

*The following is a presentation at the 2017 Families in Global Transition (FIGT) conference in Den Haag, NL. The power point alone makes almost no sense to someone who wasn't at the session, so I have written the presentation out and inserted slides with photos but not those that simply outlined points in the presentation. Presentation was to an interested general audience, not an academic research audience.*

**GLOBALLY MOBILE CHILDREN:  
ONE TRIBE OR MANY?  
CCK, Expat, Global Nomad, TCK, Immigrant,**

**Ann Baker Cottrell, Ph.D.  
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The theme of this year's conference is "Finding Your Tribe." This talk is about children with significant cross-cultural experiences, in particular those whose lives are cross-cultural because they have lived in more than one nation. Such children, or adults with such childhood experiences often seek a tribe of people with similar life experiences.

Who am I to speak on this topic? Let me introduce myself. I am imminently UNqualified to pontificate on childhood mobility, let alone international mobility. I had a single parental house from age six to 45, though I do share the experience of having lived abroad in four different countries, each for a year or two, as an adult. My main claim to fame here is that I studied under John and Ruth Hill Useem who created the concepts third culture and third culture kid (TCK), and I later did a large study of American Adult TCKs with them. My role and interests with respect to TCKs are primarily as a researcher.

**Ann - American – Non-mobile**



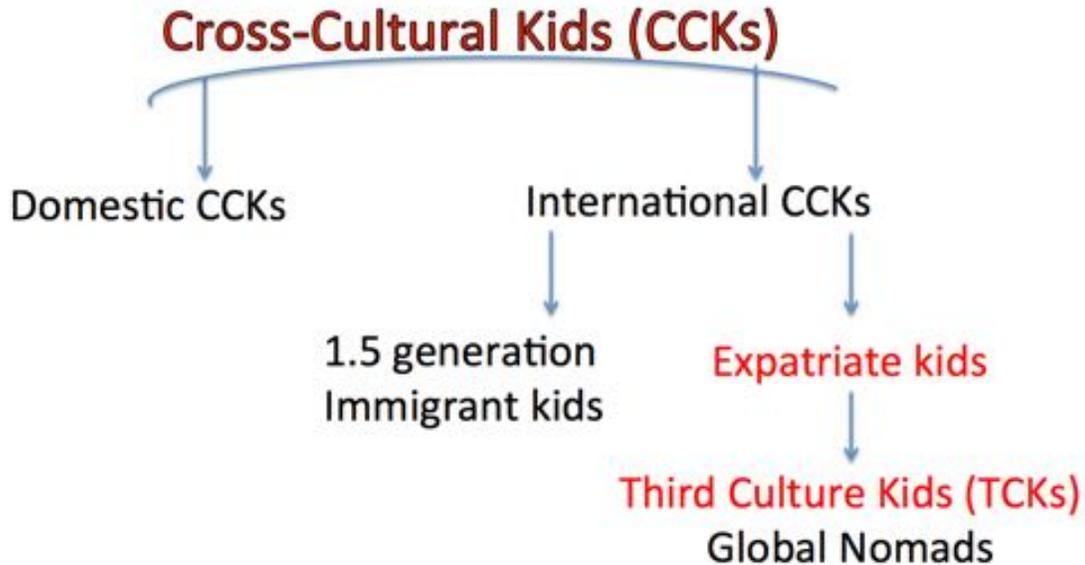
*Working with John & Ruth Hill Useem*



*Research in India*

Eons ago, when I started research on globally mobile populations, especially children, everything seemed clear; distinctions between kinds of global migration seemed obvious. Today, more and more people are moving around the world and in increasingly new and different ways. Terms I have been using have been adopted and used in new ways. The longer I've worked on this topic the muddier it seems to get. Which is why I so eagerly seek an understanding of terms for globally mobile children and why I encourage more research, especially comparative research.

The subtitle of this presentation lists a number of terms applied to children who have a significant cross-cultural dimension in their lives. This chart explains these terms and the relation between them. Terms in red are the ones I will use in the presentation.



**Cross-cultural kid (CCK)** is an inclusive umbrella term for anyone who has or has had a significant cross-cultural dimension in their childhood. Many thanks to Ruth van Reken for this term which permits us to recognize the overall similarities of diverse cross-cultural childhood experiences. CCK includes:

Domestic CCKs whose lives are cross-cultural without ever leaving their home country; for example, a British girl whose whole life has been in Bradford with an Indian father, a second generation Turkish-German, an African-American attending a predominantly white school. And it includes

International CCKs whose lives are cross-cultural because they have lived in more than one country as a child.

**International CCKs** broadly include:

Immigrant kids: I believe traditional immigration patterns are sufficiently different from expatriate patterns to keep them separate. As traditionally understood, immigrants make a permanent move from country, A, where they belong, to country B where they are expected to assimilate and belong. When talking about International CCKs, children who have lived a significant amount of time in more than one country, only 1.5 immigrant children are included. These are children who immigrate to a new country during childhood. Neither immigrant parents nor second generation immigrants are included.

Expatriate kids: children who live abroad with parents outside their home/passport country for any reason; They are outside of their country, ex-patria, but don't intend to settle. They expect to return to their home/passport country.

**Third Culture Kids & Global Nomads** are one type of expat kid. Their parents are abroad because of employment in another country. These terms have been used

interchangeably. I prefer TCK because it is more widely used, it is the original term for this population and, having worked with the Useems, it is the term I've always used.

## CHANGING PATTERNS OF EXPATRIATION

Today I will introduce a number of individuals whose childhood experiences illustrate different kinds of expatriation. These examples are organized historically to show:

- 1) How expatriation and expat lives have changed over the past two centuries.
- 2) Why the term TCK appeared when it did and what it means.
- 3) Why in the 21<sup>st</sup> century I am less clear about labels for globally mobile children than I was 40 years ago.

The historical overview is organized into three periods, showing the dominant expatriation patterns for each:

- Colonial era, focusing on mid 19c – mid 20c: 2 examples of traditional TCK parents:
  - Colonial administration
  - Mission
- Post WWII/Post Colonial period from 1950s: 5 examples of sponsored parents:
  - Diplomat
  - Military
  - Technical Assistance
  - Business
  - Other
- 21<sup>st</sup> century focusing on self-initiated expatriation: 5 examples of SIE parents:
  - Work: locally integrated & expat integrated
  - Study Abroad
  - Lifestyle Migration
  - Cross-national Marriage

### **Colonial Era: mid 19c to mid 20c.**

This is a period often depicted in well known stories, autobiographies, movies. The best known, and most dominant kinds of expatriate in this period were colonial administrators and missionaries. Two famous examples come to mind, Rudyard Kipling – Colonial administration, and Pearl Buck – missionary. The characteristics of this period were:

- Colonial administrators and missionaries were sent by their country or church to do the work of that country or church in other parts of the world. These expatriates typically moved from the North (shorthand for developed or rich countries) to the South (shorthand for less developed or poor countries)
- Relations between expats and “natives,” as they were called, were between ruler and ruled or between superiors and inferiors.
- Expats in this period typically made a career abroad. In many families expatriation was multi-generational.
- Because they were abroad for such a long time, usually in a single country, expatriates typically learned the language and culture, as did their children. Kipling's first language was Hindi and Buck's was Chinese.
- These two dominant expatriate communities did differ on children's schooling. Colonial parents, such as Kipling's, generally sent their children “home” for all or

certainly most of their schooling. Missionary children had more of their schooling abroad, often home schooling or boarding school; Buck's schooling was in China until she returned to the US for college.

Here are two contemporary examples of women whose expat experiences reflect these traditional patterns as both lived in Africa at the end of the colonial rule.

### **Rona - British - 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Colonial**

All four of Rona's grandparents were in the Indian civil service. Both her parents were born in India and, like Kipling, spent their school years in UK apart from parents. Her parents were in Africa from before her birth until she was an adult. They lived in Kenya, Malaya and Lesotho where her father worked in colonial administration including teaching. In contrast to her parents' generation most of her schooling was in Africa--



*boarding school in Kenya*



*an American husband*

home schooling, British day school and British boarding school. She did not visit the UK until she was sent "home" on her own for boarding high school. Carrying on the multi-generational theme, she and her American husband lived in Indonesia for two years on a technical assistance assignment. Characteristic of many TCKs hers is a cross-national marriage.

### **Ruth - American – 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Missionary**



*with childhood friends*



*off to boarding school*



Ruth's story from the late colonial period is quite similar to Rona's. She is from a multigenerational mission family. Her paternal grandparents were missionaries and are buried in Persia (Iran). Her father was homeschooled in Iran with high school in the US living with his mother. Ruth's parents were in Nigeria through her entire childhood

with two furlough years in the US, typical of missionary assignments. She was sent “home” for high school, living with her grandmother. Also continuing the multi-generational expat family tradition, Ruth and her husband returned to Africa as missionaries where they raised their own TCK-MKs.

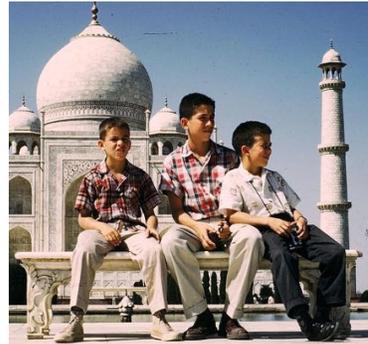
### **Post Colonial /Post WWII Era - 1950s on**

With the end of colonial rule and a world war came a global rethinking of relations between the nations of the North and South. This was a time of idealism about modernization and development in the Third World. Expat populations changed and relations between expats and locals took a significant shift.

- Expatriates were still mainly sent abroad by sponsors as assigned expats (AEs)
- Expatriation was still mainly from the North to work in the South
- Relations between expatriates and host nationals changed as they worked together to achieve the shared goal of development. Relations were cooperative and egalitarian, in principle at least.
- Expatriate work assignments changed compared to the earlier period; assignments were shorter and, more likely in several countries, thus expatriates were less likely to learn the language and culture as well
- Children were more likely to stay abroad with their families until high school graduation or the family’s return to their passport county.

Into this new and evolving system of international relations dropped American sociologists John and Ruth Hill Useem, with three young boys in tow, trying to understand this new evolving global system and how it works.

### **Useem Family - American – Academic**



*Family home in E. Lansing, Michigan, lived in India 1952 & 1958*

The Useems studied American men working in India (95% were sponsored) to learn how representative Americans worked with their Indian counterparts in the post-colonial environment. They realized that American expats and the Indians with whom they worked created ways of working across and between cultures; that they created their own culture for this in-between space. As a temporary shorthand label they called it the third culture, but before they could come up with something better it got out, caught on and there was no going back.

Ruth was an equal research partner with her husband, but as a feminist, and an expat wife and mother, she took special interest in the other accompanying wives and children. She

called these children, who were being raised in the third cultures created by their parents, third culture kids or TCKs, and she asked what this life meant to the children. This was a radical new idea. Up until the 1960s what was known of expat children was through autobiographies, biographies and novels. There was very little research; all the early research I am aware of is on missionary kids (MKs). Ruth recognized that this was a new kind of “tribe” and gave them a name Third Culture Kids. She recognized that regardless of nationality, sponsor or where they lived they shared:



*Ruth Hill Useem*

- the experience of living outside their “home” country not expected to assimilate or really become part of the host nation because they would repatriating
- a culture which is not based in geography or existing groups such as a nation or religion. (this was hard for others to accept as culture as been understood as based in nation, religion etc)

Through the many Ph. D. dissertations she supervised on the topic of “Third Culture Experienced Youth” she identified many of the TCK characteristics recognized today.

As was pointed out, most expats in the post colonial/WWII period were sponsored, sent abroad by government, church, business etc. In other words the parents were abroad as representatives of the sponsoring organization. However, the distribution of sponsored expats changed greatly from the earlier period. There were no more formal colonial rulers and missionaries were a much smaller percent of expats than previously, not so much because there were fewer missionaries as that the number of expats in other sponsor categories increased so dramatically. Two categories of expatriates that were fairly new and in large numbers at this time were technical aid workers and representatives of international governmental and non-governmental organizations.

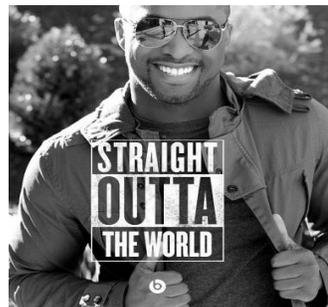
Let’s look at examples of TCKs abroad with sponsored parents, characteristic of this period. There were of course missionaries, but we have seen a missionary example, though missionaries in the post colonial/post war period were increasingly on shorter overseas assignments.

### **Tayo – Nigerian – Diplomat**

Tayo is the son of a Nigerian diplomat. By high school graduation he had lived half of his life outside Nigeria; six locations in four countries, five if you count his parents’ move immediately after his graduation. His schooling was Nigerian or American International. Tayo is an important example because he reminds us that TCKs not



*Tayo, left, at International School of Ouagadougou*



only go everywhere in the world but they are **from** everywhere, and TCKs from non-Western countries are seriously underrepresented in TCK research.

### **Donna – American – Military**



*Performing at Taegu American School*

An American military “Brat,” Donna reflects the high mobility of this sponsor group, though most military moves are domestic. Donna’s family had moved 13 time by her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. She lived in Germany and Korea for five years in middle school and high school. She attended US public schools and American Department of Defense schools abroad

### **Anna-Maria – American-Swedish – Business**



*with Peruvian “cousin”*

Anna-Maria’s American father was sent abroad to do the work of a Dutch Dairy. She had a highly mobile childhood living three-quarters of her childhood abroad. By age 18 the family had lived in 13 locations in five countries, six including the move right after high school graduation. Aside from pre-school in Peru her education was in US public schools and American international schools. She is another example showing that cross-national marriages are quite common in this community; her parents’ marriage and her own are both cross-national.

### **Kathleen – American – Technical Assistance**

As mentioned above, work for technical assistance programs such as the US AID program or World Bank represented the biggest growth category of sponsored expatriates. While many made careers in international technical assistance, many others, like Kathleen’s father, had a single overseas assignment. In her highly mobile childhood but just one posting abroad, Kathleen’s childhood mobility is more like the military. In contrast to the military, however, she was more deeply connected to the host culture. The family lived in Mexico City and Guadalajara when she was 9-13. While they lived in an expat community, she attended Mexican schools in Spanish and had close Mexican



*Outing with her Mexican "family"*



friends. Her greater local integration stemmed from the fact that in preschool she was taken daily from Texas to a Mexican school across the border and spent days with a Mexican family. Because of this experience she came to think of herself as a “Borderlander” before she heard the term TCK. While her marriage is not cross-national it is interfaith, again quite common among the internationally mobile

### **Lance – American – Other (academic)**

In our research on Adult American TCKs the Useems and I identified five sponsor categories: Government, Mission, Business, Military and Other. Other included parents sent abroad by international government agencies (e.g. UN) and non-governmental agencies (e.g. Red Cross), media, universities among others.

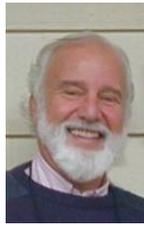


Some of these sponsored expats spent their entire careers abroad and others had one or two short periods abroad. Lance, the son of academics on sabbaticals, lived in England in first grade where he went to a village school and 8<sup>th</sup> grade in Italy where he went to an international school. The family had no contact with other Americans in either place. He is included because he fits the technical TCK definition and because, like the Useem boys and many other academic children, he had no other geographic mobility.

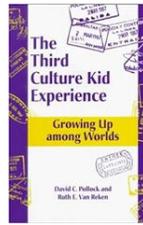
What do we learn from these seven examples of sponsored TCKs abroad from the 1940s to 1980s (including Ruth and Rona)? All fit the traditional definition of TCKs – abroad for at least a year before age 18 with a parent who was an Assigned Expatriate (AE). All lived abroad when there was no language to help them make sense of their lives. Terms such as Brat and MK (Missionary Kid) existed but were factual descriptions rather than labels that explained their unusual childhood experiences.

Five of them, Ruth, Tayo, Donna, Anna-Maria and Kathleen also fit the profile of TCKs widely presented in TCK literature. These five felt deeply affected by their international childhoods and sought a way to make sense of their seemingly crazy childhood life, so different and unexplained that most felt something was wrong with them. Perhaps not realizing it, they were seeking an identity and tribe to make sense of their lives and to connect them with others who shared what, for the tribe, is a perfectly normal lifestyle.

## Making “aha” Moments



*Dave Pollock*



*Ruth van Reken*

During this period, in the 1970s, David Pollock learned of the TCK concept and began his work of spreading the word to TCKs about who they are. He brought the term out of the libraries and into the public. Building on the term and his experience with many TCKs, he created the TCK profile to help this population make sense of who they are. Later, he and Ruth Van Reken expanded the profile into *Third Culture Kids: Growing up among Worlds*, known to many as the TCK bible.

All five of the searchers mentioned above, plus two from the next group, subsequently learned of the label TCK. They all remember when and how, as adults, they had an epiphany on hearing the term, an “aha” moment that gave them insight they sought, identity, a sense of belonging to a tribe, a cultural home.

## Epiphanies



*1st time realized I'm not alone It changed my life*



*Finally I had found a home*



*It was like discovering long lost family members*



*Finally I had people. I knew where I was from*



*Finally [it made my] identity whole I was a TCK & lots of others like me*



*Wonderful to have an identity, to know I was not a freak*



*Realized I'm not a weird failure who would never belong*

Notice how similar their words are: “finally” “first time” “fit” “others like me” “not alone” “have a home/family/people” “have an identity” “not a freak” “not a weird failure,” the kinds of feelings described in TCK writing. TCK has become a

fundamental part of the adult identity for these seven. They have gone a bit further than many in that they have all built a career or devoted a significant part of their adult lives to sharing that understanding through work, volunteer activities, writing, films.

What about the other two, what is it about my family—my son, the American academic, and my sister-in-law, the British colonial? Both fit the definition of a TCK but neither fits the Pollock and Van Reken profile that includes feeling rootless, weird, dislocated etc. Neither feels at odds with external labels such as nationality. Neither, therefore, feels the need for a new tribe or identity. I can, and do, theorize about why but that is a whole other discussion or even research project.

### **21<sup>st</sup> century: Self-Initiated Expatriation**

All of the above sponsor categories continue, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, sending expatriates to work outside their passport countries. But increasingly these sponsors have reduced the number of employees they assign or send abroad and are hiring more locals and expats on individual contracts. In addition, many others move abroad on their own, for a variety of reasons, so that Self Initiated Expatriation (SIE) has increased to the point it may be the dominant pattern characterizing the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This section introduces six individuals whose parents were abroad as SIEs. Although all these kinds of expatriation have existed in the past (and one of our examples was a child in the post colonial/post war period), they are introduced here because, as mentioned, SIE is thought to be the predominant 21<sup>st</sup> century pattern. Six is a lot of stories to follow so here is a map for the following presentation.

- 1) SIEs who would be included in current TCK research. Many researchers define TCKs as those abroad with their parents because of employment choices, whether they were AE or SIE. Within this section two patterns are identified: those who were locally integrated and those who were expat integrated. There are of course many variations between.
- 2) A category of SIE which has not been included in TCK research, the international student, most typically graduate students. These might be included as TCK parents under the current understanding because graduate study is career related, but they have not been.
- 3) Three kinds of childhood international experience which have not been considered in TCK research because the parents' reason for being SIEs is not for employment. These examples are lifestyle migrants, family migrants and repatriating immigrants. Certainly there are other patterns but these are likely to be fairly common reasons for children to have an expat childhood experience.

### **Gene – American – locally embedded SIE**



Gene, the same generation as the previous examples, is included here because he illustrates a TCK abroad with an SIE parent. His father was self-employed or worked for host country companies. And following the cross-national marriage theme, his parents too were such a couple. He differs from the other TCKs we have met

because for most of his childhood in Puerto Rico, Venezuela and Cuba (boarding school) he was embedded in the local culture and community. He had no association with other expats until at 16 he was sent to the American school in Caracas. While living like a local, he was not like an immigrant because his patriotic American dad insisted he would return to the US after high school, which he did. Completely lacking a label or vocabulary for his experience and not even having the immigrant's understanding that "we have moved and this is my future," he says "I lived in a fog, absolute confusion, no sense of identity or belonging anywhere." Though his lifestyle was different from the expats we met earlier, his concerns were the same, as was his relief at discovering he belongs to a tribe called TCK. (He is included in the "epiphanies" above.) This TCK experience is largely overlooked in TCK research.

### **Else & Mette – American –Expat Embedded SIE**

Although they may be abroad on an individual contract rather than having been assigned by a sponsoring organization, many SIEs lives are embedded in the local expat community. Else and Mette (children in the photo) moved abroad at ages two and four



because their parents were hired by the International School established largely to serve the international work force at the Lego headquarters in Denmark. In contrast to an AE, no sponsor determines when and where they are likely to move, but they expect they will repatriate eventually. Attending an international school and having many expat neighbors one

might wonder if their experience feels different to them than that of an AE or sponsored TCK. This is another area crying out for comparative research.

The next four examples have not been considered part of the TCK tribe because their childhood international experiences were not based in a parent's expatriation for employment.

### **Ok Kyung (Heidi) – S. Korean – Graduate Student**

Heidi lived in the Philippines in fifth grade and again in high school when her father was studying for an MA and then a PhD. While this isn't overseas employment in the traditional sense, it is certainly career related. Her overseas experience was both like and



*L in 5<sup>th</sup> grade Christmas Pageant*



*With husband & son*

not like the other TCK examples. Her schooling abroad was in foreign languages, English and Tagalog. As with most of the other we have met, Heidi has struggled with questions of who she is and where she belongs. (She is also in the "epiphanies" above)

In contrast to the others, however, learning of the term TCK, with which she now identifies, left her feeling especially isolated because she felt that she was not really a TCK and thus without any tribe.

The three final examples of globally mobile children have not been included in TCK research because their parents were abroad primarily for reasons other than employment.

As they identify with the term the question arises, should any or all of them be included in the TCK label?

### **Antonio – Italian – Lifestyle Migrant**

Lifestyle migrants are a familiar category, but they are not generally imagined as accompanied by children, e.g. retirees who move south and cheap. Antonio's parents are among a growing number who live abroad with children as a lifestyle, rather than an occupational, choice. They are generally rejecting life in the home country, typically "the north" seeking less pressure, less materialism typically in "the south." Some wander individually seeing new experiences while others, such as Antonio's parents, become part of a lifestyle expatriate community often based in one location. From birth to age 18



Antonio spent ten months in Goa and two in Italy. His education was home schooling, small expat-run schools and exams for the Italian school system by mail. Based on a single study of lifestyle migrants in Goa, it appears that the lives of these children differs in some ways from that of the stereotype

sponsored TCKs. Rather than moving abroad for a year or more at a time, they typically spend part of the year abroad and part in a parental country, sometimes for an entire childhood. Work and schooling tend to be more informal and lifestyle simpler. Like many expats, however, they live with other expats and do not associate socially with locals. The children in this study are still young so it is hard to say if they will identify with TCK or a similar label.

### **Katia – Russian/English – Cross National Marriage**

Children whose parents are abroad temporarily for family rather than occupational reasons are another category of children whose lives may include a number of different countries but are not considered TCKs because expatriation is not work related; cross national marriages are one example. I do not consider cross-national marriage itself a reason to consider the children TCKs; CCKs certainly but not TCKs. Then I met Katia who has definitely had an internationally mobile childhood. Born in Russia to Russian parents, she moved to the UK with her Russian mother and adoptive English dad. They moved back to Russia then back to UK where she was in a boarding school while her English dad moved to South Africa and her Russian mother moved to Spain with a new partner. Is it any wonder that someone with a history like this also looks for a way to understand belonging and identity and finds the term TCK resonates?



*In father's Russia  
Military Hat*



### **Dianne & Carljoe – Filipinos – Repatriated Immigrants**

Immigration now has so many variations that it is unlikely we can assume all immigrants fit the traditional definition of a single and permanent move. Immigrant children, in the traditional meaning (the 1.5 generation accompanying parents on a permanent move), are excluded from the expat/TCK category because they have, it is believed, a different experience based on different future expectations.



What about new variations of immigration, such as when a family becomes permanent in the new country and then cycles between the two over time, or, as with these Filipinos, immigrates to a new country then decides to repatriate? Both



Dianne and Carljoe emigrated permanently with their families to the US where they went to school and then for various reasons repatriated when they were in high school. I have no way of knowing how this would affect identity, world view etc; again this presents a need for comparative research.

### IN REVIEW

I hope you weren't counting on an expert exposition on whether the terms in the title are interchangeable or reflect different experiences and different populations, a decision on whether these examples and others like them are one tribe or many. I need to know history before moving ahead, so you are getting some history and a lot of questions. As you have seen, expatriate patterns and experiences have changed over the last two centuries and at the same time much hasn't changed for those who experience globally mobile childhoods. In particular, with the major shift in the 1950s so many more children are living outside their passport countries, among nations, but not permanently settling. The time is ripe to identify, label and understand this variety of experiences.

Where a vacuum exists to identify, label and explain something new people will fill it with words. One researcher has identified 50 terms to describe expat children. Here are some of them with a few I have added, including terms from Japan, Korea and the Philippines.

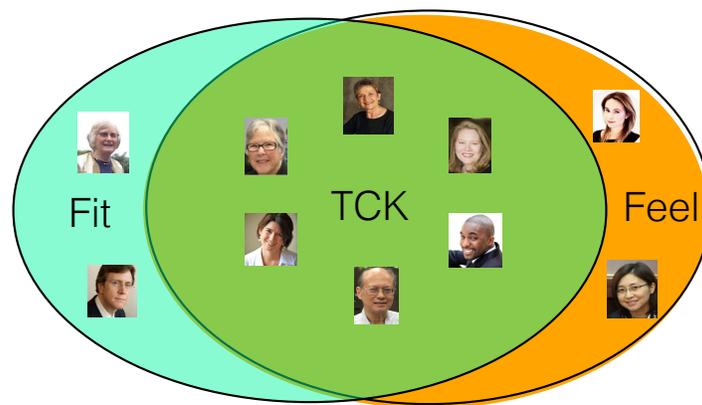
- Hidden Immigrant
- Cultural Hybrid
- Intercultural Kid
- Cultural bridge
- Serial Migrant
- Nomadic Child
- Global Soul
- Global Nomad
- Multicultural
- TCK
- BIBIMBAP
- Global Citizen
- Cross-Cultural Kid
- Composite self
- TRANSNATIONAL CHILD
- BALIKBAYAN kids
- Expatriate
- sojourner
- Privileged migrant
- KIKOKUSHIJO
- INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN
- Serial Migrant
- Drei culturen
- Borderlander
- Hybrid child
- CULTURAL NOMAD
- Impermanent Resident

## WHO IS A TCK?

One thing we've noticed in this presentation, and have known all along, is that there are two ways of thinking about who is a TCK. I call these the fit and feel definitions.

1) Who fits the label TCK? This depends, of course, on how we define the term. We ask and study what it means to be included as a member of this defined tribe. This is the Useem/Academic focus; that is my approach.

2) Who feels like a TCK, identifies with the label? Many, but not all, in this category fit the current definition of a TCK. This is more likely a concern of social psychologists, counselors and others who work with globally mobile children. It is the focus of the Pollock-Van Reken TCK profile.



Most TCKs I think, at least based on existing research, are TCKs in both senses, they fit and feel the TCK label. But, as we have seen, there are some who fit the definition but do not identify with the term; feel it does not fit them such as Rona and Lance. And there are many who feel the term fits them and self identify as TCKs who don't technically fit the category as currently defined, such as Heidi, Katia and the many immigrants who have come up to me after presentations on TCKs saying "you're telling my story."

### **The contemporary understanding of TCK**

Let's review how TCK has been defined and used before thinking about if/how it might be changed to accommodate new realities and understanding of living internationally as a child.

- Useem's original understanding: Children whose parents are working abroad in representational roles, i.e. they are sponsored or assigned expatriates.
- The most common definition: Children whose parents are abroad primarily because of work, sponsored or not.
- Less commonly used: anyone who has lived in more than one country as a child regardless of the reason.
- Pollock's original definition: Those who have spent significant number of developmental years outside their parents' culture (whether or not they have lived outside their home country).

All these definitions can be found in writing on TCKs. Further complicating the picture, as I read about TCKs and talk with individuals who know and use the term I come across comments suggesting that TCK be redefined -- either more narrowly or more broadly. Given this lack of consensus, I did a small (N=150) survey of individuals familiar with the term to see how they understand it. Two-thirds of the respondents are adult TCKs (ATCKS); others are parents of TCKs, Third culture/expatriate adults, people who work with TCKs and people who research or write about TCKs. Many, unsurprisingly, fit more than one category.

Restrict the TCK definition. I hear that it would make sense to restrict the definition of TCK to those who have been abroad only after a certain age, e.g. four, or for a minimum amount of time, e.g. three years, or even that they should have lived in at least three different countries. Maybe the thinking is that this would reduce the number who fit the definition but don't relate to the term or the profile. Given how differently people respond to similar situations I don't think that would make much of a difference. I'm sure we have all heard "I feel this way but you should talk to my brother who had the same experience but an entirely different response." The respondents to my survey did not show great support for restricting the TCK definition.

Broaden the definition. I also hear calls for broadening the definition, perhaps to reduce the number who are in the feel but don't fit category. Survey respondents tended to be in this camp. Over half said to be a TCK it doesn't matter why parents are abroad (what kind of work, or not for work), and it doesn't matter if the move to another country is temporary (expat) or permanent (1.5 generation immigrant). One other expansion they supported has to do with parents' economic status and that is interesting because it is NOT an expansion I have heard mentioned. I included that because TCK research has been exclusively, as far as I know, on privileged migrants, typically high status, well educated. But some domestics and laborers take family with them when abroad on temporary assignments. Should these children be considered TCKs even though theirs is quite a different socioeconomic status and life style? Over half the respondents agreed status is not a consideration in whether one is a TCK or not. They do draw the line, however on including those whose cross-cultural experience is only domestic; a TCK must have lived in more than one country at a minimum according to these respondents. Perhaps they are suggesting that TCK is a kind of umbrella term with variations identified, e.g. sponsored TCK, SIE TCK, Lifestyle TCK.

## LOOKING AHEAD

Let me end with where I would like to see us go, at least in the near term. This reflects my interest as a researcher rather than one who lives the life or one who works with globally mobile populations. I would like to see a great deal more comparative research to help us understand how these variations are similar and how they are different. I want to better understand the TCK tribe in all its variations including those who have not yet been included. I will leave the future redefining to others; I am not a gatekeeper with the power to define who is and who is not a TCK.

For the moment, I will continue to define TCKs as those who have lived in more than one country as children because of a parent's employment and then hope for research to help us decide how to expand the umbrella if that is how people want to go. I came up with at

least five pages of comparative research topics I'd love to see pursued, so here are just a few examples that would help us better understand variations among those who fit the current definition and secondly comparative research to better understand how others who had internationally mobile childhoods and may feel like TCKs but don't fit the current definition are like or different from those who fit.

Variations among TCK populations –those who fit

- AE/sponsored vs. SIE parents
- Locally vs. expat embedded while abroad. Locally embedded are harder to locate; so many or most samples are based on sponsor or international school networks. We need to try to locate those expat children who are not part of an expat community.
- Explicitly compare TCKs by number of moves, length of time abroad, ages abroad.
- National origin. There is a slowly growing body of research on TCKs who are not from the US, which is useful, but little is explicitly comparative.
  - We especially need to compare TCKs from countries of “the south” with countries of “the north” or Western vs. non-Western countries. Literature on Japanese TCKs reveals both similarities and differences, but we need to move beyond Japan as well.
  - We need to compare those whose primary language is English with those who speak other languages, especially languages which rarely if ever provide home language schools abroad. Are these TCKs, because of schooling in a foreign language, somewhat like immigrants? And what does having mastered English in an international school mean for home country reentry?

Compare TCKs to those with other kinds of international childhood (those who feel but don't fit current definition.)

- 1.5 generation immigrants
- Family expatriation
- Lifestyle migrants
- Refugees, stateless

THE END

Enough already. I would love feedback, agreeing or disagreeing with explanations and additional thoughts about new directions especially for TCK research.

Please let me know: [acottrell@mail.sdsu.edu](mailto:acottrell@mail.sdsu.edu).

Thanks!