

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

God is a social being. This is evident in His nature of the three Person of the Trinity and how they relate to one another. In the beginning, God created man in His image, and interacts socially with man. In the Bible, and throughout history, it records many occasions in where God has directly or indirectly interacted with humans. Because God is social and has created man in His image, He also encourages man to socialize and interact with others. So, it is important that humans try to get along and connect with others as well. In Matthew 2:36-40, a Pharisee asks Jesus, “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”. In His answer, Jesus mentions the two great commandments: love God and love man. It is impossible to love God and love man without socialization and interactions with others. The students in the classrooms as images of God are also social beings, as is God, therefore, students must learn to get along with others and honor God in their interactions with others.

Also in the classroom, not only is it important for students to excel academically and get along with others, students must learn how to work cooperatively with their peers. As one body of Christ, it is important that students are able to work together with their peers to accomplish a task. Humans are designed to need God and others. No human possesses all the skills, gifts, or knowledge necessary in order to be successful in life. God is the One that possesses all these attributes, but He has entrusted humankind with bits of His knowledge, talents, and spiritual gifts. With each person possessing a portion of

these God given gifts and talents, God has exhorted us to use them to serve others as good stewards of God's varied grace (1 Peter 4:10). So one way of being able to do that is by being able to work cooperatively with others. When students are working cooperatively with others, and helping their peers, they are in some way exhibiting a serving heart.

One place where children can learn to get along with others and develop social skills is in school. Without good social skills, children will feel isolated and miserable making the child struggle with life and concentrate on work. (Bird, 2000) Also, having good social skills, can contribute uniquely to academic success by addressing the inherently social dimensions that are characteristic of learning in a classroom setting (Ladd, Herald, et al. 2006). Social skills also play a very important role in a child's emotional health and well-being (Lawson, 2003). Without these skills, a student may struggle in establishing friendship at school, and without these friendships, students may feel reluctant to come to school.

There are many factors that can cause students to struggle socially. One of these factors is the cultural differences among children. Students who have grown up in one culture may have a different way of interacting and communicating with others from another culture. For example, a student who has been reared in an Asian culture will usually be influenced by that culture in the way he or she communicates and interacts with others. The same goes with a student reared in a Western culture. For some students, they can blend in easily, for others, these differences in culture can cause misunderstanding in their interactions with one another.

In the globalized world of today, there has been an increase in number of

families moving from place to place, country-to-country for various reasons ranging from work obligations to seeking for a better life. These families have then found themselves in the midst of other people with various nationalities, cultures, and backgrounds different from their own. Caught up in the middle of these families are the children. These children usually have no choice other than to follow their parents' lives. As a result, they spend a part of their childhood in another culture other than their own. These children are called *third culture kids* (TCK). Because TCKs spend most of their childhood outside of their cultures, they are surrounded with various other cultures. This may cause confusion in their cultural identity in where they try to relate to their own cultures but find it difficult because of their lack of experience in their own cultures.

The Bible also inexplicitly mentions of TCKs. One example of this can be seen in the life of Moses. As a little boy, Moses, who was originally a Hebrew, grew up in the midst of Egyptians. Then in his young adult life, we can see Moses struggling with his self-identity, in wrestling to find balance between the Egyptian part of him and the Hebrew part. In an incident where he kills an Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew, Moses then flees from the land of Egypt only to come back to free the people of Israel, and claim his identity as a Hebrew. As seen, the experience that Moses faced being amongst people of a different background was one full of challenges.

In an international school setting, it is most likely that teachers will encounter TCKs. These children face social and cultural challenges just like any other student would in the classroom. However, these challenges may differ slightly from other native students due to the cross-culture experience that TCKs

face. Teachers as the educators should take up the effort to try and understand these challenges that they face. It is important that teachers do so because how can teachers educate children they essentially don not understand?

Throughout the researcher's 4-month practicum, the researcher was able to interact and observe a few TCKs in the classroom. Upon observation, the researcher noticed how TCKs would more often socialize with peers that were of the same culture. During break times, lunch times, and when given the freedom to choose whom they wanted to work with in a group, TCKs would most often group themselves with people of their own culture. There were interactions between TCKs and natives, but it was very minimal. The interactions occurred usually only when the teacher instructed so in doing group work in the classroom. Sometimes however, there were a few minor conflicts resulted between these interactions. The researcher also discussed this with his mentors and other teachers, and they too noticed the same thing.

Therefore, the researcher conducted a research to further look into the various social and cultural difficulties faced by TCKs in an international school setting. The research was conducted in a grade 5 setting at XYZ International School. The researcher observed 5 TCK students from a Korean and American culture in that grade level.

1.2 Research Question

Based on the background of the study, the writer's research question for the study is as follows:

- 1) To what extent did the TCKs face social and cultural difficulties?
- 2) How do the teachers perceive these social and cultural difficulties?

1.3 Purpose of This Study

- 1) To identify the various social and cultural difficulties faced by TCKs in and international school setting
- 2) To examine how the teachers perceive these cultural and social difficulties

1.4 Benefit of This Study

Through this research, the researcher hopes to bring benefits to teachers, schools, and the researcher himself as written below:

- 1) For teachers:

The writer hopes that this research may aid teachers in identifying various difficulties faced by TCKs in school and further aid the TCKs in those areas.

- 2) For the school:

The writer also hopes that this research may raise awareness for international schools to better support TCKs in their interactions with others.

- 3) The researcher:

Last but not least, the researcher hopes to gain a better understanding of the various difficulties faced by TCKs in an international school setting.

1.5 Definition of Terms

1.5.1 Third Culture Kids

A third culture kid is a person who has spent most of his or her developing years outside their parent's culture (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009).

1.5.2 Social Difficulties

One of the social difficulties that TCKs may face is being able to fit in a new environment. (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001). These social difficulties also involve struggling to work with people in the environment and struggling to adapt to the environment. Also, Lijadi & van Schalkwyk (2014) mention another social difficulty, which is struggling to establishing and maintaining a strong relationship.

1.5.3 Cultural Difficulties

The cultural difficulties TCKs face are a lack of connection to their respective cultures and struggle to identify themselves to a particular culture (Fedorak, 2014).

