

How Global Mobility Affects Adults and Children: Insights for Parents and Other Diplomats



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Talking Points

- ❖ What happens in transition.
- ❖ Challenges facing you as parents raising children across cultures.
- ❖ Strategies for parenting globally mobile children.

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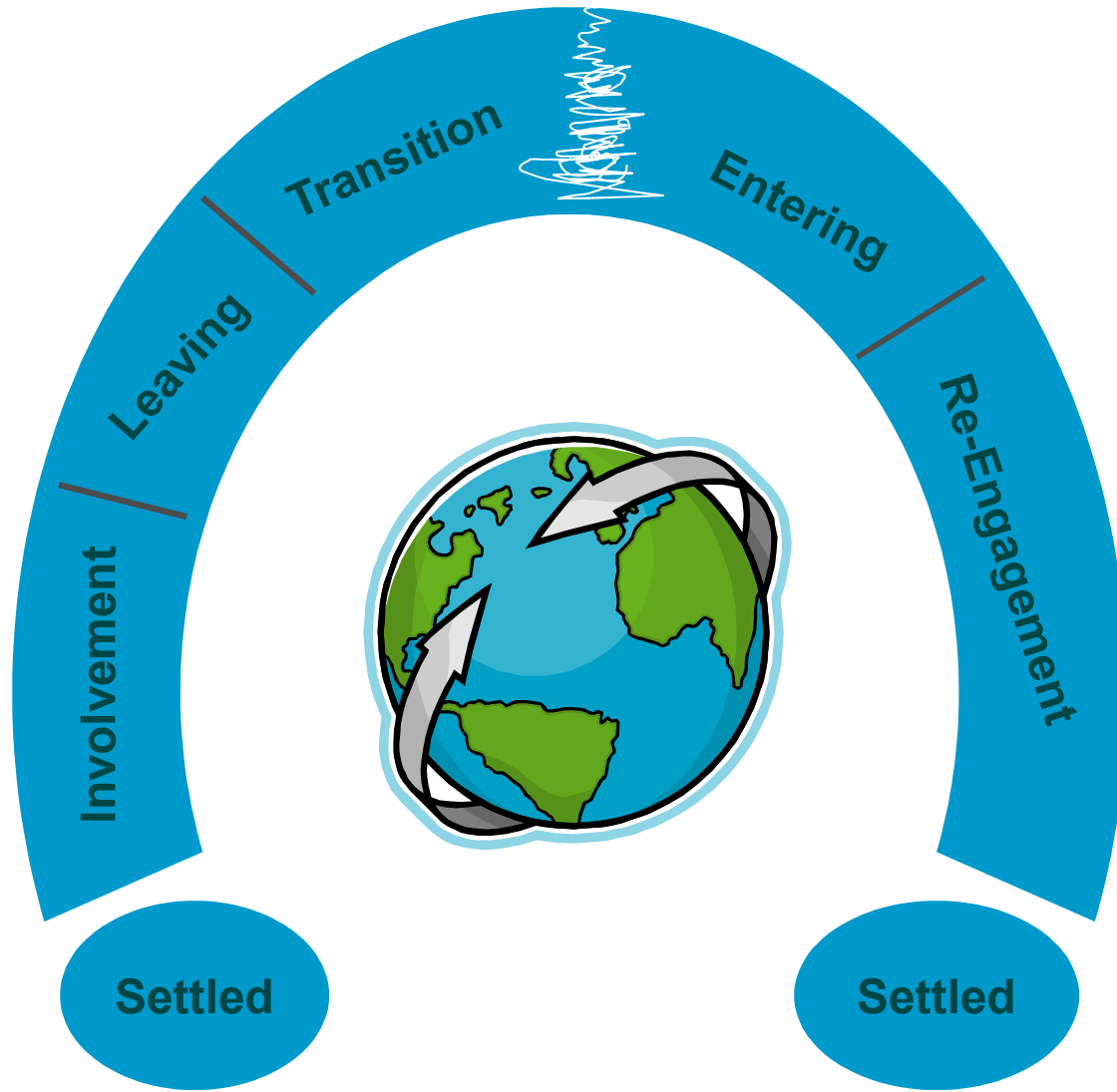
Transitions

“Transitions can be keenly anticipated or feared. They can be stepping stones to maturity and new stages of life or they can be fraught with uncertainty and inconclusiveness and laced with pain.”

‘A TCP String of Five Pearls,’ William D. Taylor, *Interact*, Dec. 1994

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Involvement

❖ Characterized by:

- Involvement
- Participation
- Sense of belonging
- Commitment
- Knowing others and being known

Adapted from "The Third Culture Kid Experience". Pollock and VanReken, 1999 and
"Transitions and TCKs", Jean Larsen, 1998

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Leaving

- ❖ Leaving – begins the moment you are aware of an upcoming change.
- ❖ Characterized by:
 - Loosening of emotional ties (“Early Release”)
 - Distancing from others
 - Relinquishing responsibilities
 - Denial
 - Mixed emotions – anticipation vs. sadness

Adapted from “The Third Culture Kid Experience”. Pollock and VanReken, 1999 and
“Transitions and TCKs”, Jean Larsen, 1998

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Transition

- ❖ Begins the moment we leave one place/situation and enter the next.
- ❖ Characterized by:
 - Chaos
 - Emotional instability
 - Lack of structure and status
 - Anxiety
 - Ambiguity
 - Disappointment

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Entering

❖ Characterized by:

The desire to connect and become a part of this new place

BUT...

...still feeling uncertain, anxious, marginal, vulnerable. Want to make friends but feeling tentative. Constantly introducing.



Re-Involvement

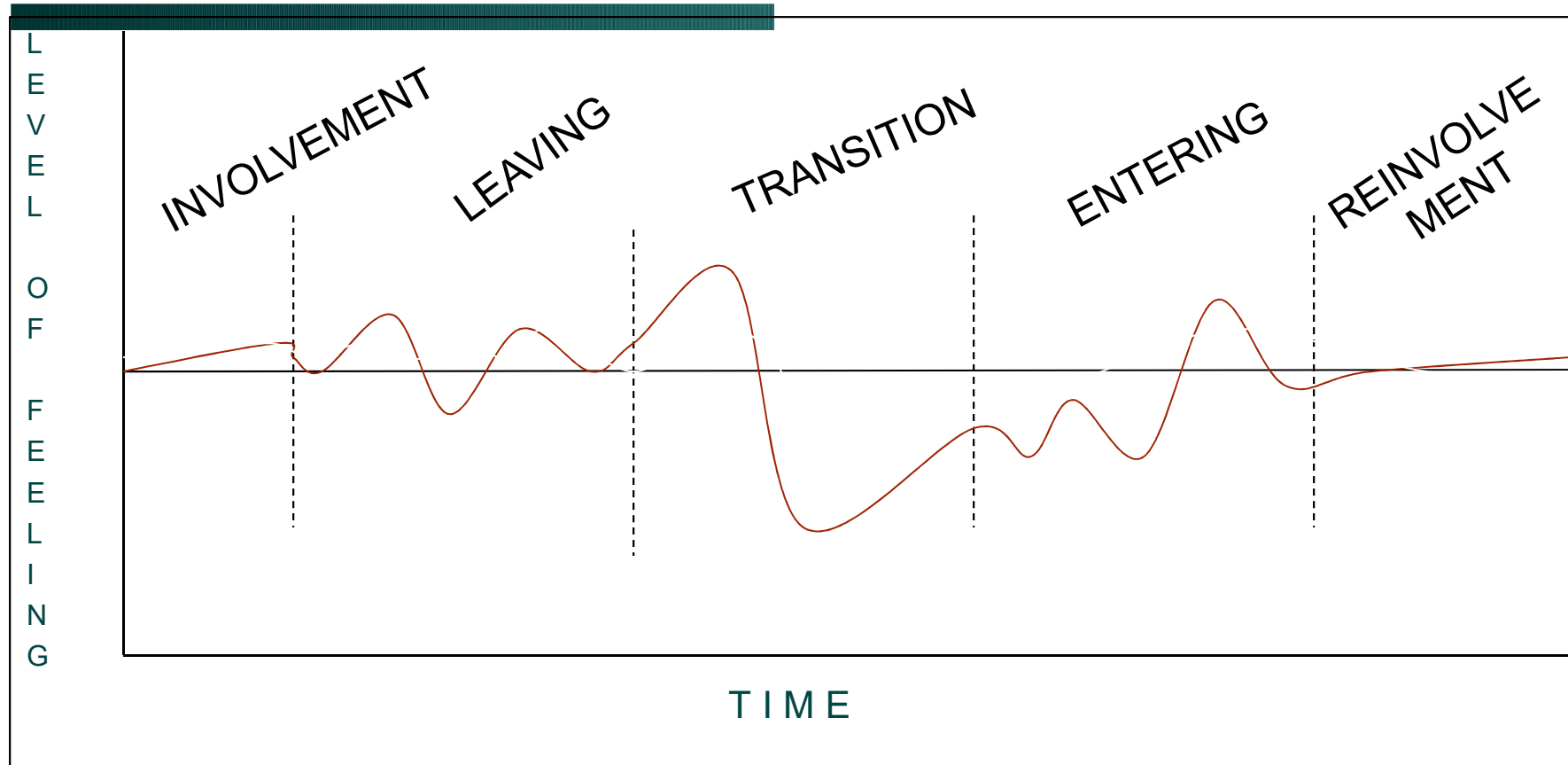
- ❖ A position again of:
 - belonging,
 - Participation
 - Commitment
 - Feelings of security and intimacy

Adapted from "The Third Culture Kid Experience". Pollock and VanReken, 1999 and
"Transitions and TCKs", Jean Larsen, 1998

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Emotional Side of Transition



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Emotional Responses

❖ What's normal?

- Mood swings – happy days / sad days
- Crying
- Nothing is right in the world days
- Loss of self-esteem, self-confidence
- Withdrawal, isolation
- Bouts of depression



Emotional Responses

❖ What to watch out for:

- Failure to move ahead (thrive)
- Paralyzed
- Live in the past
- Hard to get out of bed
- Difficulty accomplishing tasks
- Things that brought you joy no longer do
- Deep sadness that will not go away

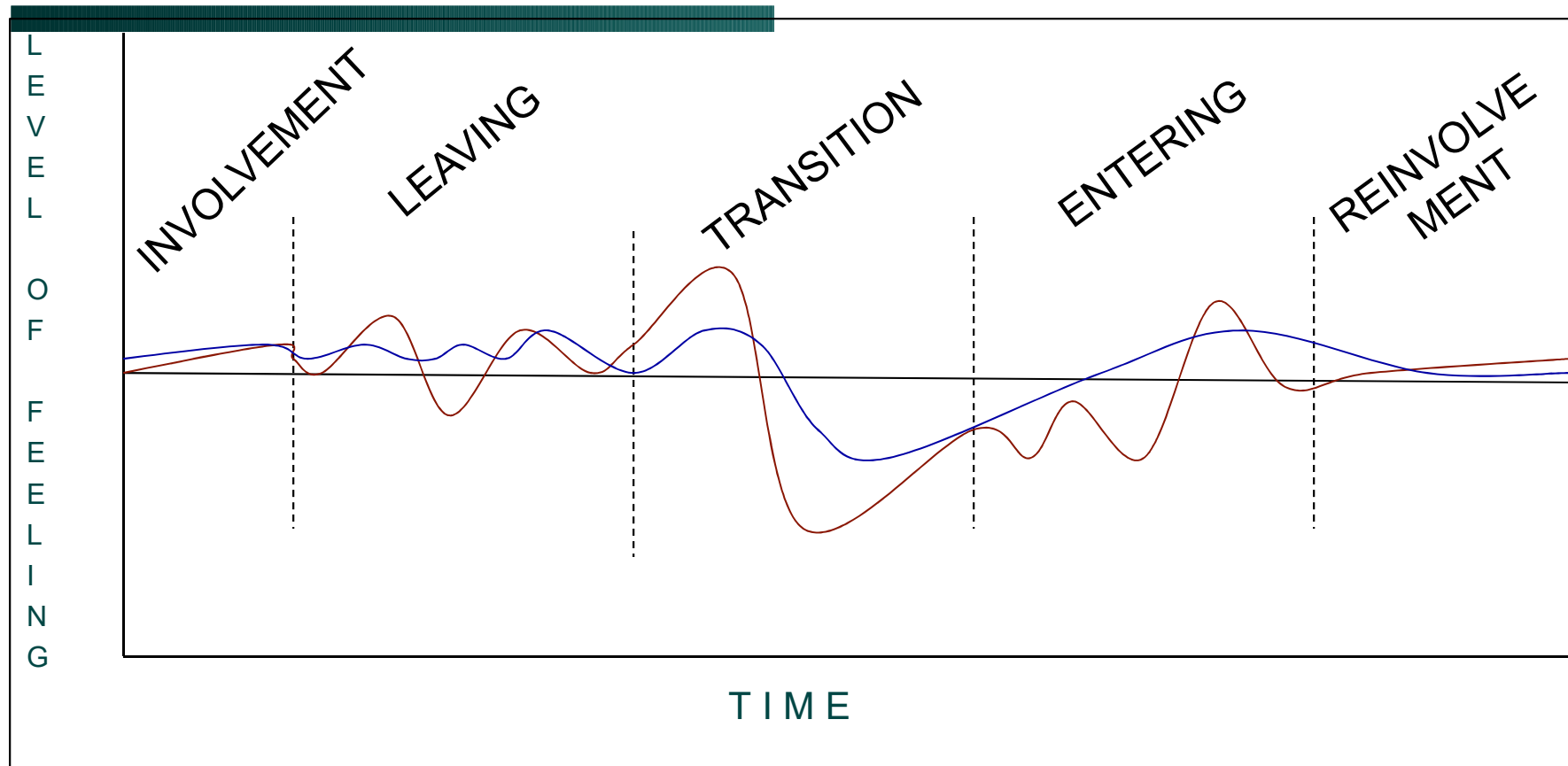
DEPRESSION – need to seek professional help

*Resource: www.internationaltherapistdirectory.com

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Transition Cycle After Training



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Why Does Mobility Matter?

- ❖ What creates “high mobility” in an international lifestyle?
- ❖ Other factors that create “high mobility”.
- ❖ What is the result of “high mobility”?

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Children's Reactions

❖ Children are:

- Amazingly resilient and adaptable . . . **BUT** . . .
- Acting out can occur – a cry for extra security

❖ Toddlers

- Most easily moveable ...as long as...
- May have delayed reactions

❖ School-age Children

- Periods of anger
- typical rules of discipline may need to be changed slightly at first
- Need to have some ownership in the situation – indulge them in choices especially at the beginning.

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Transitions

❖ “Children are silent partners in relocation.”

“Raising Global Nomads,” Robin Pascoe

❖ Transitions work best when:

- people, including children, are informed,
- they know what they are getting into,
- are reminded of their strengths.

❖ Children need their parents – at least one of them – even more so after a relocation.

❖ N.B. – Mothers – take care of yourselves also!

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Culture Shock in Children

- ❖ Children go through it too.
- ❖ Recognize the symptoms
 - Toddlers:
 - Wetting the bed or pants after being toilet trained
 - Tantrums
 - Mood swings
 - Crying for no reason
 - Sleeplessness
 - Lack of appetite

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CS in Children (cont.)

❖ Older children and adolescents:

- Regressive behavior
- Recurring physical ailments and illnesses
- Accident prone
- Crying, irritability, change in eating, sleeping, leisure activities
- Discipline problems at school
- Inability to make friends
- Inattention to homework
- Not as outgoing and friendly as before

**NB

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Family Culture Shock

- ❖ Every member of the family is going through it but be in different stages at different times.
- ❖ Have language for the feelings.
- ❖ Can take 12 months to 3 years. Children's adjustment tends to be shorter.
- ❖ Don't let children pick up your worries or discontent.
- ❖ Try to keep a positive attitude.

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How to Help

- ❖ Need to all get onto the same page.
- ❖ Communication is key.
 - Family meetings
 - One meal per day together.
- ❖ Usually gets better when you come back around to a familiar pattern.
 - Celebrate a holiday for the second time in this place.
 - Come back from a long trip.
- ❖ Unconditional love

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How Global Mobility Affects Children

- ❖ High mobility lifestyle – brings about a lot of loss

“For most TCK’s the collection of significant losses and separations before the end of adolescence is often more than most people experience in a lifetime.”

Pollock and Van Reken, Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds, 2009

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Grief

-
- ❖ Loss (recognized or unrecognized) = Grief
 - ❖ Grief is:
 - Multiple
 - Simultaneous
 - Intense
 - Unresolved
 - Lonely



Reasons for Unresolved Grief

- ❖ Fear of Denying the Good
- ❖ Hidden losses
- ❖ Lack of Permission to Grieve
- ❖ Lack of Time to Process
- ❖ Lack of Comfort



How to Help Our Children

- ❖ Allow them to grieve – Healthy grief
 - Confront the losses – name them
 - Spend time with them
 - Grieve over them
 - Come to closure



How to Help Our Children

❖ Help them to “Leave Right” – Build a RAFT

- Reconciliation
- Affirmation
- Farewells
- Think and Talk

David Pollock and Ruth VanReken, “Third Culture Kids”, 2001

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Strategies for a Smooth Transition

- ❖ Sacred items
- ❖ Familiar items, routines and rituals
- ❖ Typical rules of discipline may need to be changed at first.
- ❖ Indulge a bit in the beginning, especially with choices.
- ❖ Help them to make and meet friends.
- ❖ Give them the language
- ❖ Faith and prayer

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Your Children are Unique

Their life experiences are very different from most people they are surrounded by in their home and host countries.

There is language for their life experiences.

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Who are Third Culture Kids?

- ❖ 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 builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture are assimilated into the TCK's life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar background.

David C. Pollock and Ruth E. Van Reken, "Third Culture Kids: The Experience of Growing Up Among Worlds," 2001

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Benefits / Gifts of a TCK Upbringing

- ❖ Cross cultural skills and awareness
- ❖ Language skills
- ❖ Observational skills
- ❖ Confident, adaptable, flexible, and open to change
- ❖ Appreciative of diversity
- ❖ Broad world view
- ❖ Accepting of others' views
- ❖ Bridge builders
- ❖ Foundations for being true global citizens

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First Greatest Challenge

❖ Personal and Cultural Identity

- Who am I
- Where Do I Belong?

❖ Role of Culture:

- Identity
- Belonging
- Security

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Why a Cross-Cultural Highly Mobile Childhood Matters

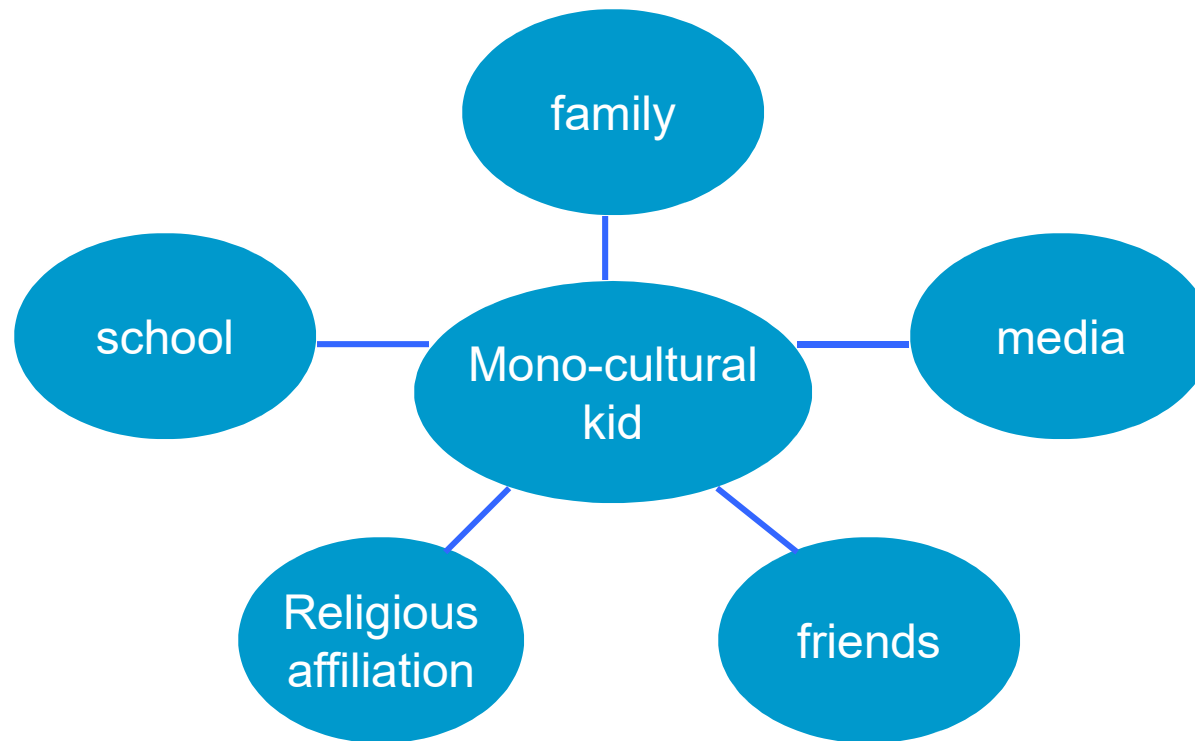
- ❖ For TCKs, the moving back and forth from one culture to another happens before they have completed the critical developmental task of forming a sense of their own personal or cultural identity.

Pollock and Van Reken, “Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds”

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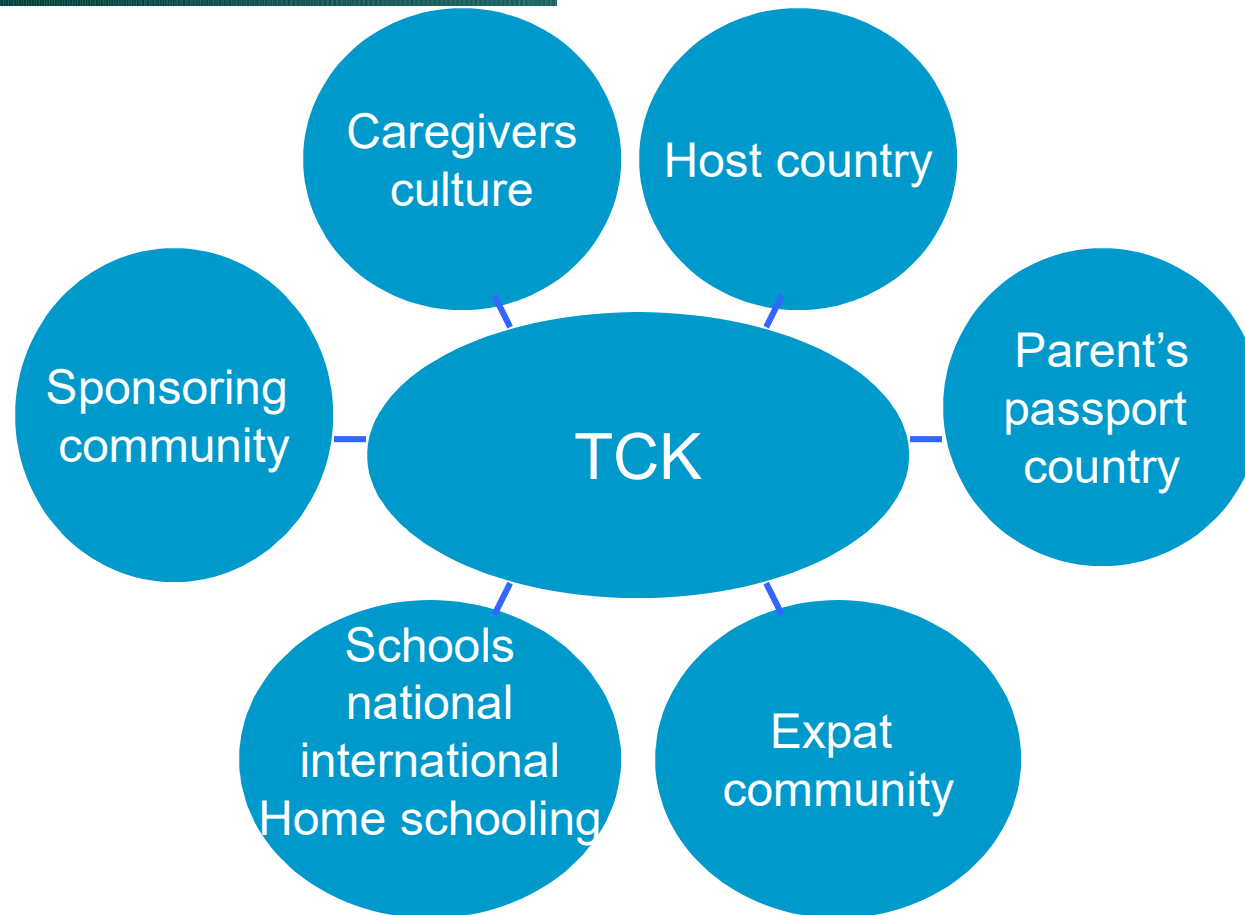
Spheres of Cultural Influence on the Monocultural Child



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Spheres of Cultural Influence on TCK's



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How to Grow from the Transition Experience

- ❖ Consider how you/they have dealt with past transitions and how you can continue growing in future ones.
- ❖ Build on/with the skills of this mobile lifestyle
- ❖ Wherever you go in life unpack your bags and become a part of the experience.

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No Pathology

‘It is my conviction that being a TCK is not a disease, something from which to recover. It is a life healthily enriched by this very TCK experience and blessed with significant opportunities for further enrichment.’

Dave Pollock from “Third Culture Kids: The Experience of Growing up Among Worlds by Dave Pollock and Ruth Van Reken,” 2001

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Resources for Parents and Children

- ❖ Third Culture Kids, David Pollock and Ruth Van Reken
- ❖ Raising Global Nomads, Robin Pascoe
- ❖ Home Keeps Moving, Heidi Sand-Hart
- ❖ A Broad Abroad, Robin Pascoe
- ❖ Homeward Bound, Robin Pascoe
- ❖ Expat Teens Talk, Pittman and Smit
- ❖ The Art of Coming Home, Craig Storti
- ❖ The Global Nomad's Guide to University Transition, Tina Quick

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