

Running Head: SOCIAL SUPPORT


A Survey of Male and Female Missionary Children at Liberty University Regarding their  
Perceived Social Support

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of the requirements for graduation  
in the Honors Program  
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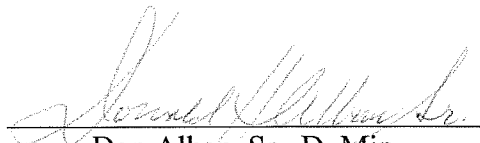
Acceptance of Senior Honors Thesis

This Senior Honors Thesis is accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation from the Honors Program of Liberty University.



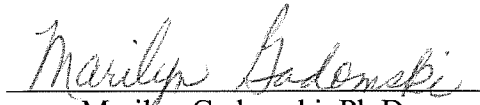
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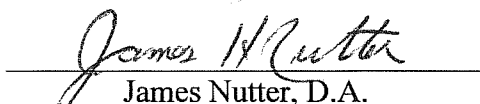
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## Abstract

There are differences in male and female missionary children who have spent five or more years overseas. The variables that will be analyzed are the perceived social support of missionary children from social groups including their families, friends, and significant others. The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support will be sent out to students of Liberty University who qualify as participants of this study. The scores of the female subjects will then be compared with those of the males concerning experiences on the mission field.

## A Survey of Male and Female Missionary Children at Liberty University Regarding their Perceived Social Support

### Introduction

Missionaries face a career that brings them many various difficulties and trials. One large dilemma that they face is the extra effort they have to make to raise a family in a foreign nation. While the missionaries may struggle with culture shock as they try to adapt to another culture, their children often become so familiar and comfortable with that culture that they experience culture shock when they return home to the United States. This experience is termed “reverse culture shock” by researchers.

Reverse culture shock is the stress experienced as the parents and children try to adapt to their home culture. There are many variables that influence reverse culture shock, such as perceived social support, parents as a source of social support, cultural distance and interpersonal distance (Huff, 2001).

From the studies that have been examined, it seems that researchers focus on children when they are studying reverse culture shock. The majority of studies examine the difference between missionary children that have returned to the United States and children who have lived in the United States for all of their lives. Other researchers have done case studies on a small number of missionary families and evaluated the effects of reverse culture shock on the family unit.

In this study, the children of the missionaries will be examined. However, instead of comparing their results to those of non-missionary children, the outcomes of the females will be compared to those of the males.

*Statement of the Problem*

The focus of the research is to determine the felt social support of the missionary children who have spent five or more years overseas before returning to the United States. More specifically, the differences between the males' and females' perceived social support will be examined. The survey given will determine the level of support the student feels from family members, friends, and the general society.

## Review of Literature

In the current literature on reverse culture shock, there have been several studies that have examined the effects on children. Others have looked at how families are affected. In the majority of cases, culture shock has been studied more frequently than reverse culture shock. An understanding of culture shock will be advantageous in learning more about its reverse effects when re-entry occurs.

Culture shock has been defined by Richard Breslin as stresses and strains that accumulate when persons are forced to meet their everyday needs in unfamiliar ways. Some symptoms of culture shock are loss of interest, homesickness, disturbed sleep, loss of appetite, poor concentration, and fatigue. To alleviate culture shock, it is important for the missionary to find places of solitude to be alone and escape the demands of every day life. It is also helpful for the missionaries to learn all he/she can about the country and focus on getting to know the people. Some researchers believe that women experience greater culture shock than men. Linda Wilson brought to light again that there is a lack of literature dealing with women and children's experiences with culture shock (Whitecotten, 1996).

Although it is a difficult situation, Wilson states that those who go through culture shock are able to learn and grow from the ordeal. Culture shock causes missionaries to discover the roots of their ethnocentrism as their values, motives, strengths and weaknesses are revealed. There are four stages of culture shock that are described by Oberg: the honeymoon stage, crisis stage, recovery stage, and the adjustment stage (Wilson, 1996).

The missionary progresses through these stages by moving from her initial excitement to discouragement, and finally to acceptance and adjustment. The author felt that there were several categories to describe the culture shock that women experience: a sense of loss and isolation, psychological reasons, cultural inconveniences, marital strain, identity confusion, and a struggle with language learning (Wilson, 1996).

Author Paul G. Hiebert (1996) has also written several symptoms of culture shock in his book. He also wrote about the progression that culture shock may take in the life of the missionary. Hiebert gave credit to Myron Loss for much of the information that he provided.

In the progression of culture shock, language shock is the initial shock with which the missionary deals. Many missionaries feel that they are incapable of learning the language and therefore struggle with not being able to learn, but being unable to thrive without learning. An additional frustration that adds to the cycle is the change in the daily routine. Daily chores such as shopping, cooking, and doing the laundry become major parts of daily living and there is left little time for the ministry that the missionary came to do. Relationships change as the missionaries begin their time overseas. They cannot connect with the locals because of the language barrier. Their own family

struggles because each member is dealing in his own way with the culture shock they are experiencing. The missionaries that have been in place seem well adjusted and the new missionary may feel that he/she can not expose their struggle to them. In short, culture shock increases the stress on relationships and great effort must be made to maintain healthy relationships. Another stressful situation that contributes to culture shock is the uselessness of the missionary's knowledge in the new culture that they enter. It is uncomfortable for the missionaries to rearrange their thinking about the things they were familiar with in their native culture.

Many missionaries undergo many changes during their first year overseas. A stress indicator test developed by Thomas Holmes (Life Changes) indicated that half of those who scored more than 150 stress points and three fourths of those scoring more than 300 were likely to become seriously ill within the following two years. The test lists various life events and rates their stress levels such as getting married, starting a new job, having a child, and moving. The missionaries add the events that they have experienced within the past year and that number determines their score. Many will receive scores within the 150-300 level. In fact, large numbers of first-term workers have scores over 400 points! Spiritual depression is a difficult symptom of culture shock for the missionary. When they first arrive on the field, missionaries are energetic and excited and tend to set unrealistic goals for themselves. When these goals go unmet, the missionary can feel that he/she has failed and can fall into depression.

Hiebert (1996) also discussed a cycle of culture shock that included various stages that the missionaries cycled through during their terms overseas. The first is the tourist stage. In the tourist stage, the missionary is excited and interested in the new culture.

The people and the new customs and attractions that they are experiencing for the first time fascinate them. They have not yet taken on the task of integrating themselves with the people. The next phase of the cycle is the disenchantment stage. The new culture seems troubling and next to impossible to learn. The missionary may get easily frustrated with the small inconveniences that occur. But as each day progresses, the missionary learns more and more about the culture and if he/she perseveres through this stage, many will go on to share the gospel successfully. In the resolution phase of the cycle, the missionary is able to laugh at difficulties. They begin to empathize with the people and take a genuine interest in learning the new culture so that they can minister to the people. In the last stage, the missionary is totally at ease in the new culture. They can function without anxiety in their new setting (Hiebert, 1996).

Because many researchers believe that reverse culture shock is the most stressful aspect of traveling for the missionary, both culture shock and its reverse are in need of more research to gain a better understanding of their effects on missionaries as they travel. Reverse culture shock generally stems from the psychological and psychosomatic consequences of readjusting to the primary culture. Several studies were used to evaluate the difference between missionary children and non-missionary children on measures of parental attachment, perceived social support, reverse culture shock and college adjustment. Measurements of parental attachment, cultural distance and interpersonal distance were used frequently in other studies researching reverse culture shock.

There are various ideas about reverse culture shock and researchers are now starting to formulate ideas about the affects and treatments that can be carried out for those who are experiencing these phenomena. Research has not been conclusive, but



experimenters have been able to formulate some basis as to why certain individuals experience more reverse culture shock than others. One line of reasoning is that the sojourners who adapt the best to the host culture experience changes in their values, attitudes, behaviors, ideas, and perceptions and then must subsequently integrate these changes with their home culture behavior and attitudes. This constant need to adapt makes reentry difficult. Another factor that may make the reentry process difficult is the length of time spent in the foreign country. Scientists have suggested that the longer one remains in the host culture, the more difficult returning to the United States will be. The processes of acculturation to a new culture and reacculturation to one's home culture are characterized by a sense of loss of familiar cues, and both require one to integrate into a different cultural system. However, people expect cultural differences and a certain amount of shock and adjustment when entering a foreign country. However, no such expectations exist on returning to the home culture.

When student sojourners go abroad, they travel at an age when they are formulating their core values, beliefs, and general lifestyles. Because they have shaped their values in the foreign culture, students, on returning home, see that they are out of step with their former culture. Sojourners are not always aware of the changes that have taken place in themselves until they return home and face the challenge of readjusting to their previous culture.

Piaget's equilibration theory of cognitive structure can offer an explanation of the acculturation/reacculturation process. Piaget believed that all living things strive to achieve equilibrium, because in this state of equilibrium, they interact efficiently with

their environment. When people are in a state of disequilibrium, however, this efficiency diminishes.

When Piaget's theory is applied to the experience of going to a foreign culture, it can be stated that when people entered a new culture, they encountered diversity and novelty. This leads to what Piaget called a state of disequilibrium where current schemes of understanding the world are no longer helpful. These schemes were only helpful when they were in their own home culture. In the new culture, travelers are thrown into a state of disequilibrium, because societal structures are different from the structures and schemes they were familiar with in their home country. To become more balanced and in a more peaceful state of equilibrium, the process of accommodation is used. Piaget described this process as modifying one's current schemes to be able to understand and process this new culture.

Piaget's paradigm can also be applied to the reentry process. Christofi and Thompson interviewed many who had recently returned from sojourns in foreign countries. Many of their responses were the same.

After I looked forward to returning to my home country after having lived abroad for several years. However, when I returned, I began to realize things at home had changed or I had changed. I found myself constantly comparing my home culture with the (sojourn) culture and found my home culture lacking in several ways. I was in a state of conflict over wanting to live in my home country, while, at the same time, finding myself unable to continue living there. It was an ambivalent "should" versus "want" conflict. I felt like I should remain in my home country, but I really wanted to go back.

There are several implications for counseling that can be drawn from the current study by Christofi and Thompson. First, data obtained from phenomenological interviews, similar to the data gleaned from person-centered counseling interviews, gave in-depth descriptions of the experience of returning home, becoming disillusioned with home, and then returning to the foreign country. Such data are invaluable to mental health professionals when they work with clients who have had conflicts similar to the ones experienced by the participants. Most likely, the best counseling for those in a similar conflict is to follow the person-centered model of actively listening and responding to the clients' thoughts, feelings, and expectations (Christofi & Charles, 2007).

The Homecomer Culture Shock scale was a test that Huff (2001) utilized to measure some of the variables. There are several variables that researchers have developed that missionaries need to take into consideration as they travel to and from their host countries--location, the child's connection with the host country, mobility, and the family's cohesion. As missionaries re-enter their native countries, there are some variables that need to be calculated--the length of time since their last visit, the age of their children at their return, and the support they receive when they arrive. Perceived social support has been found to be a vital part of re-entry into a missionary's native country. In 1988, Fray developed a 23-item Homecomer Culture shock scale. He used behavioral descriptions that were commonly reported in studies on reverse culture shock. In Huff's studies of missionary children's parental attachment in comparison to non-missionary children, she found that there was not a significance in her findings.

However, missionary children were found to have a greater feeling of distance from their culture than those who were not missionary children. They also experienced a

greater amount of interpersonal distance. In her comparisons within the group of missionary children, Huff found that missionary children who attended more than six schools while overseas had a less affective quality in their parent-child relationship. In considering facilitation of independence, the location of the missionaries was found to be a variable. Those families in Central/Southern Africa generated their children's independence more frequently than those in Central Asia. In looking at their social support, children who considered themselves as "nationals" had a greater satisfaction with their social support than those who thought themselves to be "American," but they were the ones who experienced greater reverse culture shock. Children who re-entered the United States before they were fifteen experienced less interpersonal distance than those who were older when they came back to the United States.

All of these findings within the group became insignificant when the researcher modified the T-test scores with the Bonferroni corrections. However, the consideration of parents as a source of social support was a significant contributor to the multiple correlation; the greater support receives from her parents, the less likely she is to experience reverse culture shock. These findings may indicate that the missionary child is not at an increased risk for difficulties if the right precautions are taken. On the other hand, the results of a high interpersonal distance rate among missionary children indicate that missionary children may lack an ability to connect with others.

Because perceived social support is connected to adapting to the host culture and plays an important role in minimizing reverse culture shock, it is important that missionary parents encourage their children to associate with their host culture. Another aspect of traveling to consider is to allow the child to return to the United States before

her teen years. It will enable them to achieve identity development in the States and has a positive affect on their college adjustment. If missionary parents are worried about interpersonal distance, a boarding school while overseas may be a positive experience. Boarding schools may create a close environment that permits the child to build strong relationships and social skills (Huff 2001).

In a study done by Edward Stringham (1993), three missionary families were studied at intervals after returning to the United States. The researcher discussed the need for a scholarly understanding of reacculturation, focusing on missionary families. The study looked at three questions: How did the individual participants experience reacculturation? How did the reacculturation affect family dynamics? What factors influenced the patterns of cross-cultural readjustment? The Family Environment Scale was used to evaluate the participants. Families had arrived in the United States at different times. It was believed that the most profound grief during re-entry was caused by the loss of social reinforcers. Those who had returned recently showed the strongest revulsion to Americans' prosperity. Those who had been home longer made more efforts to persuade others to take on a cross-cultural viewpoint. By about six years, the missionaries were less likely to conflict with their home culture's values.

It was found in this study that adolescents moved through the process of reacculturation more rapidly. A decline in family cohesiveness was found while studying the families. One factor thought to impact cohesiveness was the decline in the accessibility of the mother after she began working. Another contributor was the opportunity for the children to "go out" with their friends in the evenings. Although literature is inconclusive whether males or females experience greater stress at re-entry,

this study found that the wives of the three families had greater stress than their husbands. Research indicating social identity as a struggle for returning missionary children was confirmed when the children interviewed in this study revealed that they felt “different” from their peers. A majority of them had even hidden their experience of living overseas from their friends and teachers. Although the child may move faster through reacclturaion, the research suggests that the struggles through adolescence are sharpened because of the added stress of cross-cultural adjustment.

Nancy Adler developed a Growthful Reentry Theory. In it, she identified four coping styles. In this research, the adults used three coping styles that corresponded with Adler’s. Those adults in the early process of re-entry implemented alienation to cope with reacclturation. Those who were further along adopted the proactive pattern while those who had been in the United States the longest implemented the resocialization method of coping. The outcome of their missionary endeavor was an important factor in the success of their re-entry. Those families who had successful experiences overseas could look to their ongoing work overseas and feel a sense of purpose in the United States. The family who had been “kicked out” of their nation due to an unfriendly host government had an acute feeling of failure.

Readjustment can be made easier if there is similarity between the home and host cultures. As with other studies, social support was found to be a critical variable in re-entry. The power structure of the couples was considered in Stringham’s study and it was found that marriages that were symmetrical in their power coped better than those that were asymmetrical (Stringham, 1993).

Danielson (1982) stated that missionary children usually adjust to life in the United States in under a year. It was noted that children who had problems with authority on the field were the children who had the most difficulty with adjustment back in their home culture. Danielson outlined the experiences that the missionary child will need to adjust to when they arrive back in America. One is that of going to college. The new students, like their peers, will have a newfound responsibility to care of themselves. The missionary child will often find that the values of their peers are different in America and therefore find it hard to relate to their friends. The returnee will also need to gain experience with credit cards and checking accounts, but will need to wait a couple of years as their parents will not yet have established credit. Going to church in the US is another difficulty for many missionary children. It is usually difficult for them to find empathetic and genuinely interested church members. The wealth that is prevalent in the US is puzzling to the missionaries and their children. Parents may have a difficult time giving their children money to buy the clothes that are "in." However, the missionary child will usually be cautious with her money. While the missionary's child is in college, he may be left on campus during holidays if his parents are still on the field. Having adoptive parents that will take in the children at that time is very helpful. Some missionaries have even purchased an apartment near family where their child can stay when they need. Driving is another issue with which missionary children deal. If they arrive in the United States in their late teens, their peers may have been driving for a few years while they have not even attained their license yet (Danielson, 1982)!

Another struggle that involves the entire family is the pace of life in America. Many times the family members become involved in so much and their roles change so

much that they find it difficult to adjust to their new roles in the family. Many wives, who held important positions on the mission field, come home to be known as “so-and-so’s wife.” The children see the materialism that is rampant in the United States and are caught between their friends, who have the latest gadgets, and their parents, who feel it unnecessary to get them those material things.

Peter Jordan (1992) wrote a book and devoted a whole chapter to the struggles that families go through when they re-enter America. He gave some tips on how to make the shift to life in their native countries. Taking items that they value back from the field with them is important to the transition. Jordan suggested that making a photo album will enable the child to share his experiences with others. Another way of lessening the trauma for a child leaving the mission field is to begin using things that they will have in America several weeks before the move. The child will then be comfortable with those things before they arrive in the US. On the other hand, set aside items that the child will not bring with her a few weeks in advance. To ensure that the children are placed in the right classroom when they start school in the US, class work should be brought with the family along with a detailed list of the child’s accomplishments written by his teacher. Parents should make themselves known to new teachers and make sure that they are aware of any problems that arise. Re-culturing the child will help him/her develop the tools that are necessary for every day life in their home culture. If the child left their nation at a young age, they may be more familiar with the foreign culture than their own native culture.

The author also gave advice to parents about handling their teenagers when they return to the states. He suggests that the parent allow their teenager to choose the



activities in which they want to be involved. Being asked, without preparation, by their parents to speak or sing in front of their church will often not produce good results.

Research has shown that children who grow up overseas may experience delayed adolescence. Both the physical and emotional puberty of missionary children may occur later because the cultures that the children are raised in may delay the events that make adolescence such a difficult experience (Jordan, 1992).

Hiebert (1996) discussed reverse culture shock and the missionary's response to this stress. The initial reaction is defensive. After returning home, the missionary is not part of the community as he was on the field and he does not seem to fit anywhere. The missionaries don't have as many material possessions as the other families in their churches and may feel inadequate. After the defensiveness has subsided, the missionary may desire to change the culture of their community. They want to make those around them aware of the poverty that they experienced while they were overseas. Not many people will respond, which leads to more bitterness and the missionary may become angry. However, the missionary will normally adapt after some time and find their place in their society again.

The author provides some methods for learning to adapt to new cultures. These methods could be used while overseas or when returning to the United States. For some children who have spent the majority of their lives overseas, coming to America on furlough is experiencing a "new culture." Acknowledging anxieties is a good way to minimize culture shock. After the missionary recognizes the anxiety that he is struggling with, they can properly deal with it. Learning the new culture is a major benefit to overcoming the shock. As more about the culture is learned, the fear of the unknown is

decreased. Building trust develops relationships that are very important to any functioning human being. It is also a good way to overcome (reverse) culture shock.

Because stress is such a big part of culture shock and reverse culture shock, it's important for the missionary family to learn proper ways of dealing with it. Setting realistic goals is one way that Hiebert suggests to manage stress. Setting aside time for recreation and stress relief is vital for allowing the missionary to stay healthy and have a lifelong ministry. Keeping themselves in the right perspective is another way to alleviate stress. Flexibility is crucial to the foreign mission field. It is often helpful for the missionary to spend some quality time alone or with their family when the stress level is rising. However, the missionary needs to beware of withdrawing from the culture altogether. The last method for stress reduction is to have the missionary share their burdens. Talking their problems out with other missionaries and their family members can generate good relationships. Knowing that someone else understands and cares about their troubles is very helpful in dealing with a difficult situation (Hiebert, 1996).

#### *Purpose of the Study*

Reverse culture shock is a unique experience that can occur in missionary families. It is also to be taken into consideration for military personnel and those who are transferred overseas for jobs. However, current studies have not been able to establish the correlation between missionary children and their level of perceived social support and their adaptation to life when they return to the United States. Reverse culture shock will be studied with respect to the missionary child's perceived social support. Their perceived social support from family, friends, and society will be part of the study. In focusing on perceived social support and parents as a source of social support, the study

will focus on areas that have actually been of importance when studying missionary children. The results will then be analyzed to determine if there is a difference between males and females in their experiences.

### *Hypothesis*

1. There is a difference in the degree of perceived social support experienced by male and female missionary children who have spent five or more years overseas.
2. Social support?

### *Delimitations*

The study is delimited to:

1. A sample of Liberty University students who have spent five or more years overseas as missionary children.
2. The use of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support to determine the amount of perceived social support that the subject is experiencing.
3. Completion of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support sent via e-mail to determine the perceived social support of the subject.

### *Limitations*

The study is limited by:

1. The surveys being sent via e-mail, therefore allowing the participant to give answers that are not observable to the researcher.
2. Missionary children at Liberty University who may have spent several years in the United States before completing the survey; therefore their reverse culture shock may be minimal or even gone.

### *Assumptions*

1. The tests used by the researcher are accurate and reliable in measuring perceived social support and parents as a source of social support.
2. All subjects completed the surveys honestly and correctly.

### *Definition of Terms*

For consistency of interpretation, the following terms are defined:

1. Reverse Culture Shock stems from the psychological and psychosomatic consequences of readjusting to the primary culture (Huff, 2001).
2. Social Support is the physical and emotional comfort given by families, friends, co-workers and others (Social Support, 2006).

### *Method*

#### *Subjects*

The researcher obtained a list of Missionary Students from the MuKappa chapter of Liberty University. MuKappa is an organization for missionary children who are attending school at Liberty University and desire to have some support from others who have spent a large majority of their lives overseas. A total of forty-four surveys were sent out. The researcher received fourteen responses out of the e-mail surveys sent out. Eight of those responses provided answers to the survey. There were three which were sent back to the researcher as undeliverable. There were two “out of office” replies which never received answers after the initial e-mail. One reply received by the researcher was from an instructor at Liberty University who had been back in the United States for some time and felt that he would not be useful to the study. After the initial e-mail, no

following e-mails were sent. Out of the eight completed surveys, six of those were completed by females. The other two were done by male students at Liberty University.

### *Instruments*

The Perceived Scale of Social Support asks a total of 12 questions pertaining to the individual's perceived social support from parents and friends. The individual taking the survey is asked to answer on a scale from one to seven with one representing "strongly disagree" and seven representing "strongly agree." Four indicates that they are neutral about the question. Below is a copy of the actual survey.

#### **Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet & Farley, 1988)**

- |     |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |     |
|-----|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|
| 1.  | There is a special person who is around when I am in need.           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | SO  |
| 2.  | There is a special person with whom I can share my joys and sorrows. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | SO  |
| 3.  | My family really tries to help me.                                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Fam |
| 4.  | I get the emotional help and support I need from my family.          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Fam |
| 5.  | I have a special person who is a real source of comfort to me.       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | SO  |
| 6.  | My friends really try to help me.                                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Fri |
| 7.  | I can count on my friends when things go wrong.                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Fri |
| 8.  | I can talk about my problems with my family.                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Fam |
| 9.  | I have friends with whom I can share my joys and sorrows.            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Fri |
| 10. | There is a special person in my life who cares about my feelings.    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | SO  |
| 11. | My family is willing to help me make decisions.                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Fam |
| 12. | I can talk about my problems with my friends.                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Fri |

Below is a chart which displays the female and male responses to each question. Questions one, two, five, and ten of the survey pertained to the general perceived social support felt by the participant. The third, fourth, eighth and eleventh question were guided toward the social support perceived from the family. Questions six, seven, nine,

and twelve were targeted at finding the participants perceived social support from their friends.

### *Procedure*

After a list of the subjects is received, the survey will be sent via e-mail to the participants. This method will allow the subjects to complete the survey at a time that is convenient for them. They will be asked to place an "X" to right of the number they wish to mark. The completed survey will then be sent to the researcher's e-mail address. The scores of the survey will be tabulated and scored by the researcher to gain statistics showing the difference between males and females in the study and their perceived social support.

### Results

After averaging the female response for each question, the researcher gathered the average for each section. The questions pertaining to general social support received an average score on the scale of 3.7. Social support from the family generated an average score of 5.6. Questions dealing with friend's social support received an average of 5. The family seems to have generated the highest level of social support among females. General social support has the lowest average with social support from friends falling a little above the middle at an average score of 5. The averages for males fluctuated less with social support from friends received the lowest average of 4.8. Family's social support received the highest score of 5.1 and general social support fell in the middle with a score of 5.

## Female Responses

| Question | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Avg. |
|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|------|
| 1        |   | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 |   |   | 3.5  |
| 2        |   | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 |   | 4.2  |
| 3        | 1 |   |   |   |   | 2 | 3 | 5.6  |
| 4        | 1 |   |   |   |   | 3 | 2 | 5.5  |
| 5        |   | 2 |   | 2 | 2 |   |   | 3.6  |
| 6        |   |   | 1 |   | 2 | 3 |   | 4.8  |
| 7        |   | 1 | 1 |   | 2 | 1 | 1 | 4.6  |
| 8        |   | 2 |   |   |   | 2 | 3 | 5.8  |
| 9        | 1 |   |   |   |   | 3 | 2 | 5.5  |
| 10       |   | 2 |   | 2 | 1 | 1 |   | 3.6  |
| 11       |   | 1 |   |   | 2 | 1 | 2 | 5.3  |
| 12       |   |   | 1 |   | 3 | 1 | 1 | 5.2  |

## Male Responses

| Question | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Avg. |
|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|------|
| 1        |   |   |   | 1 |   | 1 |   | 5    |
| 2        |   |   |   | 1 |   | 1 |   | 5    |
| 3        |   |   |   |   |   | 2 |   | 6    |
| 4        |   |   |   | 1 |   | 1 |   | 5    |
| 5        |   |   |   | 1 |   | 1 |   | 5    |
| 6        |   |   |   | 1 |   | 1 |   | 5    |
| 7        |   |   |   | 1 |   | 1 |   | 5    |
| 8        |   |   |   | 1 |   | 1 |   | 5    |
| 9        |   |   |   | 1 | 1 |   |   | 4.5  |
| 10       |   |   |   | 1 |   |   |   | 5    |
| 11       |   |   |   | 1 | 1 |   |   | 4.5  |
| 12       |   |   |   | 1 | 1 |   |   | 4.5  |

## Discussion

When the averages of the males and females are scored, it is found that the females had the lower average over all than the males. There are many factors that could play a role in the lower scores shown by the female participants. Females tend to need

more attention and desire the social support over and above what the male desires.

Another additional item to be noted is that one survey completed by one of the male participants was marked completely down the middle. He gave all fours as his answers, indicating that he was neutral on every question. If there had been more participants in the survey, this participant's answers would not have been important to the total average, but because there were only two male participants, it was significant that he chose to give fours as his answer for every question. The female respondents, however, seemed to be more honest in their opinions and put more thought into their answers.

Questions 1, 5, and 10 had the lowest average for the female population.

Interestingly, those questions had to deal with the perceived social support from the general population. Questions 3, 4, 8, and 9 received the highest average for the female population. Question nine dealt with social support from friends, but the other three questions dealt with social support from family.

Unfortunately, any difference that is seen between the male and female respondents is not a significant difference. Due to the low number of participants who completed the survey, the results can in no way be considered to be an accurate reflection of missionary children across the United States.

### Conclusion

There is much work to be done in the study of missionary children and the effects returning to the United States has on their lives. The few studies that have been done have not been conclusive in their findings. It was seen from the studies above that the results were similar between missionary children and children who have spent their entire life in the United States. Each study that has been done has been unable to conclude that



children who live overseas for an extended period of time have a more difficult time establishing social support and making friends in the United States. It was also seen that recent research is difficult to come upon. It was difficult to find current books and journals which had information on the subject of missionary children and their perceived social support.

The same can be said about the study done in this paper. The number of responses was clearly not enough to generate valid research. As the missionary community is already a small community, it becomes even harder when trying to find missionary children who have recently returned to the United States. It was obvious that more research needs to be done to generate a superior investigation into the perceived social support of missionary children. More comparisons need to be made between the missionary community and the secular community in the United States. Possibly more aspects of the missionary child should be observed to come up with better outcomes. At any rate, more research should be done for the benefit of the missionary community.

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