

Cross-Cultural Symposium

Ideas for the Future

'Growing up Cross-Culturally – Broadening Horizons for Research'

Butler University, Indianapolis, USA October 13-14, 2011

www.crossculturalkid.org/sympo/

Conference directors: Fran Colley fran.colley@comcast.net

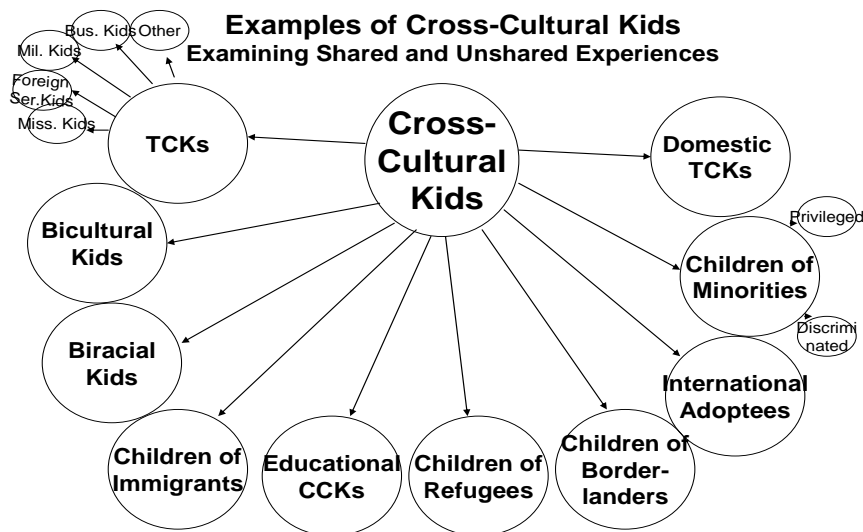
Ruth Van Reken RDvanreken@aol.com www.crossculturalkid.org

The goal:

The goal of the symposium was to encourage research focusing on the concept of cross-cultural children and young people in the context of multiple academic disciplines and fields of study such as sociology, psychology, anthropology, education, intercultural studies, ethnicity, diversity, race, refugees, immigrants and minorities.

The core model:

The essence of the cross-cultural concept is explained in Ruth Van Reken's model:¹



Defining Cross-Cultural Kid (CCK)

- A *Cross-Cultural Kid (CCK)* is a person who is living in—or meaningfully interacting with—two or more cultural environments for a significant period of time during developmental years of childhood.
- An *Adult Cross-Cultural Kid (ACCK)* is one who grew up as a CCK.
 - Ruth E. Van Reken, co-author, *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds (rev)*

This group includes (but not exclusively):

- *Traditional TCKs*—Children who move into another culture with parents due to a parent’s career choice
- *Children of Bi/multi-cultural home*—Children born to parents from at least two cultures. May or may not be bi-racial
- *Children of Bi/multi-racial homes*—Children born to parents from at least two races.
- *Children of immigrants*—Children whose parents have made a permanent move to a new country where they were not originally citizens
- *“Educational CCKs”*—Children who may remain in their home or passport country but are sent to a school (e.g. an international school) with a different cultural base and student mix than the traditional home culture or its schools
- *Children of refugees*—Children whose parents are living outside their original country or place due to unchosen circumstances such as war, violence, famine, other natural disasters
- *Children of borderlanders*—Children who cross national borders on regular basis
- *International adoptees*—Children adopted by parents from another country other than the one of that child’s birth (*Interracial adoptees* – those adopted by parents of a different race – might be another circle)
- *Children of minorities*—Children whose parents are from a racial or ethnic group which is not part of the majority race or ethnicity of the country in which they live.
- *“Domestic” TCKs*—Children whose parents have moved in or among various subcultures within that child’s home country.
 - *Special note:* Children are often in more than one of these circles at the same time. (e.g. A traditional TCK who is also from a minority group; a child of immigrants whose parents are from two different cultures, etc.) President Obama is from seven groups: Traditional TCK, bicultural, biracial, child of immigrant, educational CCK (he went to local school in Indonesia for 4 years, seen as “child of minority,” and domestic TCK. Brice Royer, founder of TCKid.com has a Cambodian/French father, Ethiopian mother, moved to 10 countries before he was 18 due to his father’s work as a UN peacekeeper. Such examples help us understand the growing complexity of many being raised in today’s “new normal.”

@2002 Ruth E. Van Reken

Day One – Looking at the present:

Assessing where we are and where we may still need to go in our understanding of those who grow up cross-culturally

Through the model above, watching Rahul Gandotra’s file, *The Road Home*©, the story of the British Indian child, Pico, sent back to boarding school in India at the age of ten, and hearing the stories of our young people who had all grown up in one or more of the types of experiences listed above, we looked at:

- Common themes shared by cross-cultural kids
- Whether this new type of culturally complex childhoods means we do or don’t need to re-think current models of cultural identity and diversity.
 - If so, what are some areas we might need to research in order to do that?
- The impact of such cultural complexity on one tri-national/tri-cultural family
- Areas of research already begun

The following notes are based on comments recorded by participants on flip charts during the final hour of Thursday’s symposium

Day 1: Feedback

Some common themes emerging from the discussion

- Questions of Belonging and Place
- Role of language
- Lack of parents as cultural navigators
- Community/Family Support Systems
- Looking beyond visible diversity (example: considering emotional intelligence)
- Social support systems
- Art as a form of expression of identity and culture (discovery and communication)
- Need for “permission” to not fit into one box or choose only one box (such as those found on administrative forms)
- Cross-cultural young people in relation to dominant culture – reality of “hidden immigrant” experience, also known as “hidden diversity”

CCKs’ Cultural Identity in Relationship to Surrounding Dominant Culture²

Foreigner	Hidden Immigrant
Look Different Think Different	Look Alike Think Different
Adopted	Mirror
Look Different Think Alike	Look Alike Think Alike

PolVan Cultural Identity Model @1996

Potential Areas for New Research

- Learning from other areas of research (exploring applications of psychological, sociological, and anthropological research to the cross-cultural topic)
- Research that compares different subgroups within cross-cultural kids and young people
- Ericsson’s model of child development and other theories such as Edwin Nichol’s model and their cross cultural applications
- Pathological behaviors (such as sexual promiscuity) as a response to a need for belonging
- Role of same-age mentors in the cross-cultural experience
- Legal Documentation and its role in identity and feelings of validity
 - Illegal immigration
 - Loss of visa status in a country considered home as a child
 - Refugees without birth certificates, etc

- How non-cross cultural kids related to cross-cultural kids (CCKs) and specifically third culture kids (TCKs)
- Role of language in transition, adjustment and belonging
- Can we define identity without “place”?
- Why do we need the topic of cross-cultural kids, young people, adults?
 - Balance of unique identity and community belonging
- Role of language in identity and/or personality
- Do current models of developmental milestones fit cross-cultural kids?
- Bilingualism/multilingualism and their importance in identity, development and so on
- What is generally ‘human’ (common to all) and what is specifically linked to the cross-cultural development experience?
- What is/is there a basic issue behind the common themes expressed?
- There is a strong need for a common vocabulary defined within academic community and among practitioners to discuss this growing cultural complexity.
 - Is CCK model above a good beginning? Need changing?
 - Is there better language that doesn’t already have an easily preconceived meaning (e.g. “multicultural”)? If so, what? Etc.
- How does identity form when mirror reflecting back that identity may be frequently changing as children move from one cultural world to another and back on a regular basis?
- What are other factors to add to the PolVan model above to better reflect the growing cultural complexities of today’s world (such as “sound alike”, “sound different”)?

Day 2: Next Steps

Developing research and directions across multiple disciplines

After an excellent keynote address by Gary Weaver, Ph.D, founder and director of Intercultural Management Institute at American University, Washington, DC on how the principles of his cultural iceberg relate to the topics we had been discussing the day before, and panelists who gave their vision for other ways to approach these changes in our globalizing world, our concluding session used ‘interest alike’ groups to consider the following questions:

1. What are some areas of research emerging in different disciplines?
2. What approach can each discipline take to better understand and/or support cross-cultural kids and young people?

The following notes are based on comments recorded by participants on flip charts during the final session of Friday's symposium.

Education and Psychology – some topics for new or further research

- Research (fact-gathering) – what is happening in the school to meet the psychological needs of cross-cultural kids and young people?
- Research: Why do some kids struggle and others succeed?
- What education options are available for cross-cultural kids and young people and is the information easily accessible for those who need it?
- What is available for special education?
 - Those that are extremely gifted and need to be further challenged
 - Those that need extra support due to learning or behavioral challenges abused in cross-cultural environments?
- What is the role of a caregiver in the education and emotional development of a child?
- How does the developmental process of a person who moves cross-culturally for the first time as an adult and lives in another culture for an extended period compare to the common characteristics attributed to those who make a similar move during childhood?
 - Comparing the TCK Profile developed by David C. Pollock with the adult experience could be a significant research project

History and Sociology – some topics for new or further research

- Methods to get below the surface and explore “hidden diversity”
 - Service Learning courses – study the self-reflective practices they include
 - In-depth interviews – Go to deeper levels
 - Collaborative research – cross-cultural collaborations to encourage reflection on the research process itself
- Topics for community building
 - Gardening projects – comforting way to start with the concrete and then go to abstract
 - Cross-generational story telling – Elders’ stories being passed on to children and then children also sharing their stories with their elders
 - Exploring tools used in specific cultures that may be applied to the cross-cultural context

Psycho/Socio Linguistics – some topics for new or further research

- Role of language in family dynamics
 - Changes in how the nuclear family operates and interacts when some members have stronger language skills than others
 - Relationships with grandparents, cousins, etc where there may not be a shared first language
- Language and Power
 - Children usurping parents when functioning as interpreters –dealing with adult issues
 - Those who speak dominant language limiting knowledge access of those who don’t
- Emotion and Language
 - Memory triggered by a particular language or specific phrases in that language

- Emotions associated with speaking or hearing a particular language
- Strength of words (swearing, shame or praise) in first language, versus second or third languages.
- Lack of family support through lack of shared language
 - International adoptees or unaccompanied refugees that don't speak parents' language and parents don't speak child's language
 - Children of Immigrants with greater comfort in the dominant language and are reluctant to attempt complex cognitive and emotional expression in parents' first language
 - Children raised by caregiver or parent teaching a language to them that one or both parents doesn't understand
- Bilingual/Multilingual language acquisition
- Alienation related to "imperfect" language use
 - Mistakes by a competent speaker that do not affect understanding still being pointed out making the speaker feel an outsider
 - Speaker's serious intent devalued and lost in amusement over speech error
 - Assessing intelligence or lack thereof based on use of dominant language
 - Loss of social status or social identity due to transition between languages
 - Rejection by parent's culture (extended family or interactions in society)
- Language acquisition outside of cultural context
 - Learner unaware of stereotypes associated with dialect taught by parents or language teachers
 - Parents teach their L1 to children, but due to many years outside L1 country, parents are unaware of linguistic developments over the last decades, causing their children to sound "old"
- Class markers in cross-cultural/international context
 - American, British or Australian English in international community
 - Standard or Non-standard variants of language (the accepted dialect in one culture may be looked down upon or thought to be arrogant by the other culture)
 - Connection between accent and perceived identity, trustworthiness or intelligence
 - Is there an English dialect only found in the international community?
- Connecting to "home culture" or parent's culture through language
- Deaf or Non-communicative cross-cultural kids or young people
- Triggers for and prevalence of code-switching among bilinguals and multilinguals
 - Are personality, identity and/or experience factors?
 - Verbal versus Non-verbal
 - Frequency and view of occurrence depending on type of CCK environment
 - How often is code-switching incorrectly triggered and why? (speaking to someone in a language they don't understand)
- Language use as protest
 - Refusing to learn a language
 - Insisting on using a language
 - Adopting an outside dialect as a form of being a "screamer"

Supporting cross-cultural kids and young people

- 5 Step Process – many get stuck
 - Help move them through to understanding and integration
 - It is a continual process within the maturation of the TCK – we need follow-through.
- Flipping the Cultural Iceberg
 - Building on similarities – focusing on “likeness” first
 - Possibly how TCKs/CCKs can “go deep” quickly
- Practical Help for the kids
 - Don’t assume they know how things work
 - Expect to have to advocate for them within systems they are not accustomed to.
 - Coach them on slow self revelation so as not to come across as arrogant or self-centered
 - Give it time
- Recognize the biggest disconnect is relationships

Adults who were raised cross-culturally – Therapy and Support

- Develop regional groups that bring together adult CCKs of various backgrounds
 - Helps to “normalize” the experience
 - Helps them recognize the many gifts of such an experience so they can more intentionally use those gifts (e.g. language, relative ease of relating cross-culturally, being potential cultural bridges, adaptability, etc.)
- They tend to settle in larger cities where there is more diversity and access to other cultures
- www.internationaltherapistdirectory.com – resource created by Josh Sandoz
- Publish books, articles, etc
- Present on adult CCKs to professional organizations, training schools, etc
- Create virtual communities
- Get the word out

Media – Creativity and the Arts

- Communicate ‘community’ to cross-cultural and non-cross-cultural young people:
 - Phone apps – short, interactive video game that allows people to experience elements of third culture and other cross-cultural experiences to better understand them and/or interest them.
 - Create Videos and distribute through YouTube (some are already there)
 - Chat
 - Art
 - Audio Interviews

¹ David C. Pollock and Ruth E. Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds, (rev.)*, (London/Boston: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 1999, 2001, rev. 2009), p. 31

² Ibid. p. 55