as a prize that must be earned through enduring pain, and how teachers, dorm parents, and administrators can support these students without interfering with the process of becoming independent. The fourth theme investigates the fears students experience before coming to the school as well as the fears that develop after their arrival. These fears cover life in dorms, navigating a different classroom culture, and living in a new physical environment. Language is also explored as a factor exacerbating the other fears. The final theme explores the effects that siblings, relatives, and friends have on the transition process. It reviews the benefits that these relationships have for new students preparing to enter a new school as well as after they have entered; it also examines the costs that siblings can have on identity formation.

The final chapter provides a summary of the study and gives recommendations for the school based upon the findings. These recommendations explore developing a system to increase the communication between the dorms and school as way to collect and utilize the knowledge of veteran teachers, dorm parents, and students. The importance of the ESL program is discussed, as well as the need to spend extra attention to the minorities within the school. This chapter provides connections to the literature and areas for further research.
LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will review the relevant literature pertaining to the four major topics related to the research study. The first section explores the concept of the Third Culture Kid, and explains how a multicultural and transient upbringing affects adolescents. The second section investigates the process of identity formation of adolescents, with a focus on Erikson's theories as well as Phinney and Devich-Navarro's (1997) models for cultural and ethnic identity. The third section in this chapter reviews the literature relating to transitions between countries as well as school systems. The fourth and final section explores the cultural norms found at boarding schools and international schools.

Third Culture Kids

The increase in international schools in the past fifty years has resulted in the growth of the population of Third Culture Kids (TCKs). There has been more research on the typology of TCKs in the past twenty years as awareness has increased that this is a unique population with both special skills and special needs. TCKs live a transient life and grow up in a genuinely cross-cultural world (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999).

Culture, being integral to any discussion on TCKs, must be defined. This paper will utilize Pai, Adler, and Shadiow’s (2002) definition of culture, “the knowledge, beliefs, values, skills, and behaviors of a social group” (p. 4), which may also be defined as how groups “have come to solve the problems of survival and existence” (p. 4). In the context of an international school there are many different social groups and therefore several subcultures within each school.

The term “third culture” first originated from the studies of John and Ruth Hill Useem, who, in the 1950s and 1960s researched American populations living in India. Useem and Useem (1967) define the third culture as “the cultural patterns created, learned, and shared by members of different societies who are personally involved in relating their societies, or sections thereof, to each other” (p.
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This culture is created when individuals attempt to build bridges between cultural groups such as missionaries, international business people, and diplomats. This statement implies that there is no uniform third culture, but that individuals growing up in a third culture do share certain characteristics. The third culture produced between Americans and Indians may be very different from the third culture produced between Chinese and Germans, but both forms of this third culture rely upon learning how to relate cross-culturally. Finn-Jordan (2002) defines the participants of the third culture as individuals who “generate a composite of values, role related norms, and social structures that make them a part of, yet apart from, the first and second cultures that they span yet from which they remain distinct” (p. 211). Members of this third culture could not be accurately described as Indian-Americans or German-Chinese because the culture in which they live is distinct from either culture. Finn-Jordon (2002) goes on to state, “the third culture is not a blended or a hyphenated culture. It is a relating culture, a culture of linkages and networks” (p. 226). Ruth Hill Useem saw that the children growing up in this third culture had unique traits and skills that their domestic peers did not have, and she coined the term Third Culture Kids.

Useem and Downie (1976) investigated the effects that an expatriate lifestyle had on Third Culture Kids. They noted that this group of children felt most at home in their interstitial third culture. Pollock and Van Reken (1999) went on to define them:

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

Pollock and Van Reken (1999) further classify TCKs as having a cross-cultural, highly mobile
upbringing. They are usually members of organizational families who find their identity within an organizational system such as the military, missionary or church organizations, businesses, or diplomatic agencies such as the United Nations. They are often physically distinctly different from the people around them; they expect to repatriate back to their parents’ country of origin; they live a privileged lifestyle due to their parents’ position; and they have an identity within an organizational system (p. 23). These children generally follow their high-paid/high-status parents around the globe, interacting with other members of the same socioeconomic status.

Global nomads, an alternate term for this unique population coined by McCaig (1996) has become interchangeable in the literature with Third Culture Kids. Schaetti and Ramsey (1999) define global nomads as “persons of any age or nationality who have lived a significant part of their developmental years in one or more countries outside their passport country because of a parent’s occupation” (Introduction, para. 1). This definition is very similar to the TCK definition, but Pollock and Van Reken’s definition does not specify that a child must live in a different country, so their experience may be domestic rather than international.

More recently, scholars have been reevaluating the limits of the term “Third Culture Kid.” Ruth Useem, who first coined the term, has now revised her definition to include the children of refugees, immigrants, and people who have experience in domestic rather than international mobility (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999). In describing the traits of this population, there has often been a focus on describing the similarities between the diverse members of this population while glossing over the differences in experiences (Hylmö, 2002). Hylmö (2002) argues that there is no uniform third culture, and that it is important not to over-simplify individuals down to the term Third Culture Kid. In this paper I will use the terms internationally mobile adolescents, global nomads, and Third Culture Kids interchangeably, while respecting the wide diversity within this population.
The effects of a multicultural upbringing.

An upbringing in a multicultural surrounding may provide children with a useful set of cross-cultural skills and give them a greater desire to maintain a level of internationalism, but may also result in a level of social isolation when these children move to a less culturally diverse area.

Cross-Cultural skills.

Living in a genuinely multicultural world gives TCKs opportunities to learn new languages and see the world from many different angles. Langford (1998) surveyed a large group of teachers and administrators and found they agreed that TCKs were different from their domestic peers in their approach to relationships, and their increased linguistic ability, flexibility, cultural awareness, tolerance, and worldview. McCaig (1996) and Bowman (2000) both argue that these skills could be utilized by international businesses looking for individuals who have cross-cultural skills. Although the traits Langford (1998) noted may be valued in more individualistic countries such as the United States, in more collectivist countries such as Japan, standing out may be looked down upon (Fail et al., 2004). Further research should be done to investigate whether international businesses have recruited TCKs.

Desire to maintain a level of internationalism.

Research suggests there are long-term effects on TCKs of growing up in a multicultural context. Useem and Cottrell surveyed over 700 adult TCKs (ATCKs) and found that two-thirds of them desired to maintain an aspect of internationalism in their lives. The respondents also described themselves as being able to relate to anyone, desiring to help in their local community, and having a sense of being different yet not isolated. In Ender’s (1996) survey of ATCKs, many noted that they deeply valued the experience of living overseas despite its many stresses. Living abroad gives individuals options that they may not realize are open to them. Gerner and Perry (2000) found that female TCKs were much more likely to desire working abroad than their domestic peers. In an age of increased globalization,
being a TCK may provide advantages through expanded job opportunities in the world economy.

**Social Isolation.**

However, the increased worldview can have an isolating effect for students later in life when they repatriate. Sheard (2008) compared TCKs to gifted children in the sense that “both groups experience aloneness, knowledge beyond that of their classmates, and feel gaps between them and their classmates” (p. 31). The students that she interviewed claimed that they learned to self-censor their thoughts and ideas so that they would not face ridicule by their domestic classmates who did not care about their expanded worldview. This self-censoring may be the start of TCKs learning to become cultural chameleons to fit into whatever culture they enter. Cultural chameleons are individuals who are able to blend in to many different cultures, but only feel at home in the third culture (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999). This may have negative consequences if these individuals fail to develop a stable sense of self.

**The effects of a transient childhood.**

Although both growing up in a multicultural context and having a transient upbringing provide a rich environment for personal growth, the nomadic nature of TCK lives may result in negative effects as well. This discussion is not intended to insinuate that being a TCK is a pathological condition, rather to describe the difficult issues unique to this population. Children growing up with a transient lifestyle must deal with a greater level of loss and grief, have more difficulties in defining home, and rely more heavily upon the few stabilizing factors in their life than their less transient peers.

**Loss and grief.**

TCKs are often expected to move frequently. In Dixon and Hayden’s (2008) research, 25 of the 30 students in their study who filled out questionnaires had lived in multiple international contexts before the age of 11 (p. 489). Pollock and Van Reken (1999), through their work with TCKs, theorized
that this high degree of mobility led these children to experience the following: unresolved grief as a result of not feeling permitted to mourn (in fear of upsetting their parents), feeling that grieving meant that they would deny the good aspects of their TCK background, not realizing the losses because they were hidden, having a lack of time to process, and lacking comfort from their parents. It is important for parents, teachers, and administrators to understand the psychosocial issues that students are dealing with when helping children in transition.

Many of Pollock and Van Reken’s theories were backed up by a qualitative study by Gilbert (2008), who investigated how TCKs experience loss, and found that disenfranchised grief was prevalent within this population because many of the individuals had not felt permitted to mourn. Some of the tangible losses that TCKs experienced were those of losing people (having to say goodbye to friends and families constantly, without knowing if they could ever see them again), places (moving from country to country and school to school), pets, and possessions (Gilbert, 2008). Even when children stay in a location for an extended period, friendships suffer because their peers are transient and often moving, possibly resulting in more shallow friendships (McLachlan, 2007). Gilbert (2008) also found that intangible, or hidden, losses were an important part of the TCK experience, including the loss of a sense of belonging, the loss of an identity, and the loss of sense of home. Dealing with intangible losses may be difficult for parents, teachers, and administrators to help TCKs with because the TCK may not be aware that they have experienced these losses until they have taken time to reflect and talk about them.

Disenfranchised grief, a result of an individual not having a sense of control over the losses he or she experienced, was a common theme in Walters and Auton-Cuff’s (2009) study on women TCKs. They found that the women growing up in these expatriate families lost their voice growing up, choosing to act as “good girls” rather than expressing their thoughts on moving. Useem and Downie
(1976) described the children in these organizational families as being little missionaries or little diplomats, thereby forcing these children to conform to the roles that organization placed upon them without having much freedom to experiment with other roles. When children do not fit within the organizational rules that the family must abide by the organization may punish the parents, putting extra pressure on children to behave.

**Defining home.**

Because many TCKs live as nomads, defining home can be difficult for them. Hart (2005) states, “Home is rooted, place-bound, and bodily, but also psychological and spiritual” (p. 128). Keuss and Willet (2009) claim that it is the lack of a single definable home which is the main trait that characterizes TCKs. Buying a house in the country of origin before moving abroad may provide one central geographic location for their TCK to call home (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999). This is not always economically feasible for families, and a sense of home must therefore come through relationships. For many TCKs, the family becomes the home and their extended families provide them with roots (McLachlan, 2005). To further complicate the matter, home and nationality can mean two different things (McLachlan, 2005). When collecting demographic data with this population for research purposes, it is important to allow TCKs to define their nationality in their own words rather than checking boxes or being defined only by the country that has issued them a passport.

As a result of their nomadic upbringing, many TCKs experience a sense of rootlessness and restlessness (Ender, 1996; Useem & Cottrell 1996). Useem & Cottrell’s (1996) survey of ATCKs found that many changed universities at least once because they felt that they did not fit in with their peers (p. 29). Providing these children with a sense of stability is important for them to be able to attain a sense of self and continuity within their life.
**Stabilizing factors.**

Since many TCKs live with a high level of uncertainty and change, they require extra support from the few stable people and places in their lives, which often include their parents and the international schools they attend.

*Parents.*

Parents play an important role in providing TCKs with a sense of stability. The families of TCKs have been described as being a ‘bubble’ because of their closeness and familiarity (Schaetti & Ramsey, 1999). McLachlan (2007) found that mothers in internationally mobile families played an important role in helping their children manage transitions, by counseling them and volunteering at their schools. There is a lack of research on how parental attitudes affect transitions of children into international boarding schools, however. In my experience as a teacher at an international boarding school, there did seem to be a range of preparedness of new students entering the school. This warrants further research into what parents can do to help ease their child’s transition into boarding school.

Peterson and Plamondan (2009) investigated what effect living internationally had on acculturative balance, the ability to fit in with a different culture. They found that the number of years abroad did not have any effect on the variables they measured. The most important correlation with acculturative balance was when children had a positive relationship with their parents. Because the majority of parents do not live near their children attending an international boarding school it is easy to overlook the relationship that a boarder has with his or her parents, but dorm parents, teachers, and administrators should be aware of this important factor if they are to meet the needs of all of the students at a school.

Although internationally mobile families are usually very close, family separation is also an issue that TCKs commonly deal with. Ender (2002) in his research on adult TCKs found that family
separations were one of the most stressful events for them growing up. International boarding schools may add to this stress, where children may not see their parents for several months at a time. McLachlan (2007) found that the fathers in her study often struggled to find time to spend with their families.

In addition to separations, family moves have an important effect on children. Schaetti (2002) theorized that constant family movement could result in children becoming fatigued from too much transitioning. The families that McLachlan (2007) interviewed cited concerns that the high turnover of students caused their children to gain and lose friends quickly, resulting in shallow friendships.

International boarding schools may provide a more stable environment for TCKs, allowing them to stay in one location rather than follow their parents around, transitioning to a new location every year.

**International schools.**

Langford (1998) theorized that some of the consistency with the TCK personality was due in part to the social and academic environment found at international schools. She described this community as having a multinational composition, a high level of turnover, and an environment where intercultural learning takes place. McLachlan (2005) found that for many of the participants the international school community played an important role in providing stability for the families by providing an expatriate community and transition programming.

**Identity**

One of the main issues that TCKs deal with is identity. TCK identity formation is made more difficult because their constant mobility may require them to form a new identity after every move, and deciding which nation or culture they align themselves with is made more complicated when they have lived in several different countries.
Erikson’s framework.

Erik Erikson saw adolescence as the time when individuals began to form their individual identity. He described adolescence as a crisis between identity and role diffusion, a reluctance to commit to an identity. Erikson believed that individuals must go through a psychosocial moratorium where they had time and space to try on identities before settling on an identity that fit them. Identity formation therefore requires some level of self-awareness and exploration, as individuals attempt to synthesize the many different selves that they experience. Identity is also inherently relational, where individuals define themselves through comparisons, and a negative identity may form when individuals continually defines themselves by what they are not. Erikson, who had a multicultural upbringing, described identity formation as being culturally embedded, where individuals find their identity and role within a specific culture (Stevens, 2008).

Erikson believed that individuals had moved past this crisis when they reach attain fidelity, “the ability to sustain loyalties freely pledged in spite of the inevitable contradictions and confusions of value systems” (Stevens, 2008, p. 51). Choosing an identity can be problematic however, if individuals choose an identity too quickly and only later realize that their identity is inadequate or unsatisfying, resulting in an identity crisis (Stevens, 2008). Individuals choose an identity partly based upon their anticipated adulthood, and when their actual adulthood does not match up with their anticipated adulthood it may result in a mid-life crisis (Stevens, 2008). Although Erikson believed that identity was mainly formed in adolescence, he believed that identity continued to be formed through the rest of the life (Stevens, 2008).

James Marcia took many of Erikson’s ideas and provided a framework for researching identity formation in individuals. Katherine Finn-Jordan (2002) applied Marcia’s framework for identity formation to surveys that she conducted with ATCKs. She noted that many of the respondents
experienced a psychosocial moratorium in their late twenties, and usually did not follow in their parents’ career paths. An interesting observation Finn-Jordan pointed out was that the TCKs she interviewed often hid a “deep self” (p. 219) that they did not like to talk about, and avoided this by redirecting the discussion to superficial topics. In investigating identity formation with TCKs, she argues that it is important to factor in who the sponsoring organization is for the child, the distance from extended relatives, and the high level of mobility that TCKs experience.

**Cultural and ethnic identity.**

An area of interest to researchers working with TCKs should be specifically how they form their cultural and ethnic identity in light of their nomadic lifestyle. Phinney and Devich-Navarro (1997), furthering the research initiated by Erikson, investigated how individuals form their ethnic and cultural identities within the context of minorities in the United States. They tested different models of bicultural identification, which included blended bicultural, alternating bicultural, separated, and marginal. Blended bicultural individuals see themselves as being a combination of two cultures (i.e. Mexican-American), whereas alternating bicultural individuals move between two non-overlapping cultures (i.e. being both Mexican and American, but not Mexican-American). A separated individual identifies with one culture but not the other culture (i.e. being Mexican but not American), while a marginal individual does not identify with any culture (i.e. being neither Mexican nor American). Phinney and Devich-Navarro (1997) found that the population they sampled described themselves as being either blended biculturals, alternating biculturals, or separated. This is incongruous with how TCKs have explained their sense of cultural identity as being cultural marginals.

Phinney and Devich-Navarro’s (1997) model has some explanatory power for describing how TCKs identified themselves culturally, but is unable to fully explain this unique population. One category that TCKs fall into is that of being marginals, where they do not fully fit into any single
cultural category other than that of other TCKs. This may make them feel isolated because they do not realize that they have a culture that they can call their own. This difficulty exists because their culture (the third culture found between two other cultures) is not linked to any single nation or people group. Pollock and Van Reken (1999) point out that when TCKs find out that they can give their childhood experiences a name, such as Third Culture Kid, it normalizes the experience and can provide these individuals with a sense of community. Rather than being cultural marginals, not being a part of any one culture, they could be viewed as separated individuals, being members of the third culture, while blending in with other cultures.

The theme of marginality is consistent throughout the literature on TCKs. Finn-Jordan (2002) found that 74% of respondents in a study of adult TCKs described themselves as outsiders in their ‘home’ culture, while Useem & Cottrell (1996) found that 90% of adult TCKs in their study stated that they did not completely fit in with their domestic peers. Schaetti (1996) proposed the idea that TCKs are inherently cultural marginals, living between cultures, and that their main struggle is to move from being encapsulated marginals, who surrender their opinions to fit in, to being constructive marginals, with a strong sense of self. She compares the two types of marginals this way: “rather than the either/or identity of encapsulated marginals, constructive marginals experience their movement between cultures as both/and” (Constructive marginality, para. 2). Fail et al. (2004) interviewed eleven adult TCKs and found that some expressed feelings of lacking a sense of belonging (encapsulated marginality), while others saw their background as partial outsiders in a positive light (constructive marginals). Reaching a level of constructive marginality is difficult for many TCKs to achieve and maintain (Killguss, 2008). For TCKs to reach their full potential, their special abilities to traverse between different cultures without fully being a part of any single one is a positive aspect.

Erik Erikson for example, could be considered a global nomad, since his parents were Danish,
he grew up in Germany, and he lived his adult life in America (Stevens, 2008). In describing how Erikson related to the cultures that surrounded him, Stevens (2008) states, “he felt both Jew and Gentile, German and Danish and yet not fully identified with any of these” (p. 8). Erikson was a constructive marginal because he did not fully fit in any single culture, but was able to move effectively between many cultures while maintaining his own personal sense of identity.

One of the shortcomings of Phinney and Devich-Navarro’s (1997) models are that they only deal with biculturalism rather than multiculturalism. The life experiences of many TCKs are very diverse, which makes modeling their experience much more difficult. TCKs learn to function in many different cultural contexts, adapting their outer culture to match the surface culture of their surroundings while their deeper culture, regarding how they think and what they believe remains unchanged (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999, p. 41). They are different from the separated individuals in Phinney and Devich-Navarro’s (1997) typology because they are a part of the larger society, even though they cannot fully identify with that society.

Being a cultural chameleon is a matter of social survival for many TCKs when they repatriate to their home country. Being unfamiliar with popular culture or other cultural knowledge that is taken for granted, such as not knowing the Fahrenheit temperature scale, can be humiliating for TCKs (Bowman, 2000; Gillies, 1998). McCaig (1996) notes that TCKs became extremely good observers because they have been forced to learn how a culture works quickly through observation and then only acting after they have an understanding of the culture.

An interesting finding within the literature on TCKs is that they often do not strongly identify with their own ethnicity (Finn-Jordan, 2002). One TCK stated it this way, “My interior does not show on my face, my skin, my tongue. But I still feel displaced. Perhaps someone needs to come along and declare military children who grew up in the other countries a separate ethnic group” (Finn-Jordan,
Based upon his research with TCKs, Killguss (2008) argues that nationality should not be limited to only one or two countries. One TCK stated that “My heart feels mostly South American, my intellect European, my drive from the US and my calm is Asian” (Finn-Jordan, 2002, p. 219).

When TCKs live in many different countries they have opportunities to fit the parts of the country’s culture that fit their personality best into their identity. Smith (1996) proposed the idea that TCKs see themselves as world citizens rather than any one national identity, and that a sense of nationality can be contextual, becoming stronger or weaker depending on the situation. A Canadian TCK may feel more Canadian while abroad, and more foreign while in Canada, for example.

Carol Sussman (2000), in proposing a model whereby cultural identity is formed through cross-cultural adaptation, argues that there is a difference between cultural and ethnic identity, but that there is no current model to differentiate between the two. Sussman (2000) does state that national identity is an important aspect of an individual’s personal identity however, and that traveling to new countries can threaten an individual’s self-concept, forcing them to adjust. Sussman (2000) states, “This model proposes that as sojourners successfully adapt to the new culture by modifying behaviors and social thought, cultural identity changed as well” (p. 365). One of the major gaps in the current research is better using current psychological models to help explain why TCKs have identity issues (Tanu, 2008). More empirical research should be conducted to help fill this gap in the literature.

It is important to note that most TCKs feel at home when they are with other TCKs (Killguss, 2008). The women in Walter and Auton-Cuff’s (2009) study stated that their sense of belonging came through relationships with other TCKs. The relationships provided a place to explore their identity formation with other peers who had had similar life experiences. The importance of peers of similar backgrounds cannot be overestimated when working with TCKs.

The highly mobile and cross-cultural lifestyle that TCKs live forces them to learn to adapt to
new situations quickly. TCKs who are cultural chameleons may change their cultural colors too often, causing them to lose a grounded sense of cultural balance (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999). Killguss (2008) found that TCKs often suffer from “authenticity anxiety” (p. 147) and that acting as a chameleon is a turning point for many individuals to question their identity. When the TCKs’ blending in leads to feelings of inauthenticity, they begin to question what their authentic identity is. Pollock (1996) described TCKs who look like the members of the surrounding culture but think differently from them as being hidden immigrants. This description was supported by Gilbert (2008), who found that TCKs he interviewed used this ability to downplay their unique experiences, because it was tiring to always be different from everyone.

**Transitions**

Individuals may experience a variety of transitions across life, while the early lives of many TCKs are defined by their constant transitioning. Developmental transitions, such as going through puberty, are age-dependent, while systemic transitions, such as going to college, are based upon the structure of an organization (Anderson, Jacobs, Schramm, & Splittberger, 2000). This research framework borrows heavily from Carol Sussman’s (2000) work to define culture shock, adjustment, cross cultural adaptation, and acculturation. She defines culture shock as “an intense, negative affective response, both psychological and physiological, experienced by new expatriates when faced with unfamiliar symbols, roles, relationships, social cognitions, and behavior” (p. 355). For example, when students come to a new school that is very different from their previous experience with school they may undergo a form of culture shock until they can learn the necessary social processes needed to function in a new culture.

Sussman (2000) defines adjustment as “the motivational process whereby sojourners attempt to modify both cognitions and behaviors to decrease negatively valenced interactions and experiences and
increase positive ones” (p. 355). In order for new students to function in a school they must learn how the school culture operates and change their behaviors accordingly to meet the social requirements of the new culture. Sussman (2000) defines cross-cultural adaptation as “the positive consequence of the adjustment process in which cognitions and behavioral modifications produce neutral or positive affect and successful social interactions” (p. 355). When students have changed their behaviors to fit in with the new school culture and are able to function with ease in the new school, they have reached a level of cross-cultural adaptation.

Acculturation is “the process of long-term adaptation of indigenous groups within plural societies or immigrants to a new culture” (Sussman, 2000, p. 355). This is different than culture shock, adjustment and cross-cultural adaptation because of the long-term implications of acculturation. The mobile populations of TCKs do not expect to live in the host country their whole lives, and therefore the motivation to completely acculturate may be decreased for these individuals. The process of formal education will inevitably have some acculturative affect on these individuals. Acculturation, however, is not a passive process. Rogoff (2003) states, “human development is the process of peoples’ changing participation of their communities” (p. 52). This means that children are actors in the process of being acculturated and choose the degree to which they participate in their local community.

The repeated moves TCKs experience cause many of them to go through more transitions in their childhood than many adults experience in their whole lifetime. Because of the prevalence of transitions in the TCK lifestyle, Pollock and Van Reken (1999) proposed a five-stage model to explain how transitions occur for TCKs. The first stage is involvement where TCKs are engaged in their current location. TCKs move out of this stage and into the leaving stage when they find out that they will be moving (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999). This may be a relief for some TCKs who are unhappy in their current location (Schaetti, 1996b). During the leaving stage Pollock and Van Reken (1999)
suggest that the TCK build a mental RAFT (Reconciliation with friends, Affirmation of their relationships, Farewells, and Thinking about their destination) to help cope with the upcoming transition. Hervey (2009) conducted a study to test if difficulty in transitioning early in life for TCKs led to difficulty in transitioning later in life, and found that individuals who had difficulty saying farewells also had the most difficulty transitioning. Schaetti (1996b) noted that children in the leaving stage need ample processing time in this stage, although knowing the information too early may lead to premature disengagement. A deficit in processing time may lead to unresolved grief for children. In Dixon and Hayden’s (2008) study of student transition, they found that the children who participated in their study had little idea what to expect at their new school, leading them to suggest that schools have a role to play in the leaving phase for students who will be moving away.

When an individual travels from one location to another they are in the transition phase (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999). This stage is marked by chaos and mourning, but is generally short. The entering stage is when an individual enters the new location where they will be living, and begins to acclimate to the new culture. Pollock and Van Reken (1999) suggest that finding a mentor who can help the newcomer navigate the new culture can shorten this stage. This is the stage where school programming can have the most direct impact on helping new students enter into the school (Schaetti, 1996b).

When an individual finally feels comfortable in a new culture, they have reached the reinvolvement stage (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999). Unfortunately, not every child reaches this stage before they are forced to move again (Schaetti, 1996b). Hill and Hayden (2008) tested this transition model with students at an international school in Switzerland through an online questionnaire and follow up interview. Their questions focused on the five stages on transition proposed by Pollock & Van Reken (1999) and found that the data they collected supported this model. The students’ main
worries about leaving dealt with making new friends and learning a new language (Hill & Hayden, 2008). When the students entered the school they went through a period of optimism at the beginning, then depression, and finally attained a level of adjustment (Hill & Hayden, 2008).

When children move to a new location, they may not have the necessary level of maturity to successfully transition without the help of an adult (McKillop-Ostrum, 2000). When children encounter a new culture they have to either modify their own values, or learn to accept that other cultural practices are also acceptable (Pearce, 1996). Moving between an individualistic and a collectivist culture may result in children needing special forms of support (Pearce, 1996). It is not only the culture of a new location that affects children, but each school has its own organizational and student culture. McKillop-Ostrum (2000) notes that children moving into a school culture that is very different from their previous school culture may experience culture shock on the school culture level. Children, however, have a strong desire to fit in with their peers, and giving up their previous way of doing things may make it easier for children to transition than adults (McKillop-Ostrum, 2000). Pearce (1996) suggested that new students are the best individuals to explain what the school culture is like to the members of a school because of their fresh perspective. Understanding the psychological underpinnings for what makes transitions difficult for individuals is vital to smoothing those transitions. When individuals move to a new culture, their cultural identity is challenged and these individuals must make adjustments to their schema if they are to transition successfully.

**Gender differences.**

Gender is an important factor in how children transition between cultures. Anderson et al. (2000), in their review of the literature on school transitions in schools in the US, found that females were more likely to be affected by environmental and biological transitions, such as the period of time when girls are moving from elementary school to middle school. They also noted that peer
relationships were more important to girls than to boys. Although Anderson et al.’s (2000) literature review studied US schools, it has some applicability to international schools because most are based upon a Western model, and many of the students who come to international schools are either from a Western culture or have had a significant amount of exposure to Western culture because of their socioeconomic status. Hervey’s (2009) study of how TCKs’ transitioning in early childhood affected their transition into college found that males managed transitions better than females. It may be due to the differences in relational patterns or other factors, but the affect that gender has on transitions should not be ignored.

**Moving between schools.**

School transitions include both external and internal changes (Cillessen & Mayeux, 2007). Anderson et al. (2000) state that school transitions are difficult because they “interrupt the continuity of life” (p. 326). The move from elementary school to middle school as an important transition in many children’s lives because it represents both a systemic and developmental transition for these children (Anderson et al., 2000). There are many significant changes between an elementary school and a middle school in a Western model. In general, there is an increase in both the school size and population as well as more heterogeneity in the teachers and classmates (p. 327). The class structures are more compartmentalized, with teachers only teaching content specific classes (p. 327). Behavioral expectations also change, with an emphasis on the “rules of behavior” and a greater focus on competition and relative ability (p. 327). It is little wonder that this inter-school transition can be very difficult for some students.

Although early adolescence is commonly thought of as a time in intense change and turmoil, Eccles, Wigfield, Flanagan, Miller, Reuman, and Yee (1989) in their study of changes of adolescents’ self-concepts through the transition of elementary to middle school found that the self-concepts of the
participants were surprisingly stable. They found that the participants’ self-esteem dropped during the first semester of their first year in middle school, but had rebounded by the end of the second semester. In Lord, Eccles, and McCarthy’s (1994) study of middle school transition, the best indicators for a successful transition were correlated to students’ self-perceptions of their math ability, physical attractiveness, and social skills with peers. They noted that the families of students who provided their children with autonomy were also linked to a more successful transition. This may be due to the stage-environment-fit theory that individuals who transition into a location that fits their developmental needs will result in a positive transition (Eccles, Wigfield, Midgley, Reuman, Mac Iver, & Feldlaufer, 1993). Eccles et al. (1993) noted that many students transitioning to a middle school desire a greater level of autonomy but are greeted with an increase in teacher control and a decrease in teacher-student relationships. This is detrimental to the identity development of these students since teachers play an important role in providing a stable structure for students to explore their identity within a school setting (Lord et al., 1994).

There are certain factors that correlate with difficult inter-school transitions. Anderson et al. (2000), in their meta-analysis of school transition literature, found that the four main factors that correlated with difficulty in transitioning were gender, prior problematic behavior, low academic achievement, and socioeconomic status and race (which were combined since they are linked in the US). Though Anderson did not address the context of international boarding schools, we might expect that these categories would slightly change because of the demographics of the schools. The majority of the students come from a higher SES, but familiarity with the language of instruction may be an important factor to consider. The international boarding school where the research was conducted for this study was selective in its admissions policy in attempts to alleviate the academic and social difficulties in transitions.
Anderson et al. (2000) found four factors that correlated with students who managed transitions with greater ease. Students who had been taught coping mechanisms such as knowing how to resolve conflicts peacefully, manage multiple assignments at once, and how to get needed information were able to deal with transitions better (Anderson et al., 2000, p. 331). Students who knew how to conform to adult standards of behavior, showed a level of independence and industriousness, and were academically prepared were able to successfully transition (Anderson et al., 2000 p. 331). In addition to these factors, Anderson et al. (2002) found that having siblings positively correlated with greater ease in the transition process. This is an important area for study in international boarding schools because older siblings often attend the boarding school before their younger siblings, possibly helping them prepare better for the transition.

Allan (2002) conducted one of the most in-depth qualitative studies of the culture of international schools and how students experienced inter-school transition at an international school in The Netherlands. Students were asked to write a narrative about what coming to a new school was like, and then Allan coded the student narratives. Based upon the themes from the student narratives, Allan describes the experience this way: “Induction into an international school, and its attendant acculturative process, is at best challenging and at worst traumatic for students” (p. 75). The students who found the transition most difficult were those who most exemplified a sense of “otherness”; in this case it was the Korean and Japanese population. These nationalities separated themselves into enclaves for a sense of safety.

One of Allan’s (2002) most interesting findings was that the host-national population so completely dominated the culture of the school that all other nationalities expressed some level of hostility towards their peers from their host country; the school was in essence monocultural. Allan (2002) noted that very little intercultural learning was evident in the members of the host country,
referring them to as “culturally conversant” (p. 80) at best, while the students from Korea and Japan showed the most intercultural learning. One of the main barriers for the Korean and Japanese students was their lack of familiarity with the language of instruction. The larger the language disparity was, the harder the transition became. In Hill and Hayden’s (2008) study, difficulty learning a new language was a common theme that emerged from the student questionnaires. ESL classrooms are important safety zones for children learning a new language to deal with their emotions (Pearce, 1998). Understanding students’ cultural and lingual backgrounds is necessary in meeting their needs, and a little bit of empathy with students who are minorities in a school’s population can go a long way.

**School Programming for Student Transitions.**

**Recognizing school culture.**

To meet the needs of a transient student body, it is important for international schools to aid students in the transition process. A good place for an international school to start is through understanding its own culture. Allan (2002) noted that the similarity or dissimilarity between the culture of the school and the culture of the student effects how quickly the student adapts to a new school. One way for a school to take advantage of their new students’ outsider perspective on the school culture is to ask the new students to write a section of the student handbook with instructions to future students about what to expect when they come to a school (Hill & Hayden, 2008).

**Teachers’ role in transition.**

Teachers can play an important role in helping students through the transition to a new school. Cooperative learning provides students with a chance to get to know each other in a structured setting (Akram, 1995; Gillies, 1998; Schaetti, 1996b). Teachers have the opportunity to change their curriculum to best meet the needs of their diverse student population. Akram (1995) suggests that teacher should: develop knowledge and skills by connecting children’s learning to their lives; develop
the children’s sense of community by providing many opportunities for them to form friendships by finding out more about each other; develop the social skills needed to win and keep friends by experimentation with relationships and problem-solving; and adjust the shape of the group to include children who risk remaining on the periphery of social relationships in the classroom (p. 51). Teachers can also help students to transition by doing something as simple as being available (Anderson et al., 2000), and learning about their new students before they arrive (Hill & Hayden, 2008). Explicit instruction on problem solving skills also may provide TCKs with the skills they need to cope through transitions (Yee, Bain, & McCallum, 2007). Although teachers can play an important role in helping children transition, the importance of a child’s peers should not be underestimated.

**Buddy systems.**

The most common theme in the literature on school programming for student transition deals with the concept of a buddy or mentoring system (Dixon & Hayden, 2008; Gillies, 1998; Hill & Hayden, 2008; Schaetti, 1996b, Pearce, 1998). Allan (2002) noted that the most important group that the participants in his study cited for their ability to aid in transition were the student’s peers. Although some schools have formal buddy systems, they do not always function correctly (Dixon & Hayden, 2008), with some students not even realizing that someone is their “buddy” (Hill & Hayden, 2008). It is important for schools to have a training program for their buddy system (Hill & Hayden, 2008), having guidelines for choosing buddies such as similar interests (Dixon & Hayden, 2008), and an evaluation system to hold buddies accountable (Hill & Hayden, 2008). Although buddy systems can be helpful, Pearce (1998) points out that it is acceptable for new students to go through a silent period when they are adjusting to the school culture. Schaetti (1996b) agrees, stating that new students need space to be able to observe quietly before they choose to participate in school activities. It may be frustrating for some teachers to get to know a student who is very shy when he or she first moves to a
new school, but the student will begin to participate when they feel comfortable with their new surroundings.

**Transition teams.**

While buddy systems are a useful tool, schools should also work on developing transition teams to develop a systematic method for student transitions. Transition teams are groups of parents, teachers, students, and administrators who work together to help design a program with a focus on aiding students entering and leaving the school (McKillop-Ostrum, 2002). Anderson et al. (2000) proposes that the activities of these transition teams should include goal setting, formal planning to meet their goals, gaining the support of all teachers in the transition process, and evaluating how effectively the goals were met.

**Pastoral care.**

In the context of international schools, it is important that the school provides both rites of passage for students entering and leaving the school, as well as formal education regarding the impacts of mobility on cultural identity and personality (Schaetti, 1996b). This type of education is a form of pastoral care, which refers to education designed to aid a student’s social and emotional development (Drake, 1998). Drake (1998) states that all teachers should have a part in pastoral care rather than leaving it to the school counselors, but to be effective in an international context, teachers need some level of cross-cultural training. For a boarding school, the dorms are an important location for pastoral care to take place (Drake, 1998). Other suggestions for pastoral care include having homerooms where teachers are responsible for a small group of students’ academic and social well being (Anderson et al., 2000; Schaetti, 1996b). Schools should continue to systematically evaluate how well their transition programming is working and make the necessary changes to help students in whatever ways they may need.
Organizational Cultures

The research site in this study is an international boarding school, and although there is some information on international schools, and other information on elite boarding schools, there is little information about what occurs when these two educational organizations combine. In the following section I will examine the relevant literature on each type of school compare and contrast them when appropriate.

International schools.

There is a lack of consensus on what actually constitutes an international school, and if what is taught at an international school is actually “international education”. The literature that has developed in the past twenty years has started to define what an international school is, but there is still a level of ambiguity. Hayden (1998) noted that some of the traits associated with international schools included having multicultural, multilingual aspects, a high level of transience, a variety of higher education destinations for its students, a unique curriculum, and special forms of management. Hill (2006) argues that it is possible to have an international education without being an international school, while Sylvester (1998) claims that not all schools that teach in an international context can be called international schools because they do not provide an international education. Department of Defense schools are good examples of schools in an international setting that have a very national curriculum and structure, because their specific role is to serve the children of US military personnel who are stationed abroad. Thompson (1998) noted that there are five areas of importance that determine how ‘international’ a school is: exposure to others of different cultures within a school, teachers as exemplars of international mindedness, exposure to others of different cultures outside the school, a balanced formal curriculum, and a management regime which is value consistent with an institutional international philosophy (p. 284). Langford (1999) states that it is the international students that cause
schools to be international. It is unlikely that any school will ever be completely international, but it is possible for some schools to be more international than other schools. For the purposes of this paper, international schools will be defined as schools whose main mission is to serve international students.

**Purposes of international schools.**

The term “international school” has a diversity of meanings, making it somewhat difficult to define. Hill (2006) describes schools as being on a continuum between international and national schools. The ideal international school would have a complete focus on international education and be very culturally diverse, whereas a model national school would be culturally homogenous and would focus on a national curriculum (Hill, 2006). Hill (2006) points out that very few schools, domestic or abroad, are either completely national or completely international; rather they fall somewhere in between the two extremes. Walker (2000) claims that the origins of international schools lie not in serving the expatriate community, but rather in an ideological desire to produce world-mindedness in individuals. He states that international schools have a role to play showing national schools how to help promote international mindedness.

Many schools that serve the expatriate communities abroad define themselves by nationality, such as American embassy schools, but Allen (2000) points out that many of these schools are changing their names to become more internationally accepting. Sylvester (1998) refers to some international schools as “transplanted national schools” (p. 186) because they have encapsulated school missions rather than inclusive school missions. Schools with encapsulated missions may have 15 or more nationalities, but there is often one group that dominates the culture of the school, with an imported value system from the dominant group’s nation (Sylvester, 1998). The school acts as a home away from home for the dominant student group, managing their cultural experiences, and primarily recruit teachers from a single country (Sylvester, 1998). Finally, the curriculum prepares students for a
single post-secondary educational context rather than a wide range of contexts (Sylvester, 1998). US Department of Defense schools fall into encapsulated mission schools because they mainly serve US expatriate students, follow a US curriculum, mainly hire US teachers, and attempt to maintain a US culture within the school.

Schools with inclusive school missions fall closer in line with Hill’s (2006) definition of what an international school should be. They have at least 30-40 different nationalities (promoting a student culture of openness) and have a curriculum that does not give preference to any single culture (Sylvester, 1998, p. 187). The teachers come from many different national backgrounds, are world-minded, and are willing to learn methods from other cultural backgrounds (Sylvester, 1998). Rather than attempting to keep its students in a cultural bubble, the school engages with the local culture, and the administration’s ideology is explicitly stated and works through consensus (Sylvester, 1998). International schools that have inclusive school missions are more likely to be more philosophically driven because they are not working to serve any single national population, but rather work towards producing internationally minded students.

The curriculum that an international school chooses to follow is important in determining how international the school is. Thompson (1998) described curricula in international schools as being exported, adapted, integrated, or created. Exported curricula generally take a national system and export it to a new location, such as a US Department of Defense school using US curricula. An adapted curriculum takes a national system and makes changes to it, such as the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) produced by the University of Cambridge, which is used by many postcolonial states such as India. An integrated curriculum takes the best practices from many different countries, while a created curriculum makes a brand new curriculum based upon a system of guiding principles (Thompson, 1998). The best example of a created curriculum is the International
Baccalaureate (IB).

The curriculum of an international school can play an important role in the parents’ decision of whether or not to send their child to a school. The curriculum and language of instruction at an international school can be a significant way for expatriate children to maintain their national culture, while that same curriculum may be viewed by host-nationals as a gateway to education and jobs in more developed countries (Pearce, 1998).

**Demographics of international schools.**

The students that make up an international school may be internationally mobile, like TCKs, immigrants in the host country, or nationals (Hill, 2006). Some schools do not allow host-nationals to enroll, while schools that do allow host-national student enrollment have to be careful to not let too many host-nationals enroll, causing outsiders to view the school as not being truly international (Allen, 2000). Since almost all international schools are fee paying, there is a limited amount of socio-economic diversity found at international schools (Allen, 2000). The research site used for this study allowed host-national students to attend, while also serving expatriates and the children of political refugees. It is somewhat unique in that does desire to have a level of economic diversity in its student population, which it is able to do by providing scholarships to many of its students.

One of the most important aspects to any international school is the diversity of its student population. Current international school students, recent undergraduates who had attended international schools, and teachers at international schools all cited exposure to students of different nationalities as the most important aspect of an international education (Thompson, 1998). Langford (1999) hypothesized that the special characteristics found in TCKs was due to the culturally diversity and transient populations found at these international schools. The research site used for this study had over twenty nationalities represented, but has a less transient population since it is a boarding school
that offers its students more stability.

**Teachers.**

Hiring practices at international schools can be a complicated process. The school’s desires are often at odds with the desires of host nationals who attend the school because the host nationals want their children to be educated by foreigners (Allen, 2000). This may be due to their desire to have native English speakers as teachers for their children (Hayden, 2006). A school’s board of directors may also push to have more Western teachers hired, helping the school maintain its image as being ‘international’ (Cambridge, 1998). Cambridge (1998) points out that in order to hire teachers from Western countries, schools must offer them higher salaries to lure them away from domestic jobs. This can often result in a double standard of pay, where Western teachers are paid a much higher salary than host-national teachers (Cambridge, 1998). Transparency in salaries and hiring practices is important in creating a healthy school atmosphere where colleagues are seen as resources rather than competitors. Pearce (1998) suggested that hiring host-nationals as teachers, and treating them as equals in regards to pay and status, is a significant way in which schools can become more inclusive in their school mission. As international schools continue to grow and develop to meet the changing needs of their student populations it is important for schools to recognize that teachers from all cultural backgrounds have important gifts to offer their school.

**Intercultural student-teacher dynamics.**

International schools are places where intercultural dynamics are ever-present. Cambridge (1998) applied Hofstede’s cultural dimensions to different student and teacher interactions. The teachers at international schools often come from very different cultural backgrounds from their students, resulting in possible conflicts of values. Teachers who come from cultures where the power-distance is low may use more student-centered teaching methods, while students who come from a
culture where the power distance is high may not feel comfortable at first learning in a student-centered classroom (Cambridge, 1998). Uncertainty avoidance may affect the level of intellectual disagreements that students and teachers are comfortable with, while level of masculinity or femininity can affect whether a classroom is more competitive or cooperative (Cambridge, 1998). Finally, teachers from individualistic cultures may choose to give special awards to top performing students, but if those students are from a collectivistic culture they may not feel comfortable being pointed out (Cambridge, 1998). Hofstede’s cultural dimensions have important explanatory power in teacher-student dynamics, and training in cultural dimensions should be a part of international teacher training.

**Relationship to the local community.**

International schools do not live in their own little bubble, but are situated in time and place. However, some international schools are better at taking advantage of their local community than others. Although students at international schools cited participation with the local community as the least important aspect of international schools in a survey study (Thompson, 1998), the community is still an important resource for providing students with an opportunity to use their cross-cultural skills. Allen (2000) suggested that participatory education linking the local community to the school could help it become more inclusive. The research site has attempted to do this with its middle school program by helping clean up trash on the hillside and raising money for local charities. Another important way in which schools can build strong relationships with the community is by treating their non-teaching employees fairly and with respect (Pearce, 1998). International schools, and especially international boarding schools, need many non-teaching employees to function. In my experience the contributions of these individuals are often taken for granted, but the school would be crippled without them.
Boarding schools.

Boarding schools play an important role in training many future national leaders. Much of the review of the literature in this section is based upon Cookson and Persell’s (1987) study of elite boarding schools in the US, England, Israel, and Cuba. Over sixty schools were part of their study, which consisted of a questionnaire, many interviews with teachers, students, and administrators, as well as hundreds of hours of formal and informal observations (Cookson & Persell, 1987). Although the majority of the research was conducted from 1981 to 1983, this information is still valid today because elite organizations are inherently conservative, working to maintain their elite status. Although there are likely superficial differences in elite boarding schools today, there are more similarities than differences.

Gaztambide-Fernández (2009) defined what an elite boarding school is in America by creating a framework based upon five factors that determine whether a boarding school can be considered elite. The first factor that makes a school elite is its typology. Boarding schools that cater to the elite have the title of being independent schools having “self governance, self-support, self-defined curriculum, self-selected students, self-selected faculty, and small size” (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2009, p. 1100). Elite boarding schools are also elite on a scholastic level, offering a wide opportunity of activities outside of the classroom such as field trips and a wide range of athletics as well as a focus on the classics within the classroom. Elite boarding schools have been historically elite, holding a special status in the upper class, and have the ability to pass on cultural capital to its students. A fourth common feature of elite boarding schools is that they are geographically elite, owning large tracts of land in rural areas, providing the students with a sense of privilege. Finally, elite boarding schools are demographically elite because they serve the students from high socioeconomic levels. Although there has been a recent push for more economic diversity in boarding schools, the majority of the individuals
who attend these schools come from the upper class. Although Gaztambide-Fernández (2009) applied these criteria to elite boarding schools in the US, I argue that these criteria should fit in an international context as well because socioeconomic status is more important than geographic location. Elite international schools, therefore would also be typologically, scholastically, historically, geographically, and socio-economically elite.

**What makes boarding schools effective.**

One of the reasons that elite boarding schools are important to study is because the influence that the alumni of these schools have on the national and international stage. One of the main goals for these boarding schools is to prepare their students for leadership positions. Kahane (1988) noted, while reviewing the literature on elite boarding schools, that there were nine commonly cited reasons why these schools were able to produce such effective leaders. One way in which these schools are able to produce leaders is through their reputation, which allows the school to give their alumni greater social status. A second way is that they can be considered a total institution, giving the school control over all aspects of student life. Elite boarding schools also have a level of pedagogical consistency, allowing them to better de-socialize and then re-socialize their students in whatever image they choose. Boarding schools also have a more intensive socialization process because residential students spend much more time together than day scholars do. Elite boarding schools also have a level of social isolation, separating students from outside influences (Kahane, 1988), but this may be an area where boarding schools have changed in the past thirty years due greater access to family, friends and community via the World Wide Web.

Kahane (1988) noted that many scholars had hypothesized that the sociocultural composition of the schools was important because it allowed members of the upper class the opportunity to begin
creating social networks with each other at a young age. Primary group pressures are also greater at boarding schools, with individuals having a much greater motivation to conform to existing norms. Another reason that scholars believe that elite boarding schools are especially effective at producing leaders is because of the close student and staff relationships at these schools. Teachers are able to function as role models in a more meaningful way because the students do not have the parents present. The last reason that Kahane (1988) states as a commonly cited for boarding school effectiveness is its use of a dual curriculum focused on classical education within the classroom and many recreational activities outside of the classroom. Although Kahane believed that these reasons were insufficient to explain why these schools were so effective, these reasons are compelling when looked at in totality rather than individually.

**Historical background.**

Boarding schools, as we know them today, have their roots in European thought. Jean Rousseau first originated the concept that children should be educated away from their parents (Cookson & Persell, 1987). Boarding schools in the international context have roots in British colonialism, providing expatriates with places to educate their children in a culturally coherent environment. It is worthwhile for international boarding schools to question whether they are agents of change, or are just another form of neo-colonialism. If the only children who can afford to attend these schools are already members of the upper class, these schools are much more likely to reproduce the current social order.

**Geography and location.**

Cookson and Persell (1987) note that boarding schools are commonly built in geographically remote locations, away from the crowds and noise of large cities. They often own large tracts of land, and continually construct new buildings with alumni money. These schools often require a large
infrastructure, with operational requirements similar to that of a small town. Although Cookson & Persell were mainly describing boarding schools in the US, their description accurately describes the international school in this study.

**Cultural norms at boarding schools.**

Boarding schools commonly espouse meritocratic ideals because “privilege appears to be earned, because the only real justification for inequality is that it is deserved - in payment for sacrifices, the powerful must endure for the common good” (Cookson & Persell, 1987, p. 125). By forcing the children of elite to survive the demands that these boarding schools place upon them, it legitimates their privileged status later in life. Kuriloff and Reichert (2003) noted that the meritocratic ideals found at the schools were passed on to all the members of their school, even the minority students. The students learn to work hard to meet their goals, but they also have to look like they are not working too hard, otherwise their peers will chastise them.

Another cultural norm at these schools is that of bullying. Bullying is important in these schools, because it differentiates between what is taught and what is learned (Cookson & Persell, 1987). The school administration may claim to desire that their students treat each other with respect while completely ignoring the intense bullying that is occurring beneath their noses. At one elite boarding school in Australia, seventy-five sexual assaults were committed against two students by their peers in a four-month period (Poynting & Donaldson, 2005). These schools have a strict hierarchy within the student population which “has its form of solidarity, but it is one that tolerates and even admires bullies” (Poynting & Donaldson, 2005, p. 328). Kahane (1988) suggests that the conformity that bullying may bring is one of the aspects of boarding schools that makes them so effective at producing leaders. The atmosphere at these schools tends to be more competitive than cooperative, resulting in the student strength and aggression to be directly linked to power (Cookson & Persell,
1987). Students must join a clique or be left out and isolated, causing identification with a social niche a matter of survival (Cookson & Persell, 1987). Even for the most popular students, pain and loneliness is common in the boarding experience (Cookson & Persell, 1987).

The structure of boarding schools is designed around forming an intense collective identity (Cookson & Persell, 1987). Cookson and Persell (1987) describe this as deep structure regulation, controlling all aspects of the student’s life. Food and sexuality are both highly regulated in boarding schools, forcing students to subvert the control system (Cookson & Persell, 1987). Cookson and Persell (1987) state that “each person’s life is so regulated that freedom must be won by stealth” (p. 20). The psychological impact of living in these intense communities may lead to an early loss of attachment, resulting in difficulties later in life (Schaverien, 2004). The results of leaving parents at a young age may differ from child to child, but it would be foolish to ignore the idea that it has no effect at all.

The structures in place at boarding schools represent an intense form of acculturation. Acculturation is the process of the dominant culture reproducing itself through the education of individuals (Pai et al., 2002). Dominant culture refers to the most powerful (and often the majority) culture of a society. The core values of dominant cultures may differ from society to society depending on the environmental stressors and historical backgrounds. A benign structural-functionalist view of dominant cultural reproduction suggests that it promotes social cohesion and allows a society, in this case a school, to function smoothly. From a Marxist perspective, this reproduction only benefits the few individuals in power, while repressing and marginalizing the many individuals not in power.

**Students.**

Based upon the research by Cookson & Persell (1987), elite boarding school students in the US are the children of wealthy well-educated parents. The students often travel domestically and
internationally with their parents, and have a high levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy. Cultural diversity is clearly lacking among this population (Cookson & Persell, 1987), making it significantly different from the majority of international schools. Even with the push for greater racial and economic diversity within US boarding schools, the student leadership and hierarchy still lies with the students with high SES (Kuriloff & Reichert, 2003).

Although these schools are allowing more minorities into their hallowed halls, the majority of the students come from white Anglo-Saxon Protestant backgrounds. The admissions officer of a boarding school plays a vital role in a boarding school (Cookson & Persell, 1987). They are charged with finding the right mix of students so that the school can maintain its elite status. Admissions officers often give priority admission to the children of alumni, helping to reproduce the social order (Cookson & Persell, 1987).

The student subculture at these schools is one of high pressure. Cookson & Persell (1987) point out that there is no respite from a boarding school, and many of the students and counselors at the schools they interviewed mentioned that student freak-outs and escapes were not uncommon for students who couldn’t deal with the pressure. Although many boarding schools provide students with academic advisors and “big brothers” to watch out for their social and academic well-being, homesickness is still a common experience for many students (Cookson & Persell, 1987). The lack of privacy at the schools strips away their private self, while the dorms provide these students with an arena for intense relationships (Cookson & Persell, 1987). It is little wonder that these students have a difficult time when they return to their homes after living in a crucible for several months (Cookson & Persell, 1987).

**Curriculum of Boarding Schools.**

A vibrant academic climate is central to elite boarding schools (Cookson & Persell, 1987). The
model for the curriculum at elite boarding schools involves a focus on the classics in the classroom, and many recreational and athletic activities outside of the classroom (Cookson & Persell, 1987). The classics give the students access to important cultural capital, while the athletic activities provide students with opportunities for leadership (Cookson & Persell, 1987). Elite boarding schools in the US and Britain do not have the same ethical dilemma that international boarding schools have in deciding which cultures classics to teach. The greater the number of nationalities that a school teaches, the more groups that a school has to accommodate in its curriculum.

**Teachers at boarding schools.**

Teachers at boarding schools are often well educated, but not well paid (Cookson & Persell, 1987). Teaching is more of a calling than a job for these teachers. The demographics of the teaching population, in both age and years of experience, has an hourglass shape, with many young teachers at the bottom, and many older teachers at the top, with few teachers in the middle (Cookson & Persell, 1987). Teaching at a boarding school can be time consuming and emotionally intensive, so the younger teachers often do not last very long, leaving only those teachers who can survive the boarding school lifestyle (Cookson & Persell, 1987). Schools pay extra attention to personality when hiring teachers for elite boarding schools because unlike at a day school, everyone has to live together (Cookson & Persell, 1987).

**Administration at boarding schools.**

Power at boarding schools is best described as being extremely hierarchical (Cookson & Persell, 1987). The top of the power structure is the board of directors, who usually do not live in the area of the school, but rather are selected because of their wealth, wisdom, or work that they can contribute to the school (Cookson & Persell, 1987). Having the board of directors convene at an international boarding school can be especially tricky when the board members live all across the
globe. The headmaster at a boarding school is symbol of authority, and is responsible for showing students how to wield power effectively (Cookson & Persell, 1987). The boarding school I worked at had recently experienced having three headmasters in a three-year period, and the lack of stability was felt throughout the school.

Neither descriptions of boarding schools nor international schools can fully describe international boarding schools, but describing them together provides a rough outline of how these schools function. From my experience I believe that the boarding school aspect is more important to the student experience, but the effects of a culturally diverse school should not be overlooked.
This study explores how middle school students transition into an international boarding school. Schaetti (1996) describes the need to aid student transition in international schools as an emergent mandate, while Thompson (2006) points out that there is little research that incorporates the voices of international school students. Pearce (1996) claims that students new to an international school can best help it understand its culture. By hearing from the students themselves, the staff and administration could better meet the needs of incoming students as they make the transition into a new boarding school. The aim of this research is to answer the following questions:

- How do new students transition into an elite international boarding school?
- What aids and hinders the process of transitioning?
- What effects do siblings have on the process of transitioning?

Case Study Approach

A case study approach, which Creswell (2007) describes as “the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system” (p. 73), is best to help answer the research questions. Creswell states that a case study is most appropriate when “the inquirer has clearly identifiable cases with boundaries and seeks to provide an in-depth understanding of the cases or a comparison of several cases” (p. 74). In this study, the case queried a group of twelve middle school students who entered the research site between Fall 2007 and Spring 2010 to help answer how students make the transition into an international boarding school. Following this research tradition, multiple sources of data were collected, including semi-structured one-on-one interviews, semi-structured focus groups, informal observations, and documents and reports (Creswell, 2007, p. 73).

Description of the Case

The research site is a prestigious international boarding school in a mountainous region of India.
The school was founded for Anglo-Indian girls over 150 years ago, and has gone through many transformations since its creation. It was administered by American Presbyterians from 1874 through 1923, and then became a school serving many of the missionary children from US denominations (Fleming, 1947). In the 1940s the school population was over two-thirds American, and one-third British and Indian (Fleming, 1947). When the Indian government stopped issuing visas to Christian missionaries during the early 1950s (Scott, 1957), the different denominations left the land that the school is situated on in trust with the Church of North India, allowing the school to remain open.

The exodus of the missionaries from India caused much of the clientele of the school to leave and the school consequently struggled to recruit international students, which resulted in higher enrollment of Indian nationals. Currently the school recruits heavily from South and Southeast Asia, but the administration desires to increase the North American and European student population. According to the school’s information profile for 2009-2010 academic year, there were a total of 477 students, comprised of twenty-two different nationalities (Woodstock School Information Profile 2009-2010, 2009). Even though many different nationalities are represented at the school, approximately 80% are from India, Nepal, South Korea, and the US. Approximately half the students at the school come from Christian households, while the rest are a mix of Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, Jains, Muslims, and other religious affiliations.

The population of teachers and dorm parents at the school is approximately half Indian, and half a mélange of American, Canadian, English, Scottish, South African, French, and Korean individuals. The school has a dwindling number of mission board-supported teachers who see teaching at the school as their calling in life. A popular saying at the school coined by an alumnus who returned to be the school chaplain was that the teachers at the school are either missionaries looking to do good in the world, mercenaries looking for an international experience, or misfits who did not fit in
anywhere else. Many of the teachers who come to the school for an international experience are often unable or unwilling to fulfill or extend their two or three year contract, leading to a high rate of teacher turnover.

The school’s location on the outskirts of a popular Indian resort town is breathtaking, with views of snow-capped mountains in the fall and spring. Although the school does not claim to be an elite boarding school, it does serve some of the richest students in India, and the physical location of the school exudes a sense of privilege that most Indians rarely get to experience. At recruiting fairs for teachers the school uses its location as one of its biggest selling points, since many international schools are located in busy cities.

Since the school is built on a mountainside, flat areas to build dorms and classrooms are rare. This led the school to build the dorms and the academic buildings at different elevations. Students must climb several hundred feet each morning to make it to their classes on time. This establishes a geographic sense of separation between school life and dorm life. Up at the school level the majority of the administrative offices and middle school classrooms are built around a courtyard, while the high school is located up a walkway approximately fifty feet higher in elevation.

The school has undergone many changes within the past ten years, and shows no sign of slowing down. A rich alumnus and a string of ambitious school principals have been pushing to improve the stature of the school within the international school community. This has resulted in a new gym, a renovated boys’ dorm, and replacing the schools current three school model featuring a middle school in favor of a two school model with a K-6 junior school and a 7-12 senior school.

**Researcher Perspective**

Working and living for two years as a teacher at the research site left me with strong opinions about this school. Growing up in the Midwestern US and attending a public day school gave me a
much different perspective than many students at the school. I could never see myself sending my children to a boarding school, but the majority of the students that I talked with were happy and well adjusted. I attempted to allow my participants to share their ideas of how transition programming should go rather than ask them to confirm my hypotheses on what should happen.

My two years as a middle school teacher at the research site were a happy but busy time, and I appreciated being welcomed back at the school as if I had never left. I see the research site as a school that holds many of its students’ happiest memories as well as worst nightmares for some. I did my best to reflect the complexity found within my participants’ statements about the school.

**Selection Methods**

The participants in this study are twelve middle school students currently attending the school at the research site. All of the selected students entered the school at some point during their grade six year. At the research site, grade six is the first year of middle school, and is a common entry point for new incoming students, increasing the probability that the findings will be useful to the school, as they reflect one particular challenge in that school. Even for students who are not new to the research site, the transition to middle school can be difficult because of the increase in school size, heterogeneity in population, departmentalization, emphasis on ‘rules of behavior’ and competition, and less personal relations with the teachers (Anderson et al., 2000). This transition results in students being given more autonomy but less support than they have been accustomed to.

Previous studies have focused on adolescents’ experiences during the year they move to a new school (Dixon & Hayden, 2008; Hill & Hayden, 2008). In order to get a fresh perspective from the students on their thoughts and feelings, I chose to select students who had been at the school from one to three years to focus on the transition experience. The students who had attended the school for three years have had the opportunity to go through the transition, as well as aid (or not) new students coming
In choosing the participants in the study, I attempted to select a population that would represent the school’s diversity. International schools vary in their admissions policies in deciding whether host-nationals are allowed to attend the school (Allen, 2000). Allan (2002) found that the ratio of host-national students to foreign students had a major effect upon the school culture, and affected how new students transitioned into the school. I hoped to find how the experience between the host-national and foreign students experiences differed. Some of the students who come to the research site are non-nationals who have lived in India for many years, so the lines between foreigner and host-national are sometimes blurred.

In addition, there is no current research on how siblings affect student transition at international schools, and Dixon and Hayden (2008) have suggested this as an area for further research. It is common at the research site to have several siblings from the same family attending the school at the same time. The school allows students, under exceptional circumstances, to board in second grade (Woodstock School prospectus, 2010). What is not stated in the prospectus is that the exceptional circumstances often include having an older sibling at the school for support. I purposefully selected several students who already had an older sibling attending the school.

**Ethical and Professional Considerations**

Ethical considerations were of upmost importance throughout the research project. The first step was gaining access to research site. Weinberg (1968) states that when attempting to do research at an elite secondary school it is important to find a sponsor who is familiar with the headmaster. Since I had a personal relationship with the school principal from my tenure as a teacher at the school from 2007-2009, I contacted him with a request to do research at the research site school during May 2010. He graciously invited me to conduct my research at the school as long as I sent the school a copy of my
thesis once I completed it, one way in which I gave back to the participants in the study (Creswell 2007). He also provided me with a written statement of permission to allow passive parental consent at the school.

Participant Selection

Having gained consent from the principal, I went through the Human Subjects Review Board at Bowling Green State University, describing how I would gain informed consent from my participants and their parents, as well as the interview protocols for the study. To gain consent from the parents I sent out an e-mail describing the purpose, risks, and benefits of the having their children participate in the study (See appendix A for parental consent form). I chose e-mail as the communication tool of choice for several reasons, including reliability, speed, and familiarity. The mail system in India is not nearly as reliable as that of the US, so I would have had no way of knowing if the letters reached their intended audience, and if they did it would have taken a long period of time for the parents to receive them and respond. Since most of the parents of students at the research site do not live near the school, e-mail is the way that the school most frequently communicates with them. The head of the middle school sent out the e-mails since she is the main communicator with those parents. I used passive consent in this study to increase participant pool, while still giving the parents the option to remove their child from the study. The e-mails were sent out one week before the study began, and then parents were requested to reply if they did not want their child to participate. None of the parents sent back requests asking for their children to be removed from the study.

I also sought the assent of the middle school students. To do this, I drafted a letter describing the purposes, risks, and benefits of participating in the study, and had a middle school teacher distribute them to all the students (see appendix B for student consent form). I was available to answer any questions that the students had in regards to their participation in the research. On the back of the form,
the students were asked to fill out some simple biographical data if they wanted to participate in the study. Students who completed this form, and whose parents assented to their participation, became the pool of potential participants.

Out of the 127 students who filled out the forms, 25 met the criteria of joining the school in grade six and assenting to participate in the research. I chose four students from each grade level in the middle school (6th, 7th, and 8th). To achieve maximal variation I chose seven females and five males, six of the participants were members of the ESL program at the school, five of the participants had older siblings at the school before they came, while three more had friends or cousins attending the school before they came. When discussing the nationalities of the participants, I allowed the students to describe themselves however they felt most comfortable. The participants consisted of four Indian students, one of which spent his whole life in Nepal other than the past year and a half at the research site, while another had spent the past several years in Nigeria at another international school, three South Koreans, one of whom had lived for significant periods of time in India and the US, one Thai, one Nepali, and three Japanese, two of whom were siblings who were also part Indian, and one who was half American but had lived the majority of her life in Japan. Although Japanese students make up a small portion of the total population of the school, I selected three of the Japanese students to hear the perspective of students who were minorities in the school. The two siblings who were Japanese also provided me with a greater perspective on how siblings view each other.

Each of the 12 participants I selected took part in one semi-structured interview and one focus group session with other classmates. The follow table shows the breakdowns for the participants in the study, including their pseudonym, gender, grade level, country of origin (in terms of how the participants described themselves), ESL status, and social connections at the school prior to entering.
### Data Collection

To gain a wider perspective on the issue of “transition” I used maximum variation sampling, which Creswell (2007) cites as “an ideal in qualitative research” (p. 126). The participant selection criteria attempted to gain a maximum variation in regards to nationality, gender, years spent at the school, fluency in English, number of new schools attended, years spent in India, and the presence of a sibling at school before the participant enrolled. I chose these criteria because all of these factors could affect the ease with which these students transition into a new school. The data were collected through a student questionnaire attached the student consent form (see appendix B for form).

The interviews were conducted during the participants’ free time during lunch and after school, so as to not disturb their regular routine (Creswell, 2007). The interview questions revolved around the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>ESL Student</th>
<th>Social contacts at the school before entering</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indira</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>An older cousin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isako</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Two older siblings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byong</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>An older cousin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ajay</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Una</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>An older brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chihiro</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Japan and America</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vijay</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>India (lived most of his life in Nepal however)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>An older brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birch</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanjana</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>A friend from Nepal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>A friend from South Korea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atsuko</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>An older sibling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthew</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>An older sibling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
students describing the major differences between their old school and their new school (specifically in terms of teaching style and teachers), what helped them to transition, and how teachers, current students, and new students can aid in the transition process (see appendix C for interview protocols). Each participant received a small gift after his or her interview as an act of reciprocity.

The interviews took place in a quiet area to allow for the recording of the interviews. I also took notes during the interview to aid in further analysis. Although English was not the first language of many of the participants, they were fluent enough to be able to describe their thoughts and emotions about their transitional experiences. The interviews were transcribed and coded throughout the research process to help “the field-worker cycle back and forth between thinking about the existing data and generating strategies for collecting new, often better, data” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 50). The individual interviews were conducted first, and then the questions for the focus groups emerged from the conversations in the initial interview. The questions in the focus group focused on first having the students collectively remember their first week at the school while the second half of the focus group focused on giving the students the opportunity to design their own transition program for new students coming into the school.

The focus groups were used in hopes that interaction between students would produce better information than if they were only interviewed individually (Creswell, 2007, p. 133). Before I started asking the focus group questions, I gave the participants time to read over the transcripts from their previous interview as a form of a member check. I interviewed the focus groups by grade level, since those students are most familiar with each other. An added benefit of this group was that these focus groups came into the research site together as a cohort, which led to them being able to corroborate stories about their initial experiences of trying to fit in. I encouraged all participants to share, drawing out the shy students and asking the more boisterous students to allow their peers to talk (Creswell,
During the focus groups food was ordered in from a local restaurant as an act of reciprocity. Food is an important and appropriate reward for students at this institution, which is not surprising given that Cooks & Persell (1987) argue that food is a highly regulated commodity at many boarding schools.

In addition to the interviews and focus groups, I spent much of my time on the site as a participant-observer. Two years teaching at the school had given me partial insider status. While it is unlikely that any adult can be a true insider with students at a boarding school (Cookson & Persell, 1987), I had a cordial relationship with them both as a teacher and a researcher. During one month at the research site, I volunteered as a consultant with the middle school technology specialist, giving me a good opportunity to observe the students. After completing all of the formal data collection for the research, I spent a week as a substitute for the departing science teacher. This led to some difficult power imbalances with participants in the study, but I did make clear to the students that I did not have control over their grades in an attempt to minimize the power disparity. Volunteering allowed me to act as a participant at the school, and made my presence less obtrusive. The informal observations from teaching in the class were written into field notes and used to help triangulate the data. Although this study is not an ethnography, it did use several ethnographic techniques such as prolonged periods at the research site as well as my participation within the community. This helped me to better understand the culture of the school and the students’ formation into Third Culture Kids.

A wide array of documents, including the information profile for the school, admissions forms, the schedule for new student transitions, the school’s strategic master plan and the school prospectus was accessed through the school’s website. I collected other data during my time at the site, specifically focusing on documents about the transition programming of the school. These documents were mainly used to provide demographic data about the school and to help provide an accurate
description of the case.

Data Analysis

The interview recordings were transcribed and then coded using in-vivo codes (Creswell, 2007, p. 153). The analysis was open ended and inductive, seeking to hear the voices of the participants rather than the fit them into a pre-established theory (Creswell, 2007, p. 38). The transcription and first level of analysis was ongoing helping to better focus the second round of interviews. Writing field memos as well as reading and thinking through the interview transcripts both played an important role in the first level of analysis (Maxwell, 2007). After the first round of coding, a list of second level codes was developed and the transcripts were coded a second time. It was from the second round of coding that the themes of this study emerged. Through discussions with an adviser the themes were focused around processes rather than static concepts to further enrich the discussion.

Validity and Reliability

A second researcher cross-checked the coding, until an acceptable level of agreement was reached (Creswell, 2007, p. 210). My role as an observer of the community for over two years helped reduce “spurious associations and premature theories” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 110). I used long quotes from transcribed interviews to help maintain my participants’ voices, and attempted to describe the case in as much detail as possible to allow the readers to decide how transferable the findings are to different situations (Creswell, 2007, p. 209). I also attempted to find disconfirming evidence to the conclusions that I reached to improve validity. I reported my own biases and role as the instrument in this study, to help the readers understand how I approached this study, and attempted to set my biases aside to better understand what the participants were saying (Creswell, 2007, p. 208). Finally I triangulated the information from the interviews with the observations I made and documents I collected during my time at the site (Maxwell, 2002, p. 112).
Limitations

As a case study, this research has definite boundaries to give it focus, though this limits the generalizability of the study. The study was bounded by age level, so high school students or elementary age students at the school may have a much different experience than the junior high school students described in this paper. This study was also bounded by place, making these experiences not generalizable to other elite international boarding schools. This study focused on the experience of boarding students, thereby excluding the experiences of day scholars at the school. This population is an important minority, especially since they may become marginalized at boarding schools (Cookson & Persell, 1987). Finally, the research was conducted at the end of the school year, meaning students were likely to have a different perspective on their experiences than if the research would have occurred during the first several weeks of the school year.
DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Five major themes emerged out of data collected from the one-on-one interviews and focus groups. In the data analysis these themes shared many of the same codes, and although the first theme specifically focuses on the acculturation process in general, the four other themes explore specific aspects of this process. This chapter will explore how new students acculturate into the school; how being an ESL student affects this process; how new students become independent through acculturation; how new students must overcome fears while acculturating; and what role siblings and old friends play in helping new students transition.

The Process of Acculturation Into a New School

Students from a variety of different backgrounds are acculturated into the school culture of the research site that, although located in India, is very Western. Students are required to study and speak in English, follow a Western curriculum, attend monthly Christian chapels, and exhibit a strong work-success ethic. The school’s motto, *Palma non sine pulvere*, can be translated as “There is no success without work.” Whatever the outcome of this acculturation is, the school appears effective in producing students who fit into the cultural system of the school. The school acculturates students into its dominant culture through the boarding program, the overcoming of homesickness and exclusion, fitting students into social groups, learning a new educational system, and adjusting to a challenging environment. Through all of these, students actively acculturate to the new school with the help of their peers, teachers, and dorm parents.

Acculturation through boarding.

One major theme that emerged from the interviews and focus groups was the importance of residential program in the acculturation process. The participants described life in dormitories (or dorms) as a busy, diverse, crowded place where students have to learn how to survive within a total
fitting in

Dorm parents take on some of the responsibilities of guiding and mentoring students, but with student to dorm-parent ratios of eighteen to one or higher, it is difficult for many of these students to receive the individual attention from adults to which they may have been accustomed. Attention from adults can become a source of jealousy for students at this school, as Chihiro, a seventh grade Japanese girl, stated in response to being asked if her first week at the school was stressful:

A little bit in the beginning because I remember fighting with my roomies because my dorm parent is also Japanese, Ms. Tadamori, and like they thought like, they, she was only treating me because I was Japanese, and it was her first Japanese student, not first, but it had been a long time, so I had a difficulties with that.

Living with peers all of the time resulted in friends becoming family, forming a collective identity within the student body. Students are required to learn to share everything, including showers, food, and their deepest fears, as they live in such close quarters with their peers. When asked about the importance of peers at the school, Indra said, “They are like your family, they support you when you need it, they don’t like, if someone gets caught and the other person doesn’t and they were doing the same thing they would go and confess.” This collective identity is can be extremely powerful. During my tenure as a teacher at the school, a large group of middle school students were able to keep their indiscretions during an activity week field trip a secret for over half a year.

**Acculturation through overcoming homesickness, bullying, and exclusion.**

Homesickness is a major obstacle facing students who are new to a boarding environment. The strategy that many of the students proposed as being the best way to survive this part of the process of adjustment is to continue to look forward and ignore their complete loss of the familiar. The first six weeks are targeted by the dorm-parents as the time for new students to adjust to the boarding life; new students are restricted from going out of boarding with their parents, are only allowed one phone call a
week to their parents, though students are given extra support to help them adjust. Even with the frenetic pace of life in dorms, students reported that the acute sense of loneliness creeps into their minds at night, even for those students who had been at the school for a long period of time. Atsuko, an eighth grade Japanese girl, when asked if she felt that she had fully adjusted to life in the school stated:

Yeah, sometimes, but sometimes when we do something that we do at home like games together, KatKati, or hide and seek, I feel so homey because even I play with friends at home, but if we, if I alone in room I feel so not homey, yeah, at home my siblings are making noise and I don’t, I never had not hearing things, I always heard something here, so when I’m lonely in my room, then I feel so alone.

Not all students are able to adjust to parental absence and conform to the social norms of a new location. During the seventh grade focus group, the participants reminisced about two of their previous classmates who left the school after a few weeks. Neither student was adequately prepared for the realities of living in a boarding school, and one student who had lived a very sheltered life until that point experienced intense bullying because he did fit the cultural norms of the school.

For many of the English language learners, speaking their own language can be an important source of comfort in dealing with homesickness. This can have unintended consequences for students who do not have peers with whom they can speak their native language. When Chihiro was asked if she saw groups forming down in dorms, she replied,

Yes, I did. Especially with the Koreans, because like I, yeah there’s something that they weren’t used to since they were in ESL so, I guess they don’t want to speak English so much in the beginning, maybe it makes them feel more better speaking in Korean in the beginning, (pause), yeah sometimes I thought it was a little over, feeling left out.
Acculturation through finding a group.

Finding a social group to fit in with is a matter of survival for most new students at this school. Several participants mentioned that they were unable to focus and succeed in school until they found a social group. When asked about the best part of the first week at the school, many participants mentioned meeting their peers. This process of learning to be around peers all the time is intensive, but was enjoyable for many of the students. While the new students are acclimating, returning students are evaluating the new students and deciding who will make an acceptable friend. The social acclimation for new students and evaluation by old students occurs constantly, through group work and games at the school level, and through sports and other social activities down at dorms. New students who are seen as having a potential to provide social capital to the returning students in the future may find acceptance much quicker than students who are seen as social liabilities. Birch, a seventh grade Thai boy, when asked if he saw old students avoid talking to new students, explained it this way:

Yeah (laughing), hah sometimes it’s me also, like first year there’s one Thai new students boy, so he’s in my dorm, so I wasn’t sure if he was good friend or not, so I just don’t talk to him for awhile, and after that I say ‘hi, how are you doing’.

The groups formed by some returning students can be entrenched, since some of the students have been living in dorms for three or more years by the time they reach the sixth grade. This leaves limited options for new students when attempting to find a group. New students coming to the school found the easiest groups to join consisted of other new students, members of their same nationality, their roommates of the same grade, groups that friends they knew before attending the school were a part of, and large groups that they could join easily. Atsuko, the eighth grade Japanese girl, stated it this way:

If it’s bigger, big group huge group then people can just go into the group because I don’t think they notice, and nobody say what are you doing in this group, but if it’s small group like four
people it’s so hard because they have their own secret and own conversation, and if other person comes they don’t want that person to know their secret and to have conversation with them, so yeah, this school lots of small smaller groups, so it's hard.

These limited options can pose problems for students who enter the school during the second semester since the group of new students is much smaller.

**Acculturation through a hybrid-Western school.**

The participants in the study came from a wide range of backgrounds, and many of the students found that adjusting to a Western-style education was the easiest part of the transition to their new school. I am using the term Western-style education here rather than international style education because what is taught within the class is a complex amalgamation of British and American curricula, where high school seniors who take Advanced Placement tests have to write an essay on the benefits of daylight savings time, many of whom had never heard of the concept before. The students, however, are getting a multicultural education at the research site, but is it not due to the curriculum that is taught within the classrooms. So much of what is taught and learned about different cultures at this school occurs between the students, giving them a truer multicultural education. Finding ways to increase the international aspects of the curriculum could be an important way to increase students’ post-secondary options.

Some of the students already had experience in Western education before attending this school, but for many it was the first time to attend an international school. The adjustment process for many of the students was expedited because many stated they had been very unhappy with their old school. When Vijay, an Indian who had lived his whole life in Nepal, was asked about what he disliked about his old school, he said,

There were like a billion things. Like I didn’t like anything out there. I hated the teachers, I
didn’t like most of the students, so I hated the school overall. That, I think that was the main reason why I joined in the second semester, because I couldn’t like stay there for any longer. I just wanted to leave even if I was badly, doing bad in the school. But then I didn’t do as bad as I thought I would, so it was quite alright.

A major theme throughout the interviews was that the participants appreciated the philosophy of their new school compared to their old, including an absence of corporal punishment and of high-stakes testing, greater attention from and interaction with teachers, and a focus on effort and critical thinking. Despite these pleasures, learning the cultural norms of a classroom in an international school was not an easy adjustment for many students. Participating in class was difficult for many of the ESL students as well as the students coming from schools in India. The critical thinking required in many classes was particularly difficult for the students coming from Indian school systems. When Matthew, an eighth grade boy from India, was asked what advice he would give new students coming into the school, he said,

Uhh, that it’s different from their old school so they need to drop, actually it depends where they are from. If they are from an Indian school they will have to drop everything that they know and learn new stuff.

It seems likely that the students who are most likely to have a successful transition into this school are those who either have previous experience with a similar system or are willing to abandon their previous schema for what it takes to be a successful student and embrace a new schema.

**Acculturation into the physical environment.**

If dealing with an entirely new social and educational landscape was not enough, new students have to navigate an intense and complex physical environment. Before new students coming from other countries reach the school, they must take an eye-opening trip through Delhi. Chihiro, the
seventh grade Japanese girl, described it this way

Umm, it’s not in [city located by the school], or this school particularly, but when you go to the cities like Delhi, there’s so many beggars, that really shocked me, because my mom told me ‘Oh there will be some beggars around’, but it’s, it’s still like shocked me because all of these people seem like they weren’t able to take a bath or get any healthy stuff for themselves, sometimes they just saw a man lying on the sidewalk, just lying there not moving, and flies were around, and sometimes I thought he was dead when he was just sleeping.

The majority of new students enter the new school during the peak of monsoon season, when dampness and mold are a constant menace. Staying healthy can be a struggle for many new students (and teachers) whose digestive tracts have not adjusted to life in India. In addition to dealing health issues, students have to learn to deal with the roving troops of monkeys that occasionally like to attack humans.

Although the harsh realities of life in India may be difficult, the location of the school is breathtaking, both in beauty and in a lack of oxygen. Being located in the mountains provides stunning views and cooler temperatures, as well as a thinner atmosphere that can take several weeks to adjust to. In comparison to Delhi, the beautiful expanse of land exudes a sense of privilege in a way similar to how Gaztambe-Fernandez (2009) described elite boarding schools in the US. Although the school owns large tracts of land, flat space is at a premium, so the schools and dorms had to be built several hundred feet apart in elevation. Walking up the steep hill to school each morning was one of the biggest difficulties mentioned. Sue, an 8th grade Korean girl, said “The long climb up to school, that was the hardest for me, ‘cause in Korea, North [region of South Korea] of course there’s no mountains, and PE class I also fake it every day, so I didn’t exercise at all.”
Student agency in the acculturation process.

Una, a seventh grade Korean girl, came into the school as a new student with a plan to fit in from the very start. She stated with a chuckle, “It felt like I had to be hyper to friends with people, it was really tiring. I thought, kind of worked. People thought I was like very happy person.” Older students who reflected on advice they would have given themselves if they could go back in time remarked that working to be perceived as happy rather than lonely would have helped them to fit in better.

Some students come to the school after having spent their childhoods traveling to many different countries. Sue, an eighth grade girl, spent significant portions of her childhood enrolled in South Korean, US, and Indian public schools. She found that coming to an international school was harder because she had always received more support and attention at the national schools. She described coming to the school this way:

I mean, like, in Indian schools I was the only Asian in my class so people were very friendly to me and all of that but over here there a lot of different nationalities so it's like (pause) you have to adjust to it. There’s no like ‘welcome, here‘ it’s nothing like that. You have to adjust to it yourself, although there are people who are very friendly to you, but it's more to yourself being associated with other people, so I guess that’s what different.

Acculturation with the support of the school and peers.

Support in the acculturation process comes from many different sources, including peers, dorm parents, classroom teachers, and the ESL program for students learning English. The buddy system, where new students are assigned a returning student to help show them around the school, was active but appeared to be functioning organically and without strong administrative direction. Sometimes it
was dorm parents who assigned buddies, while other times it was the students’ academic advisers. Two of the participants stated that they were never given a buddy, two participants stated had been provided buddies but found them unhelpful, while eight students reported positive experience with the buddy system. The job of a buddy at a boarding school is more intense than that at a day school because they are responsible for helping their new students navigate both the school and dorms, introducing them to peers, acting as a tour guide and occasionally as a translator. Isako, a 6th grade Japanese girl, stated that,

For me, I don’t know language, then you ask my buddy, not have to, but buddy should do this to friend, this is Isako or something, that dorm parent said this thing and you have to do this thing. She should explain what happen.

Although buddies were an important source of support, all of the participants mentioned that informal support from friends was important to their adjustment to the school. Dorm parents also play an important role in helping students to adjust, providing students with help with homework, homesickness, and heartbreak. For the ESL students, the ESL program was commonly as a safe place where they could relax and learn to be comfortable speaking English in front of others. Several participants mentioned receiving extra support from teachers during the first few weeks of school. This is clearly helpful for students who come at the beginning of the school year, but can be problematic for students who come during the second semester when the teachers are more focused on content. When Sue was asked about coming in the middle of the semester she responded this way,

It's like, first semester when you come it’s all like, you get to, it builds up, friendships and relationships and study skills and all that and then you’re sort of stuck in the middle and you don’t have a perfect shape to be stuck in that place, so you’re like ‘Oh, what do I do’ so it’s kind of, what should I say, harder than just coming in at the beginning.
Discussion of the Process of Acculturation Into a New School

Learning to fit in at an international boarding school is an extremely intense and demanding experience for new students. The environment found at this school, which encourages a collective identity is similar to the elite boarding schools described by Cookson & Persell (1987), suggests that the research site may have more in common with boarding schools in the US than it does with other international schools. Forming a collective identity is one of the main objectives of elite boarding schools in the US since it is seen as an important trait for future leaders to rely only upon themselves and their closest friends. As Atsuko and Chihiro mentioned, homesickness is something that students struggle to deal with during the first few months at the site, in spite of the best efforts of the staff to ease the transition. Research suggests that intense homesickness (Cookson and Persell, 1987) and bullying (Poynting & Donaldson, 2005) are present at other boarding schools and act as an important role in the process of forming a collective identity.

The participants in the study who came from cultures very different from that of the school culture found the transition into the school especially difficult, and many found solace in other members of their home culture. The retreat of students into groups selected by nationality because of their ‘otherness’ is similar to what was described by Allan (2002) in his study transition into an international school. For some of the students at the research site, the limited population of national peers denied them the luxury of a linguistic enclave. The segregation of minorities into enclaves can actually result in a further ‘othering’ of even more marginal populations, making a social pecking order based upon the demographics of the school.

The participants in the study were highly aware of the differences between new students and returning students, which made finding a social group to be a part of more difficult. Although Langford
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(1998) and McLachlan (2007) describe the population of international schools as being highly transient, and therefore producing a student culture where friendships are made quickly but are often short-lived, the student population at this research site was much more stable, producing a more closed student culture in which student-student relationships were the most important and powerful. It’s not uncommon for students to be sent to the boarding school in the third grade and spend the next nine years living and studying with a close group of friends. Every international school has a unique student population that is a reflection of the local and international community present at the school, which should be recognized. The thriving alumni program at this school is evidence of the strong ties to this particular place and population.

Some of the participants in the study found the transition into a more Western classroom especially difficult. Hofstede’s cultural dimensions can help explain much of the acculturation that occurs within the classrooms. Many of the students come from countries where the power distance is higher, but have to learn to be comfortable with a lower power distance between themselves and their teachers (Cambridge, 1998). These cultural dimensions create difficulties for both students and teachers because the expectations of proper behavior for both parties are often assumed and taken for granted rather than clearly communicated, leading to frustration. Adjusting to these cultural differences took varying amounts of time, with one student mentioning that it took him a whole year before he felt comfortable offering answers and asking questions in class. Giving new teachers a brief orientation into the cultural dimensions could be an important tool to help diminish intercultural difficulties and help new students transition even easier into a new school.

As Chihiro and Sue mentioned, learning to deal with special challenges of living on the side of a mountain in India took time and effort. These difficulties of having to climb up and down the mountainside and surviving monkey attacks are viewed by the administration and alumni as part of
their unique school experience, a sense of asceticism similar to that described by Cookson and Persell (1987) where students have to experience some level of suffering to deserve their privileged position in life. Although the school could make changes to make aspects life easier for students, since much of the school's identity is tied to these challenges. How elite boarding schools maintain a sense of asceticism while conducting multimillion-dollar renovations warrants further investigation.

The participants in the study described differences their strategies for surviving when they came to the school as new students. The participants at the school were not passive individuals who were merely acted on by outside forces; they were also active participants in the acculturation process (Rogoff, 2003). Students who were the most confident in their ability to relate to their peers were able to make the adjustment easiest (Lord et al., 1994). For students to fully adjust to life at this boarding school they must actively make changes necessary to thrive at the school. International boarding schools differ significantly from international day schools because of the difference of parental support between the two types of schools (McLachlan, 2007). Support at an international boarding school may require parents to focus extra attention on the leaving phase of Pollock and Van Reken’s (1999) transition model, mentally preparing themselves and their children to leave for the boarding school, and then allowing their children adapt to the new school setting without them. Providing incoming students with a list of strategies for fitting in before coming to the school could give new students more tools to adjust to the school quicker. The desire for students to fit into the school is a strong motivation to change their personal behaviors and attitudes (McKillop-Ostrum, 2000). For students who do not have a strong desire to fit in with their peers may find the acculturation process difficult due to a lack of rewards other than social acceptance.

Students coming into the school have to make many adjustments to their cultural schema to successfully make the transition to life in an international boarding school. The participants mentioned
several different rites of passage that represented adjustment into the new school. For one student it was winning a sporting event, and for another student it was getting caught in dorms talking after lights out. Overall, students reported taking anywhere from nine weeks to one year to feel adjusted to the school. These students have the difficult task of adjusting to life away from their parents, being surrounded constantly by their peers, climbing up and down mountains while fending off monkeys, and learning to meet a whole new set of teacher expectations. They are active participants in the process of adjusting to this new environment, but also receive support from a wide variety of places. This process takes students varying amounts of time depending on how similar their cultural background is to that of the school.

Learning English in an International School

The research site is home to a strong ESL program that draws students from Korea, Thailand, Japan, Vietnam, and other countries in Asia. Many of the ESL students enter the program during the sixth grade, and the majority of the support they receive occurs during their middle school years. Most ESL students new to the middle school enroll in ESL courses for English, history, language, and religious education, and take the regular math, science, gym, art and technology skills classes. As they become more comfortable with English they are eased out of ESL classes, and by the end of their middle school years they are expected to succeed at the high school level with minimal ESL support. Learning a new language can be a difficult process, making the transition into a boarding school even more difficult. These students learn English in their classes, ESL and regular, as well as outside of class with the help of their peers.

Difficulties caused by not knowing English.

Unfamiliarity with English caused some participants to struggle to adjust to the cultural differences at the school and in India. Byong, a sixth grade Korean boy, described it this way, “because
Korea people doesn’t [understand] that much of Indian culture, because umm when I first came here I didn’t understand English that much and then umm, sometime I got struggle with that.”

As a result, Byong said he frequently received formal reprimands from dorm parents and teachers during his first semester at the school.

Another difficulty resulting from limited English proficiency among students is social teasing and exclusion from their peers. The ESL participants in the study characterized the teasing about their pronunciation and grammar as hurtful, even when it was meant to be helpful. Discomfort with speaking English led some participants to feel very shy, and produced a degree of self-imposed social exclusion. These participants wanted people to reach out to them, but that didn’t happen. When asked what old students can do to help new students, Atsuko said,

Talk to me, talk to people, talk to me, even though I don’t know English just talk to me, I can nod or umm yeah, so I can, I can say yes or no, more than that maybe I can’t say, but if people talk to me I don’t feel lonely or homesick. I think people just talk to new students to make them in the conversation and so they don’t feel lonely.

Being seen as a lonely person only worsened the situation, and participants felt this made them less attractive as possible friends.

**Learning English in non-ESL classes.**

For the ESL participants in the study, taking classes outside of the ESL program presented difficulties as well as rewards. In school, all students are required to speak English, forcing ESL students to learn quickly. One unfortunate consequence is that some of the participants worried about losing the ability to speak their mother tongue. When Isako, a sixth grade Japanese girl, was asked about what it was like speaking English at school all the time she stated:

(Isako) Yeah, English, again, but like, I was taught by Japanese language, but now no Japanese
language, English at the school.

(Researcher) So is it hard not speaking Japanese up at school?

(Isako) Like we can’t talk Japanese at that time, I start forget Japanese and I don’t know how to explain......Kind of, but I feel strange in my heart because I am talking English and suddenly to Japanese then I feel weird.

Learning vocabulary words for math and science posed special problems for many of the ESL participants, but they appreciated whenever they were able to learn vocabulary words in class or in tutorials with the help of practical objects.

Although being in non-ESL classes was difficult for many of the ESL participants, they all appreciated the social benefits of being in class with their non-ESL peers. For many of the participants, math and art classes were opportunities demonstrate skills that were less related to language. They appreciated the praise and social status they received for these skills, but Una, a seventh grade Korean girl, found that being labeled an ESL student could be a hindrance:

Even though we do they same work in ESL people did the better work than the regular class, why can’t they just say ‘Oh they did better, and they have to say ESL did better’, like cause some, someday we’ll be out of ESL and then it doesn’t make any differences if you are in ESL whose better…Yeah, not only writing, everything, even in math. Math has nothing to do with ESL, he says like ESL can understand better than you guys.

It is important for regular classroom teachers seeking to help ESL students to remain cognizant of the steep learning curve these students experience and to scaffold their classroom activities in relation to language.

**Learning English with the support of an ESL program.**

The ESL program at the school plays a vital role in student success. One participant mentioned
that she did not feel like she would still be in the school if not for the support she received from the ESL program. In general, participants noted that the ESL classroom was a comfortable place to practice English. Una, a seventh grade Korean girl, described the ESL program this way,

First of all, I learned so many vocabularies, and that helped and ESL was like, you know it's like small group of people who don’t know English, I don’t feel awkward there. Mr. Sulu told me that when I do presentation in front of them I feel comfortable, but in front of whole class is really scary, so I had lots of practice in ESL and it was very comfortable.

Learning to participate in class using English is one of the most difficult hurdles participants had to overcome, and the informal atmosphere in the ESL classes gave students the confidence they needed to participate more in non-ESL courses. This helped create a sense of belonging that in turn encouraged the students to expand their social networks. Chihiro, the seventh grade Japanese girl, described it this way,

Yeah usually all of us have the same problem in English, even if we can’t speak a little bit, all of us can only speak and read a little bit, but by grouping up or assembling with the same type of people it really helps because you don’t think you are alone.

Although these students appreciate the camaraderie, they have a strong desire to take more classes outside of the ESL program as they become more comfortable.

**Learning English outside of the classroom.**

ESL students are active learners of English outside the classroom as well. They reported spending time studying, reading books in English, and seeking out help from friends even though these activities are not always easy or comfortable. Byong, a sixth grade Korean boy, described the importance of friends and the process of learning English this way,

Every day I ask for words, like I don’t know what the words what they say or someone else
says, and I ask them and they tell me. And I, and the most important part that I learned is
talking with them and telling the teachers and all, that’s how I learn English most.

Some students felt uncomfortable talking to their peers at first because of their lack of English. Semi-structured small-group activities, such as “adviser nights”, where academic advisers host 12-15 advisees in their homes, created relaxing social opportunities for ESL students to talk with their more fluent peers. The students have plenty of motivation to learn English. One of the important motivators for students is to be able to communicate with their peers through sports. When Birch, a seventh grade Thai boy, was asked about how his English skills affected his ability to make friends, he answered it this way,

I think it depends, if you down at dorms, like sometimes if you good at some sports you can start to hang out with friends, but if you don’t know English, it's kind of like hard to talk to them and explain to them what you try to do or something.

Learning a language at this boarding school can be exhausting because there are few times when students are not surrounded by English. The sixth grade students lamented the fact that they could not listen to their iPods during the week, a convenient way for them to listen to their native languages.

**Discussion of Learning English in an International School.**

The participants in the study who were in ESL classes stated that they had to overcome several challenges that their peers who already knew English did not have to deal with, including understanding dorm rules and how to overcome the embarrassment of speaking a second language improperly. Many of the ESL students have limited verbal skills when they come to the school. Although the school conducts English entrance exam tests to check applicants for minimal language competency, the students’ preparation for English-medium schooling focused only on passing the competency exam, and not on well-rounded language skills. When these students reach the school,
there is often a discrepancy between the English skills students think they have, and their actual skills, which frustrates students and teachers alike. Even students who came from India and Nepal had difficulty learning English, recognizing the multitude of accents at the school, and building up their vocabularies.

For some of the participants such as Atsuko, not being comfortable communicating orally in English led to self-imposed social exclusion. This lines up with Allan’s (2002) findings that familiarity with the language of instruction is a key factor in how easily students transition into a new school. The school has provided extra support for ESL students in the form of a summer camp before entering the school, which is especially important in a boarding school where students are surrounded by English both at the school and the dorms. Since the school is a total institution, described by Cookson and Persell (1987), it forces students to become English speakers quickly.

As Chihiro mentioned, the ESL program was an important safe haven for students who were uncomfortable speaking English in front of their more fluent peers. This matches up with Pearce’s (1998) description of these programs as areas of refuge for students learning English. The ESL program allowed a wider variety of perspectives into the school, and should be valued for the service they provide to schools. Further empirical research specifically on ESL programs within international schools could illuminate the needs of these students to further help them.

The ESL program played a vital role opening up opportunities to students who desired to gain entrance to educational systems that would not be available to them otherwise. The importance of English as the gateway to Western institutions of higher learning is a powerful incentive for parents to send their children to a school where they can learn to speak English fluently (Thompson, 2005). International boarding schools are well suited for students learning English since they are surrounded
by English at all times. Although these students face many hardships in the process of learning English, participants in this study were able to successfully adjust to non-ESL courses through the support of the ESL program, their own motivation, and the support of their peers.

**Becoming Independent**

A major theme that emerged from the focus groups and interviews was the effect that coming to this boarding school had on the participants’ development as independent thinkers and individuals. The process of developing self-reliance occurs both in boarding as well as classrooms, and can be painful for many students so it is important to find appropriate levels of support that students find appropriate.

**Becoming independent through boarding.**

Living in dorms and away from parents for the first time can be a difficult experience for many students. The first six weeks of semi-isolation from parents forces students to cut many of their previous dependencies and privileges and learn to rely upon themselves more. For some students this meant cleaning up after themselves for the first time in their life, while for others this meant learning to cook for the first time since food from home can be a vital comfort during difficult times. Ajay, a sixth grade Indian boy who had spent the past several years at an international school in Nigeria, described it this way,

I think the good thing about coming to [Research site] was that like here I learned to look after myself nicely ‘cause then there like I just leave the room and then the people after me just clean up after me and all, but now I have to make up my own bed and clean up my own room.

One of the participants had attended a boarding school prior to coming to the research site, and he found that this school forced him to become more independent compared to his previous school. Una, a seventh grade Korean girl, first became cognizant of her independence after she received her first
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report card; she said

It feels like now I am grown up, so last time when I wanted to cut my hair, I just cut it and nobody knows, it’s like really comfortable after reports card has come. If I was in Korea they would scold me right away. If it’s good I call them right away, and if it’s bad I don’t call them.

Although these students are learning to become more independent, to accomplish this they have many freedoms taken away from them. Many of the participants remarked that they often were not allowed to do many of the leisure activities they were used to at home and had less choice as to when they would study and when they would relax. The indirect support of providing students with a set of rules to follow provided an important level of scaffolding in helping these students learn to look after themselves.

**Becoming independent through critical thinking in formal education**

Students’ development of critical thinking skills allowed them to become academically independent. Here is how Sue, an 8th grade Korean girl, describes a typical class at her old school in South India:

Umm, we come to class, and the teacher come into class and you stand up ‘good morning ma’am or sir’ we sit down, he or she, the teacher, writes something down on the board, you copy down in your notebook, you submit your notebook and that’s the end of class. Yeah, and you have to memorize everything in the book or in the notebook. And that’s all that comes in the tests, and that’s it. If you fail the test, well bad for you, you have one more grade, but if you pass it you go up, and that’s yeah, that’s it.

For many of the participants, transitioning into a classroom where they were expected to creatively generate ideas for writing assignments as well as problem based assessments posed a challenge. This was the most challenging transition for one male student. Another student, a seventh-grade Japanese
girl named Chihiro, described the expectations of her current teachers this way: “They try to make us solve on our own by not telling us the method, that really helps to figure out the stuff.”

**Becoming independent through experience.**

Living in a total institution resulted in many of the participants jealously guarding little freedoms that they do have. Una, the seventh grade Korean girl, when asked whether teachers should provide students with a buddy to show them around, stated that:

> Academic they should do something, but for friends stay out of it, because it makes it more complicated. Teachers, like, if some people have trouble they believe teacher and they tell them, and then it ends up going to principal.

Much of the literature on peer support systems is referred to as ‘the buddy system’, but using this term with ESL students may result in confusion, as later in the interview Una described a similar situation where she said it was important to have a peer to help answer questions. For schools with ESL students, finding a different term that does not imply teacher-directed friendships may be more useful.

Attempting to find ways for teachers and dorm parents to help new students is further complicated by a resignation that the process of becoming independent must be painfully experienced. When Atsuko, the eighth grade Japanese girl, was asked what teachers can do to help new students, she responded by saying,

> Maybe first day they can advise them, but second day they shouldn’t do anything. As I said last time, right now I think teacher should just avoid them, they should be more stronger and more independent. That’s why parents send them to here to be more independent.

It can be complicated for the academic advisers to provide students with the right level of freedom. Since many students come from cultures where seeking extra help is a sign of weakness, and resulting in students foregoing needed additional academic support. Many students, however, are able to find
the support they needed by themselves. For some students this meant following their classmates from class to class if they did not get along with their buddy, finding student tutors rather than going to teacher led study sessions, and relying on their peers for emotional support.

**Becoming independent with suitable support**

Finding the right types of support for students working hard to become independent can be a difficult task. The types of acceptable support can be very contextual. Students at this boarding school valued a certain level of division between their school and dorm lives, so that the emotional support given by dorm parents was acceptable at dorms, but that same emotional support given by teachers at the school level was shunned. The direct support from teachers most appreciated by the participants was mainly through the facility of academic advisers, similar to the types of support described by Cooks and Persell (1987). Academic advisers advocate for a small group of students, as a bridge between the school and the dorms, as well as providing students with opportunities to go out of boarding for a night. The participants appreciated having a safe adult they could share their concerns about dorms with without fear of retribution. Ajay described it this way,

> I think advisers are the best thing to help new students, because we can tell Miss Leslie something, and then we know it’s safe with her, Mr. F we can tell him something and we know that if he says he’ll do this he’ll try his hardest to make the difference.

The other supports that students appreciated from teachers came in spending extra time building up skills in class, and holding optional tutorials outside of class.

Finding the right solution of how to match up an appropriate ‘buddy’ for new students is complicated. During the seventh grade focus group the participants mentioned that they were skeptical of individuals who volunteered to be buddies. Una and Vijay saw it this way:

> (Una) If we say ‘Who wants to volunteer to be a buddy‘ everybody will raise their hand
because they don’t want the teacher to feel bad.

(Vijay) And then that person will be like ‘you know this, you know that’ and you’ll be like just shut up for a second.

Some basic guidelines that the participants mentioned in a good buddy were that they lived in the same dorm, were outgoing, and would listen to the desires of the new students. Although many students appreciated having a buddy, other shyer students appreciated being able to answer questions on their own through looking at a poster of the rules or reading the student handbook.

Discussion on Becoming Independent.

Although these students are still wards of their parents and the school, they described their independence in terms of a sense of self-reliance. Some of the participants shunned the idea that teachers or other adults should provide support for new students, for fear of hindering the students’ emerging independence. For some students the increased autonomy in within the classroom and with their peers may make the transition for these new students easier since it fits well with their developmental needs (Eccles et al., 1993). The paradox is that students must become independent within the strict boundaries of school regulation, similar to Cookson and Persell’s (1987) description of elite US boarding schools, and several of the participants were wary of having adults taking away other freedoms. The structures in place at this elite boarding school for developing future leaders by coping with pain and pressure through self-reliance and the help of peers are very similar to what Cookson and Persell (1987) described, and further research could show that elite international boarding schools have more in common with elite boarding schools in the US than elite day schools in the US.

The participants in the study repeatedly mentioned that they appreciated the educational philosophy they found at the research site. Many of the participants came from schools that had a philosophy similar to Freire’s (1970) description of the banking method of education. In this view,
students are seen as empty receptacles that must be filled with knowledge and facts imparted by their teachers. The process of becoming an independent thinker in classrooms seemed to be most difficult for students who came from cultures with high uncertainty avoidance and power distance (Cambridge, 1998).

Peers were commonly cited as the most important source of support for new students, similar to Allan’s (2002) findings. Forming a structured buddy training system at the research site could be an important step in helping the transition process for new students, but finding the right students to be a part of the system is important. Although buddies were an integral part of the transition for many students, the desires of shyer students to have other forms of less personal support such as informational posters and handbooks is similar to the situation Pearce (1998) described where different personalities need different forms of support.

New students are faced with multiple adjustments to boarding school. This process requires students to achieve a level of independence not required by day schools, and teachers and dorm parents have to help provide support to aid in these changes while at the same time providing students the freedom to become independent. These students have to become independent both at dorms and as critical thinkers in the classroom. Finding the right balance of freedom and support is critical in making these important adjustments for new students.

Fear in Transitioning

The participants in the study commonly cited fears related to living in boarding, finding a social group, entering a new academic environment, learning a new language, and adjusting to a new environment.

Fears of boarding.

One of the greatest fears of boarding cited by the participants was due to not having their
parents around anymore. Much of this fear revolved around having a lack of security, since they did not have anyone they could truly trust when they first came to the school. Ajay described it this way,

It was different because when you are with your parents you feel like quite safe and you know there’s something happened, there’s always your mom and dad to take care of you. Yeah but then here it’s also dorm parents but then you’re not that close to them in the beginning, then it’s hard to like get their trust.

Some participants said they were able to have their fears about boarding and being away from parents alleviated by their siblings and parents, while one participant mentioned that his brother had told him lies to increase his fears about coming to the school.

The other mainly cited fear about entering boarding by the participants was related to living in a total institution. One participant mentioned that he did not like being afraid of receiving consequences at the dorms such as being sent to bed early for misbehaving, while another participant was very anxious about having to take showers where other boys could see him. One of the most real, yet unanticipated fears was bullying by roommates. Birch, a seventh grade Thai boy, talked about his experience during his first year of boarding this way,

When I was new I was with Akshay, and then another two eighth graders, and they used to bully us a lot. I kind of like, I wanted to go out from [this] school, because like they bully us so much.

This form of bullying is particularly scary because these individuals have no escape from the bullying. Their rooms, a site of security for most people, become the place where these students are most anxious. The school has brought in experts on dealing with bullying, as well as writing up an anti-bullying policy, but this deeply entrenched part of boarding culture (Cookson & Persell, 1987; Poynting & Donaldson, 2005) continues to occur. Dorm parents stated that it had continued to be a
problem at the school, but was difficult find out about until it had been occurring for a long period of
time. Education on helping teachers and dorm parents should continue to be implemented at the school
so that students can have a safe transition in their new school.

**Fears of finding a social group.**

One of the most commonly cited anticipated fears of participants before coming to the school
was whether they would be able to make friends when they reached the school. This fear was most
acute the first week when the participants were surrounded by people they did not know, but students
who knew someone at the school had this fear alleviated. Indra, a sixth grade Indian girl, found her
fear of making friends being replaced by a fear of being able to keep her friends. She described it this
way,

I had lots of friends, but I was scared, of you know, not continuing being with them, and with
fitting in with them. Because I was like different, I was hyper and there were like, so calm, not
as hyper and jumping around.

Many of the participants appreciated the school’s attempts to alleviate these fears through providing
social activities at dorms, doing group work in classes, and playing name-learning games in many
different locations. The one attempt at helping students to get to know each other to promote
cooperation that was not appreciated by the participants was a welcome dinner for all of the middle
school where students had to play games that they found incredibly embarrassing and traumatic. Una,
a seventh grade Korean girl, described the socializing games this way

We play games and it was so embarrassing for new students. We have to be sitting, and then
some guy come and sit on our laps, for old students they’re like ‘Oh he’s gonna sit on me’, but
for new students ‘Oh some random guy is gonna sit on me.’

Aiding students in finding a social group is vital because the participants said that they were only able
to focus on academics and other activities valued by the school after they had reached a level of social stability.

**Fears from formal education.**

Many of the participants came with anticipated fears of school because of previous experiences with corporal punishment. A common theme in the interviews and focus groups was the importance of teacher personalities. Overall they found the teachers at the research site to be very kind; one group of participants had developed a fear of being yelled at by one of their teachers, while another group reminisced about a previous teacher who was notorious for never giving an A+ and handing out detentions during the first day of classes. Learning to talk in class can be a major fear for many students to overcome, especially when it is embedded within their home culture where expectations about class participation may conflict with home culture expectations about silence. Una, the seventh grade Korean girl, when asked about advice for new students said

It’s hard to talk in class, but someday you will get it, get to talk in class. It’s better if you do it earlier, like don’t be scared to talk in front of people just because your English is bad or something. Like don’t be afraid to talk to… people, ‘cause they’re so friendly. New students they should not try to change the culture here, they should be trying to follow the culture here. Just because in Korea they don’t talk to the olders, it doesn’t mean that they ‘Oh youngers shouldn’t talk to me and I shouldn’t talk to the olders’ that is not true.

Learning the basics of a different cultural system of education resulted in anxiety for several participants. These elements included learning to take notes effectively, finding out where to sit in a classroom full of strangers, and moving from one class to another rather than having teachers switch classrooms. When Sanajana, an eighth grade Nepali girl, was asked if she thought assigned seats were a good idea for new students she replied,
Yeah, it is, because the new student doesn’t feel out of place when all the old students are sitting together, so you don’t know where to sit, yeah so assigned seats you actually sit next to person you don’t know and you get to talk to them and get to know them better.

A more difficult fear to alleviate for students is a fear of failure. This research site had a very competitive academic atmosphere. It is not uncommon for students to wake up at 4 a.m. to study for a test that day in hopes of receiving a better grade than their peers. One participant mentioned that this level of competition produced a high level of anxiety for her because these competitions led to many fights between friends.

**Fears exacerbated by language.**

Learning a language caused many unique fears for the ESL participants, as well as exponentially amplifying the same fears that students fluent in English already had. When Byong, the sixth grade Korean boy, was asked what he remembered most about his first week at the school, he replied

Scared, at first I was scared. Scared of everything. Friends and all. First, umm, I wasn’t that good at English here, so I didn’t talk usually, umm because I also didn’t feel comfortable to other friends and all, to the teacher, but now it’s OK. When I first came here my parents were like talking to teachers and all, and I was alone, and I couldn’t do anything.

Some of the participants’ anticipated fears of not being able to make friendships were realized when their reticence to speak stopped them from communicating with their peers. Other anticipated fears caused by not being fluent in English were not being able to understand teachers because of their accents as well as a fear of being the only individuals at the school who did not know English. Many of these fears were alleviated after the participants came to the school, but these fears were replaced by a fear of losing their own language.
One of the most difficult fears for ESL students to overcome is a fear of failure, since most of the ESL students are incredibly intelligent and used to high levels of success. Tests and quizzes can be especially stressful for new ESL students adjusting to classes in English. Atsuko, the eighth grade Japanese girl, described her first science test in a class the researcher taught a year/two years ago:

Yeah, first I couldn’t understand English so I didn’t know what teacher was saying, and we didn’t have that much experiments, so my first test was so..... (laughing). In test we weren’t supposed to have dictionaries, so some words I cannot understand even though it’s not the science words I cannot understand the questions, the answer might be wrong, so it’s hard to study without my own language.

For non-ESL teachers working with ESL students, it is important to have a good working relationship with the ESL department. While I was a teacher at the research site I talked with the ESL teachers on a daily basis, and attempted to follow their policies on assessments (such as not allowing students to have a dictionary for tests), but I regret not finding ways to further differentiate the tests to help relieve some of the fear that these students experienced.

**Fears caused by the environment.**

For many of the participants in the study, coming for student orientation was their first time experiencing the sights, sounds, and smells of India. This was an overwhelming experience for many of them. One girl in the study mentioned that her living conditions, her social contacts, and the language she had to use to communicate, changed instantly when she came to the school, leading to a great fear of the unknown. Chihiro, the seventh grade Japanese girl, came in with fears of having her valuables stolen. She described it this way

I was scared. I only had an MP3 but I was scared of it, like because the teachers said, because it was India and all I was scared of loads of stuff, yeah, so I remember I used to lock all my
valuables in my closet with my foods.

Although the interpersonal aspects of the environment were sources of fears of these participants, the physical environment also provided a wide array of fears for an active imagination. Some of the participants mentioned having a fear of heights, which can be problematic when living on a mountain that has slime-covered paths during monsoons. One girl mentioned falling off of the path onto the side of the mountain because the paths were too slippery.

The other very real fear inducing part of the physical environment are the roving troupes of monkeys. Sanjana, the eighth grade Nepali girl, when reminiscing about what she remembered about the first week of school stated, “There were lots of monkeys and all, and they were really difficult, we couldn’t take food outside.” It is wise for these students to have a fear of the monkeys since they attacked several teachers and students during my tenure as a teacher at the school. The school has attempted several different methods to alleviate the fears of these students, including but not limited to: having security guards with slingshots on the path between dorms and school, trapping and relocating the troupes (until they travel back to the school), and hiring monkey handlers who have trained monkeys on leashes who chase away other monkeys.

**Discussion on Fear in Transitioning.**

Any transition comes with a certain amount of anticipated excitement and fear of what the future will bring. This fear is exponentially increased when that transition is into an international boarding school filled with strange peers, adults, foods, surroundings, and languages without the support of parents. These fears could be explained by terror management theory (Sussman, 2000), since these cultural unknowns produce anxiety because of the cultural systems these students left to come to the school had yet to be replaced by the cultural knowledge at the research site.

As Ajay stated, living away from parents produced fear in students since families represented
an important source of security. This research study differs significantly from the research McLachlan (2007) has conducted on the effects of families on transitions, since families are unable to function in the same way at international boarding schools as they are able to at international day schools. Since the families of the students were not present they had to rely upon their peers, teachers, and dorm parents to help them deal with their fears. Many of the cooperative learning activities the participants mentioned that helped reduce their fears were similar to those described by Akram (1995), Gillie (1998), and Schaetti (1996b). These cooperative learning activities were vital for giving students opportunities to find social groups to fit into, helping to alleviate the fear of not being able to fit in. This intense fear of not being able to fit in is similar to Hill and Hayden’s (2008) findings at an international day school in Thailand, and helping students to overcome this fear is one of the most important steps in adjusting to a new school.

Some of the participants in the study, such as Una, found that having to learn a new set of rules of behavior in classroom especially unnerving. The teachers at the school have a great deal of influence to either increase or alleviate new students fears in their classrooms. Teachers can alleviate the fears created by a new academic environment by providing scaffolding for new students by teaching note taking skills, assigned seats, and providing buddies for students to help them move from class to class. Even with these strategies in place a fear of failure was common among students similar to the competitive atmosphere of elite boarding schools described by Cookson and Persell (1987). Teachers should be work to establish a cooperative classroom atmosphere to help alleviate the fear of failure in new students.

A fear of failure was cited by the ESL participants in the study. Students who are in the process of learning English need extra support in alleviating their fears. The fears caused by language are similar to Hill and Hayden’s (2008) findings about students’ anticipated fears of entering a new
international school. Providing avenues for students to speak their native language needs to remain a priority for any international school so that their fear of losing their mother tongue can be reduced.

As Sanjana mentioned, living in an area surrounded by monkeys and other hazards created unique fears in the students. The current literature on international schools lacks a sense of place, the importance that the local environment has on the school. Further research on international schools should investigate the importance of location in international schools, even though Thompson (1998) found that this was the least important aspect of international schools in the eyes of international school students.

Overcoming the anticipated and actual fears is a major obstacle in the adjustment process for new students. Entering a new boarding school can be a frightening venture. At its worst it involves learning how to survive in a total institution, how to act in a foreign classroom, how to form friendships with complete strangers, sometimes without the aid of a common language, and how to navigate in an alien environment. Being mindful of the many fears these students have can help teachers, administrators, and old students empathize with the challenges facing new students.

Relatives and Friends Providing Social and Cultural Capital

An important finding of this study was the important effects of siblings on the transition process. During the interviews it became clear that friends or extended relatives who were alumni provided support similar to that of the siblings. This support included reassurance before entering the school as well as guidance during the acclimation process. Although new students who have these connections may be provided with certain advantages, these connections also present unique difficulties for these students as well.
Support before entering a new school.

One important theme that emerged from the focus groups and interviews was the support students received before their initial arrival at the school. This support came in the form of conversations between new students and relatives or friends about what to expect at the new school. Indra, a sixth grade Indian girl, when asked if she received help from her cousin before entering the school replied, “Yeah, ‘cause he gave me details about school, and it’s nice, you’re gonna have loads of friends.” These conversations may help students preparing to leave for a new location. Matthew, an 8th grade Indian boy, described the support he got from his sister this way,

Before I came she told me that umm, I mean she told me who was in my grade and showed me the yearbook and stuff, what the school would look like. But when I came I didn’t know it would be like that, it was different.

Although the support that these friends and siblings give in preparing new students is very important, much of the support comes as the students enter the school.

Support while entering a new school.

The old friends and relatives of new students played a multitude of roles in aiding in the adjustment process. For many of the ESL participants, relatives and friends were among the only people with whom they could speak their native language. For Matthew, his sister helped him out with his academic difficulties. He described it this way,

In the beginning my sister helped me, and when I first came I got into academic probation so, my parents told me to pull it up, and I tried my best and I did pull it up. My studies, she helped me study in the holidays.

These individuals act as an important bridge between their past and their present, providing a sense of security that students who do not have siblings or old friends may not have at the school.
The most common theme from the participants in the study was that having a sibling or a friend at the school provided them with many social contacts, including teachers. Isako, a sixth grade Japanese girl and Atsuko’s sister, described her social connections this way, “My sister has friends, that friends will talk to me, and sometimes then they will give me, I can’t tuck [Have junk food] if I don’t have anything, good thing, then they will give to me, and communicate also more.” Although having relatives may provide new students with a head start at the school, it can also cause significant difficulties.

Difficulties of attending school with siblings.

In contrast, siblings, rather than old friends or extended relatives, were more frequently noted by the participants as having important negative consequences. A significant concern of some of the participants who had older siblings at the school was feeling overshadowed by their siblings. This was most striking with Atsuko, who felt overshadowed by both her older brother and younger sister:

(Atsuko) Like me and, people expect me to be like Daisuke, he was so good at basketball, I wasn’t, so I was kind of mad that people started talking about him about me, that was kind of the thing, so I stopped talking to him, and he always make that face because if I, he always in that group with his friend, so if his sister comes up and talks to him it embarrasses him also.

(Researcher) So did you not like being known as Daisuke’s sister?

(Atsuko) Yeah, so many people called me Daisuke’s sister. When Isako came I talked to her more than Daisuke so that people think that I’m good sister, but I don’t know if people says Isako, people call me Isako, but people don’t call her Atsuko, so I feel so weird.

Younger siblings may have a particularly difficult time forming a suitable identity within a total institution such as a boarding school because they are surrounded by people who only know them as someone’s brother or sister.
Although younger siblings gained some clear benefits from having an older sibling at the school, the rewards are not always mutual. One younger sibling mentioned that his older brother told him horror stories about the school in hopes that he would choose not to attend the school. Una described her experience with her brother this way,

…but it’s really annoying sometimes because I have to follow what he says and like whatever I do he always tells on my mom, and it’s really sometimes, like I want to do what I want to do, suppose I wanted to take physics, but he tells me to take chemical, and I tell him I wants to take physics, but he doesn’t care, he tell me, ‘cause he’s always like ‘I’ve been living in this world longer than you, why don’t you listen to me’ but I know more about myself, it’s just like crashing everything.

For students coming from cultures where family honor is very important, older siblings may be very controlling since their younger siblings represent a social liability.

**Discussion on Relatives and Friends Providing Social and Cultural Capital.**

Much of the support that entering students received from friends and family can be understood as a form of social and cultural capital. Pierre Bourdieu (2007) argues that a culture provides the meaningful choices to attain a good life through economic, social, and cultural capital. According to Bourdieu, individuals make decisions based on the costs versus rewards in terms of the different forms of capital. Cultural capital, in the embodied state, is the “long lasting dispositions of the mind and body”, while social capital relates to social networks (Bourdieu, 2007, p. 84).

Many of the discussions students had with friends and siblings before leaving for the school were similar to Pollock and Van Reken’s (1999) strategy of building a mental RAFT for successfully transitioning out of one location in preparation for entering another location, supplying them with things to look forward to. These discussions helped the students not only prepare to leave but gave
them a head start in learning the culture of the school, as these conversations represented a form of cultural capital. These conversations may help explain some of the correlation between siblings and ease of transition described by Anderson et al. (2002), but the support students as they enter the school is also important.

Much of the support that friends and relatives provide new students as they enter the school is in the form of social capital. This provision of social capital may allow these new students to form an identity quickly, since identity is partially based upon the social connections (Stevens, 2008). Since the school has many different nationalities, students who are able to make social connections with different groups may develop multicultural identities, different from Phinney and Devich-Navarro’s (1997) models, since these students are a mixture of their home culture, the culture of the school, and the culture of India. The thriving alumni association and the difficulties some students have leaving the school for vacations strongly suggests that these students are Third Culture Kids, since they often relate to each other better than individuals from their home cultures (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999).

Although younger siblings may have many more social connections than students without an older sibling or friend, this is not always a benefit. Forming a stable identity requires a psychosocial moratorium where individuals are able to try on different identities (Stevens, 2008), but younger siblings may be forced into an identity from the moment that they enter a boarding school. Having older siblings requires younger siblings to strive extra hard to form an identity that they find suitable. For teachers, administrators, and old students at a school it is important to see these new students as individuals rather than extensions of their siblings, since these new students need a stable structure within which to explore their identity (Lord et al., 1994). Even if a new student is proud of his or her siblings, he or she should be given the freedom to form an identity of his or her own choosing.

Having relatives and old friends are and should continue to be an important factor in viewing a
new students transition into a new school. They are able to provide important support both in the
preparation and the transition into a new school. These students need extra help, however, in being
provided the freedom to develop an identity separate from their siblings if they so choose.
CONCLUSIONS

This chapter will provide a brief explanation of the case and the research methods used, a description of the major findings, and a list of suggestions for the research site based upon the findings. Adjusting to an international boarding school is an arduous process, but holds many potential benefits for students. This case study investigated how middle school students transition into an international boarding school. The research site was an elite international boarding school found in a majestic location in the foothills of the Indian Himalayas. The school is a K-12 boarding school with hybrid American/British curriculum serving 477 students from twenty-two different nationalities. Twelve participants were selected for this study based upon their gender, nationality, English language skills, grade when entering the school, and whether or not they had siblings to provide a population similar to the demographics of the school.

The data collection process consisted of a thirty-minute, one-on-one interview with each participant as well as a forty-five minute focus group with each cadre of participants from the same grade. The questions in the interviews focused on differences between the participants’ old school and their new school, as well how they dealt with the transition of moving between the two. The data was recorded, transcribed, and was first coded using in vivo codes and then by more abstract second level codes. The second level codes were grouped into five themes regarding the experience of the participants.

All of the participants in the study found parts of their transition to the research site difficult to navigate, although some participants found the transition easier than others. Adjusting to life in boarding was a commonly cited struggle that the participants had to overcome. The students at the school receive less individual attention from adults than from their peers; therefore they form a strong collective identity with their peers who become their new family. The majority of the participants in
the study experienced a level of homesickness and exclusion, something that students must overcome in order to successfully acclimate to a boarding school. The first six weeks in particular were especially difficult for new students, although students who had spent several years at the school still experienced pangs of homesickness. Sometimes students’ attempts to overcome homesickness through surrounding themselves with others who spoke their native language resulted in the exclusion of other students. The presence of homesickness aligns with Cookson and Persell’s (1987) study of boarding schools, but this homesickness may even be more acute at an international boarding school where students are away from a familiar cultural elements.

The participants in the study stressed the importance of finding a social group when first coming to the school. The first friends that many students make at the school are other new students who are in the same situation, because returning students can be reticent to invite new students into their social circles unless the returning students see the new students as a source of future social capital. Finding a social group can be especially difficult for new students who come during the second semester when there are not many other new entering students. Much of this process was similar to Allan’s (2002) description of acculturation into an international school in Europe. The students who were very different from the dominant culture of the school found solace in each other, but this phenomenon was even more intense at the research site since there was no escape from the minority status that these students experienced.

Although much of the students’ acculturation occurs outside of the classroom at this elite international boarding school, the formal education at the school can be a hurdle for many students to overcome. Many of the participants came from an educational background focusing on rote memorization, while the research site offered a more constructivist education where students had to use critical thinking and participate in class. One participant’s suggestion for other Indian students is to
forget everything they knew about being a student in an Indian system and relearn a new set of cultural rules. The physical environment also posed a challenge for several students, since they had to adjust to several differences: the realities of living in a developing country, a lack of oxygen due to the elevation, and the presence of monkeys. The environment at this school was an important part of the experience of the participants in the study. Although Thompson (1998) found that this was perceived by international school students to be the least important part of an international education, the students at this research site seemed to find the physical environment important.

The participants in the study were clearly actors in their transition into the school. The more active the student was in the transitioning process, the easier it became. Several participants cited the importance of acting energetic and happy in order to make friends quickly. Students who were not willing or capable to make changes to their cultural schema often did not survive at this boarding school and returned home to a day school. Although students must be actors in the transition process to fit into the new school, peers and teachers play an important role in helping these students. Buddies, peers, dorm parents, and teachers and academic advisers help new students learn the cultural rules of the school and scaffold the transitioning process so that students can eventually wean themselves off of the support once they can navigate the many facets of the school by themselves. Special attention should be given to students coming during the second semester since much of the support given to students during the first semester is not present for students coming in the second semester. Using Rogoff’s (2003) framework for investigating students’ experiences is important since children should be viewed as actors and participants in the acculturation process, rather than as pawns to be controlled.

Learning English was central to the transition process for many of the participants in the study. ESL students often come to the school having been prepared to pass an entrance exam in English, but able to do little else. This leads to difficulties when teachers expect these students to function in their
classrooms, but the students do not have the level of English to be successful. Language and culture are strongly linked, and students who are learning a new language also have to learn a new culture, leading to intercultural conflicts. Several of the participants in the study found that not being familiar with English resulted in social exclusion because they did not feel comfortable reaching out to their English-speaking peers. This was similar to Allan’s (2002) findings, and further supports the need for ESL students to receive special support in making the acculturation process less painful.

For the participants in the ESL program, taking classes outside of the ESL program provided them with several challenges and opportunities. Learning the vocabulary for math and science classes especially posed problems for these participants. Being immersed in English was the policy of the ESL program as a method to speed the language learning process, but some students feared of learning their native language and culture. One of the benefits of taking classes outside of the ESL program was that these classes provided opportunities for the participants to get to know a wider range of people and show off their talents. Although these classes may be more difficult for the students, the social benefits outweigh the costs in the eyes of the participants. The ESL program was commonly cited by the participants in the study as a key to their success. It provided the students with a safe place to practice speaking English and a vital social support network. Many of the participants mentioned that they could not survive in their non-ESL courses if they did not have the skills that they learned from their ESL courses. Supporting the ESL program is vital for helping new ESL students transition into a new school.

Much of the language that students learned at this international school occurred outside of the classroom. Peers played a vital role in provided new students with a resource for learning English informally. Being able to communicate effectively with peers provides a strong motivation for these students, but it can be draining since they are constantly surrounded by English. Learning English was
highly valued by these students since it was a gateway to their future careers, and one of the main reasons they had been sent to boarding school. This aligns with Anderson et al.’s (2000) description of peers being the most important source of support for new students. Although teachers and dorm parents played important roles in helping students adjust, they cannot fulfill the same function that peers provide.

One of the other main reasons that the participants cited as a reason for entering a boarding school was to learn to become independent. Living in dorms was the most important place where students learn to become independent. Although the majority of these students come from places of privilege, they are required to clean up after themselves and many learn to cook food for the first time. Living away from family was difficult for the participants, but they felt like they were more grown up since they had more control over their every day life. The process of becoming independent in dorms was scaffolded so that the dorm staff took extra attention during the first six weeks to teach the students the skills they needed to survive in the dorms. This finding corroborated Cookson and Persell’s (1987) study, where the dorms limited some freedoms, but provided greater opportunities to grow into individuals who could look after themselves and their peers.

Learning to think for themselves was a special type of independence that developed within the classrooms of this international boarding school. Since many of the participants had gone to a school focusing on rote memorization, learning to develop their own ideas rather than that of the teacher was a new experience but the participants noted that they appreciated being able to learn to figure problems out on their own rather than having a teacher always provide the solutions to problems. Living in a total institution means that adults highly regulate the lives of students, and although the school provides opportunities for students to learn to take care of themselves, students often do not have many of the same freedoms that day scholars take for granted. When administrators, teachers, and dorm parents
attempt to help students in the transition process, the students see this as an attempt to take away their few personal freedoms which they fiercely guard. Finding ways to help students without taking away their sense of independence is the great challenge for teachers and administrators. Some of the participants felt that becoming independent was a sink-or-swim process where new students had to experience a certain level of pain otherwise they would never fully reach a level of independence.

The support that the participants did find most helpful came from academic advisers and peers. Academic advisers provided a form of checks and balances where the participants could air their complaints about other teachers or dorm parents without fear of retribution. The buddy system at the school was very organic and grassroots, and provided the students with varying levels of supports. The majority of the participants felt that buddies were a useful idea, but finding the right buddy was a complicated ordeal. Finding ways to improve the buddy system at the school should be a priority since peers play such an important in the transition process. Ideas for buddy systems proposed by Dixon and Hayden (2008) and Hill and Hayden (2008) were not currently in place at the research site, such as a formal program for training buddies and evaluating their performance. Any attempts to change the current model would have to be done very carefully since being a buddy at a boarding school requires not only a commitment from a student to help his buddy at school but also at dorms as well.

Coming to a new school can be a scary venture, and entering an international boarding school only amplifies these fears. When students leave their homes they are leaving the cultural frameworks that alleviate their fear of unknown, and are in a state of flux until they can develop a new cultural framework. Living in dorms was the most commonly cited fear of the participants, since their parents were no longer there to support them. While the forming of friendships eventually alleviated this fear for many students, peers produced a new fear in the form of bullying. New students were often placed in dorm rooms with students in the grades above them, and became the target of the older students
bullying. Cookson and Persell (1987) and Poynting and Donaldson (2005) both wrote of situations where varying degrees of bullying are commonly present at boarding schools. Finding ways to change the deep-rooted culture of bullying is difficult since so much occurs out of the sight of adults and students fear retribution from reporting incidents.

Fear of not fitting in was commonly cited by the participants in the study. This fear was alleviated for some students by having a friend or sibling who introduced them to people. Even students who were able to make friends had the fear replaced with a fear of losing friends. Social games in dorms and classes played an important role for students to get to know each other. Group work, such as that described by Akram (1996) can play an important role as well in helping students adjust socially to a new school. Aiding students in this process should be a major goal for teachers since several of the participants mentioned that they weren’t able to focus on their schoolwork until they felt comfortable with their social life.

Formal school posed a special set of fears for students, especially those who had come from school cultures where students and teachers had a much more formal relationship. Learning to participate verbally was one of the most important yet difficult fears that students had to overcome to be successful in classes. For new students, learning the cultural rules of a Western-style classroom should be scaffolded through the teaching of note taking skills, using assigned seats, and providing buddies to help the students move between classes.

Unfamiliarity with English increased the anxiety felt by new students coming to the school. For some of the participants it had a paralyzing effect, preventing them from attempting to talk to their peers. The fear of failure was increased for the ESL participants because many had become accustomed to be at the top of their classes in their home countries, but often struggled with assessments written in English. For instructors working with ESL students, having a good working
relationship with ESL specialists is especially important in helping reduce the fears that these students experience in their classrooms.

For the participants coming from another country, the location of the school represented a completely new social, cultural, and physical environment. The students feared having their possessions stolen, because upon arrival they were surrounded by strangers. The other aspects of the environment that produced fear in these students were the slippery trails they had to use to travel around the hillside and the roving packs of monkeys. Further research should make a point to represent a sense of place when investigating international schools.

The final major theme that emerged from the study was the effect that siblings, extended relatives, and old friendships had on the transitioning process. The participants mentioned that these contacts helped provide them with cultural knowledge about how the school worked when they were preparing to leave for the school. Finding ways to connect old students with students preparing to enter a new school could be an important way to improve the transitioning process for students who do not have relatives or old friendships. Once the new students reach the school, siblings, relatives, and friends help act as bridge between their old life and their new life. They provide valuable social capital, which contributes to the identity formation of these individuals since much of identity is based upon social relationships. These students may be developing a multicultural identity similar to that of Third Culture Kids since the school produces a culture where these students have more in common with each other than they do with members from their home cultures. This is somewhat different from Phinney and Devich-Navarro’s (1997) models of biculturalism, since many of these students are experiencing more than two cultures. For example, students from Korea are living in India, going to a Western-style school, and have many relationships with students from many different countries. Further study into how these students form their cultural identity could be illuminating.
Participants noted several drawbacks to having siblings at the same school. They felt overshadowed by their siblings and pushed into an identity not of their choosing. The students resented only being known by their peers and teachers as someone’s brother or sister. Older siblings may be resentful of having their younger siblings at the school as well, since younger siblings may be viewed as unwanted social liabilities and a drain on their time and energy. One participant mentioned that his older brother attempted to scare him away from coming to the school. Although having siblings provides many possible benefits, it is important to acknowledge and attempt to alleviate the challenges caused by having older siblings when entering a new school.

There are several recommendations that can be drawn from this study. First, the school should continue to work on improving its transition programming. It is difficult to provide suggestions for a group of teachers and dorm parents that often are being told what to do from a top-down approach, so for anything to be useful it must be practitioner driven. Much of what the school is currently doing was seen as beneficial by the participants in the study, so major changes to the school are not needed. Most of the social games that occur at the beginning of the year in dorms and classes, as well as group work, are two things that are currently being done that help new students. The school has several teachers and dorm parents who have successfully helped new students transition into the school, and pooling their collective knowledge as well as input from administrators, parents, and students into a transition team (Mckillop-Ostrum, 2002; Anderson et. al, 2000) could greatly benefit the school. The teacher and dorm parent population is much more transient than the student population, so training new teachers into helping new students transition would be one of the most important jobs for this transition team. For this to work it would have to consist of teachers who were passionate about helping new students, since the out of class expectations for teachers are already extremely high.

Another important role of the transition team would be to help to improve the buddy system at
the school. One of the difficulties with buddies at a boarding school is the lack of communication between dorm parents and teachers. Transition teams could help formalize the process of buddy systems so that buddies could be assigned by dorm parents, who would then pass along pertinent information to school staff. The transition teams could help train future buddies as well as gain feedback from students about how the buddy system worked (Hill & Hayden, 2008). Although this study focused on students entering the school, the transition of leaving the school should also be a part of these transition teams responsibilities.

The ESL program at the school provides strong support for the students who make the school such a culturally diverse place. Many of the students who enter the ESL program in the middle school become valuable leaders in the high school, but many of them would not have been successful without the help of the ESL program. Any attempts to cut back on the ESL program would be counterproductive, as this program represents the international heart of the school. Finding teachers who can speak the mother tongue of the ESL students as the school could help alleviate fears of losing their mother tongue as well as providing a greater level of cultural diversity within a teaching population that is increasingly American.

One special population for whom the school could improve the transition programming is students who enter the school during the second semester. These students often get lost in the fray because there are so few of them. Teachers need to make an extra effort to help these students learn the cultural expectations within the classrooms, while returning students need to provide aid in the transitioning since these new students do not have other new students to help them out. One of the ways in which the school can help these students is through adviser nights where the students can meet their peers in a smaller informal setting while eating good food. These types of meetings may be more beneficial than welcome back dances where new students either feel too shy to participate or are put in
embarrassing situations in a group game.

Hearing the voices of students should be a goal of future research in international schools as well as boarding schools. One area that did not fall under the scope of this investigation was the experience of day scholars entering a boarding school. Many of these students are the children of teachers and administrators and are a minority within the school. Hearing the voices of these students to better understand their special needs are an important area of future research. Much of the evidence in this study pointed to this school sharing more in common with a typical elite boarding school than with a typical international school due to a difference in student transience. This is an area for further research to see if this phenomenon is the same in other international boarding schools. The process of identity formation at students in these schools could be further investigated to further illuminate the collective identity that forms due to it being a boarding school, as well as the multicultural identity that may form from being surrounded by many different nationalities in India at a Western school.
REFERENCES


International education: Principles and practice, (pp. 1-10). London; Sterling, VA: Kogan Page; Stylus Pub.


Bayside, NY: Aletheia Publications.


March 3, 2010

Dear [Research Site] Middle School Parent:

My name is Jared Hatch and I am a graduate student at Bowling Green State University in the United States. I previously taught middle school science at [Research Site] school for two years, from 2007-2009. I am working on my thesis project with the help of my academic advisor, Dr. Chris Frey. I am interested in investigating how middle school students who come to [Research Site] deal with the changes in teaching methods between their old school and their new school. I would like to learn what middle school students see as effective strategies for coping with all of the academic changes.

This letter is to inform you of a research project that your son or daughter at [Research Site] School may be participating in this year. If you wish for your child not to participate in the project, please fill in your name the bottom of this letter and email it back to me at hatchjp@bgsu.edu.

Your child will be invited to be part of a research project that is studying how students adapt to changes in teaching methods when coming to a new school. Your child’s participation in this study is completely voluntary and their participation will have no influence on their grades or relationship with their school in any way. Your child’s name will not be associated with any of the information they provide in their interviews. Therefore, there are no risks for your child to participate in this study.

This study will benefit all of the students in the [Research Site] schools, especially those in the middle school, as it aims to understand how staff members can help new students adapt to the academic changes they face when coming to [Research Site]. With this information, [Research Site] school will be able to create the best environment for adolescent students.

A small number of students will be asked to be involved in a short interview about themselves and the school. This one-on-one interview will take about 30 minutes during study hall, and after school periods. The same small group of students will also be asked to be part of a “focus group” discussing their opinions about the academic changes they went through when coming to [Research Site]. Participating in a focus group will take approximately 45 minutes of their time. Some students may be contacted for a follow up interview that would last approximately 30 minutes to clarify any questions from the focus group or previous interview. All of these activities are purely voluntary, and at every stage of the study, participating students will receive a small gift of food in thanks for their time.

Your child’s name will not be connected to any information gathered. They will be given a number and
the information collected about them will be connected to that number, not their name. All of the information provided by them will remain confidential. I will be conducting this study the spring term of the 2009-2010 academic year. Your child will have the option to drop out of the study at any time he/she wishes.

If you have any questions or comments about this study, please contact me by e-mail at hatchjp@bgsu.edu or my advisor, Dr. Chris Frey at cjfrey@bgsu.edu. Also, if you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your child’s rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of Bowling Green State University’s Human Subjects Review Board at +1(419) 372-7716, or hsrb@bgnet.bgsu.edu.

Sincerely,

Jared Hatch
School of Educational Foundations, Leadership & Policy, BGSU

I _______________________________ wish that my child _______________________ not participate in the research project being conducted by Bowling Green State University.

Parent Signature: ________________________________

If you fill in this form, wishing your child not participate, please send it back as an email attachment to hatchjp@bgsu.edu and sanjayamark@[Research Site].ac.in within the next week so that your child will not be asked to participate in the study.

Please note that e-mail is not 100% secure, so it is possible that someone intercepting your e-mail will gain knowledge of your interest in the study.

Appendix B - Student Assent Form
March 3, 2010

Dear [Research Site] Student:

My name is Jared Hatch. I am a graduate student at Bowling Green State University in the United States. I taught middle school science at [Research Site] school for two years, from 2007-2009. I am working on my thesis project with the help of my academic advisor, Dr. Chris Frey. I am interested in finding out how middle school students who come to [Research Site] deal with the changes in teaching methods between their old school and their new school. I would like to learn what middle school students see as useful methods for coping with academic change.

You are invited to be part of a research project that is studying how students adapt to changes in teaching styles when coming to a new school. Your involvement in this study is fully voluntary. Your choice to take part or not will have no effect on your grades or relationship with your school in any way. Your name will not be linked with any of the info you provide. Therefore, there are no risks to you for taking part in this study.

This study will benefit all of the students in the [Research Site] schools, especially those in the middle and high schools. It aims to understand how staff members can help new students adapt to the academic changes students face when coming to [Research Site]. With this info, [Research Site] school will be able to create a better place for students.

If you wish to participate in this study, please complete the attached assent form that asks for basic info about yourself. A small number of students will be asked to be involved in a short interview about themselves and the school. This interview will be a one on one interview and take about 30 minutes. It would take place during one of your study halls or after school. The same small group of students will also be asked to be part of a “focus group”. These groups would talk about how it felt to come to [Research Site]. Taking part in a focus group will take about 45 minutes. Some students may be asked for a follow up interview that would last about 30 minutes to clarify any questions from the focus group or previous interview. Any of these activities are purely voluntary and at every stage of the study, all students will receive a small gift of food in thanks for their time.

Your name will not be connected to any info gathered. You will be given a number and the info collected about you will be connected to that number, not your name. All of the info provided by you and about you will remain confidential. I plan on working on this study during the spring of the 2009-2010 academic year. You may drop out of the study at any time you wish.

If you have any questions or comments about this study, you can contact me, Jared Hatch, by e-mail at hatchjp@bgsu.edu or my adviser, Dr. Chris Frey at cjfrey@bgsu.edu. Also, if you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of Bowling Green State University’s Human Subjects Review Board at (419) 372-7716, or hsrb@bgnet.bgsu.edu.

Sincerely,

Jared Hatch
**Student Assent Form**

Please complete the following: Name: __________________________ Grade level: _____

___ Yes, I wish to participate in the research
___ No, I do not want to participate in the research

If you have checked No, then stop here and submit this form to your teacher.

If you have checked yes, please complete the following info.

- What is your country of origin (explain this in detail if you desire)
  ....................................................................................................................................................
  ....................................................................................................................................................

- How long have you attended [Research Site] School?
  ....................................................................................................................................................

- What year did you first attend [Research Site] School?
  ....................................................................................................................................................

- How long have you lived in India?
  ....................................................................................................................................................

- Did you have any older siblings at before you came?
  ....................................................................................................................................................

**Appendix C - Interview Protocols**

1) What have been some of the biggest differences between your old school and the research site?
2) What have been some of the positive differences, if any, at the research site?

3) What were some of the more difficult changes, if any, at the research site?

4) Have there been any particular subjects or classes at the research site that were very different from your old school? What made them different?

5) How would you describe the teaching styles at your previous school?

6) What did you like about how your teachers taught at your old school and what didn’t you like?

7) How would you describe the teaching styles of the teachers at the research site?

8) What do you like about how your teachers teach here at the research site and what don’t you like?

9) If there were differences between you old school and the research site was it difficult to change to the type of teaching you found here at the research site? Please explain.

10) What, if anything, helped you to adapt or change to be able to be a successful student at the research site?

11) What, if anything, made it difficult for you to adapt or change to be able to be a successful student at the research site?

12) What advice would you give to teachers to help new students coming to the research site?

13) What advice would you give new students entering the research site to help them succeed?

14) What do you think students that students already at the research site today need to do in order to help new students transition?

15) Do you feel that you have fully adjusted to life at the research site? If so, when did you realize this?
May 11, 2010

TO: Jared Hatch
EDFI

FROM: Hillary Harms, Ph.D.
HSRB Administrator

RE: HSRB Project No.: H10T262GFB

TITLE: Early Adolescent Student Copy Strategies to a New Science Class at an International School

You have met the conditions for approval for your project involving human subjects. **As of May 11, 2010, your project has been granted final approval by the Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB). This approval expires on May 4, 2011. You may proceed with subject recruitment and data collection.**

The final approved version of the consent document(s) is attached. Consistent with federal OHRP guidance to IRBs, the consent document(s) bearing the HSRB approval/expiration date stamp is the **only valid version and you must use copies of the date-stamped document(s) in obtaining consent from research subjects.**

You are responsible to conduct the study as approved by the HSRB and to use only approved forms. If you seek to make any changes in your project activities or procedures (including increases in the number of participants), please send a request for modifications immediately to the HSRB via this office. Please notify me, in writing (fax: 372-6916 or email: hsrb@bgusu.edu) upon completion of your project.

Good luck with your work. Let me know if this office or the HSRB can be of assistance as your project proceeds.

**Comments/ Modifications:**

- **c:** Chris Frey

Research Category: FULL BOARD REVIEW