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IB Africa, Europe & Middle East Regional Conference

# **Third Culture Kids** Growing Up Among Worlds

"A Third Culture Kid (TCK) is a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents' culture. The TCK frequently builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture may be assimilated into the TCK's life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar background."

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*Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds* By David C. Pollock and Ruth E. Van Reken





### Who We Are

- Culture is the way we come to know the world, individually and collectively. It is the active engagement of what and who we are as individuals, as communities and as a nation. The quality of that culture is a measure of the way we live.
- Purpose of session:
  - 1. We will discuss how our personal cultural identities influence who we are as teachers.
  - 2. How international-mindedness is about recognizing and reflecting multiple perspectives.
  - 3. Why it's important to foster internationalism in education.
  - 4. Identify the stages of intercultural learning.



Where is home? *Erica's Story* (pg. 3)

- Who are Third Culture Kids? A common misconception about TCK's is that they have been raised in what is often called the "Third World". This might be true for some, but the Third World has no specific relationship to the concept of TCK's. TCK's have grown up everywhere!
- The Expatriate World:

#### HOME Culture "First Culture"

THIRD CULTURE Shared commonalities of those living internationally mobile lifestyle.

HOST Culture "**Second Culture**"



- Dr. Useem coined the term *Third Culture Kid* after her second year-long visit to India with her fellow sociologist/anthropologist husband and three children.
- In 1993 she wrote: "In summarizing that which we had observed in our cross-cultural encounters, we began to use the term "third culture" as a generic term to cover the styles of life created, shared, and learned by persons who are in the process of relating their societies, or sections thereof, to each other.
- Simply put TCK's are: "Children who accompany their parents into another society." Ruth Hill Useem / TCK World: The Official Home of Third Culture Kids
- "The TCK frequently builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership of any."





### Where We Are in Place and Time

- Where am I really from? Brice Royer (pg. 27)
- What is culture? Please turn to an "elbow partner" and share your definition.
- When we think of culture, we think about how we *dress*, *eat*, *speak* and *act* like those around us.
- Culture is also a system of shared concepts, beliefs and values.
- It is the framework of how we interpret and make sense of life and the world around us.



#### **The Iceberg Model of Culture**



"How culture is like an iceberg - 9/10<sup>th</sup>s of it lie beneath the surface. This hidden area underlies our behavior, influences our perceptions and is outside our immediate frame of reference - until we plunge beneath the surface - or perhaps like the Titanic, encounter it unexpectedly."



Food Language Music Visual Arts Festivals Performing Arts Literature Flags Games Dress **Holiday Customs** Nature of Friendship Values **Religious Beliefs Body Language** Notions of Beauty Rules Etiquette Norms **Gender Roles** Expectations Learning Styles Leadership Styles Attitudes towards Social Status Notions of 'Self' Perceptions Attitudes towards Age Notions of Modesty **Thought Processes** Views on Raising Children **Concept of Fairness** Importance of Space Approaches to Problem Solving Notions of Cleanliness Importance of Time Assumptions

SURFACE CULTURE FOLK CULTURE fine arts storytelling . subsistence drumming dancing games cooking dress weather forecasting navigation skills • observation skills • animal behavior • seasonal changes/cycles • star knowledge / constellations • pattern recognition edible plants / medical knowledge counting / measurement / estimation • language / terminology/concepts technology . building design/materials clothing design/insulation waste disposal • fire/heating/cooking . transportation tools/ hunting / fishing / trapping • genealogy AND MUCH, MUCH MORE . . . DEEP CULTURE weapons

#### The Iceberg Concept of Currane

Like an iceberg, nine-tenths of culture is below the surface.

Surface Culture Most easily seen Emotional level - low

Food. dress. music, visual arts, drama. crafts. dance, literature, languagae, celebrations, games

Shallow Culture **Unspoken Rules** Emotional level - high

Deep Culture

courtesy, contextual conversational patterns, concept of time, personal space, rules of conduct, facial expressions, nonverbal communication, body language, touching, eye contact, patterns of handling emotions,

notions of modesty, concept of beauty, courtship practices, relationships to animals, notions of leadership, tempo of work, concepts of food, ideals of child rearing, theory of disease, social interaction rate, nature of friendships, tone of voice, attitudes toward elders, concept of cleanliness, notions of adolescence, patterns of group decision-making, definition of insanity, preferences for competition or cooperation, Unconscious Rules tolerance of physical pain, concept of "self", Emotional level - intense concept of past and future, definition of obscenity, attitudes toward dependents, problem solving roles in relation to age, sex, class, occupation, kinship, and ...

### Cultural Mirrors and Windows

 Students do need to find their own lives reflected in curriculum, but if what they read and do in school only mirrors their own views of the world, they cannot envision other ways of thinking and being.



### Cultural X-Rays

- Draw an outline of your body.
- Label the outside of your body with aspects of your culture that are evident to others (ex. language, age, ethnicity, gender and religion.)
- Label the inside with the values and beliefs that you hold in your heart (others cannot see unless they get to know you).
- Share with a group of 3 participants.



### How We Express Ourselves

- TCK's have the opportunity not only to observe a great variety of cultural practices but also to learn what some of the underlying assumptions are behind them, they develop strong *cross-cultural skills*.
- TCK's increase their inner awareness of our culturally diverse world. These experiences help in the development of useful personal skills:
- 1. **Observational Skills:** careful observers of what's going on around them and then try to understand the reasons for what they are seeing. Observing carefully and learning to ask "How does life work here?" before barging ahead. (pg. 115)

- 2. Social Skills: learning to live with the repetitive change gives TCK's a great sense of inner confidence and strong feelings of self-reliance. Not always liking change TCK's do expect to cope with new situations. (pg. 117) But, TCK's can appear to be socially slow while trying you to figure out the operative rules in their new situation. (pg. 117)
- 3. Linguistic Skills: acquiring fluency in more than one language is potentially one of the most useful life skills a cross-cultural upbringing can give TCK's. But, speaking another language, and knowing it well enough to think in it, are not the same, and that difference can be critical. (pg. 119-120)
- 4. Often the majority culture is oblivious to the cross-cultural skills the child of a minority is using each day simply to succeed in school.
- 5. How can we help our students share these crosscultural skills in the classroom? How can we encourage TCK's to share their assets within a school community?

#### What TCK's might be thinking...

- 1. How can I make and maintain friendships, especially with non-TCKs?
- 2. How do I sort out who I am or where I belong when I can't get past the feeling of belonging "everywhere and nowhere?"
- 3. How do I deal with the grief I still feel from long ago losses of country and friends?
- 4. How do I stop the cycles of separation and loss I continue to create for myself because I can't seem to stay in one place more than 2-3 years max?
- 5. How can I not lose my past while moving towards the future?
- 6. How do I deal with the extreme loneliness I sometimes feel, even when others are around?
- 7. How do I learn to recognize and develop fully the gifts I received from this experience?

# **Sharing the Planet**

 Research has been done on American TCKs to identify various characteristics:

#### 1. Sociopsychology: (social interactions)

- 90% feel "out of sync" with their peers.
- 90% report feeling as if they understand other people and cultural groups better than the average American.
- 80% believe they can get along with anybody, and they often do, due to their sociocultural adaptability.
- Divorce rates among TCKs are lower than the general population, but TCKs marry at an older age (25+).
- More welcoming of others into their community.
- Lack a sense of "where home is", but are often nationalistic.

#### 2. Cognitive and Emotional Development:

- Teenage TCKs are more mature than non-TCKs, but in their twenties take longer than their peers to focus their aims.
- Depression is comparatively prevalent among TCKs.
- TCKs' sense of identity and well-being is directly and negatively affected by repatriation (the act of returning to the country of origin).
- TCKs are highly linguistically adept (not as true for military TCKs).
- A study whose subjects were all "career military brats"—those who had a parent in the military from birth through high school—shows that brats are linguistically adept.
- Like all children, TCKs may experience stress and even grief from the relocation experience.

#### 3. Education and Career:

- TCKs are 4 times as likely as non-TCKs to earn a bachelor's degree (81% vs 21%)
- 40% earn an advanced degree (as compared to 5% of the non-TCK population.)
- 27% were elected to the National Honor Society.
- 25% graduated university with honors.
- Education, medicine, business management, self-employment, and highly-skilled positions are the most common professions for TCKs.
- TCKs are unlikely to work for big business, government, or follow their parents' career choices. "One won't find many TCKs in large corporations. Nor are there many in government ... they have not followed in parental footsteps".





Enjoying the Journey I am from Belgium, where the clouds are usually soaked in rain, I am from Italy, where the clouds are always cleared by sunlight, I am from Poland, where the sky is as dark as coal, I am from Mozart, whose music charmed peoples' hearts and woke their souls, I am from my dreams and nightmares, where my imagination takes over, I am from Egypt, whose mysteries haunt peoples' minds, I am from the ocean, where the waves calm my thoughts, I am from the mountains, where the echo calls my name, Most of all, I am from my family, where my heart truly belongs.

"I am from...." by Hendrik Verrijssen

- Voice Collage / Floor Poem: Think about your new perspective and finish this statement: *"I am from ....., where ......."*
- Record on a strip of paper.
- Each participant will lay their strip on the floor. One by one, we will read our statement to create a voice collage and collective floor poem.
- Thank you for joining me this morning! Enjoy the rest of your IB Conference!<sup>©</sup>