The focus on the care and feeding of missionaries and their families has dramatically increased over the past quarter century. Much of the literature in this area has emphasized the practical and clinical aspects of member care. In recent years, however, several authors have pointed to the need for more and better research to support member care efforts. Richardson (1992) cites the lack of empirical evidence as an obstacle to making strong conclusions about psychopathology with missionaries while O'Donnell (1992) suggests that research is needed to identify issues of importance to missionaries and to evaluate the effectiveness of intervention efforts. Hall and Schram (1999) call for greater sophistication in member care research. As Hunter (2002, p. 475) summarizes, “research has not kept pace with the more robust clinical thrust of the mental health and missions movement.”

This is not to suggest that research is being ignored in this area. Powell (1998) provides an historical perspective that indicates there has been an increase in research productivity in recent years. Part of this may be fueled by three international conferences on missionary kids and families that were held in the 1980s. One of the resolutions stemming from these conferences was for an increased emphasis on research in the area of member care.

Two reviews were published in the 1980s that summarized subsets of research findings in this area. Sharp (1985) reviewed research on missionary kids (MKs) in an effort to debunk a number of myths relative to their experience. His review suggests that, while MKs are not free from problems, they are also not deprived or underdeveloped. They often flourish academically and socially and tend to have healthy spiritual lives and good family relationships. He also indicated that research evidence supports the value of boarding schools for MKs and that strong family relationships are critical for their healthy growth and development. Austin and Van Jones (1987) reviewed re-entry research published on MKs between 1934 and 1986. They found few studies over this time period addressing this issue. Coding for specific variables across studies, they discovered a number of flaws in the research that limited generalizability. Few studies provided adequate data related to mission, outcome, and effect variables. Austin and Van Jones made a number of recommendations for future research including using instruments more sensitive to cross-cultural issues, increasing use of control groups, studying returnees who did not attend college, isolating on-the-field variables that impact re-entry, and employing more sophisticated statistical analyses.

The purpose of this article is to update the reviews previously conducted. This review expands the scope of publications to include those related to missionary families as well as their children. There are two primary goals. The first is to provide an overview of research conducted on MKs and their families from 1983 to the present. The second is to analyze research methods used in these studies. The article concludes with several recommendations for researchers.

METHOD

Several sources including electronic data bases (ATLA, Dissertation Abstracts, First Search, PsychInfo, etc.) and bibliographies from existing books, articles, and chapters were used to assemble a list of publications that reported on research conducted with missionary kids and families. Publications included in this review met three primary criteria: they primarily focused on missionary children, couples, and/or family units, they manipulated empirical data, and
they had a publication date of 1983 or later. A total of 30 publications were discovered that met these criteria.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Missionary Kid Studies

The majority of studies reviewed focused on the experiences of missionary kids (MKs). While there was some overlap in their emphases, these can broadly be grouped into three categories: educational concerns, re-entry issues, and adjustment of adult MKs.

Educational Concerns

Studies in this area were primarily concerned with the effects of educational modes on MKs. Historically, MKs have had a variety of educational options including boarding, international and local schools as well as home schooling. Thorpe (1994) explored the impact boarding schools had on family patterns. Using a qualitative approach, he interviewed 16 former students and three sets of faculty/dorm parents from an African boarding school. Four patterns of family interaction were identified. One set of students maintained strong family ties during boarding school and exhibited clear self delineation. A second group was traumatically cut off from their families during boarding school and experienced difficulties which included destructive idealization and considerable pressure to conform to the institution. A third pattern was found with students who did not have difficulties separating from parents and who were generally comfortable at boarding school but who also conformed to the institutional family and exhibited poor self delineation. The final group included students who only attended boarding school at the high school level. For this group, boarding school had less of an effect than previous experiences in different contexts.

Wickstrom and Fleck (1983) examined the relationship between self esteem and dependency among boarding and non-boarding MKs. Using a variety of self report inventories, they evaluated 130 MKs attending Christian colleges. The highest levels of self esteem were found among those who entered boarding school at an early age (before age ten). The lowest levels were found among MKs who entered at a later age (after age ten), with non-boarders averaging self esteem levels between these two groups. Self esteem was most closely associated with acceptance and warmth from all parents (father, mother, and house parents). Negative attention seeking behaviors were related to control and rejection on the part of fathers and house parents, while passive approval seeking behaviors among females correlated with a combination of control from mothers and acceptance from fathers. Variables associated with lower self esteem were also related to a lack of integration of religious values among MKs. Wickstrom and Fleck concluded that boarding schools have less to do with self esteem in MKs than the kind of relationships they have with their parents, especially their fathers.

Sharp (1990 a; 1990b) wrote two articles based on the same data set of 533 adult missionary kids (AMK). Using a survey he constructed, Sharp compared AMKs who had attended religious boarding schools with those who had attended schools in their host communities. He discovered distinct differences between the two groups. AMKs who attended boarding schools tended to have greater levels of Christian commitment, were more satisfied with the meaning and purpose of their lives, and were more likely to have missions as a career goal. AMKs who attended local schools were generally more world-minded, spoke the native language more fluently, and had higher career aspirations than their counterparts. In a separate analysis, Sharp (1991) examined correlates of commitment to social justice. He discovered a positive relationship between commitment to social justice and growing up in a Christian household, adult Christian commitment, and cultural involvement as a youth. However, he found a negative relationship between attending a religious boarding school and social justice. Sharp concluded the educational experiences were dichotomous. While religious boarding schools seem to help MKs maintain religious values, they also appear to promote the culture of the parents’ country of origin more than the host culture.
Kim (2001) interviewed thirty Korean MKs who attended Faith Academy in the Philippines regarding their experiences living in a different cultural setting. No differences were discovered between boarders and non-boarders. MKs did indicate that their experience was positive. They indicated they maintained close ties with their families and reported high academic achievements and strengthened faith. Many indicated they felt positive about being a MK and discussed becoming a missionary or entering a service profession as a career goal. However, MKs in this study also suggested they were isolated from the host culture and did not interact to a large extent with nationals. This is consistent with Sharp’s (1991) conclusion that boarding schools may help promote religious values but not integration with the host culture.

A special concern is the educational needs of MKs who experience disabilities. Frey (1995) interviewed six sets of parents who had children diagnosed with a learning disorder. Interviews focused on factors that influenced parents' decisions regarding their child's education, outcomes of these decisions, and parents' reflections regarding the entire process. Parents indicated their children experienced a variety of difficulties in their education, including factors they attributed to being an MK such as rootlessness and socio-emotional adjustment and issues related to the learning disorders such as academic problems and distractibility. In spite of these hardships, parents felt positive about their decisions to come to the field as well as their educational choices. Frey concluded that boarding schools can be an excellent resource for children with learning disabilities as long as they are staffed with personnel who are competent in this area.

Home schooling is growing in popularity as an educational options for MKs. Mutchler (1997) surveyed 43 parents of MKs regarding factors contributing to success in home schooling. Using a survey she developed, several key factors emerged including satisfaction with the curriculum, flexibility, commitment of the mother to home schooling as a ministry priority, a structured educational setting (e.g., specified study area, lesson plans, etc.), healthy family relationships, and an understanding of child development and learning styles. Three-quarters (76%) of those surveyed identified themselves as “pure” home schoolees who did not participate in co-ops or access outside resources such as tutors. The vast majority of parents who home schooled reported being either somewhat or highly satisfied with their educational situation. Mutchler encouraged sending agencies to strongly support parents who choose home schooling as an educational option for their children.

Bishop (1997) compared the expectations of MKs and their parents with a control group of stateside non-MKs on several variables including education. She found MKs and their parents had lower educational expectations than their counterparts in the United States, a finding at odds with previous research in this area. In addition, she found no differences between the two groups in expectations about cultural perspectives. Bishop did discover that overseas parents and MKs placed greater emphasis on religious expectations than stateside children and parents, and that MKs had higher expectations regarding family connections than did their peers. These findings are consistent with previous research.

Re-entry Issues

Re-entry into the parent’s home culture is a critical issue for all members of missionary families. A crucial time for many MKs occurs when they leave their families to attend college. Three of the studies in this area focused on students who were making that transition. Moss (1985) looked at loneliness and college adjustment problems. She compared 209 Southern Baptist MKs with data sets from Iranian (n = 232), international (n = 416), and American (n = 237) college students collected in previous research. Using the Michigan International Student Problem Inventory, she found MKs scored at least ten percent higher on eight of 11 subscales than the international students. This analysis is limited, however, because the international sample had been collected ten years prior to her study and inferential statistical analyses were not used to establish significance. Moss also compared the MKs to two other samples on the UCLA Loneliness Scale. She discovered the MKs had higher loneliness scores than their American counterparts but no significant differences were discovered with the Iranian sample.
Moss concluded that, as a group, MKs tend to experience some difficulties in adjusting to college life.

Fray (1988) explored the impact of several family variables on re-entry. He administered the Homecomer Culture Shock Scale as well as several family inventories to 438 Southern Baptist MKs. He discovered emotional differentiation, family satisfaction, cohesion, and adaptability were all associated with lower culture shock scores, with differentiation having the greatest effect. He also found that MKs from Latin America had the closest ties to their host culture but that this did not appear to have an effect on their ability to acculturate.

Huff (2001) explored how parental attachment and social support impacted the transition to college for MKs. She compared 45 MKs with 65 non-MKs using the Homecomer Culture Shock Scale as well as measures evaluating attachment, support, and college adaptation. In general, she found that MKs experienced greater cultural and interpersonal distance than non-MKs. However, there were some differences among the MK group. Those who identified more with the host culture from which they came reported greater social support than those who saw themselves first as Americans, but they also had a higher level of culture shock. The number of transitions seemed to be a key variable. MKs who had gone to fewer than five schools reported greater parental affect, while those experiencing 11 or more transitions during childhood experienced less grief but had a more difficult time with social adjustments. MKs who had attended boarding schools experienced less interpersonal distance with peers, while those who re-entered after age 15 reported greater interpersonal distance. Huff suggested that parental attachment and family relationships are key variables in predicting college adjustment for MKs and that they are important areas to address prior to making this transition.

The final study on re-entry issues for MKs did not specifically seek out MKs as research participants. Schulz (1985) conducted a needs assessment survey with 127 participants at the 1984 International Conference on Missionary Kids (ICMK). Respondents included AMK’s, parents of MKs, and professionals who work with MKs. Personal identity, cultural adjustment, interpersonal relationships with peers, homesickness, and adjustment to American materialism were identified as leading concerns. Top re-entry needs included help in finding one’s self, finding a listening person, getting updates on American social life, gaining an introduction to other MKs, adjusting to the American lifestyle, and career guidance. Mothers of MKs placed higher importance on several re-entry concerns than MK fathers including identity development and psycho-social adjustment. Overall, respondents were strongly in favor of programs geared toward helping with re-entry, suggesting an initial re-entry program three months prior to leaving the field with a follow-up six months after returning.

Adjustment of Adult Missionary Kids (AMKs)

Growing up in another culture is a lifelong influence for most MKs. Several studies considered long term effects of growing up as the child of a missionary. Using a questionnaire developed specifically for her study, Stelling (1991) examined the relationship between reverse culture shock and several variables with 134 Lutheran AMKs. She found the number of years on the field, being separated from parents while overseas, having a father who was an evangelistic missionary, experiencing trauma during first year of return, and having lived in Asia or Papua, New Guinea all correlated with higher reverse culture shock scores. Moreover, children who returned to the home culture in their teens (and especially ages 13 and 14) experienced the greatest difficulties. Conversely, MKs who considered the United States their home reported an easier transition and less reverse culture shock. On the whole, respondents who reported the greatest difficulties with reverse culture shock, especially those who returned as teens, tended to see themselves as quite different from non-MK peers on a number of variables including social and environmental issues, awareness of international events, idealism, and the value of spending time with children. They also perceived themselves as having less self confidence and emotional independence, and less able to make friends than non-MKs.

Drawing on the work of Erikson (1963), Ketting (1997) compared immigrants and AMKs on how a cross-cultural move during adolescence impacted identity formation. She surveyed a
total of 266 immigrants, MKs, and children who had not moved during adolescence and completed in-depth interviews with 21 of the participants. In keeping with Erikson’s theory, she found the MKs and immigrants as a group were exploring and committing to identity. However, MKs appeared to place greater importance on identity formation than immigrants, with a high percentage of them in the exploration phase well into their twenties and thirties. Other factors related to greater identity exploration included being White, having a higher socio-economic status, and moving after age 17. Higher levels of family closeness correlated with interpersonal identity status. Ketting concluded that identity formation is made more difficult when adolescents change their cultural context during this process.

Wrobbel (1990; Wrobbel & Pluddeman, 1990) focused on the psychosocial development of AMKs. Using the Measure for Psychosocial Development, she surveyed 292 AMKs ranging in age from 23 to 69. She discovered scores that were lower than the norm on psychosocial development for her sample. Those who had been on the field for more than eight years had better scores than AMKs who had been in the host culture four to eight years. Moreover, those who re-entered after age 14 had higher scores than other AMKs. No differences were discovered between AMKs who attended a boarding school and those who did not. Wrobbel also found a positive correlation between perception of family and psychosocial development. She concluded that AMKs often wrestle with the tension between their overseas experience and their homeland long after returning from the field. An important factor that can aid in resolution is the influence of a loving and supportive family.

Andrews (1995) reported on results of a study conducted by MK CART/CORE, a research consortium made of up of a number of experienced researchers and mission sending agencies. She examined religious, existential, and spiritual well-being among 608 AMKs using a series of questionnaires. In general, she found AMKs reported high levels of well-being in each of the evaluated areas. This was especially the case with those who reported a warm relationship with their parents and who were beneficiaries of strong parenting skills. MKs tend to do better academically than their peers in college and are likely to be involved extra-curricular activities that contribute to well-being. Some differences were reported among sub-groups in the sample. Women reported higher levels of existential satisfaction than men, those who were married indicated greater satisfaction than those who were divorced, and AMKs who worked in people-oriented professions had greater satisfaction than those who were in other kinds of work. Andrews concluded that MKs are resilient people who, in general, seem to be clear about their purpose in life and are well connected to God.

For some MKs, returning to passport country means leaving the culture where they feel most at home. Moessner (1992) was interested in whether the overseas experience of AMKs influenced the probability of their returning to a foreign country as a missionary when they reach adulthood. She interviewed 35 AMKs (ages 46-78) who had attended the same boarding school. Five had served as missionaries while two others had desired to serve but were prevented. Eighty three percent of the AMKs interviewed ended up in service oriented careers. Moessner concluded that growing up as an MK does not increase the likelihood of returning to a foreign culture as a missionary in adulthood.

Finally, Rosik and Kilbourne-Young did case analyses on five AMKs who suffered from dissociative disorders. MKs are at some degree of risk for several factors associated with dissociative disorders including poor parental response to stress, high mobility, exposure to trauma, and being raised outside of their parents’ home culture. All subjects in this case were AMKs who were also serving as missionaries and who had returned from the field for treatment. All reported frequent relocation in their childhoods and experienced emotional and/or verbal abuse. All had also experienced physical or sexual abuse; in three cases subjects experienced both. While these are factors are common in dissociative disorders, Rosik and Kilbourne-Young suggest that MKs are not immune and that additional experiences common to MKs (such as those mentioned above) may exacerbate the problem.

Missionary family research.

In addition to gaining greater understanding of the effects of missionary life on children, several researchers have been interested in how life on the field impacts an entire family unit.
Studies in this group focused on three general areas: marital and family satisfaction, family dynamics, and re-entry issues.

**Satisfaction**

Sweatman (1999) explored correlations between marital satisfaction and depression and anxiety among 34 first term missionary couples. Using several standardized instruments to assess these variables, he discovered high levels of marital satisfaction and low levels of depression and anxiety. However, he did find a significant relationship between depression measures and a global marital satisfaction score as well as between scores on the Beck Depression Inventory and a subscale of the marital instrument measuring time together. No correlations were found between marital satisfaction and anxiety measures. Sweatman suggested that first time missionaries may be more prone to depression than anxiety. However, levels of depression in this sample were low relative to test norms.

Andrews (1999; n.d.) reported results of a second MK-CART/CORE study on family, spiritual, ministry, and life satisfaction among missionary families. Using a battery of inventories, they surveyed 245 missionaries, 127 adolescent MKs, and 140 missionary children. They found high levels of satisfaction with family, vocational, and spiritual life. Moreover, spousal, family, and spiritual satisfaction were all significantly correlated and the practice of spiritual disciplines was related to ministry and family satisfaction. A healthy relationship with families of origin, especially those in which father were seen in a positive light, correlated with family satisfaction. A strong sense of “call” and a positive view of forgiveness were related to spiritual satisfaction. Interestingly, relationships with national and home churches and sponsoring missions were not related to spiritual satisfaction, but personal relationships with a prayer partner or other spiritual friend was related. Andrews concluded that healthy relationships with families of origin and practicing spiritual disciplines were key factors related to satisfaction among missionaries on the field.

Corby (2003) explored the effects of stress on family satisfaction, couple ministry satisfaction and communication with husbands, wives, and adolescents from 68 missionary families. She also tested the degree to which spiritual attribution, as a mediating variable, moderated the effects of stress. Using multiple regression to develop a path model that combined the variables described above, Corby discovered spiritual attribution directly impacted all but two variables and mediated the effects of stress on couple ministry satisfaction. While overall path model was not predictive of ministry satisfaction for couples, it was moderately predictive of family satisfaction. Corby concluded that this model was useful for predicting family satisfaction but not satisfaction in ministry.

**Family Dynamics**

Two studies focused on dynamics of couple relationships among missionaries. Damon (1985) used ENRICH, an instrument that measures a variety of areas of marital functioning, with a sample of 165 Southern Baptist missionaries in South America to examine correlations between religious orientation and other couple variables. She found scores on religious orientation higher than test norms for her sample, but discovered no significant correlations between religious orientation and communication, conflict resolution, adaptability, roles, and sexual relationship. Moreover, she found no differences in marital satisfaction between husbands and wives. She did find a small but significant relationship between religious orientation and marital satisfaction. Damon suggested that religious orientation is a strength for missionary couples but that it seems unrelated to other marital variables.

Kailing (1995) considered whether pre-mission scores on marital communication were predictive of burnout. She used pre-field scores on selected subscales of the Marital Satisfaction Inventory to compare 22 couples who left the field earlier than anticipated with 41 couples who remained on the field. Communication scores predicted success on the field for missionaries who remained. In particular, high problem solving scores for husbands and high affective scores for wives were found for this group. However, no significant relationship predictive of leaving was discovered for those who left the field prematurely.
Jones (1989) investigated the impact of family type on missionary performance. Using Olson’s Circumplex Model (date) as a theoretical framework, he correlated family type with overseas performance for 119 missionary couples from the Assemblies of God. While family satisfaction and cohesion were higher than test norms for missionary families, none of the variables associated with family type or satisfaction significantly correlated with overseas performance. The only exception was for marital satisfaction for couples who were serving at least their third tour on the field.

Dodd (1996) was concerned with how family resources moderated stressors in missionary families. He used a battery of self-report inventories measuring family functioning and stress with a sample of 30 missionary couples and 34 adolescents on furlough. Dodd discovered strong marital relationships in his sample. Couples reported higher scores than test norms for communication, conflict resolution, and roles. Parent-adolescent relationships, however, were not as positive. Both fathers and mothers had scores below the norm in parent-adolescent communication and sons reported greater difficulties in communicating with their mothers than daughters. In general, the families reported a significant number of stressors, especially those related to especially related to intra-family strains, transitions and finances. Mothers, in particular, appeared to be under considerable stress. Mothers also reported lower levels of family cohesion than normative groups. Dodd indicated that families exhibited similar coping mechanisms to other families and did not appear to place special emphasis on spiritual resources for dealing with their stressors. These findings may be affected by the fact that these families were on furlough, a time of high stress for many missionary families.

Re-entry Issues

Schulz (1986) combined quantitative measures with interviews to investigate experiences of returning missionaries. She administered a survey she constructed to 161 missionaries from Churches of Christ and conducted conjoint interviews with 27 families, 11 of whom completed the survey. Families who stayed in one place, who had higher incomes, and who made the decision to come back together had an easier adjustment experience. Those who used servants and who spent more time as a family in the field than they did upon their return reported a more difficult adjustment. Moreover, families tended to report that they felt their faith was not as strong in the United States as it had been in the host country. Interviewed families indicated that the materialism and worldview of Americans made re-entry difficult. While reports of loss were common, most said they would repeat the experience and that they had been strengthened by their overseas experience. Schulz suggested that her findings indicate re-entry is a significant transition for missionary families and called upon churches to give greater attention to educating and supporting missionaries in reentry.

Stringham (1993) also used a qualitative approach to explore how missionary families adjust to re-entry. He conducted in-depth interviews with three returned missionary families (six adults and five children) in early, middle, and late stages of re-entry. He discovered that grief, difficulty with cultural references, and time management all posed challenges, with effects lessening over time. Upon return, families indicated they experienced a decline in cohesiveness, greater dependence of wives on husbands for social support, and increased interpersonal tension at home. Concurrent life transitions and poor family of origin experiences (especially for women) also contributed to adjustment difficulties. Conversely, a positive sojourn experience and marriages that were symmetrical in terms of their distribution of power were helpful factors in readjustment.

Summary

A number of themes can be identified from the findings reviewed in this section. The first is that strong family relationships seem to be the key to healthy adjustment, both on the field and during times of transition for missionary families. A number of these studies identified some aspect of family functioning as important in adjustment. For example, Wickstrom and Fleck (1983) identified parental relationships as crucial for self-esteem development, Wrobbel and Pluddeman (1990) saw family relationships as critical for psychosocial development, Huff
(2001) identified parental attachment as a key factor in college adjustment, and Fray (1988) found family satisfaction, cohesion, and adaptability associated with lower levels of reverse culture shock.

A subset that seems to be especially important for healthy family relationships is the couple relationship. Sweatman (1999) and Dodd (1996) found that couples reported their relationships were satisfying and a key ingredient of adjustment. Kailing (1995) and Dodd discovered that successful missionary couples tended to have good communication skills and Stringham (1993) found that symmetrical marriages contributed to good re-entry experiences.

Additionally, family of origin experiences may also play a role in the adjustment of missionaries. Andrews (1999) indicated that healthy family of origin experiences correlated with spiritual satisfaction among missionaries, while Stringham (1993) found that dysfunction in family of origin was related to difficulties in re-entry. All of these findings point to the critical role of family in the health and well-being of missionaries.

A second theme concerns values often held by MKs and missionary families that may set them apart from peers in their passport country. Stelling (1991) cited a host of social and environmental variables where MKs described themselves as different from those who were not children of missionaries. Schulz (1986) cited materialism and coping with a limited worldview as challenges to re-entering into American culture. Sharp (1991) reported that MKs who did not attend boarding schools were more committed to social justice and were more world-minded than peers who attended boarding schools. These findings suggest that living in another culture significantly and permanently shapes the lives of missionary families, especially MKs. Those considering missions as a vocation will certainly want to take into account the likelihood that the values and worldview of family members will be altered in a way that is substantially different than contemporaries in the homeland.

A third theme is that re-entry is a challenging process. While Andrews (1995) reported that MKs often outstrip their peers in college, Huff (2001) and Moss (1985) both indicated adjustment to college life can be difficult for MKs. Ketting (1997) found identity development is made more difficult when adolescents move cross-culturally and Schulz (1985) indicated that personal identity, cultural adjustment, and interpersonal relationships with peers were challenges faced by MKs during re-entry. Stelling (1991) reported that MKs who move to their parent’s home culture in their early teenage years may experience special difficulties. Stringham (1993) discovered a decrease in family cohesiveness and an increase in interpersonal attention among returning missionary families. In short, the research indicates re-entry is a critical period in the life of missionary families that calls for special attention from home churches and mission sending agencies.

REVIEW OF METHODS

Methodological issues are important in assessing the value of any research. This section provides an overview of several methodological considerations in the studies under review.

Sample

Studies in this review accessed a wide variety of subjects familiar with missionary experiences. Most of the MK research relied on an adult perspective. Nine articles used AMKs for subjects while four articles drew on MKs who were college students. Andrews (1999), Bishop (2001), Corby (2003), and Dodd (1996) included MKs as part of their samples of family units and Schulz (1986) conducted joint interviews with families who had returned from the field. Kim (2001) was the only study to interview only MKs. Most of the remaining studies relied on data from adults and focused on couple relationships, parenting and family issues, and/or re-entry. Schulz (1985), who interviewed conference participants, was the only study in this review that did not draw directly on members of missionary families.

Sample sizes varied widely, from five or less in two qualitative studies (Rosik & Kilbourne-Young, 1999; Stringham, 1993) to 608 AMKs in one of the MK-CART/CORE research efforts.
Most of the studies were surveys or correlational in nature and, in general, sample sizes appeared to be large enough to provide an adequate representation of the population being studied. While each study clearly reported the manner in which the sample was selected, none indicated they used randomization in sample selection.

With one exception (Jones, 1989: 30%), response rates were good, ranging from 47% to 85%. The median response rate among the 12 studies that included this information was 57%. This rate is very good when compared to other survey research in the social sciences and suggests that missionaries and MKs make willing research participants.

Method

Most of these studies used self report measures and relied solely on quantitative methods of analysis. However, there seems to be a trend toward more qualitative studies. Seven studies used qualitative methods, including two (Ketting, 1997; Schulz, 1986) that combined methods, conducting interviews and collecting survey data. Except for Schulz, all of these studies had a publication date of 1992 or later, suggesting that qualitative approaches are becoming more common in this literature.

The majority of studies relied on standardized instruments for data collection, with some combining instruments developed specifically for the study. This is a change from Austin and Van Jones’ (1987) review of MK re-entry research. They indicated most studies they reviewed did not use standardized instruments. In most of these cases a battery of instruments was used to assess multiple variables. The most commonly used instrument was some version of FACES (Olson, 1992) which assesses family cohesion and adaptability. In general, it appeared that the research instruments used had strong psychometric properties. Five data sets relied solely on instruments constructed by the author. One of these (Sharp, 1990a; 1990b; 1991) used factor analysis to check for validity while two others (Schulz, 1986; Stelling 1991) relied on face validity.

Quantitative studies primarily used correlational analyses. In general, their purpose was to determine the association between independent and dependent variables under consideration. Five studies compared experiences of missionaries with other groups. While these did not use experimental or quasi-experimental designs, they did provide results on how MKs differ from peers who have not lived in another culture. Kailing (1995) compared families who left the field with those who stayed while Bishop (2001), Huff (2001), Ketting (1997), and Moss (1985) compared MKs with peers who were non-MKs. In addition, Dodd’s (1996) analyses consisted primarily of comparisons to test norms. Two studies were descriptive surveys. Schulz (1985) assessed MK needs and Mutchler (1997) polled parents regarding home schooling issues.

All studies in this review were cross-sectional in design; no longitudinal studies were conducted. All but four data sets were developed as part of a thesis or dissertation project. Both MK-CART/CORE projects (Andrews 1995; 1999) involved a collaboration of mission agencies and experienced member care specialists. Rosik and Kilbourne-Young (1999) and Moessner (1992) also reported on data that did not appear to have been drawn from graduate study. None of the studies in this review appeared to be building on previous research conducted by the author, suggesting the lack of an on-going research agenda in this literature. Except for the MK-CART/CORE projects and Rosik and Kilbourne-Young, these studies reflected the work of scholars working alone, usually with the support of graduate advisors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The studies described in this review have helped further our understanding of the unique dynamics found with missionary couples, families and children. They reveal a picture of family members who depend on one another to meet the challenges of living between cultures, whose world view is shaped by their experiences, and who wrestle with the challenges of re-entry. The researchers who have contributed to this body of knowledge have provided a valuable service.
At the same time, this field of study is only beginning to scratch the surface from a research perspective. The following suggestions are offered to further the development of this area of study:

1) *Increase research productivity.* This paper reviews a total of 30 publications spanning a 20 year period. That is less than two studies per year. Admittedly, this review may not report on every study. It may miss conference proceedings, book chapters, or articles that did not appear in the data bases from which this list of publications was derived. But it is fair to say little research is being conducted on MKs and missionary families. While there are volumes devoted to the care and feeding of this group, they are primarily based on anecdotal evidence. This is not to deny the value of these works, but clinical and practical applications to MKs and missionary families can only be strengthened by solid research evidence. Scholars who work in this area need to be encouraged to train their sites on this potentially fruitful area of research.

2) *Increase accessibility to research results.* As previously noted, most of the research conducted in this area has been done as part of a graduate program. While several of these have been published in journals, the majority have not. Half (n = 15) of the publications in this review are unpublished theses or dissertations. These are difficult and expensive to obtain and since they are not readily available many researchers may not be aware of important findings upon which they can build. The literature has included a number of edited volumes in recent years that are excellent resources for clinicians and member care specialists (e.g., Bowers, 1998; Powell and Bowers, 2002). A similar compendium that assembles summaries of recent masters and doctoral research would be a valuable asset to researchers.

3) *Develop on-going research programs that investigate missionary families and MKs.* All of the studies reviewed in this article are independent research projects that do not represent an on-going thread. In other words, there does not appear to be anyone who is conducting an on-going research program focused on MKs or missionary families where subsequent studies build on previous ones. In keeping with the observations of Hall and Schram (1999), this review discovered that the majority of research is being conducted by graduate students as part of their degree requirement. They have contributed some excellent findings, but unless they move into a career path that focuses on research, they are unlikely to develop a continuous program.

Hunter (2002) suggests faculty at Christian graduate schools should be encouraged to take more of a lead in this area. Many have the skill set to conduct research and they often have access to graduate students who can be encouraged to work under their guidance. Faculty can provide overall direction that would allow multiple research efforts to be cohesive in nature. But this route has its challenges. Faculty are often stretched with many responsibilities and research may, by necessity, take a lower priority in their efforts to train students. They need administrative support to help them focus on research. Moreover, research requires funding and, in an area where money is always limited, it is difficult to justify funnelling resources toward research when they could be used to support missionaries on the field. Nevertheless, research is one vital way we learn about what helps families stay on the field. Support for research may not cry out with the same urgency as other areas of missions, but it is still important.

4) *Focus on theory development.* Research, theory, and practice form a triad where, hopefully, each component informs the others. As early as 1983, Hunter called for theory to play a greater role in member care research. A number of the studies in this review were explicitly linked to theory – for example, Ketting’s (1997) link to Erikson’s theory of development or Dodd’s (1996) reliance on family stress theory – but not to a theory of missionary families. While work has been done on theory development in this area (e.g., O'Donnell, 1987) this review suggests research conducted on MKs and missionary families is not tied to these frameworks. The exception is Stringham (1993), whose purpose was to develop grounded theory through his qualitative study of re-entering families. Researchers
focusing on MKs and missionary families need to be aware of the need to refine theories in this area and to allow their work to be informed by them.

5) **Increase research collaboration.** Nearly all the studies in this review were the efforts of a single researcher. Scholars working in isolation miss out on rich resources offered by colleagues. The notion that many hands make light work is certainly appropriate in empirical endeavors. The clear exception to this trend is the research conducted by MK-CART/CORE. This represents a collaboration of several leading scholars in the area of missionary family life as well as a number of mission sending agencies. The effect of this collaboration is clear in the quality of their work. By banding together, this consortium has been able to leverage their resources and produce high quality research that benefits missionaries and their families and helps inform those who work with them. MK-CART/CORE is a stellar example of collaborative research and should be held up as a model for others to follow.

6) **Employ greater variety in research methods.** The typical study in this review collected a set of self report inventories from a sample of MKs or missionaries and sought to determine how some aspect of their lives correlated with other variables. This correlational approach is common in social science research and has produced some enlightening findings in this body of research. However, there are other methods of investigation that can also provide useful results. Hunter (2002) advocates combining qualitative research with quantitative methods, suggesting that working with smaller groups in greater depth provides another perspective on family dynamics easily missed by survey research. As previously noted, the use of qualitative methods appears to be on the rise but greater emphasis needs to be given to combining methods. Austin and Van Jones (1987) cited the need for more research that used comparison groups consisting of those who did not have overseas experience. Control groups allow researchers to have greater confidence that effects they find in missionary samples are due to their unique experiences and are not attributable to normative events experienced by their cohort. Four studies in this body of research (Bishop, 2001; Huff, 2001; Ketting, 1997; Moss, 1985) accessed non-MK control groups. As the field moves toward using research to evaluate methods of intervention for missionary families making preparations to go to the field, quasi-experimental methods may prove useful. Finally, longitudinal research is badly needed to assess the long term effects of life on the field for missionary families. Austin identified this need in 1983 and it has been echoed in numerous publications. At that point he indicated he was unaware of any longitudinal studies on missionary families and re-entry. This review concludes that this status has not changed in the last 20 years.

**CONCLUSION**

There have been some good developments in MK and missionary family research over the past 20 years. Researchers continue to uncover findings that inform those who work with missionaries on a regular basis. At the same time, there is a lack of cohesiveness in this body of research. There is no evidence of on-going research programs focused on missionary families and children and this area is reliant on graduate students who conduct one time studies. A need exists for more collaborative efforts such as the one modeled by MK-CART/CORE, increased funding to support research in this vital area, and a reciprocal relationship between research efforts and theory building.
REFERENCES
