THE MILITARY CHILD: DEVELOPING A LEARNING RESOURCE FOR GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

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Abstract

Every day, U.S. military members across the world uproot their families and move to a new location. They do so willingly and unconditionally, as they are obligated by their oath to serve their nation. This nomadic lifestyle is accepted and, oftentimes, embraced by the military family; for them, as long as they are together, they are home. Though a natural part of their existence, this lifestyle is a bit of mystery to those who live outside of its boundaries. Questions arise, such as, “How does the military help its families adjust to a new culture?” Research on this topic revealed few answers, and while there was no communication theory found, specific to children, both Altman and Taylor’s (1973) social penetration theory and Berger’s (1987) uncertainty reduction theory were referenced in an effort to understand how best to assist a child in his or her adjustment. Ultimately, a children’s book was designed in the hopes that it would help children understand that they are not alone in what they may be feeling. Similar to fables written by the philosopher, Aesop, the developed story attempts to teach an ultimate lesson of bravery and acceptance, with the aim of appealing to every child. The challenges faced by military spouses offer future research opportunities, as do the variety of platforms technology offers to deliver additional resources.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Any time a question is asked, and there is no ready answer, it deserves to be explored further. Curiosity fires the imagination, and gives true purpose to some of life’s best inventions. When it is a question that hits close to home, the purpose is even greater. There are few things, if any, closer to home than the family unit, and even though the definition may vary greatly from person to person, the importance of this relationship is understood by all. That variance, which is found from culture to culture, is what peaks a person’s interest.

The military is a very small sub-culture of American society, and therefore, not well understood by those standing on the outside. While there are many forms of service that an individual might pursue, the sacrifices made by the military family are a mystery to many. This enigmatic lifestyle causes questions to be asked, such as “How does the military prepare its families to move overseas?” When an answer does not immediately come to mind, a purpose is discovered.

Statement of Purpose

Through research, a gap has been identified in resources made available to families and educators that will help prepare young children for a life away from their home culture. Helping children to understand what awaits will only help to strengthen their family bonds. A children’s book will be developed in the hopes of addressing some of the concerns that many children may feel.

Definition of Terms Used

While there are many concepts that are important in the remaining chapters, the following terms standout as the most significant to the research:
Fable: Credited to a philosopher named Aesop and initially passed down through the oral tradition, “fables” are defined as short stories that instill values and morals into a young audience (Jose, D’Anna, & Krieg, 2005).

Global Nomad: Pascoe (2006) defined a “global nomad” as children who grow up within multiple cultures (p. 197).

Military Family: While there have been many definitions for the “military family” over the years, the most appropriate, modern definition is that of a spouse, and dependent child aged twenty-two years and younger (Clever & Segal, 2013).

Sponsoring Agency: The “sponsoring agency” is an organization – in the case of the military family, the U.S. Department of Defense (Finn Jordan, 2002) – that establishes the environment and rules for individuals living in a culture other than their own.

Third Culture Kid: Living in a “neither/nor world” (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009, p. 3) “Third Culture Kids,” or TCKs, are those children who spend years away from their parent’s home culture.

Organization of Remaining Chapters

The subsequent chapters consist of the following subtopics: a literature review, the scope and methodology of the project, a proposed answer to the research question, and a summary with ultimate conclusions. The literature review, Chapter 2, provides a basis on how best to answer the question of preparation for military children when they are moved to an overseas location. The scope and methodology of the project, Chapter 3, will discuss any gaps found in the previous chapter, as well as establish the best method for communicating with children. Chapter 3 will also narrow the focus of the project. In Chapter 4, the project will be presented and a full version of the subsequent children’s book, Truly Hidden, Tales of a Scaredy-Dog: It’s Moving
Day, may be found in the Appendix. Finally, Chapter 5 will summarize the findings, propose other avenues for future research, and give final conclusions on the topic.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Members of the U.S. Armed Forces make a conscious decision to give up their freedom to make choices which, to others, may seem to be a forgone conclusion. In which state shall I live? What clothes will I wear, today? Should I quit my job? Today’s military is a total, volunteer force, and every military member made their decision willingly. But, what about their spouses and children? These families, moving every two to three years (Masten, 2013) – three times more than their civilian counterparts (Blakley, Hennessy, Chung & Skirton, 2012) – have little say as to their next location. They must find ways to adapt to their new surroundings, once again establishing roots for their families to thrive. Similar to other highly-mobile families, such as missionaries who spend years at a time away from their home culture (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009), these individuals face separation from family and the potential loss of friendships (Masten, 2013). Military families are also subjected to additional stressors such as deployments, possible injury or death of a loved one, and the high frequency of relocations (Clever & Segal, 2013). They must embrace the question, “Where are we off to next?”, and in doing so, embrace the unknown.

Going a step further than the typically routine process of moving, military families are often asked to transition overseas, and their service is a constant adjustment to new places, people, and a general way of life. In an effort to assist their transition, the U.S. Department of Defense has created programs to assist families in a variety of life changes. There have also been articles published regarding the effects of international experiences (e.g. Blakely et al., 2012; McDonald, 2010; McLachlan, 2005; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009; Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009) and the study of military family resiliency is common, but little has been found regarding the best preparation practices to assist these families. Something to consider would be that not
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every member of the family prepares for a move in the same way. Whom, within the family, would best benefit from preparation?

Philosophical Assumptions

Children are the future. Plain and simple. Through their eyes, the world takes shape, and the interactions they have in their early years will impact them in ways which may never be completely understood. What is generally understood is that children have a willingness to learn, and their curious minds are quick to absorb the world around them.

A philosopher named Aesop’s is credited with creating short stories with an impactful message. Primarily passed down through the oral tradition, these fables instilled values and morals into a young audience (Jose, D’Anna, & Krieg, 2005), giving validity to the notion that children can be taught life lessons at a young age by conjuring scenes which are familiar, yet teach an ultimate message. Simplicity and brevity seem to be key, and life lessons are passed along through whimsical characters and easily-understood stories.

Theoretical Basis

Communication theory, as a whole, is placed within seven different “traditions” (Griffin, 2012, pp. 37-38) which help scholars and students to categorize the ideas and concepts being presented. It is not as neat and tidy as one might wish, however. As an intercultural topic, a young child facing a move to a new country might seem to fall squarely within the socio-cultural tradition where communication shapes our belief system (Griffin, 2012). And, that statement would be true. What would also be true is that the communication challenges faced in this situation might also fall within socio-psychological tradition. By asking themselves questions such as, “How should I behave, so they will like me,” or “What should I say, so they don’t laugh at me,” children begin to explore the effects of their actions as they build new relationships.
Theories such as Altman and Taylor’s social penetration theory and Berger’s uncertainty reduction theory (Griffin, 2012) support a dialogue which could help to shape the direction of additional resources on this topic.

**Social Penetration Theory.** Compared to the multiple layers of an onion, Altman and Taylor’s (1973) social penetration theory examines the complexity of self-identity. On the exterior, people tend to be less complex and more easily relatable to others. As the outer layers are shed, a deeper understanding and bond is more easily formed. We are able to move past basic demographics and begin to understand what lies at the heart of a person: what inspires them, what frightens them, and what they hold most dear (Altman & Taylor, 1973). When those bonds are disrupted, it can lead to anxiety and remorse for what may be lost (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). There is an uncertainty which can implant itself into a situation likely to bring change. Doubt begins to set in, and what should be considered a great adventure, instead becomes something which may be dreaded, or even feared. Reducing that doubt, before the voyage beings, is a possible method for preparing a young child for what is to come.

**Uncertainty Reduction Theory.** “Uncertainty is a potential hobgoblin of interpersonal relationships” (Berger, 1987, p. 41). Something about that word – hobgoblin – speaks to childlike imagery of a little green monster wreaking havoc across elementary school playgrounds. For such adult concepts as relationships and feelings, uncertainty still finds a way to work itself into children’s lives. Understanding the actions and influences of another person is challenging enough without the inexperience of childhood added to the mix (Finn Jordan, 2002). Berger’s (1987) uncertainty reduction theory may be one way in which to understanding the best methods to help children combat those feelings of fear and loss. Though children don’t traditionally deal in the competing relationships in which adults find themselves – intrigue, shifting values,
jealousy amongst friends, etc. – studies have found that the sudden and unexpected loss of a close relationship can cause the seed of uncertainty to grow (Berger, 1987). It would seem simple to say that to keep that uncertainty at bay, contact must be continued. After all, with the advent of Skype, Facebook, and FaceTime, video teleconference capabilities fit into a single pocket. But, is there a way to prepare the child for that loss, before it even happens?

Little research has been found which focuses on how various communication theories apply specifically to children. Helping families and educators to apply communication theory may assist a child with overcoming his or her fears. Further research as to how best prepare for this transition is beneficial not only to military children, but to all children who find themselves relocating to a new country and, potentially, a new way of life.

**The Literature**

**Military Families**

Before discovering how to best help military children transition overseas, the concept of the military family should be further explored. The military family is unique, and the definition has changed substantially over the years. Bower (1967) explored the effects of living in a foreign country on American military families. His definition of the military family – military husband and stay-at-home wife – has changed dramatically over the subsequent years. Clever and Segal (2013) defined the military family as that consisting of a spouse and dependent child aged twenty-two years and younger. These families are found in active duty, reserve, and guard forces. Demographics gathered by the U.S. Department of Defense (2014) defined a military family as also, but not limited to, a single parent, a service member married to a service member, or a military service member married to a civilian. Family members outnumbered active duty military by 15%, with 11.8% of the active duty force serving in an overseas location (U.S.
In 2011, that dynamic changed even further with the repeal of the military’s ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ policy which had previously denied the right of homosexual service members to serve openly (Bumiller, 2011; Clever & Segal, 2013), and further yet in 2013 with the federal government’s recognition of those in a same-sex marriage to receive federal benefits (Liptak, 2013). The military family is drastically different from that studied by Bower (1967), and the effect of a move overseas on these families deserves to be re-assessed from his initial study.

A Military Transition

Not only are there different definitions for the military family, there are also different perspectives from which an impending move might be viewed. One could consider the position of the military spouse (Blakley et al., 2012), while another might look at the perspective of the children (McLachlan, 2005). While the pros and cons of a new location might be considered the same for most families, military families have the added burden of less control when considering the “when” and “where” of the move. Spouses face difficulties in finding work (Blakley et al., 2012) while children struggle through identity development (McDonald, 2010) and where to call ‘home’ (McLachlan, 2005; Finn Jordan, 2002) due to the frequency of their moves. Young children may lack some of the coping skills that are developed by their peers who have experienced more consistency in the place that they call home (Masten, 2013; Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009).

Children also struggle with the effect of a move on their friendships (Burrell, Adams, Briley Durand, & Castro, 2006). Pollock and Van Reken (2009) found that, in general, children in a highly-mobile environment like the military have become very adept at meeting new people and developing new relationships, though those new relationships typically lack emotional depth.
These children tend to relate well to one another and gravitate to those like them. Researchers strongly agree that additional study is needed on the unique nature of the military lifestyle (Chandra & London, 2013; Clever & Segal, 2013; McDonald, 2010; Palmer, 2008). While the plight of the military spouse is an important topic to consider, and one that would benefit from further study, children have so much potential. As described by Pascoe (2006), children who grow up within multiple cultures, or “global nomads” (p. 197) share important qualities. They better understand how they fit within the borders of the world, and that being different is not necessarily a bad thing. To these children, world economics and politics are not foreign concepts. They understand the impact they can have on the world. While assisting an adult with this transition is important, children have the potential to take that experience, have it become a part of their identity, and change the world.

A New Cultural Experience

The military family is a unique element of our culture, and as already discussed, there are many challenges and rewards that a life of service can bring. Moving every two to three years could become routine for these families, and adding in the element of the unknown with a move overseas can bring both stress and excitement (Clever & Segal, 2013). It has been shown that an international move can bring adventure and new experiences with varying languages and cultures, all viewed through a unique multicultural lens (Clever & Segal, 2013; Easterbrooks, Ginsburg, & Lerner, 2013; Finn Jordan, 2002), and a new dynamic develops. The children in these transplanted families, along with the aforementioned title of “global nomad” (Pascoe, 2006), are also among those referred to as “Third Culture Kids” (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009, p. 3).

Third Culture Kids. Third Culture Kids, or TCKs, are those children who spend years away from their parent’s home culture and live in a “neither/nor world” (Pollock & Van Reken,
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2009, p. 3), or what social scientists, John Useem and Ruth Hill Useem, defined in the 1950s as a “third culture” (as cited in Pollock & Van Reken, 2009, p. 13). The third culture is found in the middle of the culture of origin, or “first culture” (p. 14), and the new, introduced culture, or “second culture” (p. 14). TCKs are now finding themselves to be more relevant due to their increased numbers, a louder voice, and a larger platform.

Pollock and Van Reken (2009) identified that TCKs are challenged by their relative inexperience, and the continuous development of their identities; it is essential that their status as children not be forgotten. Preparing children for their new life as a TCK – a status that, once obtained, will never change (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009) – is key to ensuring that the experience is an enriching one, and will continue to be so into adulthood.

Self-Identity. For the TCK, there is always the burning question, “Where is home?” There is no documentation that exists which shows one’s true place in the world, and there is often a feeling of displacement and of being an outsider in one’s home culture (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). This feeling of separation can be challenging to anyone who takes on the title of TCK, as self-identity is “… grounded in one’s society and culture, and related to the historical moment” (Finn Jordan, 2002, p. 211). If not one society or culture can be pinpointed as the foundation for shaping that self-identity, where might a TCK turn? The sponsoring agency may be the answer.

In the instance of the military child, the U.S. Government provides some of the answers for which they may be searching. Recognized by Finn Jordan (2002), the sponsoring agency – in this case, the U.S. Department of Defense – sets the stage and provides the structure in which military children are developed. No longer about where one might call home, or where one plants his or her roots, the mission of the respective military service establishes a common bond...
MILITARY CHILD amongst its families. Each family becomes an ambassador, of sorts, for the United States, and their behavior is governed by that status. Through these experiences, adult TCKs develop identities which Finn Jordan (2002) characterized as “… [remarkably] talented…” with a “… strongly held, often contradictory view of the world” (p. 222).

**Anticipating Expectations.** The excitement leading up to the overseas move sets high expectations for what may be discovered, and if those expectations are unfounded, it can lead to disappointment and struggle (Hall, 2004). Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs is one model used to explain human satisfaction and happiness, and it can help families to understand why they may be struggling with those expectations (Hall, 2004). Maslow’s Hierarchy states that, in order to achieve personal fulfillment, one must start at the base of the model – physiological needs such as food, clothing, shelter and safety – and build his or her way up to the goal of self-actualization, or reaching one’s own potential (Hall, 2004). While the foundation of this model is typically not in doubt for a military family – all of those needs will be met by virtue of their service with the United States government – the idea of what is considered acceptable options for food and clothing, at an overseas location, may change. The loss of that which is familiar may create anxiety, and it is important for families to understand that this feeling is normal. Further research would help to identify methods for working through these anxieties, and possibly even find ways to anticipate them, thereby limiting their negative effects.

**Children’s Literature and Its Effect on Intercultural Experience**

There is a world of possibilities that open up to a child with a book in his or her hands. Children’s literature can transport a child to another part of the world, and in doing so, learn the similarities and differences amongst cultures. Hylmo (2002) provided a modern day example in highlighting the effect that J. K. Rowling’s series had on millions of readers: a story about a
young magician named Harry Potter, and his intercultural experience joining a magical society. Rowling (1998) transported her readers to a fictional culture, and opened their eyes to new possibilities. This experience was not only appreciated by its younger, target audience. Adults also benefited from the readings, whether through its purchase, or through eventually picking up the books to read for themselves (Hylmo, 2002). Ultimately, readers see themselves in the story and its reality becomes their own, regardless of their age (Arizpe, Bagelman, Devlin, Farrell, & McAdam, 2014); they “[participate] in the reproduction of ideology” (Hylmo, 2002, p.126). There are times, however, where this ideology could hinder the positive influence these stories could have on children.

Critics have found a lack of variety in children’s literature storylines, and a narrowing of worldviews; it is felt that children’s literature is underutilized (Arizpe et al., 2014). Children’s books tend to focus on one perspective – that of a dominant culture – and in effect, overwhelm the intercultural experience (Hylmo, 2002). Individuals maintain their dominance throughout the story, and the ability to instill principles and beliefs through the main character are lost. Books which attempt to tell the TCK’s story may, in fact, have the opportunity to build a sense of belonging. It has the ability to create a common place for those individuals to bond, an often challenging task due to lack of proximity to one another. It is up to the author to ensure that he or she takes all cultural influences into account, thereby expanding the reader’s horizons and potentially accepting something that is unfamiliar.

Rationale

Thus far, the majority of the research discovered has been adult-centric, meaning that the challenges faced in a person’s later years are very much at the heart of applicable communication theories. Children do not approach life in the same way as adults, therefore the approach taken
in communicating adult concepts to them should not be the same. Arizpe and Styles (2003) believed that “… intellectual excitement converges with aesthetic pleasure …” (p. 21). They stated that adults do not see a picture book in the same way as a child; their years of experience counter the open mind with which a child views the pages. For children, imagery, combined with words, can be a spark for conversation, allowing children to apply their own personal meaning to the illustration on the pages (Arizpe et al., 2014). Children identify with the characters in the book, placing themselves within the story, and in doing so, start to shape their own unique perspective (Botelho & Rudman, 2009).

For the military child, a vast majority of the literature and resources provided, focus on a child dealing with his or her parent’s – typically, the father’s – deployment. Websites, similar to Military Kids Connect (National Center for Telehealth and Technology, n.d.), were created by the military to try and assist children with various life transitions. Consistent with Arizpe and Styles’ (2003) teachings, cultural sensitivity is taught through colorful games and characters, and the interactive interface challenges the children to test their knowledge. While there is much discussion about a parent who is away from home, while serving overseas, there is less regarding what the child might face if they, themselves, are the ones moving to a new country.

Design Questions

There are various questions that are in the forefront when considering the best way to approach preparing military children moving to an overseas location. What character would most capture the experience that a child might face when moving overseas? Is there a particular age group that should be targeting for this preparation? How does one best represent both cultures as equally important to the storyline? The development of a children’s book will attempt to provide an option for families and educators facing those same question. Botelho and
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Rudman (2009) believed that “… [children’s books] expand children’s understanding of the world, opening the widow to a panoramic view of society” (p. 265). This project will attempt to open the proverbial window a bit wider, capturing a child’s imagination, and assisting the child with his or her next great adventure.
Chapter 3: Scope & Methodology

The Scope of the Project

While the military family unit, as a whole, is essential to a successful transition overseas, this study will focus attention on the preparation of military children. As previously mentioned, while a spouse also requires support and understanding during this transition, his or her status as an adult makes them better equipped to handle the stressors which accompany a big move. Their identities have formed and their home culture has made its impression on their vantage point from which they view the world. Children, on the other hand, are more impressionable, and the lens through which they view life is unmarred and crisp.

Though this study will focus on children, that is not to say that the preparation of a military spouse is any less important. It would likely not, however, be approached in the same way as with a child, and separate study of a military spouse’s preparation would be beneficial. Ideally, preparation of the entire family would support each member’s individual resiliency. Parents, siblings and peers would act as role models for children (Botelho & Rudman, 2009), showing how to best approach a situation which otherwise might seem impossible to understand by oneself.

Also, while there are a variety of media outlets available to entertain and educate young children – television shows, websites, and computer programs, to name a few – children’s literature will be the sole focus of this project. The final product will be a book which attempts to fill some of the noticeable gaps found through research. Namely, how to best prepare children to be global citizens while also handling the stress of military life.
The Methodology of the Project

An initial understanding of communication theory, and how it might apply to a young child, is an essential first step in the project’s development. By exploring Berger’s uncertainty reduction theory and Altman and Taylor’s social penetration theory, products might be developed that target a younger worldview. Key elements of each theory will be kept in mind when developing the most appropriate storyline for a TCK, with the end goal of lessening, if not the elimination of, fear and anxiousness. Finally, nonverbal communication will be incorporated into the development of the storyline. A robust vocabulary takes years of development, and children have the opportunity to better understand those around them through the nonverbal cues that they receive (Kidwell & Hasford, 2014). Something as simple as a smile can help children to feel less threatened, and more willing to open up to the social circle in which they find themselves.

Current literature regarding the upbringing of TCKs, as well as children’s literature written to address substantial life changes, will be utilized in an attempt to develop the most appropriate product which might be useful in the home and classroom. Wooldridge (as cited in Botelho & Rudman, 2009) posed a list of questions that took a critical look at the socio-political themes within current children’s literature, and these questions will be kept in mind as a new resource is developed:

1) Whose worldview is deemed as important and normal within the book?
2) Why was the particular style chosen for the book? Was there another option?
3) Are there any expectations made with regarding to age, gender and culture of both the characters and the reader?
4) Who has a voice in the story, and who is suppressed?
Feedback will also be gathered from a “convenience sample” (Rubin, Rubin, Haridakis & Piele, 2010, p. 202) – a group of individuals who were utilized based on their availability for the study – of current military members who have either 1) moved overseas, during their childhoods, as part of a military family, 2) have children whom they have moved to an international location, and 3) used their own experiences in a third culture to assist their own children in making the transition. Contact was made with these participants through social media and e-mail, and the appropriate surveys were delivered via a third party provider, SurveyMonkey. This original research will be necessary due to the lack of substantial feedback from individuals who have first-hand knowledge of what it means to live in such a unique portion of American society.

The intended audience for the project will be military children, ranging in age from years four to eight, as well as parents and educators. This project must be useful to the entire family in order to encourage growth and acceptance. While the project will be written with the younger child in mind – an individual who has not yet reached adulthood, but whose experiences will shape the adults that they will become – the parent or teacher will be the one to purchase the book, and potentially read it to him or her, ultimately absorbing the lessons presented. Since the target audience is the most impressionable, there are certain ethical considerations to keep in mind.

**Ethical Considerations**

The first ethical consideration presented itself within the topic of the project itself, and the fact that the intended audience would be young children. Since this project will ultimately be
utilized in home and public education, a concerted effort must be made to develop the storyline with the best intentions in mind. By considering the afore mentioned questions during the products development, the product has a larger possibility of success at being all-inclusive and an open-minded experience for its readers.

Due to the original research child’s preparation for an overseas move, special care was made to ensure that the participants in the surveys would be over the age of 18. Rubin, Rubin, Haridakis, and Piele (2010) explained that a survey should only be conducted if it is a survey that the researcher is willing to do, his or herself. This follows their rule of “do no harm” (p. 204). Also important to keep in mind is that the participation should be completely voluntary. Each participant was made aware that he or she had this option, and that identities would be changed, should any answers be quoted in the research.
Chapter 4: The Project

Project Description

There is an unending supply of material to fuel the imagination, and the approach used for this project was purely personal. Finding inspiration in children’s books such as *The Berenstain Bears’ Moving Day* (Berenstain & Berenstain, 1981) and *The Berenstain Bears and the Trouble with Friends* (Berenstain & Berenstain, 1986) – a much beloved childhood series – this project was developed with the intent of delivering an ultimate message. A main character was chosen with whom any child could identify.

With no formal training on how to write children’s literature, beloved examples from childhood were referenced. The end result is a 25-page illustrated book, with a target audience of ages four to eight. Much like the morals learned in Aesop’s Fables, the goal of this book will be to inspire children to view change as an adventure and something to look forward to.

The Approach

As previously mentioned, children’s literature might unintentionally highlight one culture or vantage point over another. Voices might be silenced. By eliminating people from the storyline, there was no particular nod to one culture or another. The location of the story was also intentionally left vague, and while the inspiration for the project came from the perspective of a military family, the military storyline was intentionally excluded. This was done in the hopes that children from any sponsor group – missionary, diplomatic, etc. – might benefit from the lessons shared in the book.

Also considered were the results from the survey of military families who had moved to an overseas location. Themes such as the fear of losing friendships and having to make new
ones, were addressed in the project. The idea that “home” is found within the family, and not a location, was also incorporated.

The Story

Synopsis. Entitled Truly Hidden, Tales of a Scaredy-Dog: It’s Moving Day (see Appendix for full story), the project was inspired by a true-to-life rescue dog who finds herself scared of any new situation. Truly, the main character, is confronted with the realization that her world will soon be turned upside down, as her family is told that they will be moving far, far away. She struggles with the knowledge that she will be leaving behind all of her favorite hiding spaces, as well as her very best friend, Chipper. This story is about facing one’s fears, and recognizing that – though it may be scary – it can still be a great adventure.

Pages One through Five. The story opens with a brief introduction to Truly, and an acknowledgment that she is scared of just about any new situation. Right away, the storyline is revealed – she and her family will be moving someplace far away – and Truly expresses her concern with the idea that she would have to leave behind much of what she has come to love. While the location for the move is not revealed, the inclusion of a world globe introduces the idea that the location will be a completely different country.

Pages Six through Ten. By page six, Truly faces such fears as new people (the movers) and loud noises (the door bell). Her house is emptied, and she slowly loses her favorite hiding places. Faced with no other options, Truly takes comfort in the fact that she is with her family. It is acknowledged that, as long as she is with them, she will be ok.

Pages Eleven through Fifteen. The use of two different forms of transportation – both the car and a plane – helps to show the great distances that Truly travels, and serves as a transition point from one location to another. Truly starts to realize that there is a bright side to
traveling, and while the noises, smells and people at the airport are very new and strange to her, she seems to embrace the adventure of their new location. The house, while different, contains a variety of new hiding places for her to claim. A walk around the neighborhood reveals that new friends are possible.

**Pages Sixteen through Twenty.** Out on her walk, Truly encounters a new neighbor. This dog looks and sounds different than any other dog Truly has met, and Truly is unsure. In fact, she cannot understand anything that this new dog is saying. This component is included to acknowledge the possibility that a new language is a possibility when moving to a new location. Nonverbal communication is introduced in this portion of the book, and the wagging of the new dog’s tail is a sign of friendship.

Both dogs discover that they have a love of squeaker balls, and they spend the day playing in the park. Happy to have found a friend, Truly starts to feel more comfortable in this new place. Soon, Truly’s belongings are brought to the new house, and she is surrounded by those things that she finds familiar.

**Pages Twenty-One through Twenty-Five.** While Truly is finding comfort in her new home, she starts to miss her old friend Chipper. Unsure if she will ever see him again, technology is introduced to the story. It is important for the readers to understand that, while they may not get to be with their old friends every day, there are still methods for them to keep in touch. Truly’s happiness at the end of the story is a direct result of her connecting with both old friends and new friends.
Chapter 5: Summaries and Conclusions

Limitations of the Project

Limited research was found regarding communication theory specifically developed for children. Due to the unique worldview of a child, it was challenging to apply existing theories, and instead, multiple theories – Altman and Taylor’s (1973) social penetration theory and Berger’s (1987) uncertainty reduction theory – were referenced in an attempt to understand how a young child may feel when placed into a new culture.

Also, working within the shortened timeframe of the 16-week semester, there was immediately the limitation of tailoring the body of work in order to see its completion. As with any project, more time could have been committed to the gathering of feedback from military families, with regard to their personal experiences, as well as the development of the visuals for the project, itself.

With regard to the survey participants, there was a limitation in that the participants were gathered via social media, and were close, personal friends. The personal relationships with the participants was, ultimately, a positive in that the surveys were completed in a timely manner. There was a personal investment in the project on the participant’s part, and they were anxious to be a part of the process.

Finally, one of the most important limitations was that the project was limited to strictly the child’s point of view, and attention was not given to the spouse or military member, themselves. All have unique needs and concerns, and each could stand on its own as a research topic. While the target of this research question centers around the military child, the project’s design was done in such a way that any Third Culture Kid could benefit from the story.
Recommendations for Further Study

There is such opportunity for further research on this particular topic, and the first suggestion would be to expand the survey to encompass a larger selection of military families. There is an opportunity to create a larger feedback mechanism for those who are newly assigned to an overseas base – sponsorship surveys, orientations, etc. – though access to the base populace would have to be granted to the researcher, should they not have any type of military affiliation. This could be requested through the military base’s Public Affairs office.

Thankfully, technology has advanced in such a way that communication across the miles has become more and more accessible. While children’s literature is a tangible way to tap into a child’s imagination, other delivery mechanisms such as a webpage, a pamphlet, or a video game could be developed in the hopes of reaching a larger, more diverse audience. That diversity should be considered in the development process, and the resources tailored to the unique make-up of the individuals being represented.

Lastly, additional research should be focused on the other members that make up the military family, specifically the spouse. Military spouses encounter unique challenges in their position, and while there are many resources tailored to assist military spouses in the rigors of military life, there would be benefit in researching communication theory specific to their needs, followed by the development of unique, useful resources.

Conclusions

There is a gap in the understanding of the military family, and attention should be given when deciding how best to utilize communication theory in aiding this subculture in life’s biggest transitions. In this project, attention was given to military children, and how to best prepare them for a move overseas. Third Culture Kids, a group encompassing not only military
children, but children from missionary and diplomatic families, often face unique concerns that center around lost friendships and lack of belonging to one culture or another (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). Resources which honor all voices in the story – ethnicity, economic standing, and cultural identity, to name a few – should be intentionally honored and mindfully amplified; no one voice should be louder than another, a concept highlighted by Hylmo (2002). In this project, those children’s voices were represented via literature.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, a young wizard was introduced to the literary world and children everywhere were immersed into a new culture (Rowling, 1998). By virtue of purchasing the books and, in some cases, reading those books to a child, adults were brought into that same world and embraced it as their own escape. Arizpe et al (2014) helped us to understand that children place themselves in those books, and by doing so, become a part of the adventure. A children’s book written to help guide Third Culture Kids through that adventure is just one method which might be used in helping to prepare military children for a life overseas, and could become a learning resource for helping children develop as global citizens.
References


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Appendix

Truly Hidden, Tales of a Scaredy-Dog: It’s Moving Day!

Everybody gets scared sometimes. And that’s ok! Bravery comes in many shapes and sizes. Let’s meet Truly.

“Truly is a scaredy-dog, and she thinks that is just fine!”

To my family, friends, professors, and to all those who supported me near and far, thank you.

- K
There are a lot of things that Truly finds very scary. Cars, rides, thunderstorms, strange people...you name it!

Whenever Truly hears a strange noise, she runs for her favorite squishy, blue bed.

One day, Truly heard the scariest news yet. Her family was moving, and they were going to a new home...a whole new country, in fact!

It was time for all of their belongings to be packed away and shipped to a new house.

Truly did not want to move...

What about her favorite hiding spot?

What about her best friend, Chipper, who lives just down the street?

Truly did not like this idea one bit...not one bit at all.
It wasn't long before Truly heard a loud, banging noise outside. She peered over the window sill, around the stacked boxes, and saw a very big truck parked in front of the house.

Then, the worst possible thing happened... the door bell rang! Truly really doesn't like the door bell.

Before she knew it, strange people started to take all of the boxes from inside the house to inside the very big truck.

What was they going to do with her things? What about her squeaker balls and her favorite dog bed? Would she ever see them, again?

Soon, the house was empty as can be, and all of Truly's hiding places had disappeared.
Truly had no choice, but to find a comfortable spot on the floor of the car, and hope for the best.

After all, as long as Truly was with her family, she knew she would be okay. Her family would always be her home, no matter where she ended up.

This certainly was an adventure. Not only did Truly ride in the car, but she also flew in a plane—a plane up in the sky!

She didn’t mind the plane, for her space was small and cozy, and it felt just like one of her hiding places in her old home.

Truly and her family were on the plane for a very long time. When they landed, they grabbed their bags and went outside.

New smells, new sounds, new people... this may end up being Truly's scariest day, yet.

Another ride, and Truly found herself outside of a new house with new trees, new bushes, and a new front door. She slowly made her way inside, and started to explore.

While their things had not quite made it, yet, there were plenty of great hiding places to discover.
Soon, it was time to explore her new neighborhood. She slowly walked out the front door and down the steps, and out she came onto her new street. The stones felt funny beneath her feet.

Everywhere she turned, there was something new to see and smell, and Truly became nervous. But then, something unexpected happened.

Down the sidewalk and around the corner, Truly could hear the jingle of another leash and collar. She didn't know what to expect, but she tried her best to be brave, and not be too scared.

When the new dog saw Truly, it began to bark. Truly did not understand what the new dog was saying... this dog did not resemble any of the other dogs that she had ever met. But, it did seem excited to meet her!

Slowly, Truly made her way over to the stranger, and stuck out her nose to say, “Hi!” She saw that the other dog's tail was wagging, and she began to wag her own.
Truly and her new friend, Cobble, walked side-by-side, and made their way down the hill to the park. Soon, they were chasing a squeaky ball and having a great time.

After a long day of fun, and her new friend just around the corner, Truly started to feel as if this place could really become home.

Over the next few days, all of Truly's favorite things began to appear, one-by-one, in the house. There was her old bed and her squeaker balls.

Her mom even made her a special hiding place, all her own.

Truly began to enjoy this new place, and every day things became a little less scary. She started to understand that, even though these places and people were different, there was no reason to be so scared.
A few weeks passed, and even though she had new friends down the street, Truly began to miss her old friend back home. Would she ever get to see him again?

The next day, Truly heard something strange coming from the room. She peeked nervously around the corner and could not believe her eyes!

As she crept a little closer, who should she see? It was her old friend, Chopper, jumping up and down on the computer screen! Her family left the computer on, after talking to their old neighbors down the street.

"Truly was so very happy. She may always be a scatterbrained dog, but she was beginning to learn that there are so many adventures to be had. She cannot wait to see what adventure comes next!"