Making Sense of a New Culture:

Transition of International School Leaders

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ABSTRACT

Researchers have placed the number of expatriates in the world at between forty and sixty million people in the years 2010 through 2013 (Finaccord, 2014; Firth, Chen, Kirkman & Kim, 2014). One segment of the ever-expanding expatriate population is that of international school leaders who guide learning for a culturally diverse community of expatriates around the world. The International School Consultancy Group (2014) estimated that there were upwards of 3.5 million students being educated in over 7,000 international schools. As the number of expatriates and expatriate families with school-age children increases, this challenge of leading education for a diverse international school community also increases.

This ethnographic case study analyzed transition stories from international school leaders at one international school and addressed the following questions:

- How do international school leaders make their own journey to cultural awareness?

- How do international school leaders make sense of and identify the culture of their schools?

- How do international school leaders recognize beliefs and practices in their schools?

Thematic analysis based on Boyatzis's (1998) *Prior Research Driven Approach* was used to analyze data. The findings are shared through a two-article manuscript style dissertation. The research produced findings that indicate that while local and expatriate

international school leaders recognize international school culture as unique and follow similar patterns of reactions in their transitions, they do not perceive school culture through the same lens nor do they experience the same support in their cultural transitions.

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GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

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This study analyzed transition stories from international school leaders at one international school and addressed the following questions:

- How do international school leaders make their own journey to cultural awareness?

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The findings of this research study are presented through two articles. The research produced findings that indicate that while local and expatriate international school leaders

recognize international school culture as unique and follow similar patterns of reactions in their transitions, they do not perceive school culture through the same lens nor do they experience the same support in their cultural transitions. These findings can be used to guide international leaders through future transitions and help international school plan transition support for new leaders.

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Chapter 1- Introduction

Globalization and Expatriates

The ways in which individuals, organizations, and nations are interacting and living with one another are expanding at a rate that we can barely comprehend (Dumont & Lemaître 2005). Earlier writers about globalization understood that although current tools and identifications were not up to the task of explaining globalization, we had to become smarter at comprehending the phenomenon (Friedman, 1999). As early as 2000, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) struggled to narrow the definition of globalization to economics, including the movement of people around the world (International Monetary Fund, 2000). The IMF went on to state that these migrating people bring with them wide-ranging cultural, political, and environmental ideas and understandings.

This movement of people and their cultures creates a network of expatriates. Researchers have placed the number of expatriates in the world at between forty and sixty million people in the years 2010 through 2013 (Finaccord, 2014; Firth, Chen, Kirkman & Kim, 2014). Each of these individual expatriates comes with an understanding of the world and a way of making sense of roles and the interactions of those roles (Coates & Allen, 2010). Whether expatriates are relocating voluntarily or involuntarily, they must learn how to adjust to a new cultural environment (Firth, Chen, Kirkman & Kim, 2014). With many expatriates bringing family with them, these adjustments include work, home, and school. In each of these arenas, Newman (1995) pointed out that cultural distance between home and host country creates obstacles to assimilation. Newman added that although frameworks and formalities may exist that acknowledge these cultural differences, a gap in true knowledge and comprehension of the new culture endures.

The cross-cultural differences are particularly difficult for expatriate international

school leaders. These educational leaders guide learning for a culturally diverse community while simultaneously they are responsible to orient and supervise faculty and staff from their own native cultural background, a local cultural background, and a mix of other international cultural backgrounds. As the number of expatriates and expatriate families with school-age children increases, these challenges increase. In 2013, the International School Consultancy Group estimated that there were upwards of 3.5 million students being educated in over 7,000 international schools (International School Consultancy, 2014). In order to understand the influence of these emerging challenges on the leadership of international schools, one must understand the history and identity of international schools, the ways in which the specific culture of a place becomes an actor in the school community, and the journey of how the culture is developed over time through a combination of local and external factors.

International Schools

An international school is composed of a culturally diverse and a highly transient student and faculty population (Hayden & Thompson, 2011). The mission of the international school is distinct from local national schools, adhering to the regulations of a foreign or international accrediting agency for the creation and approval of its curriculum and standards (Caffyn, 2010; Keung & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2013). How these diverse individuals and needs come together creates, in international schools, a unique school culture that must be learned by each new entrant into the community.

The definition of an international school has evolved over time as the proliferation of new schools catering to different stakeholders around the world continues to grow. Beginning in 1969, Leach classified international schools based on how they were founded and to which organizations they were affiliated. At the time, Leach described four ways to identify an international school: schools attending to the needs of one country (British schools, American Schools), schools attending to the needs of various countries, schools

established with the cooperation of two countries (Colegio Anglo-Columbiano), and schools which are members of The International Schools Association.

A few years later, Terwilliger (1972) looked at different characteristics that all international schools share. Terwilliger stated that international schools needed to combine and exhibit all of these characteristics. He began with a student body that was composed of a significant percentage of diverse foreign nationals. Moving to governance, he required a school board that mimicked the cultural composition of the school. Finally, addressing teaching and learning, he described the need for a faculty and staff who have experienced the process of adapting to the host country and a plan of study that meets the needs of the various student groups who attend the school.

As we moved through the second half of the twentieth century, the definitions of international schools continued to grow and expand. Sanderson (1981) expanded Terwilliger's definition by including schools that self-identify as international by offering the International Baccalaureate program and schools that cater to needs of students from various countries. Hayden and Thompson (2011) added to Sanderson's more open definition of international schools by defining international schools through the presence of a culturally diverse enrollment and a teaching staff that is often highly mobile. As expatriate families and educators move through this loose network of international schools, they experience extremely diverse circumstances and a widely varying culture at each new school.

Rationale for the Study
Since international school communities exist in this environment of constant transience of expatriates, international schools experience a uniquely high rate of turnover in staff and leadership. This turnover increases the diversity of thought by continually adding new educational leaders and teachers with their own experiences and perspectives. The great

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diversity of cultural thought present in international schools influences the leadership of these schools. Hallinger and Leithwood (1996) stated that cultural values have enormous effects on all aspects of school relationships. Both global and local environments influence the thoughts and actions of twenty-first century school leaders with a global understanding (Easley & Tulowitzki, 2013).

There is not considerable research on the reciprocal relationships between international school leaders and the cultural environments in which they work (Dimmock & Walker, 2000; Hallinger & Leithwood, 1996). The research that does exist suggests that the many superficial attempts to address cultural norms generally fall short of their goals (Dimmock & Walker, 2000; Coates & Allen, 2010). As Coates and Allen (2010) pointed out, sometimes individuals, in an attempt to meet the needs of another cultural environment, miss the mark because they do not understand the subtle histories and values that have built the culture. This misunderstanding can lead to conflict.

One of the largest issues of this type of conflict in international schools is how schools import and implement policies and practices that are foreign to the culture of the local host community or to the values of community members and faculty (Dimmock & Walker, 2000; Hammerness & Kapadia Matsko, 2012). In particular, an international school must be concerned with the internal culture of the school and how that school inducts its new faculty and staff into that unique culture. Saka, Southerland, Kittkelson and Hutner (2013) asked us to move beyond the traditional highlights of induction programs and focus on how schools identify and share school culture with new teachers. In the environment of international schools, the specific culture is influenced by a combination of local, host country factors, and imported perspectives and biases from its leaders, faculty, students and parents (Caffyn, 2010). New members of the international school community must learn how

to make sense of their new place and its culture.

The Culture of Specific Places

As individuals, we attach special meaning and specific cultural environments with different places. As we come to know a place, we learn its unique culture and our role within that culture. Agnew (1987) identified three elements that make a place into a meaningful location: location, locale, and sense of place. Location refers to the physical space of the place, whether the space is permanent or not. Agnew's concept of locale encompasses the idea of how things get done and the forms through which interactions take place. Finally, Agnew's sense of place alludes to the sentimentality of a space and how that place makes us feel. This sense of place is the association of memories and feelings with a specific location or culture. These associations allow an individual to move beyond the physical artifacts and clinical observations of culture.

This journey through different stages of learning about a place is repeated around the world as expatriates move from one posting to another. Individuals and families develop ways of coping and learning as they arrive in a new location. Many newly arrived expatriates methodically go about the learning of their new place. Where is the best grocery store? How do I get a driving license? Who is the best dentist for young children? Moving through the layers of understanding, individuals use different markers to help them to feel comfortable and "at home" in their new place. In other words, they transition through stages of understanding a new place in order to develop a sense of that place.

Research Questions

The process of transition takes place in every international school as new people arrive. New families and new teachers arrive in airports ready to start a life in a new location. International school leaders will initially guide many of their orientations and inductions to

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their new culture. How do international school leaders make their own journey to cultural awareness? How do international school leaders make sense of and identify the culture of their schools?   How do international school leaders recognize beliefs and practices in their schools? While other researchers asked similar questions, there has been little effort to explore such questions from the viewpoint of educational leadership (Hallinger & Leithwood, 1996; Easley & Tulowitzki, 2013).

Overview of the Study

In this study, I explored the journey to cultural awareness from the viewpoint of international school leaders. I identified patterns and trends in international school leaders' understanding of their previous and current international transitions. Through the use of an emic perspective, I gathered data about how these international school leaders and aligned the data with levels of cultural awareness. By analyzing international school leaders' stories of transition, I identified their stages of awareness and the ways in which they made sense of new cultures.

Chapter 2 - Review of Related Literature

As expatriates move and transition from one culture to another, they must come to understand that new culture. The newly arrived expatriates begin a process of making sense of the new culture. In this chapter, we will examine definitions of culture and models of cultural transitions. In an attempt to understand how the process of cultural transition can become an actor in international school leadership, we will compare this process to a theory of adult learning and development and we will survey studies that highlight the role of culture in educational leadership. Finally, we will review current research of cultural transitions and awareness in international schools.

Understanding Culture

In order to analyze how culture influences systems such as international schools, we must understand what culture is and the models of how one transitions through cultural awareness. Such understanding includes identifying what is meant when one refers to culture. Additionally, it is important to recognize cognitive and emotional stages of transitioning to a new culture.

Defining and Learning Culture

Most definitions of culture allude to its complex and variable nature and often refer to multiple influences and contributing factors. In 1952, Kroeber and Kluckohn characterized culture as a common lifestyle including beliefs, traditions, routines, and expectations. The outcomes of cultures are visible symbols, rituals, and shared embedded values (Drenth & Groenendijk, 1998) that can be discussed and observed. A deeper examination of culture asks one to investigate how these cultural beliefs and practices came to be. Getting to the heart of how culture is formed helps researchers understand how cultures are built (Coates & Allen, 2010; Goh, 2009).

Coates and Allen (2010) described how people build an understanding of what culture is as a consequence of how their minds interpret the actions of others within an environment; "culture does not exist as a factor distinct and apart from the human mind" (Coates & Allen, 2010, p. 26). These constructions of understanding differ as individuals build their own reality. As a result of this social process, the realities that are created are often specific to each culture. Hofstede (1983) alluded to the same, more-subtle, development of cultural norms as he described that such cultural values are difficult to alter later, because they begin to influence individuals from the beginning of life.

The process of orienting oneself to a new culture involves some mundane tasks such as identifying daily needs and acquiring specific information about rules and policies. This induction process includes what Horn and Metier-Armijo (2010) termed informational learning. These authors described the need and process of learning the nuts and bolts of how to be in a particular culture. This informational learning includes the daily needs of how to function and follow routines. At this point of introduction to a new culture, the individual is simply trying to survive from day to day. Learning and knowing the rules and routines of a new culture is not enough to claim to understand and be a part of that place's culture.

The journey from learning some concrete procedures to becoming aware of a new culture can be compared to other theories of adult learning. Researchers describe different ways of knowing in adult learning (Drago-Severson, Blum-Destafano & Asghar, 2013). The informational learning referred to previously, aligns with the researchers' stage of *Instrumental Knowing*. In this level, an individual can identify the rules of how to get something done correctly. This way of knowing, much like the survival stage described above, allows one to efficiently get done what needs to get done and the individual has a clear set of directions to achieve that process.

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In the next section, we will explore different models of moving beyond this initial level or stage of learning. As a person moves to other ways of knowing, their learning becomes less absolute (Drago-Severson, Blum-Destafano & Asghar, 2013). Learners recognize that there is more than one perspective and often more than one answer. Individuals come to understand that there are different paths to understanding and seek to explain and describe what they are learning in different ways.

Cultural Transitions

As individuals enter into a new culture, their behavior and reactions to situations determine their stage of cultural awareness or learning. Various researchers have represented these cultural transitions through different models. (Hanvey, 1976; Stobart, 1989; Winkleman, 1994; Coates & Allen, 2010). Most of these models begin with cultural shock, which Winkelman (1994) defined as a complex reaction to diverse stresses that arise from entering into a new culture. Researchers agreed that individuals vary in their ability to come to understand and develop empathy for another culture's perspective and practices (Hanvey, 1976; Stobart, 1989; Winkleman, 1994). In other words, when individuals quickly recognize that they are interacting in a new place, each individual deals with that realization and makes sense of their new place in their own way and in their own time. In the section ahead, there are descriptions of the various models that researchers have used to describe the process of how individuals make sense of that new place.

Stages of Cultural Awareness. Each individual manages the arrival in a new culture differently. Stobart (1989) used concentric circles to represent the journey towards a center of cultural awareness. Beginning in the outer circle, individuals recognize that there are different cultures than the one in which they live. In this first stage, people have exposure to the ideas of different cultures although they do not actually interact with those cultures.

Moving inward to the second and third circles, individuals have experiences in places other than their own culture. The experiences may include very brief vacations or trips to living for longer periods of time. The identifying characteristic in these two circles is that the individual never changes their identification of home as their country of origin. The key to moving to the final center circle is making a more lasting move and the capacity to use the local value system to judge the actions and decisions of others. Typically, the individuals who move to the innermost circle speak various languages and their identification of home does not always align with the country of their passport. These individuals in the fourth inner circle make local connections with people and organizations and conduct their daily routines using local services and interact with local community members. In other words, at this innermost stage of cultural awareness, individuals can naturally interact and can make sense of their new culture.

Coates and Allen (2010) believed that individuals are constantly creating a way to make sense of culture and identified three progressively deeper levels of understanding. Their first level, "naïve understanding", is akin to Winkleman's cultural shock. Coates and Allen identified naive understanding as the period of trying to survive in a place that is obviously new and different to the individual. As cultural awareness grows, these researchers believed that individuals move through stages ranging from "superficial understanding" to "profound understanding". In these stages, individuals move from basic understanding of language and culture to a deeper appreciation and acceptance of underlying beliefs and subtle nuances.

With a slightly different perspective, Hanvey (1976) stated that true cultural awareness comes when one has in-depth knowledge of another culture and also can accept that unique perspectives and behaviors result from being part of different cultures. He saw the ultimate goal of cross-cultural awareness as moving beyond an understanding of why a

culture behaves in a certain way, to being able to get inside the thoughts of a local in order to live the same thoughts and perspectives as the members of the cultures. Hanvey identified the stages in the journey towards this goal and incorporated the motivating rewards that may encourage movement towards this deeper understanding.

Hanvey's stages, like Stobart's circles, began with an acknowledgement of local culture and transition through varying levels of participation in that culture, finally arriving at a depth of understanding that he describes as being, "inside the head of the host society" (1976, p. 50).   Hanvey cautioned that mere exposure or participation cannot guarantee this depth of understanding, a belief that is justified by the many expatriates that never make this cultural shift (see Hanvey, 1976; Stobart; 1989; Winkelman, 1994). Hanvey persisted that individuals who are able to move to the deepest levels of understanding are able to accept and participate with an open mind and are motivated by the rewards that this participation and understanding offers.   These rewards include a truer acceptance from the local host community and a feeling of belonging in a new culture.

Table 1 Levels of Cultural Awareness

Level	Information	Mode	Interpretation
I	Awareness of superficial or very visible cultural traits; stereotypes	Tourism, textbooks, National Geographic	Unbelievable, i.e., exotic, bizarre
II	Awareness of significant and subtle cultural traits that contrast markedly with one's own	Cultural conflict situations	Unbelievable, i.e., frustrating, irrational
III	Awareness of significant and subtle cultural traits that contrast	Intellectual analysis	Believable cognitively

	markedly with one's own		
IV	Awareness of how another culture feels from the standpoint of the insider	Cultural immersion: living the culture	Believable because of subjective familiarity

(Hanvey, 1976, p.53)

Hanvey gave more concrete descriptions that identify behaviors at each of the stages of coming to know a culture (Table 1). Specifying the cultural awareness of the individual not only in terms of their understanding, Hanvey also used terms to describe how and where the person is gathering information about the new culture and how they emotionally react to that new information. As the individual gains cultural awareness, the sources of information move from external to internal, as the individual learns by doing.

Therefore, cultural awareness is a process that initially involves individuals cognitively identifying, acknowledging, and interacting with new cultural practices and the routines of the culture. Deeper awareness and transition further requires one to become an insider, understanding the thoughts and emotions that drive the routines and symbols of the culture. In other words, these final stages of cultural awareness necessitate that one comes to have Agnew's (1987) "sense of place". It is at this stage, that a person can more successfully achieve the work that is required in their life or job. For international school leaders, the achievement of this final stage of cultural awareness means that they can successfully navigate new cultural values while conducting their required work.

School Leadership around the World

The work of school leaders is remarkably similar considering the distinct places in which they conduct their daily activities. While the cultures in which they work may differ, there appear to be many commonalities in the role and responsibilities of the principal in

schools (Dimmock & Walker, 2000). Walker and Dimmock (2000) in their comparative

exploration of leadership explained that, although there are differences due to government

policies or culture, several general principles are globally recognized by principals

supervising teachers. These principles include holding teachers accountable for their actions,

providing teachers constructive feedback to continually improve, and establishing a process

through which contracts can be renewed or ended. In the following section, we will look at

how teacher supervision varies from one country to another and how culture can play a role

in the process.

Culture Influences Supervision

Dimmock and Walker (2000) identified that many principals struggle with cultural

allegiances as they engage in their daily tasks, including supervision. By reviewing studies

from various countries and cultures, we begin to see the daily challenges faced by educational

leaders. In some instances, educational leaders believe and support the decisions that culture

dictates. In other instances, principals understand that cultural norms or expectations are

forcing them to act in certain ways, that may be in conflict with leadership theories or

educational philosophies and beliefs.

Athanasoula-Reppa and Lazaridou (2008), after conducting quantitative surveys of

newly appointed principals in Cyprus and Greece described how these principals perceive

themselves to be more accountable to the state than they are accountable to their teachers,

making the task of formative teacher evaluation more difficult. The state values the

summative teacher evaluations that determine contract renewal. Therefore, "the bureaucratic

arm of the education system militates against having the collegial relations with teachers that

are necessary for doing formative supervision" (Athanasoula-Reppa & Lazaridou, 2008, p.

81).

In Israel, Arar and Oplatka (2011) found a different challenge to teacher supervision. Arar and Oplatka conducted semi-structured interviews of Arab Elementary Principals, asking for their opinions of the teacher evaluation system. The researchers found that principals did not want to use teacher evaluation as a means for removing someone from the position of teacher. The researchers found that the principals in this region believed that a teacher came to a school to permanently remain at that school. The participant principals felt that confronting this system required political and social capital that they did not have. The principals did not feel that they were able to challenge this structure of the village in which they live and work.

Similarly, Goh (2009) wrote about a theorized implementation of the Innovative Designs for Enhancing Achievement in Schools (IDEAS) program from Australia into Singaporean schools. The program requires teachers to share opinions with their supervisors in front of groups of other teachers. In Goh's analysis of behavior norms, Singaporean teachers viewed this public form of feedback as an inappropriate form of confrontation towards their supervisors and Goh theorized that the program would not be successful in Singapore. While teachers in Singapore may speak more freely in small groups of their own choosing, they view providing suggestions or opinions that may differ from their supervisors as inappropriate.

In these examples, the culture supersedes theories on educational leadership. Cypriot and Greek principals learn about the formative elements of supervision, yet their daily practice demonstrates that they take on the cultural role of summative evaluator (Athanasoula-Reppa and Lazaridou, 2008). While Israeli principals may acknowledge that certain teachers should not continue in their positions, they feel powerless to remove them because of cultural pressures from the villages in which they live and work (Arar & Oplatka,

2011). Likewise, Singaporean teachers, who are knowledgeable and could offer classroom perspectives to add to the discussion about improving the Singaporean educational system, do not openly share opinions or disagreements with their supervisors because of the understood cultural expectations and roles of teachers and supervisors in Singaporean schools (Goh, 2009). In these examples, the teachers and educational leaders are influenced by the expectations that create the culture in which they interact. What remains unclear from these studies is the conglomeration of distinct components that came together to build the cultures that now influence these school leaders.

Elements Come Together to Create Culture

One study of international school environments attempted to observe the forces that act together to create culture. In Caffyn's 2010 study, she worked as a participant researcher analyzing critical incidents through interviews, observations, and an analysis of photos of the location. Caffyn described, how location influenced the behavior of individuals in two different international schools. In her definition of culture, Caffyn included the actual physical environment and location of the school, as well as the culture of the host country and the school community members. As Caffyn pursued her investigation, she discovered that the history of each school and its surrounding community also had both direct and subtle impacts on the current policies and contemporary actions of faculty and administration.

Caffyn worked to identify the source of current norms and routines in the two international schools, focusing on the influence of the local workers. She found that since local staff tends to serve longer periods of time at the international school, they have broader effects over time. Caffyn documented how cliques of local staff and foreign staff develop. The interaction and the tensions between these groups helped to develop the micro politics of the school that become part of the culture.

Cultural Transitions in International Schools

The unique culture at each international school can influence how an individual assimilates to that school culture. Little research exists on how teachers and principals transition to new cultures in the form of international schools (Hallinger & Leithwood, 1996). Without such specific data, we look to a study of how students respond to beginning a new international school. In 2002, Allan conducted a study in which he asked students at an international school to write a narrative about their experiences of transition. The results showed that many students "experience considerable cultural dissonance and severe culture shock" (p. 65). What Allan discovered was that although international schools often tout their diversity, many international schools are actually more mono-culture, with the majority culture dictating policies and influencing the environment. Therefore, whatever culture predominates a school effects how students assimilate.

Allan was quick to point out that no matter how much one group may control school culture, a student's experience is anything but homogeneous. He gave examples, both in and out of the school setting, in which students have little to no interaction with members of the majority culture. These examples included being a member of an ESL classroom with no speakers of the majority language, living in a home in which a non-school language is spoken or multiple languages are spoken, or having only close friends at school and outside of school who are not members of the majority language. These situations can challenge the assimilation of the student and create feelings of isolation.

Allan analyzed the student writings that described their arrival in the new school. His analysis identified the domains that most influence a student's assimilation. These domains included their interactions with peers and teachers, the school curriculum structure, and the interactions between home and school. In the conclusion to his study, Allan calls for international schools to be more intentional about what he calls "cross-cultural" learning.

Allan claims that students, and in extension, the international schools themselves, fail to meet their focused mission and goals when they do not acknowledge the cultural learning that is required to be a successful international school student.

Educational Leadership in International Schools

This same cultural learning that Allan (2002) described as a requirement for students entering international schools, has also been studied as part of research into successful international school leaders. In a 2013 study, Keung and Rockinson-Szapkiw asked how cultural intelligence can predict leadership success in international schools. Keung and Rockinson-Szapkiw's (2013) quantitative survey study used the Cultural Intelligence Scale and the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire 5X to look at the specific factors of cultural intelligence and how they contribute to transformational leadership. The results were as expected, with leaders finding more success in international school environment when they had a higher level of cultural intelligence. Keung and Rockinson-Szapkiw found that leaders with lower cultural intelligence had to dedicate more energy to their own transition process and as a result were not able to be transformational leaders in an international school setting. When looking at specific factors that supported the ability to be a transformational leader in an international school, behavioral and cognitive cultural intelligence were the two best predictors.

Need for Further Research

The culture of places and the cultural values of individuals interact and shape the behavior and actions of school leaders in international schools. Hallinger and Leithwood (1996) stated that cultural values will have enormous effects on all aspects of school relationships. When we think of twenty-first century school leaders with a global understanding, we must recognize that both global and local environments influence their thoughts and actions (Easley & Tulowitzki, 2013).

There is not considerable research on the reciprocal relationships between international school leaders and the cultural environments in which they work. (Dimmock & Walker, 2000; Hallinger & Leithwood, 1996). While some researchers like Hofstede (1983) have discussed how the culture of place influences work, they do not explore the personal journeys that individuals experience. The research that does exist suggests that there are many superficial attempts to address cultural norms, yet many of these attempts fall short of their goals (Dimmock & Walker, 2000; Coates & Allen, 2010). As Coates and Allen (2010) pointed out, sometimes individuals, in an attempt to meet the needs of another culture, miss the mark because they do not understand the subtle histories and values that have built the culture. These misunderstandings create conflict.

International schools contend with high turn-over of faculty and staff as well as the constant arrivals and departures of students (Allan, 2002; Caffyn, 2010). Educational leaders as well as teachers arrive at international schools with diverse cultural backgrounds and unique experiences of previous cultural transitions. Each leader has to manage a transition to a new school and place.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

In order to explore the journeys of cultural awareness of leaders in international schools, I gathered data on how individual school leaders experienced these transitions. In Chapter 3, I will explain how a qualitative design was used to conduct an ethnographic case study of how international educational leaders transition to the culture of a specific international school. The purpose of this study was to use an emic perspective, that of an insider to the world of international school leadership, to explore the transition stories of international school leaders.

I will provide an explanation of the conceptual framework and research design of the study, as well as a description of the participants, the data collection, and analysis procedures, and finally a report of the role of the researcher and the trustworthiness strategies used by the researcher. First, as part of the description of the conceptual framework and research design, there will be a rationale for the use of a qualitative study and a summary of ethnographic research. Following this introduction, there will be a detailed documentation of the research procedures including a profile of the participants, the methods used for collecting data including interview designs and protocols, field notes, reflexive journal, data storage plans, and the use of a transcriptionist. Finally, the last section will examine how the data was analyzed and provide information on the role of the researcher as well as strategies used by the researcher to deal with trustworthiness.

Research Design

Using the definitions and information from chapters 1 and 2, I examined the transitions of international school leaders to their new cultures, aligning their stories with the stages of cultural awareness (as defined by Hanvey, 1976). This analysis helped me answer the following questions: How do international school leaders make their own journey to cultural awareness? How do international school leaders make sense of and identify the

culture of their schools? How do international school leaders recognize beliefs and practices in their schools?

A qualitative study was the best way to respond to these questions. Cresswell (1998) defined qualitative research as "inquiry about a social or human problem…[that] builds a complex, holistic picture" (p. 15). Patton (1990) added in his explanation of the applications of qualitative research, that qualitative methods are "ways of finding out what people do, know, think, and feel" (p. 94). The purpose of this study was to do just that; to explore the social problem of educational leaders transitioning to a new place and provide a description of this complex process.

This investigation followed an ethnographic case study in order to pursue the study of this social problem.   Patton (1990) described ethnography as a way to seek better understanding of the culture of a group or an organization. Ethnographers believe that people within a group or members of an organization develop cultural patterns of behavior. Then, through various collection methods, ethnography looks to interpret and explain the data from a cultural point of view (Patton, 1990).   This study explored how international school leaders come to identify and transition into their new culture.   Therefore, an ethnographic approach led to a better understanding of the patterns of behavior of international school leaders throughout this cultural journey.

Following this ethnographic case study approach, I gathered data from various international school leaders within a specific school. Through this study, I gained a deeper, more thorough understanding of culture by getting many detailed perspectives on transitioning to the same international school. The case study methodology was appropriate because it allowed me, as the researcher, to look for similarities and unique traits among the individuals and identify patterns (Suryani, 2008). The individual units of the analysis were

transition experiences of the school leaders at the identified international school.

I relied on an interpretive approach (Khan, 2014) to analyze the experiences of the participants. An interpretive approach to qualitative research asks the researcher to try to view the world through the words of the participants. Through this approach, the researcher must come to understand the value of an experience for the participant and make that significance clear for readers (Denzin & Lincoln 2003). Since the purpose of the study was to better understand how international school leaders come to understand new cultures, an interpretive approach allowed me to understand the perceptions of the individuals. Part of the transition process for international school leaders to their new culture is the way in which the individual makes sense of that new place, so therefore, an interpretive approach allowed me to consider these individuals not as mere objects of research, but as active contributors to the research (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of Hanvey's (1976) four stages of cultural transition (superficial awareness, cultural conflict, intellectual analysis, and cultural immersion) helped to create the environment in which the research took place. This conceptual framework guided the research and helped frame the analysis of the data. The use of this framework helped explore the unique situation of international school leaders and created a background for exploring the sense-making process of these individuals and the culture in which they act. An ethnographic case study using this conceptual framework offered a fuller description of how these international school leaders came to identify and understand their transition journeys.

Ethnography

Ethnography was the best approach to deeply explore this transition process. As Frake (1964 quoted in Wolcott, 1985) stated, the purpose of ethnography is not to recount the

daily routine of a group of individuals, but rather to produce a theory of cultural behavior. Ethnographic research explores the behavioral patterns, beliefs, and customs of a group. I examined the language, practices, and attitudes of participants to compare words and actions in order to develop a complex description of the culture of the group.

Wolcott (1985) defined ethnography by emphasizing what it is not. He stated that mere length of interaction with participants, techniques, or the inclusion of rich description does not create ethnography. He required that the investigation must be through the lens of cultural interpretation. Patton (1990) also emphasized the vital role of culture in ethnographic studies and identified the essential belief by ethnographers that any human group in a common place over time will develop a culture. As a member of the group in the common place that is the focus of this research, I was uniquely qualified to conduct this research. My membership in the cultural community of international school leaders will be further addressed in the section that discusses my role as the researcher.

In ethnography, data about the development of this culture can be collected through individual interviews of members of the culture (Cresswell, 1998). In this study, data was collected through one-on-one ethnographic interviews with the other international school leaders at the school. In ethnographic interviewing, Spradley (1979) emphasized that researchers need to be concerned with "the meaning of actions and events to the people we seek to understand" (p. 5). The role of the ethnographic interviewer is to develop a relationship with the participant that conveys the belief that, 'I want to know what you know in the way that you know it.... Will you become my teacher and help me understand?' (Spradley, 1979, p. 34)

Participants

The participants in this study were the senior level school leaders who have

transitioned to the same international school. As Rudestam and Newton (2007) pointed out, in ethnography, it is essential to seek out participants who have personal experiences with the focus of the study.

I selected this site for research for a number of reasons. My own employment at the identified international school enabled me to reap the benefits of familiarity discussed later in the section on my role as researcher. The school fits the definition of international schools as defined by Hayden and Thompson (2011). Additionally, all of the school leaders had transitioned to the school within the last four years and could speak in detail about their experiences.

In order to request participation, I used a Participant Recruitment Letter (Appendix A) via email which identified myself as a researcher and provide an overview of the study. Upon receiving responses from interested participants, I communicated with the participant to identify a time and location that was mutually agreeable.

This study defined senior level school leaders as school administrators actively working as Principals or Directors at the specific international school who were responsible for supervising or creating policy for faculty at the school. As a member of the senior administrative team at the school, I was able to identify participants who met this definition through their roles. My role as a colleague with the participants brought additional benefits and challenges. These advantages and limitations will be addressed in more depth in the section that describes my role as the researcher.

Procedures

This section on procedures will define the steps that will be taken during the study. These steps include the Institutional Review Board requirements and the methods of data collection. Additionally, the procedures will detail the interview process, field notes, and

reflexivity journal involved in this study.

Institutional Review Board

This study met the requirements of the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board

(IRB) policies for conducting research. I completed and received credit for the completion of

the VT Human Subjects Protection Tutorial. Before beginning the research, I obtained

approval from the Virginia Tech IRB.

In compliance with the Virginia Tech IRB, I prepared and presented an Informed

Consent Form (Appendix B) that explained the purpose of the study and provided

participants with information regarding their role in the study. The consent forms were

completed and returned prior to the start of the interview.

Data Collection Methods

The study explored how international school leaders transition to a new place. I used

an ethnographic case study in order to interpret the culture of the participants and how the

members of this bounded group make the transition to their new place (Cresswell, 1998). As

part of this study, I conducted interviews, took field notes, and kept a reflexivity journal. The

following sections will outline the methods through which I collected data.

Interviews. I conducted interviews in a mutually agreed upon location and time that

allowed for an appropriate length, private interview. Elwood and Martin (2000) discussed

the inherent issues of the role the place of the interview can play in the participant's comfort

with the interview process. Although they acknowledged that there is no perfect solution,

they recommended offering the choice and time of the interview to the participant whenever

possible. The interviews followed the Interview Protocol (Appendix C) that was approved

through the Virginia Tech IRB and was recorded through a portable audio-recorder. A

transcriptionist transcribed all interviews.

The ethnographic interview protocol was semi-structured, including the same topics and general questions for each subject, and allowing the flexibility for unique follow-up for each person interviewed. Gibson and Brown (2009) explained that when the interview protocol is too prescribed, the researcher loses the ability to follow themes introduced in the interview process or address topics in a natural manner. The purpose of using this style of questioning was to use questions as a way to encourage participants to think deeply about their life experiences (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). The goal of ethnographic interviewing, as described by Heyl (2001), is to encourage participants to "explore purposefully the meanings they place on events in their worlds" (p. 369).

I developed an Interview Protocol (Appendix C) using recommendations from various sources (Heyl, 2001 & Spradley,1979). As suggested by these authors, the interview questions allowed participants to tell their stories and share experiences in a comfortable setting with an interviewer who was previously known to them. In addition, the questions included in the interview protocol aligned with the research questions for this study. Below, Table 2 aligns interview questions with the central research questions.

Table 2 Alignment of Interview Questions with Research Questions

Research Question	Interview Question
How do these international school leaders make their own journey to cultural awareness?	• Tell me about strategies that this school offered that helped with your transition. • Tell me about strategies that you personally used that helped with your transition. • Tell me about anything else that you believed was important in your transition journey.
How do international school leaders make sense of and identify the culture of their schools?	• How did you first learn about this school? • Sometimes people use the idea of the "rhythm of a place" to describe the sense of place. How would you describe the rhythm of this school?
How do international school leaders	• How did you learn how to get routine and logistical tasks completed

	at this school?
recognize beliefs and practices in their schools?	● How did you learn the expectations for completing your job? Tell me about any expectations that were unique to this school.
Biographical data	● How long have you worked as a school leader?
	● How long have you worked at this school?
	● How many times have you transitioned to a new school?
	● Is your current role the first time you have held that position?

In using one interview, there were some potential limitations. The first limitation was that an interview does not strictly adhere to the ethnographic tradition of fieldwork over a long period of time. I addressed this limitation in two ways. First, my role as a participant observer in the setting of the research helped to create a much stronger and informal relationship with the participants. Wolcott (1985) argued that although there can be limitations to a researcher conducting ethnographic research in a familiar environment, these same researchers can recognize persistent themes and cultural patterns of behaviors which other researchers may not identify. Second, I allowed participants to review transcripts of the interviews and confirm that the transcripts accurately described their experiences in the culture and their reflections about their transitions.   When signing the consent form, each participant identified whether he or she wished to review the transcripts. Participants had seven days to review the transcription and provide feedback.

Field Notes. Immediately following each interview, I completed field notes that included my observations during the interview. The field notes served to augment the audio recordings and transcription of the words of the participants and included notes on the participants' actions during the interview. Marshall and Rossman (2006) explained that field notes should be an organized recording of "events, behaviors, and artifacts" (98). These authors believed that participant actions and conduct have a purpose and add to the complex

exploration of the culture.

While Shaffir (2004) explained that there are no strict protocols for taking field notes, he emphasized that importance of recording the field notes as soon after an event as possible. In order to maintain a more natural flow to the interview with the participants, I refrained from taking detailed field notes during the interview. Instead, I took notes on specific behaviors and events or changes in setting and the timing of the events.   I recorded more detailed observations of setting, participant behavior and other events immediately following the interview. In order to maintain consistency from one interview to the next, I used a Field Notes Protocol (Appendix D) to record these observations.

Reflexivity Journal. In addition to field notes following each interview, I completed a Reflexivity Protocol (Appendix E).   Reflexivity serves the purpose of helping to identify the beliefs, emotions, and presumptions with which an interviewer approaches and perceives the participants and the data that they offer (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, Patton, 2002).   In the reflexivity protocol, I responded to the following categories: (a) initial thoughts (b) observation and reaction to participant behavior (c) self-reflexivity (d) reflexivity about participants, and (e) reflexivity about the audience. The use of a reflexivity protocol assisted in documenting my beliefs. By consistently using this reflexivity protocol, I recorded personal reactions throughout the data gathering process and documented any interference from my own emic perspective as a researcher.

Data Storage

In compliance with the Virginia Tech IRB guidelines, I followed policies for the safe retention of participant data. This includes maintaining data in secured locations for up to three years and the destruction of participant data at the conclusion of this time frame. Signed participant consent forms continue to be held separately from data in a secure

location.   The data was stored in a locked desk or on a password-protected computer. When I needed to travel with the data, documents identifying participant data were kept in a locked bag remained with me at all times.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, it is important to identify your role as a researcher in the context of the study (Coar & Sim, 2006). As a researcher, I conducted a study in my own professional environment. I have worked in four different international schools in four different countries for a total of more than ten years of experience. As an international school leader in three of those schools, I have transitioned to new cultures and I have been partially responsible for the transition of new faculty and staff to the school and the culture. My professional role was that of an international school leader in the school that was the setting for this study.

This role of peer researcher presents both benefits and challenges to the research process. My role in the school placed me in both professional and casual relationships with the participants in this study. Although I interacted with the participants on a daily or weekly basis in our professional roles, I did not supervise any of the participants. All of the participants were aware of my intended study prior to conducting the research. Outside of this research interaction, we had professional and personal relationships.

Benefits

The benefits to my peer relationship with participants included two distinct areas. The first was the fact that I have made multiple transitions to new places in the role of an international school leader. The second area was that as a peer, participants recognized me as a member of the international school leader community. These two areas brought knowledge of the experiences that participants described and understanding of the language with which they described those experiences.

As an international school leader, I have experienced my own journey of transition to cultural awareness to new places, and, I would argue, my transition upon returning to my own culture after years of separation. I have learned new languages, adapted to novel traditions and routines, and engaged with host community members of these new places. As has been described in the literature review for this study I have recognized that this journey of transitions has different stages and is not solely based on time in the new place. (Stobart, 1989; Hanvey, 1976)

The participants knew that I have made these cultural journeys in the role of an international school leader. Cozer and Sim (2006) explained that participants interviewed by a peer can offer richer insights because the participants lend more credibility to a researcher with professional knowledge and experience. The 2006 discussion expanded to say that participants don't feel that they need to define or explain professional "jargon" and feel a stronger sense of collaboration with a peer researcher.

Challenges

My professional and personal peer relationship with the interview participants could also be viewed as a challenge to my role as a researcher. These challenges arise from prior knowledge and experiences that we have shared as colleagues and from the fact that we may continue to work with one another after the interview and analysis of those interviews. Additionally, some participants may feel like a researcher with professional knowledge may judge their answers or opinions.

Prior to interacting with me as a researcher and interviewer, these same participants interacted with me on a daily basis, discussing future plans, solving problems, and collaborating as colleagues. I have known and worked with each of the interview participants for at least 6 months. We have come to know each other's personal and

professional opinions and beliefs.

As a result of these previous experiences, as a researcher, I already knew that they had unique relationships with the culture that we shared. As was described extensively in Chapter 2, individuals transition to new cultures with unique paces and paths. Some individuals quickly adapt and seek deep levels of cultural awareness, while other individuals reach intermediate levels and remain there, not deepening their awareness of the new culture. In order to mitigate some of this issue, I added a line to the letter inviting their participation, "Part of the reason that you are being recruited to participate in this research study is because you share a unique perspective that is different from the researcher and the other interview participants" (Appendix A). The purpose of this line, in addition to encouraging them to share personal beliefs and not try to align their opinions with the interviewer, was to emphasize that there were no wrong answers.

In a 2006 study of health care professionals, Coar and Sim asked participants to comment on how they felt to be interviewed by peers. The two most prominent themes that emerged were that participants perceived the interview as a test of their professional knowledge and that the participants viewed the interviewer as an expert who would identify gaps in their knowledge. I believed it was important to confront these concerns at the beginning of the interview. The previously mentioned line added to the invitation letter helped to encourage participants to express their personal journeys of transition. Additionally, it is important to formally address the concern that their professional knowledge is being judged. Therefore, at the beginning of the interview protocol I stated, "There are no right or wrong ways to transition to a new place. This research is trying to determine how international school leaders make that transition" (Appendix C). While these additions to the data gathering process could not eliminate all challenges, they helped to

lessen any conflict that arose from my role as the researcher.

Taking on the role of researcher in my own professional environment create both benefits and challenges to the research process. I agreed with Coar and Sim (2006), that while the challenges of qualitative interviewing of peers must be addressed, the benefits outweigh these challenges. Unlike a researcher without professional experience in the field, peer professionals can access prior knowledge and understanding of the professional culture. As a result, Coar and Sim contended that peer interviewers may be able to more deeply pursue topics.

Data Analysis

The following section will describe the analysis methods used in this study. I will describe the process of thematic analysis, the benefits and challenges of its use, and explain how the analysis responded to the research questions. Additionally, as part of definition of the coding process, I will detail the various stages of data analysis.

Thematic Analysis

In order to identify themes across the individual experiences of each person, I used thematic analysis to investigate and organize the data. This analysis approach allows a researcher to link seemingly diverse thoughts or occurrences and present this data in a new way (Boyatzis, 1998; Gibson & Brown, 2009). Using thematic analysis allowed me, as a researcher, to deal with complex concepts and the lived experiences of the participants.

Thematic analysis allows a researcher to select from various ways of coding data discovered from oral, written, and visual exchanges (Boyatzis, 1998). Boyatzis defined three different ways to identify codes for analyzing data. These three ways are theory driven, prior research driven, or inductive analysis coming solely from the raw data. I used what Boyatzis (1998) terms the *Prior Research Driven Approach.* This approach allows the

researcher to use codes based on a review of literature as well as codes that appear as a result of the data analysis.

Benefits and challenge to thematic analysis. An ethnographic study presents a broad view of a culture and the behavior of its members; thematic analysis allows researchers to analyze such data. In this study, thematic analysis was appropriate because it allowed for an efficient way to categorize and link lived experiences. There are both benefits and challenges to using thematic analysis to analyze data. Some argue that thematic analysis has the potential to weaken the real experiences of participants in the research by projecting the views of the researcher onto the participants or valuing the patterns identified above the real lived experiences of the individual participants (Boyatzis, 1998; Van Manen, 1998). To the contrary, others, including Boyatzis (1998) claimed that thematic analysis allows a researcher to find patterns in data around complex concepts and identify both manifest and latent themes, offering "a way of seeing [or] a way of making sense of unrelated material" (Boyatzis, 1998, 5). The rest of this section elaborates the challenges and benefits and discusses way to strengthen the use of thematic analysis.

Some authors such as Van Manen (1998) disputed the strength of thematic analysis, arguing that the process tends to weaken the depth of people's real-life experiences. To counteract this fear, Boyatzis (1998) recommended sticking closely to the raw data. He contended that by using specific codes and consistently using this coding in close analysis of the raw data, thematic analysis allows researchers to create a more structured analysis of complex data.

Boyatzis (1998) himself also identified an obstacle to thematic analysis. He claimed that one of the biggest complications is projecting one's own beliefs or perceptions onto the words of a participant. He identified several ways to lessen this impact. Again, he

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encouraged researchers to stick closely to the raw data from the participants. Boyatzis also

explained that developing an explicit code and using consistent judgment to implement that

code through the analysis helps the researcher to maintain a structure and reliability to the

analysis. Additionally, the use of a Reflexivity Protocol (Appendix E) helped to identify any

projection of personal beliefs.

Codes

In order to maintain consistency throughout the analysis, and to address the

challenges of thematic analysis, I kept a log to identify codes, record definitions, and describe

indicators. The log represented the audit trail of how the raw data was reorganized,

classified, and connected. The thematic coding that was used in this research began with the

codes identified below. These codes include the five elements that Boyatzis (1998) described

as essential to thematic analysis (label, definition, indicators, exclusions, and examples).

These labels, definitions, indicators, exclusions, and examples are drawn from the

concepts introduced in chapters 1 and 2 of this dissertation. I examined the transitions of

international school leaders to their new places, aligning their stories with the stages of

cultural transitions (as defined by Hanvey, 1976).

Table 3 Initial Codes for Analysis

Label	Definition	Indicators	Exclusions	Example
Level 1	Awareness of superficial or very visible cultural traits; stereotypes	Tourism, textbooks, National Geographic Unbelievable, i.e., exotic, bizarre	Deeper understanding Specific examples and interactions	"there are a lot more white faces around campus than black faces"
Level 2	Awareness of significant and subtle cultural	Cultural conflict	References to stereotypes;	"So I'm thinking of men peeing in the street

	traits that contrast markedly with one's own	situations Unbelievable, i.e., frustrating, irrational	superficial Cultural immersion; living the culture	[…] and it's nothing. That is something that was still in the '40's, after the war, and then society has changed that completely"
Level 3	Awareness of significant and subtle cultural traits that contrast markedly with one's own	Intellectual analysis Believable cognitively	Superficial; reference to stereotypes References to feeling like an insider	'If you think you're gonna change what they do, because that's how we do it in the United States, you're gonna be really very challenged."
Level 4	Awareness of how another culture feels from the standpoint of the insider	Cultural immersion: living the culture Believable because of subjective familiarity	Superficial; reference to stereotypes References to intellectual analysis	"I don't even think about it anymore. I just react that way because it feels natural to do so."

These definitions and categories also served as initial codes for analysis. See Table 3. As other patterns and categories emerge, additional codes were added. This additional coding process will be described in later sections.

Throughout my coding, I used exact quotes from the raw data. In order to maintain consistency throughout the analysis, and to address the challenges of thematic analysis, I kept a log to identify codes, record definitions, and describe indicators. The log represents the audit trail of how the raw data was reorganized, classified, and connected.

Initial Coding

Through this stage of initial coding, using Hanvey's (1976) levels of cultural awareness, I highlighted interview transcripts based on the level of cultural awareness

demonstrated, using the definitions and indicators from Table 3. As part of this process, I paid particular attention to how participants described their feelings and understandings of the situations that they described. Noting that Hanvey (1976) defined level 2 and 3 of cultural awareness with the same definition, I had to look to the indicators of the believability of the situation and whether participants were describing situations with emotion and frustration or intellectual analysis and thought in order to delineate these two levels.

Participant statements that were coded as level 2, *cultural conflict,* most often included comparisons to another culture with a preference or hierarchy for the other culture expressed by the participant or directly expressed disbelief regarding the cultural situation.

"I mean I can be walking right by a man that's peeing and he – doesn't faze him in the slightest. That is something that was still in – in France up until the '40's, after the war, and then society has changed that completely, and so it's interesting to see that that hasn't evolved [here]."

"like I was having anger reactions, in driving home particularly, and [buses] cutting me off."

"So that was one of those, 'you've got to be kidding me, but why spit into the wind?'."

I coded these statements as *cultural conflict,* because they expressed more than the fact that the situation was different from the participant's own culture and identified a participant's disbelief and frustration at their occurrence. The participant statements imply a judgement about the cultural situation. Through their use of comparison or disbelief, participants made decisions about whether or not they accept these cultural elements.

In contrast to situations coded as level 2, *cultural conflict*, the situations I coded as

level 3, *intellectual analysis,* are described by participants in terms of their logic or validity. Like the previous situations, participants describe these situations as unique to previous experiences. The difference comes from the participant's belief that these new situations are valid and worth accepting.

> "…realizing here that personal connection was so important and that taking that time to greet people was actually really essential in being able to move forward in my job."

> "…knowing that it will get done eventually. I do need to follow-up, but I'm not going to be that person that just is gonna do it daily and stress myself out over it."

While there is still the thread of differentiating the situation from their own culture, the participants can understand the situation without as much emotion or frustration. The participants believe that the situation is a valid practice and is worth accepting.

Additional Coding

After I coded the data with these initial themes from Hanvey's (1976) levels of cultural awareness, I reviewed each code looking for additional patterns or sub-themes. As I examined the data, I engaged in an iterative process of reviewing my analysis and seeking ways to group or link codes together. When a new theme appeared, I then followed the same process of creating a code log with labels, definitions, indicators, exclusions, and examples.

The pattern that started to emerge was that participants demonstrated different levels of cultural awareness depending on how they were describing elements of cultural transitions. I decided to code these different elements of the transition journey as *lived experiences, reactions, and advice.* These new codes were also logged using Boyatzis's (1998) protocol.

Table 4 Additional Codes

Label	Definition	Indicators	Exclusions	Example
Lived Experiences	Description of an incident or conversation that the person was involved in or observed.	Actions, quotes	Feelings, Reflections	"So we had the priest come over and he blessed every single classroom on the two story building, up and down the corridor, in front of every class, holy water, and so on and so forth. We paid him I don't know how much and off we went and off went the ghosts."
Reactions	Description or emotion, reflection or thoughts after an experience/ observation of behavior	Dependent on lived experience State of mind	Theory Suggestions of what to do	"feeling like every time I get a taxi that I am being taken advantage of."
Advice	Suggestions on how international school leaders or people making transitions should think or behave	Theory Principles	Lived experiences Personal emotion	"I think the biggest mistake a lot of people make is, is they try to bring wherever they were to the place they're going."

These additional labels of *lived experience, reaction, and advice* helped to isolate the actions

and observations of these international school leaders from their ability to reflect and offer

advice to other international school leaders.

Through Local and Expatriate Lenses

Finally, I reviewed the codes regrouping the data based on whether the participants

were *local* or *expatriate (as defined in Table 5)*. Through this additional filter, additional

themes emerged. In initial coding, larger themes had shown that all participants were aligned with most views. Categorizing responses by *local* and *expatriate* international school leaders, allowed me to define some new themes that were only discussed by local school leaders.

Table 5 Definitions of Local and Expatriate

	Country of Birth	**Country Educated**	**Country with most members of extended family**	**Countries lived**
Local	Host country	Host country and others	Host Country	Host Country and others
Expatriate	Other than host country	Other than host country	Other than host country	Host Country and others

Using this new lens, I was able to see where local and expatriate leaders agreed and differed. While all international school leaders agreed that the culture in the school, or the *sense of place*, was unique from the culture outside of the school walls, local and expatriate leaders differed on how they described that culture. Additionally, by isolating local responses, it became clear that these school leaders introduced the idea that support from the school during transition is considerably different dependent on your status as *local* or *expatriate.*

Trustworthiness

The following section discusses the strategies that I used to maintain trustworthiness in this study. Krefting (1991) in contrasting quantitative and qualitative research explained that the same standards of reliability and validity cannot be used in qualitative research.   In this study, I followed a model of trustworthiness as discussed by Guba (as cited in Krefting, 1991). As part of following this method, I addressed how I approached (a) truth value, (b) applicability, (c) consistency, and (d) neutrality. In each of the sections explaining these elements, I will identify strategies that I used to maintain trustworthiness.

Truth Value

        In qualitative research the concept of truth value identifies that level to which the data describes real lived experiences of the participants (Krefting, 1991).   In my data gathering, I employed various strategies to support this concept of truth value. First, I compiled field notes (Appendix D) that added to the audio record of the interviews. Second, I completed a reflexivity protocol (Appendix E) after each interview to document my own reactions, feelings and beliefs in response to the data gathered. Finally, I offered participants the opportunity to review the transcript of the interview to ensure that their experiences and beliefs were appropriately captured.

Applicability

        In qualitative research, applicability or transferability refers to the ability to apply research findings to contexts beyond the specific setting of the study (Krefting, 1991). Although the raw data was unique to the place of this research, the international leaders interviewed in this study have lived and worked on all continents of the world. It is therefore likely that the experiences of the participant international school leaders share themes and patterns with their colleagues around the world. The analysis of the data can offer insights into the levels of cultural awareness of international school leaders and the strategies that can promote such journeys.

        The real responsibility for applicability, as identified by Lincoln and Guba (1985) is on the researcher trying to apply the research to a new context. They define the responsibility of the original researcher as needing to provide rich data. I provided this rich description in my reporting of participant responses and findings.

Consistency

        Unlike in quantitative research, consistency in qualitative research does not depend on the concept of one reality. Consistency in qualitative research centers on the idea of

dependability. Guba (1981) referred to dependability as the ability of the researcher to track variability and identify the sources of the variability. The sources of variability in this study came from the participants themselves, their unique previous experiences and their distinctive transition to this new place. Additionally, my own perspectives and analysis of the data added to potential variability. These variables were lessened by some strategies already described as part of this section. I wrote field notes and reflexivity protocols after each interview. Additionally, participants were given the opportunity to review and to confirm transcripts.

Guba (1981) added that variability should be expected and reminded researchers that the purpose of qualitative research is to look at the diversity of experiences rather than identify an average. The exploration at the focus of this study examined a range of experiences. Therefore, as a researcher, I documented the analysis process and tracked patterns within the data. My code log documented the introduction of new codes and my inclusion of different elements of data into code categories.

Neutrality

Another element of trustworthiness is neutrality. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research does not seek to separate the investigator from the participants. Lincoln and Guba (1985, as quoted in Krefting, 1991) made this move from the neutrality of the researcher to looking at the truth value and the applicability of the data. They referred to this examination of the data as confirmability. I maintained this level of confirmability by documenting in detail the data collection and analysis process, as well as securing and protecting all data from the study.

As has been mentioned previously in various sections, the collection of data was supported by written field notes and reflexivity to document both the participant words and

actions and the reactions and thoughts of the researcher. A well-structured and documented

thematic analysis was recorded through a code log. This code log included specific labels,

definitions, indicators, exclusions, and examples of each code. This level of written

documentation of the data collection and data analysis methods, helped me to identify

potential issues with neutrality and allowed me to recognize and analyze these concerns.

Purpose of the Study

This study explored the cultural transitions of international school leaders to new

places. This chapter has explained why a qualitative research approach was the best way to

seek understanding. Through an ethnographic case study, I answered the following research

questions:

How do international school leaders make their own journey to cultural awareness?

How do international school leaders make sense of and identify the culture of their

schools?

How do international school leaders recognize beliefs and practices in their schools?

I share the findings to these research questions through two manuscripts, with two diverse

audiences. As a result of the study, two articles were written. One article focused on a

research audience, aligning data from the study with models from the current literature about

cultural transitions. A second article aimed to meet the needs of a practitioner audience,

identifying specific strategies that international school leaders can utilize during transitions to

new cultures. Appendix F identifies targeted journals for future submission of these articles.

Both articles address the central questions of this research study.

Manuscript 1

Making Sense of a New Culture:

Transition of International School Leaders

Abstract

Researchers have placed the number of expatriates in the world at between forty and sixty million people in the years 2010 through 2013 (Finaccord, 2014; Firth, Chen, Kirkman & Kim, 2014). The International School Consultancy Group (ISC) (2014) estimated that there were upwards of 3.5 million students being educated in over 7,000 international schools. As the number of expatriates and expatriate families with school-age children increases, this challenge of leading education for a diverse international school community also increases.

I conducted an ethnographic case study (Frake, 1964; Patton, 1990; Spradley, 1979) to analyze transition stories from international school leaders at one international school and addressed the following questions:

- How do international school leaders make their own journeys to cultural awareness?

- How do international school leaders make sense of and identify the culture of their schools?

- How do international school leaders recognize beliefs and practices in their schools?

Thematic analysis based on Boyatzis's *Prior Research Driven Approach* (1998) produced findings that indicate that while local and expatriate international school leaders recognize international school culture as unique and follow similar patterns of reactions in their transitions, they do not perceive school culture through the same lens nor do they experience the same support in their cultural transitions.

Globalization and Expatriates

The ways in which individuals, organizations, and nations are interacting and living with one another are expanding at a rate that is difficult to comprehend (Dumont & Lemaître 2005). The International Monetary Fund (IMF) (2000), when it defined globalization, including the movement of people around the world, focused on several topics in addition to economics. The IMF stated that migrating people also bring with them wide-ranging cultural, political, and environmental ideas and understandings.

This movement of people and their cultures has created a network of expatriates. Researchers placed the number of expatriates in the world at between forty and sixty million people in the years 2010 through 2013 (Finaccord, 2014; Firth, Chen, Kirkman & Kim, 2014). Each of these individual expatriates comes with an understanding of culture and how individuals interact, grounded in their own experiences and based on how they make sense of the world around them (Coates & Allen, 2010). Whether expatriates are relocating voluntarily or involuntarily, they must learn how to adjust to a new cultural environment (Firth, Chen, Kirkman & Kim, 2014). In each of these arenas, Newman (1995) pointed out that cultural distance between home and host country creates obstacles to assimilation. Newman added that although frameworks and formalities may exist that acknowledge these cultural differences, a gap in true comprehension of the new culture endures for many expatriates.

As the number of expatriates and expatriate families with school-age children increases, the challenge of leading education for a diverse international school community also increases. In 2013, the International School Consultancy Group (ISC) estimated that there were upwards of 3.5 million students being educated in over 7,000 international schools (International School Consultancy, 2014). International school leaders must guide learning

for an ever-growing culturally diverse community. Simultaneously, these international

school leaders are responsible to orient and supervise faculty and staff from their own native

cultural backgrounds, a local cultural background, and a mix of other international cultural

backgrounds.

This study explored the cognitive processes of international school leaders as they

make sense of culture in their school communities.

- How do international school leaders make their own journey to cultural
  awareness?
- How do international school leaders make sense of and identify the culture of
  their schools?
- How do international school leaders recognize beliefs and practices in their
  schools?

In order to begin to understand these journeys of transition, we need to understand the school

environment into which they transitioned.

International Schools

An international school is composed of a culturally diverse and a highly transient

student and faculty population (Hayden & Thompson, 2011). The mission of the

international school is distinct from local national schools, adhering to the regulations of a

foreign or international accrediting agency for the creation and approval of its curriculum and

standards (Caffyn, 2010; Keung & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2013). While each international

school is unique, most have programs with North American or European standards that are

being implemented by faculty and staff that represent local and expatriate influences and

backgrounds (Hayden & Thompson, 2011). How these diverse individuals and needs come

together creates, in international schools, a unique sense of school culture that must be learned by each new entrant into the school community.

Defining and Learning Culture

Most definitions of culture allude to its complex and variable nature and often refer to multiple influences and contributing factors. Kroeber and Kluckohn (1952) characterized culture as a common lifestyle including beliefs, traditions, routines, and expectations. The outcomes of cultures are visible symbols, rituals, and shared embedded values (Drenth & Groenendijk, 1998) that can be discussed and observed.

Coates and Allen (2010) described how each individual person builds an understanding of what culture is as a consequence of how their minds interpret the actions of others within an environment: "culture does not exist as a factor distinct and apart from the human mind" (Coates & Allen, 2010, p. 26). These constructions of understanding differ as individuals build their own reality. As a result of this social process, the realities that are created are often specific to each culture. Hofstede (1983) alluded to the same subtler development of cultural norms as he described that such cultural values are difficult to alter later because they begin to influence individuals from the beginning of life.

Cultural Transitions

As individuals enter into a new culture, their behavior and reactions to situations determine their stage of cultural awareness or learning. Various researchers have represented these cultural transitions through different models. (Hanvey, 1976; Stobart, 1989; Winkleman, 1994; Coates & Allen, 2010). Most of these models begin with cultural shock, which Winkelman (1994) defines as a complex reaction to diverse stresses that arise from

entering into a new culture. Researchers agree that individuals vary in their ability to come to understand and develop empathy for another culture's perspective and practices (Hanvey, 1976; Stobart, 1989; Winkleman, 1994). In other words, when individuals recognize that they are interacting in a new place, each individual makes sense of their new place in their own way and in their own time. In the following section, there are descriptions of the various models that researchers have used to describe the process of how individuals make sense of that new place.

Stages of Cultural Awareness. Each individual manages the arrival in a new place differently. New arrivals in a culture, depending on their time of interactions and exposure to the practices and beliefs of the culture, arrive at different levels of cultural awareness. Coates and Allen (2010) believed that individuals are constantly creating a way to make sense of their culture, moving from basic understanding of language and routines to a deeper appreciation and acceptance of underlying beliefs and subtle nuances of behaviors and interactions. Different researchers have highlighted the stages of this transition to deeper cultural awareness using different models and terms (Hanvey, 1976; Stobart, 1989; Winkleman, 1994). While all models describe stages of cultural transitions, Hanvey (1976) emphasized the cognitive processes that align with the more superficial behaviors.

The process of orienting oneself to a new place involves some technical tasks such as identifying daily needs and acquiring specific information about rules and policies. At this point of introduction to a new place, the individual is simply trying to survive from day to day. This induction process includes what Horn and Metier-Armijo (2010) termed informational learning, or the process of learning the nuts and bolts of how to be in a particular culture. This informational learning includes the daily needs of how to function and follow routines. Learning and knowing the rules and routines of a new place is important

to be able to function in an environment, but not enough to claim to understand and be a part of that place's culture.

Hanvey (1976) stated that true cultural awareness comes when one has in-depth knowledge of another culture and also can accept that unique perspectives and behaviors result from being part of different cultures. He saw the ultimate goal of cross-cultural awareness as moving beyond an understanding of why a culture behaves in a certain way, to being able to get inside the thoughts of a local in order to live the same thoughts and perspectives as the members of the culture. Hanvey (1976) identified the stages in the journey towards this goal and incorporated the motivating rewards that may encourage movement towards this deeper understanding.

Hanvey's stages began with a respect of local culture and transition through varying levels of participation in that culture, finally arriving at a depth of understanding that he describes as being, "inside the head of the host society" (1976, p. 50). He cautioned that mere exposure or participation cannot guarantee this depth of understanding, a belief that is justified by the many expatriates that never make this cultural shift (see Hanvey, 1976; Stobart; 1989; Winkelman, 1994). Transitioning individuals who are able to accept and participate in a new culture with an open mind are able to move to the deepest levels of understanding. These individuals who arrive at the deepest levels of understanding, as described by Hanvey, are motivated by the rewards that this participation and understanding offers. These rewards include a truer acceptance from the local host community and a feeling of belonging in a new culture.

Table 1 Levels of Cultural Awareness

Level	Information	Mode	Interpretation
I	Awareness of superficial or very visible cultural traits; stereotypes	Tourism, textbooks, National Geographic	Unbelievable, i.e., exotic, bizarre
II	Awareness of significant and subtle cultural traits that contrast markedly with one's own	Cultural conflict situations	Unbelievable, i.e., frustrating, irrational
III	Awareness of significant and subtle cultural traits that contrast markedly with one's own	Intellectual analysis	Believable cognitively
IV	Awareness of how another culture feels from the standpoint of the insider	Cultural immersion: living the culture	Believable because of subjective familiarity

(Hanvey, 1976, p.53)

Hanvey gave more concrete descriptions that identify behaviors at each of the stages of coming to know a place (Table 1). Specifying the cultural awareness of the individual not only in terms of their understanding, Hanvey also describes the stages of cultural awareness in terms of how and where the person is gathering information about the new culture and how the person emotionally reacts to that new information.

Therefore, cultural awareness is a process that initially involves individuals cognitively identifying, acknowledging, and interacting with new cultural practices and the locale of the place. Deeper awareness and transition further requires one to become an insider, understanding the thoughts and emotions that drive the routines and symbols of the culture, not just the technical dimensions of day to day practices. It is at the stage of intellectual analysis in cultural awareness, that a person can more successfully achieve the work that is required in their life or job. For international school leaders, the achievement of this final stage of cultural awareness means that they can successfully navigate new cultural values while conducting their required work.

Educational Leadership in International Schools

Cultural learning is a requirement for successful international school leaders. Keung and Rockinson-Szapkiw (2013) studied how cultural intelligence can predict leadership success in international schools. Keung and Rockinson-Szapkiw's (2013) study used the Cultural Intelligence Scale and the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire 5X to look at the specific factors of cultural intelligence and how they contribute to transformational leadership. The results were as expected, with leaders who had a higher level of cultural intelligence finding more success in international school environment than leaders with a lower level. Keung and Rockinson-Szapkiw (2013) found that leaders with lower cultural intelligence had to dedicate more energy to their own transition process and as a result were not able to be transformational leaders in an international school setting. This study suggested the need to consider cultural intelligence in international school leadership, but the study fell short of investigating if greater knowledge in the area of cultural intelligence transfers to practice in the field.

Methodology

In order to explore transition journeys of educational leaders in international schools, I conducted an ethnographic case study (Patton, 1990) in order to seek a better understanding of how international school leaders experienced these transitions. As an ethnographer, I explored how people within a group or members of an organization developed cultural patterns of behavior and, through various collection methods, I interpreted and explained the data from the point of view of how these data contribute to a culture (Patton, 1990). Following this ethnographic case study approach, I gathered data from various international school leaders within a specific school to achieve a deeper, more thorough understanding of place by getting many detailed perspectives on one geographic location. I examined the transitions of international school leaders to their new cultures, aligning their stories with the stages of cultural transitions: *cultural stereotype, cultural conflict, intellectual analysis, and cultural immersion* (Hanvey, 1976).

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, it is important to identify your role as a researcher in the context of the study (Coar & Sim, 2006). As a researcher, I conducted a study in my own professional environment. I have worked in four different international schools in four different countries for a total of more than ten years of experience. As an international school leader in three of those schools, I have transitioned to new cultures and have been partially responsible for the transition of new faculty to the school and the culture. My current role is that of an international school leader in the school that is the setting for this study and places me in both professional and casual relationships with the participants in this study.

One of the benefits of my role as an international school leader is that participants recognize me as a member of the international school leader community. Cozer and Sim

(2006) explained that participants interviewed by a peer can offer richer insights because the participants lend more credibility to a researcher with professional knowledge and experience. In ethnographic interviewing, Spradley (1979) emphasized the need for the ethnographic interviewer is to develop a relationship with the participant that conveys the belief that, 'I want to know what you know in the way that you know it.... Will you become my teacher and help me understand?' (p. 34). The goal of ethnographic interviewing, as described by Heyl (2001), is to encourage participants to "explore purposefully the meanings they place on events in their worlds." (p. 369).   My role as school leader at this same international school and the researcher in this case study further allowed me to deepen this relationship. Participants could quickly move past explanations and jargon and approach deeper reflections on their transitions because they knew I understood the vocabulary and the environment about which they were discussing. This common understanding allowed us to accelerate exploration of their transition stories. Therefore, my role as colleague and researcher helped to strengthen the relationship that Spradley and Heyl suggest is so important.

Taking on the role of researcher in your own professional environment creates both benefits and challenges to the research process. I agreed with Coar and Sim (2006), that while the challenges of qualitative interviewing of peers must be addressed, the benefits outweighed these challenges. Coar and Sim (2006) contended that peer interviewers may be able to more deeply pursue topics. Unlike a researcher without professional experience in the field, peer professionals can access prior knowledge and understanding of the professional culture. Because participants recognized me as a colleague, they did not spend time explaining details of terms or processes; the participants were able to move into deeper reflection on their actions and behaviors.

My prior knowledge and personal experiences with the participants as colleagues could also have been a challenge to my role as the researcher in this case study. Some participants may have felt like a researcher with professional knowledge would judge their answers or opinions. In my own research, participants might wonder if I would critique their experiences, passing judgement on their responses. In order to mitigate some of this potential challenge, I added lines to the recruitment letter and to the interview protocol that drew attention to the fact that the reason they were recruited as participants was because of their unique perspectives and journeys of transition. The purpose of these added lines, in addition to encouraging them to share personal beliefs and not try to align their opinions with the researcher, was to emphasize that there were no wrong answers and no judgment on them as professionals.

Additionally, to help to identify my own potential bias as an international school educator with potentially differing views from the participants, I used a reflexivity protocol after each interview. Reflexivity helped to identify my beliefs, emotions, and presumptions about the participants and the data that they offered (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Patton, 2002). In the reflexivity protocol, I responded to the following categories: *initial thoughts, observation and reaction to participant behavior, self-reflexivity, reflexivity about participants, and reflexivity about the audience*. By consistently using this reflexivity protocol, I recorded personal reactions throughout the data gathering process and documented any interference from my own emic perspective as a researcher.

Participants

The case study site is a medium-sized international school with approximately 750 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 12. The school website describes students from more than sixty different countries in a school accredited by Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools in the United States and by the Council of International Schools

(CIS) as well as authorized by the International Baccalaureate to offer the Primary Years, Middle Years, and Diploma Years Programmes.

I selected this site for research for a number of reasons. My own employment at the identified international school enabled me to reap the benefits of familiarity discussed above. The school fits the definition of international schools as defined by Hayden and Thompson (2011). Additionally, all of the school leaders had transitioned to the school within the last four years and could speak in detail about their experiences.

The participants in this study were senior level school leaders who transitioned to the selected international school. I defined senior level school leaders as school administrators actively working as Principals or Directors at the international school who are responsible for supervising or creating policy for faculty at the school. As a member of the senior administrative team at the school, I was able to identify participants who meet this definition through their roles.

There were seven participants in this study. The diversity of backgrounds and experiences of the participants added to the richness of the research and provided unexpected data. Two of the participants were defined as *local.* Although these *local* participants spent between ten and twenty years outside of the host country, they were born and educated in the host country and currently live in communities with extended families and long-term friends. The other five participants were *expatriates* because they were born outside of the host country and transitioned to new international schools prior to this case; the only reason for the *expatriate* leaders to be in the host country was to work at the school. The participants in the study had different levels of experience working at international schools, yet all participants had transitioned to new cultures previously in different professional environments. The least experience in international school was three years at one school and

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the most experience was thirty-four years in five schools. The school leaders had experiences in different continents and different size organizations.

Procedures

To recruit participants, I used a Participant Recruitment letter and communicated with participants to identify a time and location that was mutually agreeable. All participants signed an Informed Consent Form regarding their role in the study before each interview.

I completed semi-structured (Gibson & Brown, 2009; Heyl, 2001; Rudestam & Newton, 2007) interviews with each participant, asking participants to tell their stories of transition and reflect on their level of cultural awareness (see Appendix C for interview protocol). These interviews were recorded with a digital audio-recorder. After each interview, I completed field notes and a reflexivity entry to document my personal perceptions and any potential biases. A professional transcriptionist used word processing software to prepare transcripts of each interview.

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Data Analysis

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In order to identify themes across the individual experiences of each person, I used thematic analysis to investigate and organize the data. This analysis approach allowed me to link seemingly diverse thoughts or occurrences and present this data in a new way (Boyatzis, 1998; Gibson & Brown, 2009). Using thematic analysis allowed me to deal with complex concepts and the lived experiences of the participants.

I used what Boyatzis (1998) termed the *Prior Research Driven Approach.* This approach allows the researcher to use codes based on a review of literature as well as codes that appear as a result of the data analysis. The initial codes that I used came from Hanvey's (1976) four stages of cultural transition: *cultural stereotype, cultural conflict, intellectual analysis, and cultural immersion*.

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Some authors such as Van Manen (1990) disputed the strength of thematic analysis, arguing that the process weakens the depth of people's real-life experiences. Boyatzis (1998) himself also identified an obstacle to thematic analysis. He claimed that one of the biggest complications is projecting one's own beliefs or perceptions onto the words of a participant. To counteract this potential bias, Boyatzis (1998) recommended sticking closely to the raw data. He contended that by using specific codes and consistently using this coding in close analysis of the raw data, thematic analysis allows researchers to create a more structured analysis of complex data.   Boyatzis (1998) also explained that developing an explicit code and using consistent judgment to implement that code through the analysis helps the researcher to maintain a structure and reliability to the analysis.

Throughout my coding, I used exact quotes from the raw data.   In order to maintain consistency throughout the analysis, and to address the challenges of thematic analysis, I kept a log to identify codes, record definitions, and describe indicators. The log represented the audit trail of how the raw data was reorganized, classified, and connected.

Initial Coding

The thematic coding that was used in this research began with the codes identified below. These codes include the five elements, *label, definition, indicators, exclusions, and examples,* that Boyatzis (1998) described as essential to thematic analysis.

Table 2 Initial Coding

Label	Definition	Indicators	Exclusions	Example
Level 1	Awareness of superficial or very visible cultural traits; stereotypes	Tourism, textbooks, National Geographic Unbelievable, i.e., exotic,	Deeper understanding Specific examples and interactions	"there are a lot more white faces around campus than black faces"

		bizarre		
Level 2	Awareness of significant and subtle cultural traits that contrast markedly with one's own	Cultural conflict situations Unbelievable, i.e., frustrating, irrational	References to stereotypes; superficial Cultural immersion; living the culture	"So, I'm thinking of men peeing in the street […] and it's nothing. That is something that was still in the 40's, after the war, and then society has changed that completely"
Level 3	Awareness of significant and subtle cultural traits that contrast markedly with one's own	Intellectual analysis Believable cognitively	Superficial; reference to stereotypes References to feeling like an insider	'If you think you're gonna change what they do, because that's how we do it in the United States, you're gonna be really very challenged."
Level 4	Awareness of how another culture feels from the standpoint of the insider	Cultural immersion: living the culture Believable because of subjective familiarity	Superficial; reference to stereotypes References to intellectual analysis	"I don't even think about it anymore. I just react that way because it feels natural to do so."

Through this stage of initial coding, using Hanvey's (1976) levels of cultural awareness, I highlighted interview transcripts based on the level of cultural awareness demonstrated, using the definitions and indicators from Table 2. As part of this process, I paid particular attention to how participants described their feelings and understandings of the situations that they described. Noting that Hanvey (1976) defined levels 2 and 3 with the same definition, I had to look to Hanvey's indicators of the believability of the situation. When participants were describing situations with frustration, I identified this as "unbelievable" (Hanvey, 1976, p.53) from the perspective of the participant. When participants viewed situations through intellectual analysis and thought, I identified the data

as "cognitively believable" (Hanvey, 1976, p.53) to the participant. Therefore, the way in which the participant described the situation, either with anger and frustration or intellectual analysis became the indictors to delineate these two levels.

Participant statements that were coded as level 2, *cultural conflict,* most often included comparisons to another culture with a preference or hierarchy for the other culture expressed by the participant or directly expressed disbelief or anger regarding the cultural situation they deemed to be unbelievable.

"I mean I can be walking right by a man that's peeing and he – doesn't faze him in the slightest. That is something that was still in – in France up until the 40s, after the war, and then society has changed that completely, and so it's interesting to see that that hasn't evolved [here]."

"like I was having anger reactions, in driving home particularly, and [buses] cutting me off."

"So that was one of those, 'you've got to be kidding me, but why spit into the wind?'."

I coded these statements as *cultural conflict,* because they expressed more than the fact that the situation was different from the participant's own culture and identified a participant's disbelief and frustration at their occurrence.   The participant statements imply a judgement about the cultural situation. Through their use of comparison or disbelief, participants made decisions about whether or not they accept these cultural elements.

In contrast to situations coded as level 2, *cultural conflict*, the situations I coded as level 3, *intellectual analysis,* are described by participants in terms of their logic or validity and the ability of the participant to believe the situation.   Like the previous situations,

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participants describe these situations as unique to their previous experiences. The difference comes from the participant's belief that these new situations are valid and worth accepting.

> "…realizing here that personal connection was so important and that taking that time to greet people was actually really essential in being able to move forward in my job."

> "…knowing that it will get done eventually. I do need to follow-up, but I'm not going to be that person that just is gonna do it daily and stress myself out over it."

While there is still the thread of differentiating the situation from their own culture, the participants can understand the situation without as much emotion or frustration. The participants believe that the situation is a valid practice and is worth accepting.

Additional Coding

After I coded the data with these initial themes from Hanvey's levels of cultural awareness, I reviewed each code looking for additional patterns or sub-themes. As I examined the data, I engaged in an iterative process of reviewing my analysis and seeking ways to group or link codes together. When a new theme appeared, I then followed the same process of creating a code log with labels, definitions, indicators, exclusions, and examples.

The pattern that started to emerge was that participants demonstrated different levels of cultural awareness depending on how they were describing elements of cultural transitions. I decided to code these different elements of the transition journey as *lived experiences, reactions, and advice.* Each participant included some level of these different elements in responses.

Table 3 Additional Codes

Label	Definition	Indicators	Exclusions	Example
Lived Experiences	Description of an incident or conversation that the person was involved in or observed.	Actions, quotes	Feelings, Reflections	"So we had the priest come over and he blessed every single classroom on the two story building, up and down the corridor, in front of every class, holy water, and so on and so forth. We paid him I don't know how much and off we went and off went the ghosts."
Reactions	Description or emotion, reflection or thoughts after an experience/observation of behavior	Dependent on lived experience State of mind	Theory Suggestions of what to do	"feeling like every time I get a taxi that I am being taken advantage of."
Advice	Suggestions on how international school leaders or people making transitions should think or behave	Theory Principles	Lived experiences Personal emotion	"I think the biggest mistake a lot of people make is, is they try to bring wherever they were to the place they're going."

These additional labels of *lived experience, reaction, and advice* helped to isolate the actions

and observations of these international school leaders from their ability to reflect and offer

advice to other international school leaders.

Through Local and Expatriate Lenses

Finally, I reviewed the codes regrouping the data based on whether the participants

were *local* or *expatriate (as defined in Table 4)*. Through this additional filter, additional

themes emerged. In initial coding, larger themes had shown that all participants were aligned

with most views. Categorizing responses by *local* and *expatriate* international school leaders,

allowed me to define more specific sub-themes and some new themes that were only

discussed by local school leaders.

Table 4 Definitions of Local and Expatriate

	Country of Birth	Country Educated	Country with most members of extended family	Countries lived
Local	Host country	Host country and others	Host country	Host country and others
Expatriate	Other than host country	Other than host country	Other than host country	Host country and others

Using this new lens, I was able to see where local and expatriate leaders agreed and

differed. While all international school leaders agreed that the culture in the school was

unique from the culture outside of the school walls, local and expatriate leaders differed on

how they described that culture. Additionally, by isolating local responses, it became clear

that these school leaders introduced the idea that support from the school during transition is

considerably different dependent on your status as *local* or *expatriate.*

Findings

The findings in this study indicate that while participants shared some traits in their

cultural transitions, the perspective of the school towards their needs in the cultural transition

influenced their transitions. Participants agreed about the description of the culture in their

international school in comparison to other cultures, and participants had similar patterns in

their reactions to lived experiences and their advice to other making cultural transitions.

Participants had the sharpest differences in their exact definitions of the school culture and

their views of whether or not the school recognized their need for support during the transition.

Shared Definition

The international school leaders, both expatriate and local, agreed that the international school community, "seems like a country on its own, like – when you get out of the walls of [the school] you are in a different world, so to speak". Identifying how the school culture differed from that of the host country as well as the cultures of other countries, the leaders seemed to clearly understand that the school culture was a unique blend of cultures of the various community members. "So I think once you walk through the walls of [the school] there is a different culture that we try to uphold".

In their descriptions, these international school leaders gave clear examples of how the international school culture differs from that of the streets right outside the school. Leaders cited examples from general practices of punctuality to more specific practices of when gift-giving is appropriate. One local leader explained that in typical local culture there is not an expectation of being on time, but in this international school culture, "every area you work would have that expectation." When discussing the practice of gift-giving in the local host community, one of the participants described how she would be, "shocked and nobody would even think of doing that [at school]. Whereas, outside of the school culture it's seen as, 'OK, thank you'."

The leaders were also quick to point out that, however much an international standard might be the goal, the school culture also differed from their experiences with school cultures in other countries. Describing instances in which they had to adjust to what they termed a "slower local pace", the school leaders described how their perceptions of how things worked in previous schools or organizations could not be used to predict reactions in the new school

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culture. One participant spoke of how the local reality of infrastructure had to be part of planning, "in a place where power can be on or off, in terms of trying to go out and locate things in the community, you have to be a little bit patient and not […] think everything's gonna operate like it would in maybe western Europe and the United States." Other, more personal forces, also creep into the international school community to create a slower pace. Another participant, discovered that, "taking the time to greet people was actually really essential," requiring her to allow more time when moving across campus. This international school leader, like the other participants recognized the need to adjust previous cultural routines because of the unique culture of the international school.

Shared Levels of Cultural Awareness

Nearly all of the statements made by international school leaders about their transition to the new school, were classified under the stages of *cultural conflict* and *intellectual analysis*. Deeper analysis separated these statements into anecdotes about their lived experiences, descriptions of their reactions to experiences, and statements of advice about how international school should transition to new cultural places.   Lived experiences are most often described as cultural conflicts. The majority of their reactions to the new culture are classified at the levels of conflict and some reactions started to cross over to the level of intellectual analysis. Most often the advice that participants offered as to how international school leaders should transition can be identified at a level of intellectual analysis.

While most often describing lived experiences with disbelief or humor, how international school leaders reacted to their transitions crossed the level of *cultural conflict* and began to move into *intellectual analysis*.   While the majority of participants' reactions to certain situations was disbelief or anger, in other situations, the school leaders were able to reflect and recognize the cultural practice as not "right or wrong", but rather distinct from

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their previous experiences. In this second group of reactions, the new cultural practices are cognitively believable and the international school leader finds ways to adjust to the practice rather than being frustrated by the behavior. All of the participants demonstrated some evidence of this cross to intellectual analysis, though in the minority of the reactions shared in the interviews. Again, the data demonstrated similar reactions for both local and expatriate participants.

Lived experiences as cultural conflict. All of the international school leaders in this study had transitioned to other cultures prior to this position, so they spoke about their own transitions with a sense of ease and confidence. They were not fearful of experiencing new cultures nor did any of them describe this transition or previous transitions as particularly difficult. All of the participants, expatriate and local leaders, most often described cultural experiences to this case study site and previous transitions to other cultures at a level of cultural conflict; laughing or displaying disbelief as they described an experience.

One participant described a situation in which teachers had "heard ghosts" on the weekend when they came into work. After being advised by school staff of what local culture required of the school leader, the participant described what happened. "So, we had the priest come over and he blessed every single classroom on the two-story building, up and down the corridor, in front of every class, holy water, and so on and so forth. We paid him I don't know how much and off we went and off went the ghosts." As this participant shared this lived experience, he rolled his eyes and shook his head.

Another participant shared her experience about waiting to get served. "People don't like to queue up and they might just come and stand in front of you." As she shared her description of a lived experience, her voice rose and she shook her head.

A third participant related an experience in which he had to deal with a student who

had been physically fighting with another student in the gym. He shared that the school guidance counselor had cautioned him against communicating with the family of the student. "She asked me, 'Do you know his father is the military attaché at the Korean Embassy?' and then she told me, 'the father will beat him'." Reflecting on the experience now, the participant, shared his thinking, "I remember thinking, 'Ah, come on'. From my experience, we had kids that were beaten at home, but not necessarily so in your face type of stuff."

These three leaders, including both expatriate and local, identified these situations as in conflict with their beliefs or behaviors. Additionally, as these different participants described the situation, they expressed disbelief through their words and actions. These description of lived experiences were described in terms of a cultural conflict.

How the international school leaders described these situations further emphasizes the level of conflict associated with particular cultural practices or the awareness of the leader to intellectually analyze the practice. These descriptions of lived experiences by international school leaders do not show an intellectual analysis of why such actions might be part of a culture, nor do they demonstrate a desire by the individual to immerse in the culture and actively participate. In these descriptions, the participants viewed the behavior of the members of the new culture as bizarre.

Reactions as cultural conflict. Frustration at some cultural practices was expressed as anger or stress related to the situation causing the cultural conflict. When the leaders described these annoyances, they did so by framing their reaction around how the practices were inefficient, often comparing the local practices to more efficient practices elsewhere. At other times, this frustration was displayed through a lack of patience or anger in which the participant was personally offended by the experience.

When describing the logistics of getting day to day repairs and maintenance done, one

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participant reacted, "A lot of things I see, I think, that's what we should get to, and so it's difficult to accept fully that it's - you know, that's the way." In addition to his specific words expressing his difficulty with accepting the situation, as he made these statements, his shoulders shrugged and he looked down. He had seen more efficient practices at other international schools, and knew that the processes could be improved.

A second participant described how she knew that returning merchandise to local stores was not a common practice. Yet, she knew this was a common practice in other countries and she explained that sometimes, her reaction to this situation is to confront the practice rather than accept it. "But sometimes I say 'No, I'm going to go to the shop and I'm going to fight for a refund because this product isn't of quality'. So, you know, I am still struggling to find balance." This display of frustration and the desire to confront the practice demonstrates how this reaction is at the level of cultural conflict.

In another expression of frustration, a third participant describes her experience interacting locally to accomplish daily chores. She describes a level of discomfort with the closeness of the interactions in the markets. Adding other examples, she explains her reactions to negotiating taxi fares, "I just feel like I am always being possibly taken advantage of and I just don't enjoy that so much." In these examples, the participant can clearly identify her frustration and emotion towards the situations that are in conflict with her beliefs.

Reactions as intellectual analysis. At other times, the leaders see the culture from an intellectual analysis level, and cognitively believe and accept the practices. Rather than reacting with emotion and identifying the practice as irrational, the participants can analyze the practice intellectually, even though the practice differs from their own beliefs. At this level of intellectual analysis,

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One participant, explained how he adapted his behavior to the new culture, "Realizing that personal connection was so important, and that taking the time to greet people was actually really essential in being able to move forward in my job, I had to start planning time for moving across campus." In this reaction, the leader does not view the behavior as bizarre; he intellectually identifies the practice of the culture as a believable practice and is able to intentionally implement the practice.

Another example that could have easily led to frustration, showed that the participant had started to intellectually analyze cultural practices that differ from his own. When describing the process to get curtains installed, "I've been after them for two months and they got installed yesterday and that one is crooked and the brackets are in the wrong place. I simply texted and said 'We're gonna need to follow-up with the curtain lady', knowing that it would eventually get done. I'm not going to be the person that is going to pester daily and stress myself out over it." Through this description of the participant's reaction, the intellectual process is visible through his words and the intentional choice of reaction.

A third participant described her reaction to watching a dance outside of the capitol city. Rather than simply identifying the dance as exotic, she critically analyzed the situation, placing it in the context of her knowledge and experience from other cultures. "They were all dancing together and they were dancing in a circle, and I remember when I was in Brazil on the beach at New Year, but the exact same motions in dancing. With the scarf, with the handkerchief, the whole thing, and I remember thinking, 'Wow! OK. This is really interesting. This is how it, you know, evolves and it's taken into other parts of the world and then it transforms itself a bit there.'" She went beyond simple identification that a practice is different from her own traditions, she analyzed how and why the practice was done in that way.

While these reactions show that the participants still react with emotion and frustration to situations that contrast with their own beliefs, each participant showed some ability to move to an intellectual analysis level. As the participants made this move to intellectual analysis, they often cited their observations of the culture as the source of the ability to explain and more readily accept the situation. Following these reactions, international school leaders often made more general statements on theories or principles on how to transition to new cultures.

Advice as intellectual analysis. When asked for suggestions or advice they would offer other international school leaders transitioning to new schools, all participants shared advice that would be defined at the level of intellectual analysis. Participants consistently cautioned against treating the new culture like previously experienced cultures, "If you think you're gonna change what they [the new culture] do, because that's how we do it in the United States, you're gonna be really very challenged." Participants often cited theories against moving too quickly or implementing what had worked in a different school, consistently recommending slowing down during transitions. "You have to be patient and not allow – you know, you think everything's gonna operate like it would in maybe western Europe and the United Sates and it just doesn't."

The school leaders cautioned against moving too quickly to implement changes to organizational culture and encouraged other leaders to take time to analyze the culture more deeply. Participants encouraged international school leaders in transition to observe and get to know the new culture. One participant stated, "it helps to understand what – what other aspects of life that populations find as important and even, you know, little things." The implication of not taking this time to know a new culture, as expressed by another participant, creates problems. "I think the problem comes - or the problems do come when the leader, at

any division let alone the head of school, comes in, ignores traditions and doesn't try to understand." A third participant expressed similar advice when asked about transitioning to a new school, "So, you have to understand how the school you're in functions before you say, 'We're gonna do it this way.'"

Beyond understanding the school community, several participants also explained the importance of seeking interactions outside of the school. Describing his own challenges with previous transitions, one participant advised, "I think you really need to find things outside of school that you enjoy and people that you can connect with". With a slightly different lens, another suggestion for international leaders focused on the fact that socializing solely with the school faculty and staff could be difficult for school leaders. "Although the school community is wonderful, you need people outside of the school and especially as a leader, you need people outside of school."

It seems clear that at an intellectual level, the school leaders understand the higher levels of cultural awareness. At the level of offering advice, they can also identify the reality that new leaders will encounter cultural conflict along the way, "No matter where you go, the beginning is hard." Statements by these leaders demonstrate a cognitive awareness that international school leaders in new cultural places should seek to identify cultural practices and traits and understand their role in the culture at an intellectual level.

Differing Experiences

While the participants agreed on the uniqueness of the school environment and had patterns in their levels of cultural awareness, they did not agree on how they would define the culture of the school or how they viewed the support offered from the school during their transition. Local international school leaders described a very different culture than their expatriate colleagues. Whereas expatriate leaders commented on the international school

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community as "very friendly", "a very positive environment", and "a community that is very tight", local leaders described the community as "very demanding" and a culture with "a greater level of entitlement." These two different perspectives of the culture come, in part, from their transitions into this new culture and the support offered through their transitions.

Entering the same walls and having to make sense of the same culture, similar orientation and transition support programs rarely existed for new arrivals with local roots. "[It] was a local position and so the assumption is that I wasn't given any - anything whatsoever about life – or transitioning information at all… you pretty much had to do it on your own." Local international school leaders are expected to work with expatriates from all over the world, in a system of education that is often foreign to the local leader. Often these local leaders are asked to take on responsibilities for supporting the transition of expatriates new to the school. One local leader summed this up by saying, "You've got a new person [expatriate] coming in who has training about the person who is already here [local], but the person who is here does not get training as to how to handle the person who is coming in."

Local participants explained how they spend time at meetings reflecting on how the new expatriates are settling in. "So, we always ask ourselves, 'What can we do once they [expats] arrive to help them?'" They went on to state that this same time and effort is not spent analyzing the support needs of new local staff. While everyone in the international school agrees that the culture of the school is unique compared to local culture and other cultures, the time spent supporting and analyzing the transition of new arrivals is unequal.

Discussion

In summary, the principal findings of this study demonstrate that while local and expatriate international school leaders recognize international school culture as unique and follow similar patterns of reactions in their transitions, they do not perceive school culture

through the same lens nor do they experience the same support in their cultural transitions. The findings show that although international school leaders have an ability to intellectually analyze the new cultures into which they transition, they more often described their lived experiences and reactions as cultural conflicts. Additionally, nearly all of the international school leaders professed theories of transitioning that encouraged an intellectual analysis of the behaviors. This consistency among participants is a strength to these findings because it shows that among diverse participants, there are similar patterns.

While these international school leaders were in one place at the time of this study, their experiences span more than six continents and more than twenty different schools or organizations. Therefore, although the data in this study are unique to this case study, the experiences of the participant international school leaders are likely to be similar to their colleagues around the world. The analysis of the data can offer insights into the levels of cultural awareness of international school leaders.

Other authors (Hanvey, 1976; Stobart; 1989; Winkelman, 1994) have identified various stages or elements of the journey to cultural awareness and explained that individuals may progress at varying paces throughout their transition, my research showed evidence of more complexity to these stages. My analysis of participant responses showed that as people transition, they may be experiencing multiple stages of cultural awareness, reacting and responding to their environment at one level of cultural awareness, yet intellectually discussing their transition or offering advice at a distinct level of cultural awareness. These differences further emphasize the need to access the cultural intelligence of international school leaders from various perspectives.

While Keung and Rockinson-Szapkiw's (2013) study identified the link between cultural intelligence and the ability of an international school leader to be a transformational

leader, it did so at a theoretical level in which it asked participants to self-assess their general cultural intelligence. The tool used in the study asked respondents to select responses at an intellectual capacity level – for example, "I know the rules for expressing nonverbal behaviors in other cultures." I would argue that while many international school leaders know what leaders in culturally diverse situations should do, these leaders do not always act or react using this knowledge. As was evidenced in my study, international school leaders shared advice that consistently reached the level of intellectual analysis. Yet, the international school leaders often reacted to experiences at a level of cultural conflict that did not demonstrate this cultural intelligence.

My study asked participants to describe their specific experiences of cultural awareness to one place without evaluation or assessment of those experiences or reactions. Rather than offering potential options to a participant that include the more cultural aware choice, my study required participants to share their own stories. The nature of an ethnographic interview intentionally does not offer options for participants to select from, but rather the opportunity to share their unique experience with culture.

Before accepting this pattern of transition for international school leaders it would be important to replicate this study at different international schools in diverse regions of the world. Additionally, it would helpful to consider the additional levels of analysis of this study and identify potential new interview questions. How does the role of the school leader change their perception of the culture? How much experience in international school does each participant have and how do those experiences create their filter for entering a new culture? Are cultural transitions supported through cohorts of new arrivals?

While these results show that international school leaders have the capacity to understand cultural awareness at an intellectual level of analysis, their daily-lived experiences

and reactions do not always reach that level. Therefore, finally, it would be important to further investigate the consequences of this pattern of cultural awareness in international school leaders. Do these same patterns of cultural awareness exist in other international school in distinct regions of the world? Is there any evidence that leaders who transition to a deeper level of lived experience are more effective or better able to navigate the multi-layered culture of an international school community?

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Transitioning to the Culture of a New International School:

Supporting the Whole Community

*"You've got a new person coming in who has training about the person
who is already here, but the person who is here does not get training as
to how to handle the person who is coming in."*

-from an international school leader with local roots

Transitions in international schools start well before the first teacher meetings or tours

of campus. Expatriate educators receive various supports from the school including help

coordinating required documentation, suggestions on what to pack, and connections with

other expatriates working at the school. Upon arrival, these expatriates are typically met at

the airport and assisted with acquiring housing and needed household supplies. Hours and

sometimes days are dedicated to explaining the culture of their new community to these

recent arrivals. This orientation focus slowly blends into the logistics of school, but usually

maintains what expatriates view as "local flare", often including excursions to local

restaurants, language or cultural workshops, and explanations of how some of the local

workers at school might interact differently than the expatriate might anticipate. The focus of

this support is to help the perceived *outsider* make sense of this new culture. We want these

new arrivals to be successful and international schools know that part of supporting this

success is to support basic needs and assist with the transitions of expatriates.

Yet, more and more international schools are including local professionals at all levels

of the school. As a result of a larger research study exploring the transition of international

school leaders, questions about the transitions of local international school leaders emerged.

How do these new international school leaders from the host country transition to the culture

of an international school? How do local international school leaders come to make sense of

and understand the practices of the international school? Coates and Allen (2010) discussed the need for individuals to make cognitive sense of the culture that surrounds them; this need is no less important for a newly arrived *local* international school leader.

The findings of this research indicate a strong need for schools to evaluate how their support of local and expatriate professionals differs. Many schools, and international school in particular, continually seek to improve induction and orientation programs, recognizing the importance of helping to make early, strong foundations. While all new arrivals to the international school culture seem to appreciate the unique nature of the community into which they are entering, both groups, expatriates and locals, do not feel fairly supported.

Previous Research

Much of the previous research done about transitions to new cultures was viewed from the perspective of an expatriate arriving in a new physical location and new culture. Coates and Allen (2010) described how each individual comes with an understanding of the world and a way of making sense of roles and the interactions of those roles. Newman (1995) pointed out that cultural distance between home and host country creates obstacles to assimilation. Newman added that although frameworks and formalities may exist that acknowledge these cultural differences, a gap in true knowledge and comprehension of the new culture endures.

The cross-cultural differences are particularly difficult for expatriate international school leaders. These educational leaders guide learning for a culturally diverse community while simultaneously they are responsible to orient and supervise faculty and staff from their own native cultural background, a local cultural background, and a mix of other international cultural backgrounds. I recently interviewed seven international school leaders (5 expatriate and 2 local) as part of a larger research study to explore how international school leaders

transition to and make sense of the culture when they arrive at a new international school.

The Interviews

The purpose of this research was to explore first-hand accounts from international school leaders about how they identify, make sense of, and transition to these new cultures. All of these international school leaders arrived at the same international in the last four years and could speak in detail about their transitions. There was a mix of expatriate and local leaders who participated in the interviews. An open-ended ethnographic interview style encouraged these leaders to tell their stories of transitions and to describe their responses and their reactions during the journey to cultural awareness (Heyl, 2001 & Spradley, 1979).

Throughout the interview process, the international school leaders spoke in detail about their transitions to this new culture. They shared unique personal experiences that included anecdotes, frustrations, and reflections about their transition to a new international school culture. These interviews indicated some basic similarities in experiences among the local and expatriate participants, some stark differences in their perspectives and clearly communicated the need to be more aware of the needs of all new arrivals at the school.

Shared Comparisons of the Culture

The international school leaders, both expatriate and local, agreed that the international school community, "seems like a country on its own, like – when you get out of the walls of [the school] you are in a different world, so to speak". Identifying how the school culture differed from that of the host country as well as the cultures of the home countries of the expatriate leaders, the participants seemed to clearly understand that the school culture was a unique blend of the various community members. "So I think once you walk through the walls of [the school] there is a different culture that we try to uphold".

In their descriptions, these international school leaders gave clear examples of how

the international school culture differs from that of the streets right outside the school. Leaders cited examples from general practices of punctuality to more specific practices of when gift-giving is appropriate. One leader explained that in typical local culture there is not an expectation of being on time, but in this international school culture, "every area you work would have that expectation." When discussing the practice of gift-giving in the local host community, one of the school leaders described how she would be, "shocked and nobody would even think of doing that [at school]. Whereas outside of the school culture it's seen as, 'OK, thank you'." All leaders, both expatriate and local, shared examples about how the international school culture was unique, compared to local culture just outside the school gates.

The leaders were also quick to point out that, however much an international standard might be the goal, the school culture also differed from their experiences with cultures from schools in other countries. Describing instances in which they had to adjust to what they termed a "slower local pace", the international leaders described how their perceptions of how things worked in previous schools could not be used to predict reactions in the new school culture. One international school leader spoke of how the local reality of infrastructure had to be part of planning, "in a place where power can be on or off, in terms of trying to go out and locate things in the community, you have to be a little bit patient and not […] think everything's gonna operate like it would in maybe western Europe and the United States." Other, more personal forces, also creep into the international school community to create a slower pace. Another school leader, discovered that, "taking the time to greet people was actually really essential", requiring her to allow more time when moving across campus. This international school leader, like the other participants recognized the need to adjust previous cultural routines because of the unique culture of the international school.

Differing Characterizations of the Culture

While international school leaders agreed on the uniqueness of the school

environment, in comparison to either local or international organizations, they did not agree

on how they would describe the culture or rhythm of the school. Local international school

leaders described a very different culture than their expatriate colleagues. Whereas expatriate

leaders commented on the international school community as "very friendly", "a very

positive environment", and "a community that is very tight", the local leaders described the

same community as "very demanding" and a culture with "a greater level of entitlement".

These two different perspectives of the culture came, in part, from their transitions into this

new culture and the support offered through their transitions. Meeting the social and

emotional needs of the expatriate school leads was openly discussed as part of the school

responsibility. A leader said, "We are always reviewing the support we offer new

expatriates". However, meeting the emotional needs of newly employed locals was not

prioritized. A local leader commented that, "It is viewed that you are here, you don't need

additional help".

Differing Support to Understand the Culture

Even though local leaders have to make sense of the same unique school culture as

international leaders, similar orientation and transition support programs rarely exist for new

arrivals with local roots. In my experience in four different international school on three

different continents, no cultural orientation programs existed for local leaders. At the school

examined in this study, a local leader said, "[It] was a local position and so the assumption is

that I wasn't given any - anything whatsoever about life – or transitioning information at

all… you pretty much had to do it on your own." Local international school leaders are

expected to work with expatriates from all over the world, in a system of education that is

often foreign to the local leader. Often these local leaders are asked to take on

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responsibilities for supporting the transition of expatriates new to the school.

One local leader explained the challenge of a local professional trying to work with a newly arrived expatriate without any preparation for what to expect, "You've got a new person [expatriate] coming in who has training about the person who is already here [local], but the person who is here does not get training as to how to handle the person who is coming in." This statement demonstrates the one-sided nature of most transition programs at international schools, the focus on transition if for the expatriates in transition.

International school leaders spend time at meetings reflecting on how the new expatriates are settling in. "So, we always ask ourselves, 'What can we do once they [expats] arrive to help them?' Rarely do international schools spend equal time identifying the transition needs of local arrivals. Therefore, local international school leaders do not have the needed transition support to understand their new culture. While this international school culture may be geographically located in the city or country of origin, the distinct culture within the school walls does not strictly follow the cultural patterns of the people outside the school. Local leaders entering an international school have just as much need of support to transition to this very unique culture.

Call for New Levels of Support for Local Leaders

Most international schools have transition programs for expatriate new arrivals. The foundational ideas used to implement these expatriate transition programs can easily be adapted to meet the needs of local arrivals in an international school. As one of the local leaders expresses, "something that I think is very important in the whole aspect of cultural awareness – expats go through the whole cultural program of the country they are going to, but in an environment like [our school], we don't train local staff on how to relate to expats." In order to fill this need for training of local staff, schools can start with the following steps:

- Solicit feedback from current local staff about successes, challenges, and needs through small focus groups, surveys, entrance or exit interviews in order to get specific information about their transition stories to your school culture.

- Identify on-staff mentors for new local staff to help new local staff understand culture and expectations of school community (Tolbert, 2015).

- Invite local staff onto campus early to observe daily activities, talk with colleagues, and ask questions.

- Involve local and expatriate staff in the induction of all new faculty and staff to better explore the diverse perspectives of the school community.

- Support and encourage local staff to participate in professional development and networking opportunities in order to provide additional resources and professional colleagues.

The important point for international school leaders is to remember that the culture within the walls of an international school is a cultural transition for everyone entering the school. No matter the host country culture, the routines and practices within the international school are unique to that school community. Therefore, each new arrival, expatriate or local, needs appropriate support in the journey of transition.

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Conclusions

Every year international school leaders begin journeys of cultural transition in new school environments. Through this two-article, manuscript style dissertation, I explored how international school leaders make these cultural transitions. My research produced findings that show evidence of similarities in personal reactions of these school leaders. Additionally, my findings also point to discrepancies among the international school leaders based on their status as local or expatriate. These differences include the perceptions of international school leaders of their new culture and the institutional support offered to international school leaders during their cultural transitions.

Through the first article, *Making sense of a new culture: Transition of international school leaders,* I used thematic analysis to identify themes among international school leaders. These findings showed that international school leaders showed similar patterns in their reactions to lived experiences and their theorized advice to how one should make cultural transitions. While international school leaders often reacted to new cultural experiences at the level of Hanvey's (1976) *cultural conflict,* these same leaders were able to reflect and offer advice on how to transition to a new culture at Hanvey's level of intellectual analysis. These findings demonstrate that while these international school leaders may possess the cultural intelligence that Keung and Rockinson-Szapkiw (2013) found to be essential for transformational leadership, the international school leaders do not always apply this cultural intelligence to their own lived experiences. While Keung and Rockinson-Szapkiw's (2013) research asked international school leaders to demonstrate their cultural intelligence at a theoretical level through a written survey, my research encouraged international school elders to explore their unique experiences with culture and share their personal stories of transition.

The findings derived from these stories of cultural transition become more personally

focused in the second article, *Transitioning to the culture of a new international school: Supporting the whole community,* whose audience is international school leaders. The findings I share are derived from the final coding of data, comparing international school leaders labeled as local or expatriate. Again, there are findings that show similar patterns of thought among the school leaders; both local and expatriate international school leaders recognize the unique culture of the international school. The difference in this final coding of the data is the divergent ways in which these international school leaders describe the culture of the case study school and the ways that they felt supported during their cultural transition. The article calls for international schools to recognize that the culture within the walls of international schools is unique and requires a cultural transition for every new leader, expatriate or local.

The findings in this study describe the ways in which international school leaders think about their journeys of cultural transition. At the same time, the outcomes of this research create new questions for international schools and the school leaders who guide them. Further research is required to understand how international school leaders can apply the cultural intelligence they may possess and to identify ways that international schools can support the cultural transitions of expatriate leaders as well as their local colleagues.

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Recruitment Letter

Making Sense of a New Place: Transition of International School Leaders

My name is Megan Maher and I am a doctoral student at Virginia Tech in the Department of Educational Leadership. I am currently conducting a research study as part of my dissertation under the direction of Dr. Kami Patrizio. I would like to invite you to participate in my study.

The study is titled Making Sense of a New Place: Transition of International School Leaders. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Virginia Tech has approved this study.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the lived experiences of international school leaders as they make sense of new cultural places. Part of the reason that you are being recruited to participate in this research study is because you share a unique perspective that is different from the researcher and the other interview participants.

If you choose to participate, you will be asked to participate in an audiotaped interview that will last approximately 30-40 minutes. The interview will be conducted at a mutually agreeable time and location.

Participation in this study is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time. I will not use your name or specific title in the findings of this study. Therefore, while the results of the study will be published, your name and title will not be identified.

If you would like to participate in this study, please respond to this email (mahermp@vt.edu). We will then decide on the best times and locations to conduct the interview.

I am happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

Megan Maher

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY
Informed Consent for Participants
in Research Projects Involving Human Subjects

Title of Project: **Making Sense of a New Place: Transition of International School Leaders**

Investigator(s):   Megan Maher   mahermp@vt.edu
                          Name   E-mail

                          Kami Patrizio   kpatrizi@vt.edu
                          Name   E-mail

I. Purpose of this Research Project

The purpose of this research study is to explore how international school leaders make sense of new cultural places. This study is part of the requirements of the dissertation process in order to complete a doctoral degree in Educational Leadership.

II. Procedures

Should you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in a 30 to 40 minute interview. The interview will be audio-recorded and will take place at a mutually agreed upon time and location. A transcript will be created as a result of the interview and will be available to the Ms. Maher's Committee Chair, Dr. Kami Patrizio and other committee members. The transcript will identify participants by name.

In accordance with the Virginia Tech IRB, the audio- recordings and transcripts used in the study will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study period.

III. Risks

There are no risks to the participant.

IV. Benefits

The results of this research will add to research regarding how international school leaders come to understand and make sense of new cultural places. Participation in the study may have positive implication for transition practices for international schools.

No promise or guarantee of benefits has been made to encourage you to participate.

V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality

Researchers will collect data confidentially, not retaining email addresses or names of participants.

At no time will the researchers release names of participants or job titles in the results of the study to anyone other than individuals working on the project without your written consent.

The Virginia Tech (VT) Institutional Review Board (IRB) may view the study's data for auditing purposes. The IRB is responsible for the oversight of the protection of human subjects involved in research.

VI. Compensation

No compensation is being offered for your participation.

VII. Freedom to Withdraw

It is important for you to know that you are free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty. You are free not to answer any questions that you choose or respond to what is being asked of you without penalty.

Please note that there may be circumstances under which the investigator may determine that a subject should not continue as a subject.

Should you withdraw or otherwise discontinue participation, you will be compensated for the portion of the project completed in accordance with the Compensation section of this document.

VIII. Questions or Concerns

Should you have any questions about this study, you may contact the research investigator whose contact information is included at the beginning of this document.

Should you have any questions or concerns about the study's conduct or your rights as a research subject, or need to report a research-related injury or event, you may contact the VT IRB Chair, Dr. David M. Moore at moored@vt.edu or (540) 231-4991.

IX. Subject's Consent

I have read the Consent Form and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent:

_____ Date_____

Subject signature

_____

Subject printed name

Interview Protocol

Making Sense of a New Place: Transition of International School Leaders

Date of Interview:

Time of Interview:

Location of Interview:

Interviewee:

I am working on an approved research study at Virginia Tech regarding how international school leaders transition to and make sense of new places. The study will involve interviews with senior level administrators at one international school in West Africa.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research project. Before we begin the interview, I would like to reassure you that this interview will be confidential and the recording and transcripts available only to me and the members of my dissertation committee.

There are no right or wrong ways to transition to a new place. This research is trying to determine how international school leaders make that transition.

Do you have any questions at this time?

I would like to record this interview. If there is anything you don't want me to record; just let me know and I will turn off the recorder. Excerpts of this interview may be made part of the final research report, but under no circumstances will your name be included in this report. Is it all right for me to turn on the recorder now?

The first part of this interview will gather information about you as a school leader.

Background Information

How long have you worked as a school leader?

How long have you worked at this school?

How many times have you transitioned to a new school?

Is your current position the first time you have held that position?

The next part of this interview will ask you to reflect on your personal transition to this school.

Your transition

How did you first learn about this school?

Tell me about strategies that the school offered that helped with your transition.

Tell me about strategies that you personally used that helped with your transition.

How did you learn how to get routine and logistical tasks completed at this school?

How did you learn the expectations for completing your job?

How is this school different from other schools or places in which you have worked? (How different? What influences and creates these differences?)

The final part of this interview will ask you to think about the sense of place or culture of the school.

A sense of place

Sometimes people use the idea of the "rhythm of a place" to describe the sense of place.   How would you describe the rhythm of this school?

Does the rhythm of the school fit with the rhythm of the host city and country?

Tell me about any expectations that were unique to this school.

Tell me about anything else that you believed was important in your transition journey.

Field Notes

(Adapted from Schwandt, 2015)

After interview of (Name of interviewee): _____

Date of interview: _____

Date of completion of field notes: _____

Describe the physical setting.

Describe the social environment and the way in which participant interacted within the setting. (This may include patterns of interactions, frequency of interactions, direction of communication patterns [including non-verbal communication], and patterns of specific behavioral events, such as, conflicts, decision-making, or collaboration.)

Describe the participant and his/her role in the setting.

Describe any impact of the interviewer on the situation you observed.

Reflexivity Protocol

Date: **Participant:**

Time: **Location:**

Initial thoughts:

Observation/Reaction of participant behavior:

Self Reflexivity

Prompts:" What do I know? How do I know what I know? What shapes and has shaped my perspective? How have my perceptions and my background affected the data I have collected and my analysis of those data? How do I perceive those I have studied? With what voice do I share my perspective? What do I do with what I have found?" (Patton, 2002, p. 495)

Reflexivity about participants

Prompts: "How do those studied know what they know? What shapes and has shaped their world view? How do they perceive me, the inquirer? Why? How do I know?" (p. 495)

Reflexivity about audience

Prompts: "How do those who receive my findings make sense of what I give them? What perspectives do they bring to the findings I offer? How do they perceive me? How do I perceive them? How do these perceptions affect what I report and how I report it?" (p. 495)

Identified Journals for Future Submission

Manuscript 1

Journal of Research in International Education

The *Journal of Research in International Education* is an international, peer-reviewed journal in international education for schools, examiners and higher education institutions throughout the world.

The *Journal of Research in International Education (JRIE)* advances the understanding and significance of international education. It undertakes a rigorous consideration of the educational implications of the fundamental relationship between human unity and human diversity that 'education for international understanding' requires. The *JRIE* encourages an approach to research in international education that will close the gap between the well-established emergent theory and diverse practice throughout the world. In this context, international education is concerned with the promotion of education for international understanding and human rights, and may include peace education, global education and intercultural education.

Journal of Research in International Education. (2017). Description, Retrieved from https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/journal/journal-research-international-education#description

Manuscript 2

International School Magazine

IS magazine reflects the diversity and professionalism of international educators; written by teachers and administrators of international schools, it is published three times a year and received by schools in 157 countries, catering for students aged two to 19 years.

International School Magazine. (2017). Retrieved from www.is-mag.co.uk