THE CULTURE OF ADULT THIRD CULTURE KIDS

By D. U. S.

Supervising Professor:

Dr. Trevor Castor

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Abstract

The paper discusses a particular aspect of the long-term "cultural identity" of adult third culture kids (ATCKs). Specifically, the author shows that there are many possible ways in which the ethnolinguistic cultures to which an ATCK was exposed as a child can be reflected (or not reflected) in his or her behavior. Which culture(s) a given ATCK reflects may or may not significantly change based on the context of the surrounding culture. In a given cultural context, an ATCK may exhibit a single culture or some kind of mixture of cultures. In addition, the ATCK may minimize interaction with members of the surrounding culture. A visual model for thinking about and communicating the specific cultural pattern of a given ATCK is proposed.

Acknowledgement

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I. Introduction

Significant exposure, during childhood, to multiple ethnolinguistic cultures is one of the key elements of the experience of so-called *third culture kids* (*TCKs*).[1] But how, exactly, might the various cultures an adult TCK has interacted with be reflected in his or her behavior, values, and worldview? In addition to TCK-specific traits, do adult TCKs exhibit, in every context, a consistent blend of all the cultures they've been exposed to? Or do such individuals adapt whenever they are with members of one of those cultures? If so, to what degree do third culture kids adapt? Are there adult TCKs who essentially only reflect one ethnolinguistic culture? These are some of the questions we will explore in this paper. I will argue that there are many possible ways in which the cultures to which an adult TCK was exposed as a child can be reflected (or not reflected) in his or her behavior. Furthermore, I will propose a visual model for thinking about and communicating the specific cultural pattern of a given TCK. First, however, some preliminary material is in order.

II. Terminology and Cultural Influences

1. General Terminology

Much confusion and controversy can arise from ambiguous or potentially misleading terminology, especially if it is not defined. Therefore, I will discuss terminology in some depth. That will serve both as a foundation for the rest of this paper and as a way to weigh in (however little) in the broader discussion about TCKs.

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[1] David C. Pollock, Ruth E. Van Reken, and Michael V. Pollock, *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds*, 3rd ed. (Boston MA: Nicholas Brealey Pub, 2017), 54.

In this paper, I will use the term *culture* to refer to the set of customs, values, worldview components, and institutions[2] typical of a people group.[3] The various aspects of culture are usually interrelated, with each aspect potentially influencing, and being influenced by, each of the others.[4] It is important to keep in mind that cultures are not static; they change, sometimes relatively quickly.[5] As indicated above, culture is defined in relation to a group, not an individual. However, for simplicity, I will sometimes refer to an individual's *personal culture* or *cultural pattern* to indicate his or her (partial) membership in one or more such groups. (I will use these terms somewhat differently, but will explain the distinction later in the paper.)

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[2] In reference to individuals, the aspect of institutions may not seem particularly relevant. However, an individual can associate with, promote, or be a member of an institution. The types of institutions (e.g., church, university, or particular clubs) a person is associated with can be important indicators of the person's cultural membership.

[3] This definition is loosely based on that in Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, "The Willowbank Report: Consultation on Gospel and Culture," 1978: A Definition of Culture, https://www.lausanne.org/content/lop/lop-2.

[4] Various aspects of culture are often seen in terms of a hierarchy, based on Hofstede's "onion" model (Geert H. Hofstede, Gert J. Hofstede, and Michael Minkov, *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind: Intercultural Cooperation and Its Importance for Survival*, 3rd ed. (New York, London: McGraw-Hill, 2010), Kindle Edition, 7–10, http://www.loc.gov/catdir/enhancements/fy1009/2010010437-d.html). According to such a view, aspects closer to the core (e.g., values) are seen as more stable than aspects farther from the core (e.g., rituals). Furthermore, there seems to be an implication that aspects closer to the core influence aspects farther from it, but not vice versa. However, in this paper, no rigid hierarchy of worldview, values, and customs—especially in regards to influence—is assumed. E.g., the (initially perhaps involuntary) *custom* of washing hands before every meal can generate or reinforce kids' *belief* that the world is full of something (e.g., dirt, germs, or some kind of spiritual impurity) that is in some way detrimental, particularly in relation to eating. Similarly, if established members of a community *value* public allegiance to a particular religion so strongly that they are usually willing to suffer or even die for it, younger members of the community are likely to conclude that that religion is probably based on a fairly accurate *worldview*.
Although the various aspects of culture are generally interrelated to some degree, it does not seem that they are always "integrated" (despite being described as such in various definitions of culture, including that in Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, "The Willowbank Report": A Definition of Culture). In today's world, especially, a people group may adopt new technology and borrow cultural aspects from other peoples, while traditional beliefs, values, and practices have not yet been adapted, abandoned, or replaced. This can result in a set of rather incongruous, perhaps even clashing, cultural elements.

[5] The importance of pointing to the dynamic nature of culture (especially in today's world) was emphasized by William Larkin and David Cashin (David Cashin, "Session 02: What is Culture?," GLS6515: Understanding Cultures and Worldviews Lectures, YouTube video, 8:19, posted March 2, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VODISRrd17o).

The terms *third culture* and *third culture kid* (*TCK*) were coined (somewhat informally) by sociologists Ruth and John Useem around 1958.[6] In the early 1980s, David C. Pollock started popularizing the latter term and related concepts among groups of TCKs, and those who interacted closely with TCKs.[7] (Around the same time, Norma M. McCaig started talking to similar (albeit adult) audiences about similar topics, but used her term *global nomads* instead of *(adult) third culture kids*.)[8] The term *third culture kids* became more widely known after Pollock co-authored a book with Ruth E. Van Reken. The book was published in 1999 as *The Third Culture Kid Experience*,[9] but was retitled in reprints and revisions as *Third Culture Kids*. This book, in its various editions—the most recent of which was co-authored by David's son, Michael V. Pollock—has become the de facto standard introductory "textbook" on TCKs.[10] Therefore, this paper will interact frequently with ideas in that book.

In this paper, I am using the following updated definition of the term *third culture kid*: "A traditional third culture kid (TCK) is a person who spends [or has spent][11] a significant part of his or her first eighteen years of life accompanying parent(s) into a country that is different from at least one parent's passport country(ies) due to a parent's choice of work or advanced training."[12] Typical examples of TCKs include the children of internationally based

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[6] Pollock, Van Reken, and Pollock, *Third Culture Kids*, 398–99.

[7] Ibid., 402–3.

[8] Ibid., 401-02.

[9] David C. Pollock and Ruth E. Van Reken, *The Third Culture Kid Experience: Growing Up Among Worlds* (Yarmouth, Me.: Intercultural Press, Incorporated, 1999).

[10] I am not aware of any other book that could contend for this title through a combination of breadth, depth, and systematic coverage. According to the cover of the book's third edition, Wm. Paul Young, author of the #1 New York Times bestseller *The Shack*, called *Third Culture Kids* "the 'bible' for anyone who wants to understand the blessings and the curses of growing up multiculturally" (Pollock, Van Reken, and Pollock, *Third Culture Kids*, front cover).

[11] See my explanation later in the paragraph.

[12] Ibid., 27.

military, diplomatic, missionary, NGO, intergovernmental organization,[13] and business personnel, and students.[14] It is important to note that, in the above definition—unlike in the traditional definition of TCKs[15]—there is no specification regarding which culture, or set of cultures, someone must end up reflecting to qualify as a TCK.

For third culture kids who have reached adulthood, the term *adult TCK* (*ATCK*) can be used for clarity. However, the term *TCK* itself can refer both to children and to adults.[16] Here I will usually use it to refer to the latter, since that group constitutes the primary focus of this paper.

Traditionally, the term *passport culture* has been used to refer to the culture of the country of which the TCK is a citizen, which has been assumed to be the parents' native country.[17] However, that view of reality is becoming increasingly simplistic in today's world, for various reasons.[18] By using the term *parental culture(s)* to refer to all the cultures that are significantly reflected in the parents' outlook and behavior, we can eliminate or mitigate most of the issues.

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[13] McCaig, citing Franck and Elizabeth Murakami-Ramalho, includes "intergovernmental organizations (World Bank, United Nations, etc.)" as one possible type of affiliation of the parents of global nomad students (Norma M. McCaig, "Raised in the Margin of the Mosaic: Global Nomads Balance Worlds Within," in *Writing Out of Limbo: International Childhoods, Global Nomads and Third Culture Kids*, ed. Gene H. Bell-Villada and Nina Sichel (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 47).

[14] Cf. Pollock, Van Reken, and Pollock, *Third Culture Kids*, 43.

[15] Cf. David C. Pollock and Ruth E. Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: The Experience of Growing Up Among Worlds* (London: Nicholas Brealey, 2001), 19.

[16] Pollock, Van Reken, and Pollock, *Third Culture Kids*, 25.

[17] E.g., Pollock et al. use the term about forty times in the newest edition of *Third Culture Kids* (ibid.).

[18] Firstly, the TCK's parents may not have grown up in the same country. Secondly, one or both of the parents may have grown up in multiple countries, and may not have citizenship in all of them. (Both of these issues could be remedied through use of the term with an optional plural ending—*passport culture(s)*.) Thirdly, a TCK may have acquired—e.g., through birth—citizenship in a country in which neither parent has citizenship or has spent a significant amount of time. In that case, the TCK may have had very little direct or indirect exposure to anything related to that country. Fourthly, and perhaps most significantly, most countries are populated by members of various, quite distinct cultures. So *passport culture* would need to refer to, say, the dominant or most prominent culture of a country, or to some sort of weighted "blend" of the country's cultures.

TCKs have typically lived in places with dominant culture(s) different from the parental culture(s). These cultures have traditionally been referred to as *host cultures*.[19] As per the *third culture kid* definition above, it is possible for a TCK not to have lived in any culture that is different from the culture(s) of *both* parents. If a TCK has lived in a culture shared by only one parent, I will refer to that culture as a parental culture. The question of whether such a culture should additionally be considered a host culture is interesting, but not directly relevant to this paper.

2. The Third Culture

The term *third culture* has caused some confusion, which could cause potentially inaccurate preconceptions about topics in this paper. One popular conception of the term is expressed by Steffens and Douglas:

> The *T* in TCK refers to the third of three cultures: the home culture, the host culture, and the resulting culture that blends elements of both home and host cultures. After living abroad, a child is soon in the position of not feeling at home in either the passport culture or the host culture. Instead, he or she becomes a combination of the two.[20]

As I will show later, it seems that Steffen and Douglas view their description as relating to *typical* TCKs, rather than to *all* TCKs. However, even in relationship to typical TCKs, this understanding does not reflect the way the Useems or Pollock et al. conceive(d)

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[19] TCKs are part of a broader category of people referred to as *cross-cultural kids* (*CCKs*). CCKs include, for example, children of immigrants, children of refugees, and individuals whose parents belong to ethnic minorities (cf. ibid., 43-44). In discussing "acculturation among international migrants and their immediate descendants," Seth Schwartz et al. use the terms *heritage culture* and *receiving culture* in ways similar to the ways I'm using *parental culture* and *host culture* (Seth J. Schwartz et al., "Rethinking the Concept of Acculturation: Implications for Theory and Research," 1–2, 2010, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3700543/). However, in the TCK context, the meaning of *heritage culture* could be ambiguous when applied to TCKs whose parents are descended from immigrants. Meanwhile, the term *receiving culture* is probably no more accurate in regard to TCKs than *host culture* is, and the latter term is much more widespread in this context.

[20] Tom Steffen and Lois M. Douglas, *Encountering Missionary Life and Work: Preparing for Intercultural Ministry*, Encountering Mission (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 277–78.

of the term *third culture*. Two former students of Ruth Useem, Ann Baker Cottrell and Richard D. Downie, describe the Useems' conceptualization of the term: "Third culture was initially their own shorthand term to describe what they observed in the interaction of Americans in India and their Indian colleagues. In addition to the two national cultures they saw [a] different culture in the interaction *which reflected both [national cultures] but was definitely not [simply] a blended culture*" (emphasis mine).[21] Cottrell and Downie also say, "[The Useems'] final major research [which took place in] 1968-75, was on science as a Third Culture, studying scientists in the Philippines."[22] This further clarifies that a mix of two existing ethnolinguistic cultures does not, in itself, constitute a *third culture*, in the sense in which the Useems used that term. Rather, a similar mindset or lifestyle that is not directly linked with an ethnolinguistic group is a key part of a *third culture*.

Pollock et al.'s "Figure 2-2: The Third Culture Model"[23] also seems to indicate that, in relation to TCKs, the third culture, in its classical form, includes three types of traits (though the book is a bit ambiguous on this point).[24] Specifically, the third culture includes some—but not all—of the elements of the parental culture; a proper subset of elements from the host culture; and traits that are characteristic of neither the parental nor the host culture, but are instead "shared commonalities of those living an internationally mobile lifestyle."[25]

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[21] Ann B. Cottrell and Richard D. Downie, "TCK –The History of a Concept," 2012: 7, http://tckresearcher.net/TCK%20Hist%20%2712%20FIGT%20res.%20Newsltr%20copy.pdf.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Pollock, Van Reken, and Pollock, *Third Culture Kids*, 17.

[24] It is not entirely clear whether Pollock et al. really consider elements from the national cultures to be part of the third culture. E.g., in talking about the third culture, the authors say, "Most TCKs do have a community, an 'interstitial culture' to which they belong but one defined by a shared experience *rather than by place or nationality*" (emphasis mine) (ibid., 68). "Figure 4-2: Possible Multiple Cultures in a TCK's World" (ibid., 64) further adds to the confusion. However, that figure doesn't seem to be a Venn diagram (or any other type of standard, widely used diagram), but, rather, a representation of the diverse sources and types of cultural influence a TCK might experience (compare "Figure 6-7: Personal Identity Formation . . ." (ibid., 128)).

[25] Ibid., 17.

Thus, typical TCKs share *some* "cultural" (or at least psychological)[26] traits with most other TCKs in the world, while sharing (other) cultural traits only with other TCKs who have been exposed to the same, or a similar, set of ethnolinguistic influences. The topic of which psychological traits most TCKs share, and how those traits can be used or dealt with effectively, comprises much of the material in *Third Culture Kids* and will not be dealt with here.

3. Other Cultural Influences

TCKs may also have been heavily exposed to the dominant cultures of organizations (e.g., the parents' sponsoring entity, an international school, or a club for expats), the cultures of non-native friends or acquaintances, or the cultures of media from other countries or ethnolinguistic groups. Of course, in today's globalized world, most people are at some level exposed to, and perhaps even influenced by, multiple cultures. However, in this paper, we will focus only on *significant* levels and types of cultural exposure during childhood—exposure that is close and prolonged enough that the culture could *potentially* have had a *clear*, *significant* influence on the person under consideration. We are talking "not [about] merely living side-by-side with those from other cultures, but [about]

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[26] Whether the typical psychological characteristics of TCKs should be described as a key component of a *culture* is debatable. It could be argued that including such characteristics as part of a *culture* is analogous to describing the typical effects of, say, having experienced war trauma (in its many forms), being an orphan, or being an only child (with its benefits and challenges) as components of a *culture*. Pollock et al. defend their use of the term *culture* by saying that (in an apparently unpublished senior essay) Ximena Vidal "claims that [in our postmodern world] culture can be *what we share experientially* as well as the more traditional ways we have defined it" (ibid., 17–18). Since Vidal's argument isn't clearly recounted, we can't evaluate it. In any case, however, *subculture* might be a more natural term for psychological traits commonly resulting from TCKs' typical types of experiences.

interacting with more than one culture in ways that have meaningful or relational involvement."[27]

III. Possible Results of Cultural Exposure

Having clarified key terms and concepts, we can return to our initial question: How might the cultures an adult TCK has interacted with be reflected (or not reflected) in his or her worldview, values, and behavior? I.e., if a third culture kid has significantly interacted with a given set of cultures, what kind of personal culture(s) might the TCK end up with? In a vein similar to what we discussed above, we will only focus on *significant* effects of cultural exposure, ignoring *negligibly small* effects.[28] Also, for simplicity, we will assume that, once a TCK has reached adulthood, the effects of cultures from his or her upbringing on his or her cultural pattern will remain stable[29]—even though, in reality, gradual, limited changes are likely to occur.[30]

This paper focuses on how TCKs might reflect the influence of particular ethnolinguistic cultures. However, it is important to remember that TCKs also exhibit

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[27] Ibid., 46. Pollock et al. say, "While we can't say precisely how long a child must live outside the home culture to develop the classic TCK characteristics, we can say it is more than a two-week or even a two-month vacation to see the sights. Some people are identifiable TCKs or ATCKs after spending as little as one year outside the parents' culture" (ibid., 23-24). The authors note that "variables such as the child's age, personality, and participation in the local culture have an important effect" on "how deep an impact the third culture experience has" (ibid., 23).

[28] E.g., if a person eats Chinese food once or twice a month, we wouldn't say, based on that fact alone, that that person is, culturally, partly Chinese.
We will also ignore tendencies that are just as likely to be idiosyncratic as cultural.

[29] Another important point is that an ATCK may be significantly influenced by cultures to which he or she is exposed for the first time as an adult. However, that subject is beyond the scope of this discussion.

[30] McCaig says, "For the majority of global nomads, their point on the [cultural identity] continuum is rarely fixed throughout their lives. With each significant (or subtle) life transition—new career, marriage, parenthood, or retirement—different voices may call them to lost homes from past journeys or to new homes in lands begging to be explored ... or not" (McCaig, "Raised in the Margin of the Mosaic," 53). However, McCaig seems to use the term "cultural identity" to refer to aspects such as behavior, self-identification, and sense of belonging or comfort, without clearly distinguishing between these aspects. The paragraph containing the above quote seems to be talking primarily about where TCKs might choose to live (and potentially put down roots), rather than about cultural patterns.

"shared commonalities of those living an internationally mobile lifestyle,"[31] mentioned earlier. Thus, this paper concentrates only on certain aspects of the culture of TCKs. The presence of TCK-specific perspectives and behavior is only occasionally mentioned, but is generally implied.

The ideas in the rest of this paper are based in significant part on ideas I presented in an article in *Among Worlds* magazine[32] several years ago. The magazine's editor was kind enough to include my article—which was unusually long by the magazine's standards—in its entirety. Unfortunately, the publication process resulted in major issues related to the article's diagrams (out-of-order, missing, and duplicate diagrams, along with major color changes). The correct version of the article—with some updates to the text—is available online as "Third Culture Kids and Long-Term Cultural Identity,"[33] hereafter referred to as "TCKs & Cultural Identity."

1. Gravitating Toward One Culture

One potential (albeit uncommon) result of exposure to multiple cultures is that a TCK ends up essentially reflecting only *one* of the ethnolinguistic cultures he or she has encountered. This is indicated, for example, in Steffen and Douglas' description of the pros and cons of various types of schooling (e.g., boarding schools, homeschooling, and international schools) potentially available to MKs and other TCKs.[34] Specifically, the description of third culture kids who attend a national school includes the following: "The

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[31] Pollock, Van Reken, and Pollock, *Third Culture Kids*, 17.

[32] D. U. S., "TCKs and Long-Term Cultural Identity," *Among Worlds*, September 2010, https://www.interactionintl.org/--0086--2010_Sept_brCultural_Divides.asp?catID=14.

[33] D. U. S., "Third Culture Kids and Long-Term Cultural Identity," *Pilgrims for Jesus*, 2010, accessed April 14, 2018, http://www.pilgrimsforjesus.com/identity_management.php.
The article was republished in *Among Worlds* from this website with my permission.

[34] Steffen and Douglas, *Encountering Missionary Life and Work*, 280–85.

TCK will learn culture and language deeply and build strong relationships with peers and their families."[35] The authors further say,

> Negatively, the student without some knowledge of culture and language before starting [at a national] school will be placed in an extremely tough situation. Not all children can survive the sink or swim approach. This would be particularly so in cases where anti-Americanism prevails. They will, however, eventually learn the local culture and language, sometimes so well that some may reject the passport culture entirely. Even if they don't reject the passport culture, some TCKs may want to marry a national.[36]

The last two sentences are particularly relevant to our discussion. Firstly, we see that, according to Steffen and Douglas, some TCKs who attend a national school become so comfortable with the host culture that they are willing to marry a national. In many societies, people traditionally would not consider marrying those they consider cultural "outsiders."[37] In today's world, marriage restrictions or preferences based on "in-groups" seem less pervasive. Nevertheless, if a TCK is willing to marry someone from the host culture, even though the TCK knows (most of) the many specific differences between that culture and his or her parental culture(s), there is clearly a high degree of acceptance of the host culture.

Secondly, and crucially, we note Steffen and Douglas' claim (above) that "some [TCKs] may reject the passport culture entirely." From the context, such a rejection seems to include a rejection of self-identification with, and of a sense of belonging to, the passport culture (or country). However, it also seems to include a nearly complete rejection of the cultural practices, values, and beliefs of the passport culture (where these differ from those of the host culture). If the two cultures under discussion are the only ones to which the TCK

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[35] Ibid., 283.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Paul G. Hiebert, *Cultural Anthropology*, 2nd ed. (1983; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), Ch. 10, Restrictions on marriage.

has been significantly exposed, the TCKs ends up essentially reflecting only one ethnolinguistic culture.

Pollock et al. also describe various types of TCKs who may reflect almost exclusively one culture (not counting TCK-specific traits):

> (1) Sometimes [TCKs] appear physically different from members of the surrounding dominant host culture, but they have lived there so long and immersed themselves so deeply in this environment that their behavior and worldview are virtually the same as [those of] members of that culture. The TCKs may feel very comfortable and often more "at home" in this situation than in their passport country, and they feel wounded when others treat them as foreigners. . . .
> (2) Some TCKs grow up where they physically resemble the members of the dominant culture in the host culture. At times, they have lived there so long that they have adopted the deeper levels of that culture as well. No one would realize they aren't from this place unless they show their passports. (3) TCKs who return to their home culture after spending only a year or two away or who were away only at a very young age may also fit this category [of "look alike, think alike"]. Although they have lived abroad, their deeper levels of culture have remained rooted solidly in the home culture and they identify with it completely[38] (numbering mine).[39]

Pollock et al. present the material quoted above in the context of how a TCK may relate to whichever dominant culture he or she is surrounded by at a given time, not from the perspective of long-term, context-independent cultural behavior. Nevertheless, it seems that at least the last category of TCKs mentioned above ends up essentially ethnolinguistically monocultural long-term. Thus, the descriptions of Steffen and Douglas and of Pollock et al. indicate that some adult TCKs are, aside from TCK-specific traits, virtually monocultural—either because they retained (or adopted) their parental culture as

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[38] It could be argued that Pollock et al. overstate their case by saying that some TCKs who were away from their parental culture for "a year or two . . . identify with it *completely*" (emphasis mine), since the parental culture would have changed somewhat in the TCKs' absence. However, the authors may mean that such TCKs are firmly convinced that the parental culture is the culture to which the TCKs *belong*, regardless of potential minor differences in behavior. Alternatively, Pollock et al. may mean that some TCKs, not having noticed the minor changes in the parental culture, *think* that their personal culture still fully resembles the parental culture.

[39] Pollock, Van Reken, and Pollock, *Third Culture Kids*, 74–75.

essentially their sole personal culture, or because they simply took a host culture as their own.[40]

2. Adapting to the Surroundings

Another way an ATCK can respond to having been exposed to multiple cultures is to change his or her behavior based on the context. The most typical version of this is to adapt to whichever of the childhood cultures is represented around the TCK at the moment. E.g., when the third culture kid is interacting with members of a parental culture, the TCK behaves like members of that culture; when the individual is with members of a host culture, the TCK's actions reflect that culture. Crossman says, "Most TCKs become cultural chameleons – changing their accent[,] mannerisms and attitude depending on the circumstances."[41] Although she primarily describes *outward* adaptation, she quotes another TCK as saying, "You might find as TCKs move they may change *what is important, and what they believe*, in order to fit in" (emphasis mine).[42]

Meanwhile, Pollock et al. write,

> TCKs usually develop some degree of cultural adaptability as a primary tool for surviving the frequent change of cultures. Over and over TCKs use the term *chameleon* to describe how, after spending a little time observing what is going on, they can easily switch language, style of relating, appearance, and cultural practices to take on the characteristics needed to better blend into the current scene. Often

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[40] Individuals in the former group are probably more likely to identify—and be identified—with typical members of their parental culture than with other TCKs. (E.g., Tanya Crossman says, "Those who made their first international move in high school may not identify as TCKs" (Tanya Crossman, *Misunderstood: The impact of growing up overseas in the 21st Century* (United Kingdom: Summertime Publishing, 2016), 133).) Therefore, such TCKs presumably seldom attend events for TCKs and are rarely described in third culture kid literature. Meanwhile, TCKs who fully identify with the host society and choose to remain in it may be viewed by those around them more as immigrants than as TCKs. Crossman even says, "In some cases, [TCKs immersed in the host country] may see *themselves* more like immigrants than TCKs" (emphasis mine) (ibid., 119).

[41] Ibid., 274.

[42] Ibid., 277.

their behavior becomes almost indistinguishable from [that of] longtime members of this group.[43]

Pollock et al. describe *chameleon* behavior as one of various "common reactions we see from TCKs as they try to sort out their identity issues . . ."[44] A little later, the authors describe these as "'normal' defenses children or young people may use as they make various adjustments," but add, "We have met some ATCKs who are still living as chameleons, screamers, or wallflowers[45] in their forties and fifties."[46] However, McCaig expresses a somewhat different perspective: "As [Charles] Franck comments, [those who share this internationally mobile childhood heritage] may adapt, like chameleons, but this is not a phase or a transition, it is a state of being, an experience that informs the rest of their lives."[47]

We can now clarify the distinction between the terms *personal culture* and *cultural pattern*. I am using the former term to refer to the culture (or blend of cultures, discussed later) a TCK reflects in a given cultural context. Meanwhile, I am using the term *cultural pattern* to refer to the set of all the TCK's responses in different contexts.[48]

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[43] Pollock, Van Reken, and Pollock, *Third Culture Kids*, 153–54.

[44] Ibid., 75.

[45] The terms *chameleon*, *screamer*, and *wallflower* seem to have been first used and described together in the TCK context by Van Reken (Ruth Van Reken, "Cultural Marginality for TCKs/ATCKs: Fact or Fiction?," *Among Worlds*, September 2005, https://www.interactionintl.org/shopproductdetail.asp?prodID=10&catID=14). We will discuss *screamers* and *wallflowers* later.

[46] Pollock, Van Reken, and Pollock, *Third Culture Kids*, 76. The point Pollock et al. are actually trying to make is that "these are not healthy strategies in the long term" (ibid.). However, discussing the pros and cons of particular reactions to exposure to multiple cultures is not one of the objectives of this paper.

[47] McCaig, "Raised in the Margin of the Mosaic," 51.

[48] I.e., a TCK may have different personal cultures—each of which may consist of a single culture or, as will see later, a blend of cultures—in different contexts. The cultural pattern, on the other hand, consists of "the whole picture." The cultural pattern, unlike the personal culture, also includes information about the potential response of withdrawal, which we will describe later.

Although, as we have seen, TCKs may adapt nearly completely, they often adapt only partially. E.g., Pollock et al. quote McCaig as saying, "The cultural chameleon . . . [takes] on enough of the coloration of the social surroundings to gain acceptance while maintaining some vestige of identity as a different animal, an 'other.'"[49] Marilyn Gardner, another TCK, also seems to imply that she only partially adapted. Describing an incident in which she was accused of not knowing who she truly was, she writes, "I had just been likened to a chameleon, changing in seconds depending on who was in my immediate vicinity *overshadowing my real colors*. The flexibility that I had learned at a young age, and that I thought I wore so well, was now marking me as a cold-blooded reptile that changed according to the world around it, *but was never fully a part of that world*" (emphasis mine).[50] Actually, nearly all TCKs adapt at least a little, since changes in environment (e.g., climate, laws, or infrastructure) typically necessitate changes in behavior.[51]

Interestingly, there are suggestions that some TCKs change their behavior in each context in such a way that their behavior becomes more *distinct* from that of members of the surrounding culture. E.g., McCaig quotes Derek Fowler, a U.S. American "born and raised in Monaco," as writing,

> When I go back to France, I see myself as an American, but when I am in the U.S., I see myself as a French person. I never seem to want to belong to one or another for some strange reason. Perhaps I enjoy being different when I'm in one environment or another, getting the best of both worlds. But then sometimes I feel completely excluded from one culture or another, not being able to connect with the people my

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[49] Pollock, Van Reken, and Pollock, *Third Culture Kids*, 153.

[50] Marilyn R. Gardner, *Between Worlds: Essays on Culture and Belonging* (Doorlight Publications, 2014), 43. Gardner makes it clear that some TCKs resent being described as chameleons. However, as some of the quotes in this paper indicate, that term is frequently used in TCK literature—often by TCKs themselves. Therefore, I will use it in this paper—not to describe TCKs themselves, but as a shorthand for some TCKs' pattern of virtually complete cultural adaptation to whichever culture they are in at the time.

[51] S., "Third Culture Kids and Long-Term Cultural Identity," Chameleon.

age either in France or in the United States. I have an easier time in France, however.[52]

The emphasis here seems to be on the sense of belonging, and perhaps on self-identification. However, there also seems to be an indication of what we might call cultural "contrariness" (i.e., reaction, as opposed to adaptation). According to Pollock et al., Fowler would be a *screamer*. Pollock et al. say, "*Screamers* [are] those who try to find a 'different from' identity. They will let other people around them know that they are not like them and don't plan to be."[53] The authors indicate that such a response may be a TCK's attempt to avoid having his or her other personal culture(s)—and, in the TCK's mind, his or her identity—suppressed.[54] Pollock et al. also seem to suggest that third culture kids may, at times, "play the devil's advocate" (my words) in order to broaden the perspectives of those around them.[55] Perhaps cultural contrariness could also provide a disclaimer for cultural mistakes or ignorance. In any case, the authors consider the screamer response, like that of the chameleon, to typically be a temporary adjustment strategy. But Pollock et al. admit that in some cases it lasts for decades.[56] Elsewhere, the authors write, "Sometimes TCKs and ATCKs appear arrogant because they have chosen a *permanent identity* as being 'different' from others" (emphasis mine).[57] While Fowler apparently emphasized his difference from

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[52] McCaig, "Raised in the Margin of the Mosaic," 51–52.

[53] Pollock, Van Reken, and Pollock, *Third Culture Kids*, 75.

[54] Ibid., 157.

[55] This is not directly stated, but is suggested by the statement, "The very awareness that helps TCKs view a situation from multiple perspectives can also make TCKs impatient or arrogant with others who only see things from their own perspective" (ibid., 162).

[56] Ibid., 75-76.

[57] Ibid., 163.

the dominant surrounding culture by displaying the dominant culture of a different region, some TCKs emphasize their distinctiveness by conforming to a local counterculture.[58]

3. Blending Cultures

Yet another potential long-term response of adult TCKs is to adopt a relatively stable, new "personal culture" consisting of a blend of cultures. That third culture kids can, at a given point, act on the basis of a mixture of cultures is implied in our point that TCKs sometimes adapt only partially to the surrounding culture. However, we still need to demonstrate that some TCKs retain essentially the same personal culture in various contexts.

Crossman writes, "TCKs may absorb elements of food, dress, pop culture, body language, values and manners from each culture, blending them into a unique personal style *or* applying them differently according to context" (emphasis mine).[59] While the author may not have been using the conjunction in a *strictly* disjunctive way, at least a degree of disjunction is implied. Otherwise, Crossman would have either left out "blending them into a unique personal style" or (less likely) used the conjunctive conjunction *and* instead of the disjunctive one. Thus, in speaking about "a unique personal style," Crossman is emphasizing continuity across contexts.

Meanwhile, Pollock et al. provide very brief case studies of some TCKs who retained specific elements of their host culture (back) in the parental culture. The authors don't indicate whether those elements were retained *permanently*. However, immediately after describing the case studies, the authors write, "Certainly *cultural practices are incorporated*

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[58] Cf. ibid., 157–58.

[59] Crossman, *Misunderstood*, 2.

from the unique aspects of both host and home cultures, but the third culture is more than

the sum total of the parts of home and host culture" (emphasis mine).[60]

The organization Third Culture Kids International (TCKI) also has something to say

about TCKs creating personal cultural blends. TCKI has a flag that represents both the

organization itself and its third culture kids. The top left half of the flag's background is blue;

the bottom right half is yellow; in the middle, in the foreground, there is a green chameleon.

The explanation accompanying the flag includes the following:

> The blue section of the flag represents the TCK's passport culture. The yellow section
> represents the TCK's new [i.e., host] culture. . . . *TCKs often feel like they don't
> belong to one single culture, but rather take pieces of both cultures and blend them
> in their lives. That is why TCKs are represented by the green chameleon. They are
> green because they are a blending together of two cultures, the blue and the yellow.*
> The chameleon signifies a TCK's ability to adapt to their surroundings and blend into
> the culture they are living in at the time (emphasis mine).[61]

This description, like Crossman's, mentions both the creation of a personal blend of

cultures and the ability to adapt to the surrounding culture. The TCKI member(s) who wrote

the above description don't directly indicate how they perceive the relationship between

blending and adapting. However, the focus seems to be on blending, rather than on

adaptation. This is indicated by the fact that the "flag is based on the 'Color me Green'

article,"[62] which is reproduced on the same page as the flag. That article, written by a TCK

"born in America but raised in Africa,"[63] includes the following: "Now I have come to realize

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[60] Pollock, Van Reken, and Pollock, *Third Culture Kids*, 28–29.

[61] Third Culture Kids International, "TCKI Flag," accessed March 20, 2018, http://tckinternational.com/information/about-tcki/tcki-flag.html.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid.

that it's okay for me to be green—a blend of two colors, two cultures. . . . I am at a place in life where I can begin to choose the best of these African and American heritages."[64]

In reality, TCKs who are familiar and comfortable enough with multiple cultures to incorporate aspects of each probably do typically adapt somewhat when surrounded by members of one of those cultures. Indeed, as is the case with many aspects of life and nature, pure blending and pure adaptation are extremes of a continuum. Still, we can label a given TCK's response as "blending" (or "creating a personal mix of cultures") or as "adapting," based on which aspect is more prominent.

How one views a personal culture that is based on multiple cultures is somewhat a matter of perspective. A new application of a classic pair of analogies typically used to discuss culture in the United States will serve us well here: Is a TCK's personal culture more of a "melting pot" or more of a "salad bowl"?[65] I.e., is the personal culture more or less an average (or a uniform mixture) of multiple cultures? Or does the personal culture include certain unmodified elements from each culture, while excluding other aspects of each culture? To a degree, this depends on the experiences and personal traits of the TCK under discussion. (Cf. the "Mule" and "Platypus" sections of "TCKs & Cultural Identity.")[66] In practice, however, it is probably difficult to objectively distinguish between a personal culture that is more of a "melting pot" and one that is more of a "salad bowl." In this paper, we will not apply such a distinction, and we will use terms such as "blending" and "mixing" interchangeably.

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[64] Ibid.

[65] For a brief, informal introduction to these terms, see Concetta Grasso, "Melting Pot or Salad Bowl?," accessed April 12, 2018, https://www.cglearn.it/mysite/civilization/american-culture/a-story-of-immigration/melting-pot-or-salad-bowl/.

[66] S., "Third Culture Kids and Long-Term Cultural Identity."

4. Withdrawing

TCKs may also minimize meaningful interaction with those around them. Van Reken applied the common term *wallflower* to TCKs who behave in this way.[67] *Third Culture Kids* says that wallflowers "try to find a 'nonidentity.' Rather than risk being exposed as someone who doesn't know the local cultural rules, they prefer to sit on the sidelines and watch, at least for an extended period, rather than engage in the activities at hand."[68] As we have already seen, Pollock et al. say, "We have met some ATCKs who are still living as chameleons, screamers, or wallflowers in their forties and fifties."[69] Elsewhere, the authors write, "Common withdrawal patterns . . . can initially be within the normal range and then move toward true depression."[70] Pollock et al. list some possible manifestations of such depression, which generally involve little or no face-to-face interaction with other people. Such potential manifestations include spending excessive time on social media, studies, or a solitary hobby.[71]

Some TCKs also avoid deep engagement with, or at least attachment to, those around them to avoid the pain of being parted from friends yet again. Crossman says, "The cycle of making friends, leaving friends, and starting again is tiring. TCKs who move frequently may go through periods in which they are not interested in building relationships."[72] (Crossman doesn't specify how long such periods may last.) Alternatively,

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[67] Van Reken, "Cultural Marginality for TCKs/ATCKs," 5.

[68] Pollock, Van Reken, and Pollock, *Third Culture Kids*, 75.

[69] Ibid., 76.

[70] Ibid., 280.

[71] Ibid., 280–81. Van Reken realizes that a pattern of withdrawal and a sense of alienation are not unique to TCKs. However, she indicates that, in TCKs, such responses can be prompted by types of experiences specific to TCKs (Van Reken, "Cultural Marginality for TCKs/ATCKs," 4-5).

[72] Crossman, *Misunderstood*, 127.

TCKs who have developed negative associations with a particular culture may conceivably refrain specifically from interaction with members of that culture (or similar cultures).

The above types of behavior indicate a partial or complete withdrawal from interaction with the surrounding community—and, thus, from certain aspects of culture.[73] However, neither type of behavior entails a complete withdrawal from culture itself. Even TCKs who are primarily at home alone provide various clues about cultural influences. Such clues might include, for example, the choice of clothing, food, eating utensils (if any), and sitting location (e.g., chair or floor) and position; the language(s) used for internal dialogue; the values used in making judgments; the methods of reasoning used; and the kinds of causes (e.g., natural causes, God, evil spirits, chance, destiny, or karma) to which events are attributed. In relation to a TCK who behaves differently in different contexts, such clues may provide information about what we might call the TCK's *heart culture* or *core culture*. The main point, however, is that a TCK who minimizes interaction with others still reflects a particular culture, or set of cultures. Therefore, withdrawing should not be viewed as an *alternative* to gravitating toward one culture, adapting to the surroundings, or blending cultures. Rather, it should be seen as a potential *additional* response.

IV. Visualizing Cultural Responses

In the discussion so far, I have made or implied several points about TCKs' potential responses to exposure to multiple cultures. I have shown that which culture(s) a given ATCK reflects may or may not significantly change based on the surrounding culture. I have also shown that, in a given cultural context, a TCK may exhibit a single culture—either the

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[73] Without interacting with other people, a TCK may only be able to express a limited subset of cultural aspects. E.g., concepts such as power distance (Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations*, 61), shame and honor, and low or high context communication (ibid., 109-110) are not clearly applicable in relation to an isolated individual.

surrounding one or a different one—or some kind of mixture of cultures. In addition, the third culture kid may minimize interaction with members of the surrounding culture. It is also clear that a given TCK does not necessarily behave *analogously* in all cultural contexts. E.g., when the third culture kid is with members of one culture, he or she may behave essentially *like* them; but, when the TCK is with members of another culture, he may behave very *differently from* them.[74] These points collectively indicate that there are many different combinations of ways in which adult third culture kids can potentially behave in the contexts of the various cultures they grew up with.[75]

In this section, I will propose a model for diagrammatically indicating, in simplified form, how a given adult TCK responds in each applicable cultural context. TCKs can draw their own *cultural pattern diagram* to reflect on their cultural pattern, or to explain it to others. I will present several unfinished or finished cultural pattern diagrams. Unless otherwise noted, the finished diagrams represent hypothetical patterns, rather than corresponding directly to specific case studies. The diagrams will serve to illustrate the structure of this type of diagram, as well as to more clearly indicate the great diversity in ATCKs' potential cultural patterns. I will only present diagrams for TCKs exposed to two to four cultures, since that will suffice for illustrative purposes. The structure of diagrams for TCKs with more developmental cultures is analogous. It is important to remember that the diagrams don't indicate *why* a given third culture kid behaves in a particular way.

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[74] This is the case with "gravitating toward one culture."

[75] Some of these combinations may not actually be found in real life.

1. Basic Diagram Model

The general format of cultural pattern diagrams is based on the diagram format I used in "TCKs & Cultural Identity."[76] That format, in turn, was inspired by the TCKI flag, described earlier.[77] Figure 1 shows the basic structure of cultural pattern diagrams. The diagram is bounded by a square. Centered in the square, there is a circle, whose diameter is somewhat less than the length of the square's sides.[78] The whole diagram is divided into sections by lines radiating from the center outward. The number of radiating lines should equal the number of cultures the given TCK was significantly exposed to during his or her developmental years.[79]
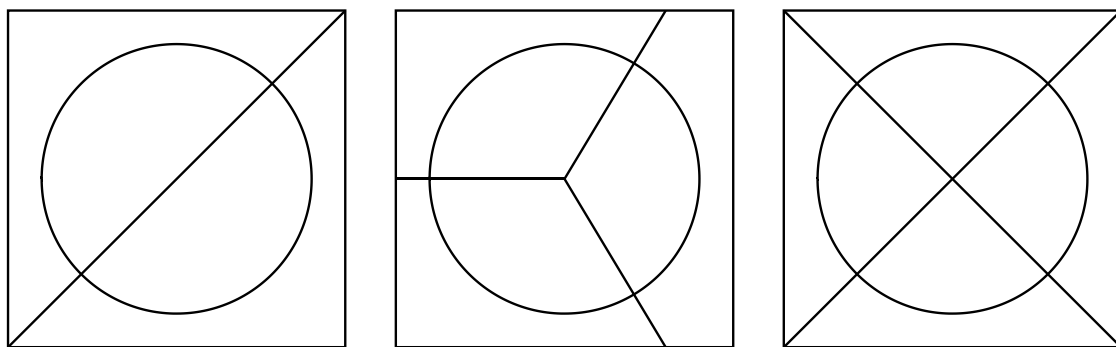
Figure 1. Left to right: Structures of diagrams for ATCKs exposed to 2, 3, and 4 cultures, respectively.

The outer sections of the diagram are each given a different fill color, as shown in figure 2. These colors represent the cultures to which the ATCK was exposed as a child.[80]

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[76] S., "Third Culture Kids and Long-Term Cultural Identity."

[77] Third Culture Kids International, "TCKI Flag."

[78] For the diagrams in this paper, I will use a ratio of 4/5, in order to make the area inside the circle approximately equal to the area outside the circle.

[79] The precise direction of the lines (i.e., which direction the "first" line faces) is up to the person drawing the diagram. However, for reasons explained later, I recommend avoiding vertical radiating lines.

[80] The specific choice of colors is up to the user. However, each color should be easily distinguishable from all the others. For readers inexperienced with choosing colors for diagrams, the following webpage may serve as a good starting point: Cynthia Brewer and Mark Harrower, "Color Brewer 2.0," Pennsylvania State University, accessed April 21, 2018, http://colorbrewer2.org/#type=qualitative&scheme=Accent&n=5. The color schemes on the webpage were designed for cartographers and are based on extensive research. The
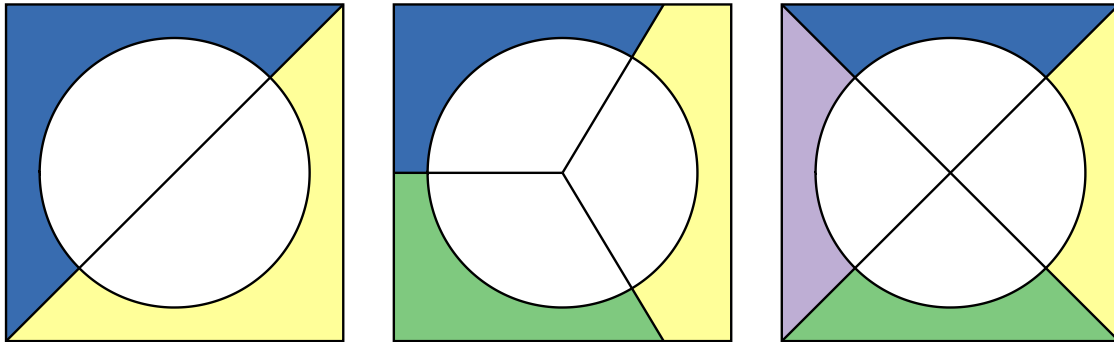
Figure 2. Left to right: Unfinished diagrams for ATCKs exposed to 2, 3, and 4 cultures, respectively.

The inner sections of the diagram represent the worldview, values, and behavior the TCK exhibits in various contexts. Each of the inner sections is shaded. How a given section is shaded is based on how the ATCK behaves around members of the culture represented by the color of the adjacent outer section. E.g., figure 3 represents the cultural pattern of an ATCK who has been significantly exposed to two cultures, but has ended up essentially just reflecting the culture represented by the color blue. (For simplicity, I will speak, for example, of "the blue culture.") Figure 4 represents the cultural pattern of a TCK who adapts virtually completely when he or she interacts with members of any of his or her three childhood cultures. Figure 5 represents the pattern of an ATCK who exhibits the blue culture when with members of the blue or purple cultures, and the yellow culture when with members of the yellow or green cultures. (Perhaps the blue and purple cultures are similar to each other, the yellow and green cultures are similar to each other, and the TCK is most familiar with the blue and yellow cultures.) In all three diagrams, the lines radiating from the middle have been omitted, since they were used solely for explanatory purposes. Meanwhile, the circle (i.e., the arc delimiting the disc) is thicker than before, so that the inner sections remain distinguishable from the outer sections.

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webpage's *qualitative* color schemes work best for most cultural pattern diagrams. The color scheme used in this paper is based on a color scheme from that website.
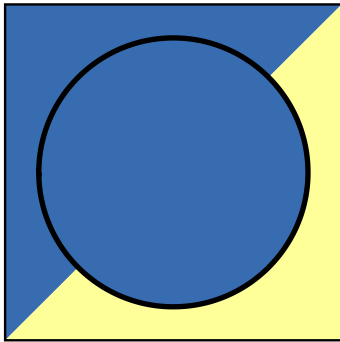
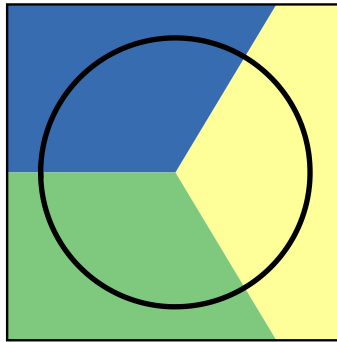Figure 3. Cultural pattern of an ATCK who gravitates toward one of the childhood cultures.

Figure 4. Cultural pattern of a chameleon ATCK exposed to 3 cultures.
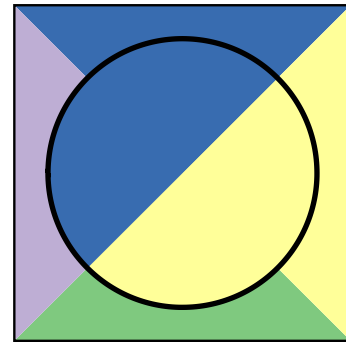

Figure 5. Cultural pattern of an ATCK alternating between 2 dominant cultures.

As we have seen, TCKs may exhibit a blend of ethnolinguistic cultures in a given context. We can symbolize this by using a pattern consisting of stripes of all of the applicable colors.[81] Figure 6 indicates that the corresponding ATCK relatively consistently exhibits a blend of his or her two childhood cultures. Figure 7 represents the blending, across contexts, of three cultures. Figure 8 represents the cultural pattern of a TCK who has been most heavily influenced by the blue culture, but partially adapts when interacting with members of other cultures.
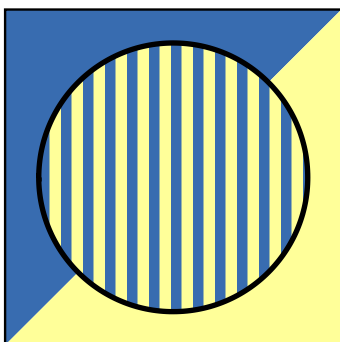
Figure 6. Cultural pattern of an ATCK who consistently exhibits a blend of 2 cultures.
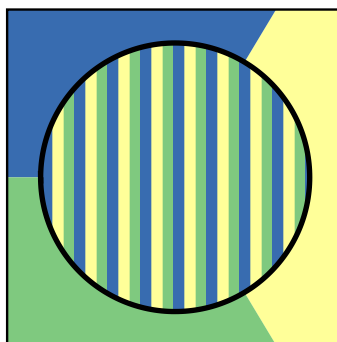
Figure 7. Cultural pattern of an ATCK who consistently exhibits a blend of 3 cultures.
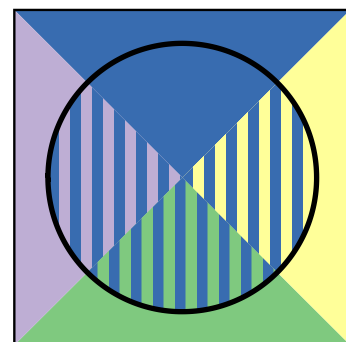
Figure 8. Cultural pattern of an ATCK who partially adapts from the blue culture.

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[81] Patterns consisting of thin stripes of very different colors are often not very visually appealing. However, using such patterns is probably one of the more versatile ways of representing cultural blending. Patterns of horizontal or vertical stripes are generally easiest to create. In this paper, I will always use vertical stripes. That is why I avoided using vertical lines radiating from the center: Vertical boundaries between patterns of vertical stripes could be indistinct or confusing.

As we discussed earlier, some TCKs minimize interaction with other people in general; other TCKs avoid, as much as possible, interacting with members of particular cultures. We can indicate such responses by using dotted lines—or, more accurately, dotted arcs.[82] Specifically, for the part(s) of the circle to which such behavior applies, we replace the solid arc with a dotted one. As I noted earlier, third culture kids reflect a particular culture, or set of cultures, even in solitude. Therefore, in a cultural pattern diagram indicating withdrawal, all of the inner sections are shaded in the usual way. Figure 9 represents the cultural pattern of a TCK who withdraws from those around him or her, but has adopted the yellow culture as his or her personal culture. Figure 10 represents the pattern of someone who withdraws only in the context of one of the cultures. In that context, that TCK exhibits, in non-relational ways, traits of the other two developmental cultures. Figure 11 corresponds to a TCK who only freely interacts with members of one of his or her developmental cultures, but adapts to some degree (perhaps out of necessity) when around members of the other cultures.
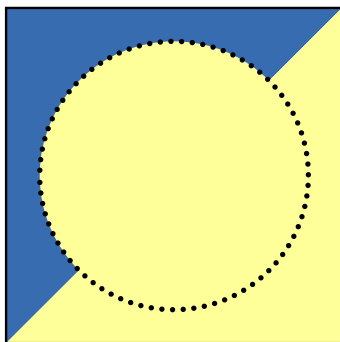

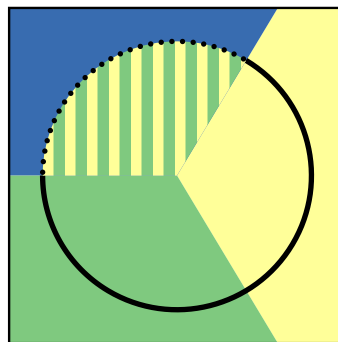Figure 9. Cultural pattern of an ATCK who withdraws from others.

Figure 10. Cultural pattern of an ATCK who avoids interacting with members of 1 culture.
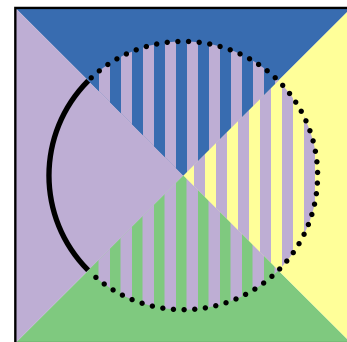
Figure 11. Cultural pattern of an ATCK who withdraws from members of most cultures.

[82] Arguably, dotted arcs would better symbolize interaction between a TCK and those of the surrounding culture, while solid arcs would better symbolize separation, i.e., withdrawal. However, as I have indicated, withdrawal is not a typical long-term response. In most types of diagrams, solid lines are used for typical cases, and dotted lines are used for less common cases (perhaps not least because dotted lines take more time to draw). In addition, the use of dotted arcs to symbolize withdrawal is consistent with the diagram style of S., "Third Culture Kids and Long-Term Cultural Identity," Turtle.

2. Extensions of the Model

We can optionally extend the basic cultural pattern diagram model, presented above, in various ways. One way is by indicating the relative prominence of cultures in a cultural blend through varying stripe width. This can add nuance, potentially making a given diagram represent a TCK's behavior more accurately. E.g., figure 12 corresponds to a third culture kid who exhibits a relatively stable mix of two cultures, but reflects the influence of the blue culture more strongly. Figure 13 represents the pattern of an ATCK who exhibits a blend of cultures that is weighted toward the surrounding culture. (As I indicated earlier, this combination of blending and adapting is probably the most typical response among TCKs.) Figure 14 represents a pattern of limited cultural contrariness. (See the earlier discussion of Derek Fowler's cultural pattern.)
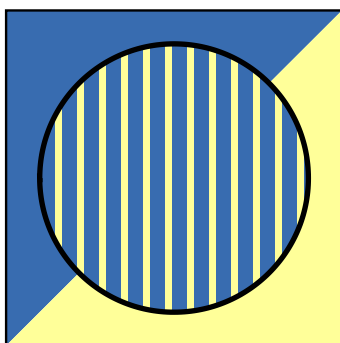

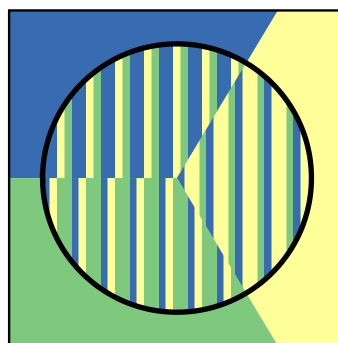Figure 12. Cultural pattern of an ATCK who unevenly blends 2 cultures.

Figure 13. Cultural pattern of an ATCK who exhibits a context-weighted blend of cultures.
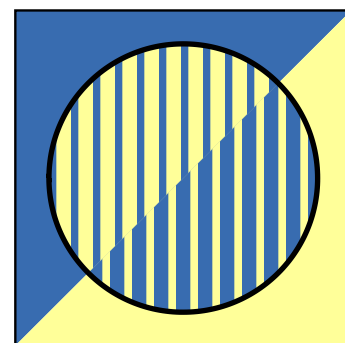
Figure 14. Cultural pattern of an ATCK who somewhat highlights his or her differences.

There are various other extensions we could choose to apply on a case-by-case basis. E.g., we could make outer sections larger or smaller, depending on how heavily a TCK was exposed to the corresponding cultures. This might provide a visual clue about why a third culture kid ended up with a particular cultural pattern. E.g., figure 15 suggests that, during childhood, the corresponding ATCK was exposed more intensely (e.g., for a longer period, at a more crucial time, or in more meaningful ways) to the yellow culture than to either of the

others. The uneven levels of exposure may (or may not) be the reason why the yellow culture has most strongly influenced the third culture kid. Also, for a TCK who doesn't exhibit a consistent personal culture across all contexts, we could indicate the TCK's heart culture (described earlier) with a smaller circle in the center of the diagram. Figure 16 gives an example of this.[83] Yet another extension would be to use similar (but still clearly distinguishable) colors to represent similar cultures. Meanwhile, if we wanted to create a distribution-ready diagram representing the cultural pattern of a specific TCK, we would probably want to label the developmental cultures—either on the diagram itself, or in a legend. We might also choose a specific order for assigning developmental cultures to outer sections. E.g., we could start at the top and move clockwise, assigning cultures in the order in which the TCK was first exposed to them. We could indicate such a choice through appropriate labels, such as "1st culture: [culture name]."
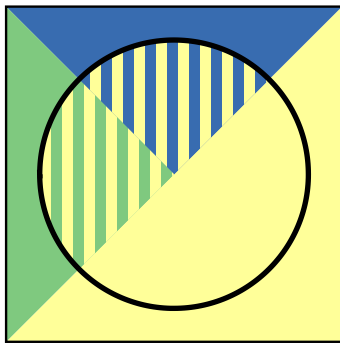

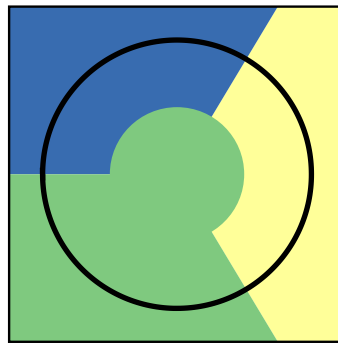Figure 15. Highlighting differences in cultural exposure levels.

Figure 16. Indicating an adapting TCK's heart culture.

V. Conclusion

As we have seen, adult third culture kids may respond to their childhood exposure to multiple cultures in numerous ways. A given TCK's response may differ based on the cultural

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[83] Of course, the heart culture could also be a blend of cultures.

context he or she is in at the moment. In any given cultural context, a TCK's worldview, values, and behavior may reflect that culture, another culture, or a weighted or relatively even blend of elements from multiple cultures. TCKs may also end up withdrawing (to some degree) from interaction with others, or from members of particular cultures. We should remember that TCKs typically also exhibit some psychological and behavioral traits that result not from exposure to particular ethnolinguistic cultures, but from the experience of having made multiple international moves.

We have also seen that, in simplified form, all of the combinations of context-specific responses can be represented diagrammatically. The process of creating a cultural pattern diagram—including the decision of whether to use any of the mentioned extensions—can help a TCK understand himself or herself better.[84] In addition, the diagram can serve as a *starting point* for explaining one's cultural pattern to others (especially to visual learners comfortable with abstractions).

This paper has focused on only one aspect of what might be referred to as TCKs' "cultural identity." One could also ask other questions related to cultural identity, such as the following: To members of which culture(s) (if any) does a TCK feel he or she belongs—regardless of whether his or her behavior resembles theirs?[85] How does a third culture kid describe his or her cultural identity to others—especially in short form?[86] Do members of

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[84] In practice, ATCKs may not know how they would behave in each of the cultural contexts they experienced during childhood. In addition, as Ruth Van Reken pointed out to me in her personal feedback, TCKs may not know exactly which developmental culture(s) particular beliefs, values, and behavioral patterns come from. So, a TCK may end up creating a cultural pattern diagram based on his or her best guesses. Such focused reflection may nevertheless provide new insights or perspectives.

[85] E.g., an individual might feel very comfortable in a community, despite having the status of cultural semi-insider (or even outsider), if he or she has developed strong relationships and acquired a meaningful role in the community.

[86] E.g., how does the TCK respond to questions such as, "Where are you from?" or "What is your nationality (or ethnicity)?"

the cultures the TCK has encountered treat the TCK as an insider or as an outsider? How do they describe him or her to others, in reference to culture or ethnicity? Thus, cultural identity is a broad (and significant) topic. Nevertheless, we need to remember that the various facets of cultural identity form a relatively small subset of all the traits that contribute to a given TCK's identity as a unique individual.

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