

INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION OF ADULT TCKS' LIVES

Ann Baker Cottrell
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Background

describe study participants etc.

Research question

what life patterns do adult TCKs create?

Where & how do they participate in local and global communities

How do they see themselves and what is their world view?

Today focus on one dimension of adult TCKs' lives, albeit a broad one

To what degree and in what ways do TCKs maintain an international dimension in adult lives

start w/ their assessment of the importance of international dimension in current lives

asked to agree, disagree or both with statement

"it is important to have an international dimension in my present life"

Over half agreed and 1/4 said it was not important

the rest said both... some reflecting ambivalence desire for stability and mobility

others qualified, "yes, but"

here are some representative responses

"I don't want it"

"I have the international I need the local"

"I will always be a world citizen but I look forward to learning about the domestic in depth"

"I want to be international but my husband doesn't so we host foreign students"

"The longer I am in the US the more difficult it is to maintain a truly international dimension to life. But my work with Spanish speaking immigrants is inherently cross cultural" (Many referred to working in multicultural American communities as drawing on or similar to international)

"I don't want to live overseas, but I don't want to lose the edge I have by holding on to the international experience"

"I fear becoming settled and complacent, losing my edge"

"It is hard to say it is important to me. It's more like a part of me that I can't remove so how can I judge whether that part is important--it is just me"

"Without it I am a non-being"

"If only watching the news or reading magazines I feel the need to connect to the larger world"

"Yes, but it is at the personal mental discussion level, not an activists role.

Quotes raise two points

- 1) living abroad doesn't necessarily mean interest in continued international involvement
some may have had a bad experience and want no more

Others want to settle and belong. a TCK abroad his whole life said

“I wanted to be American from when I was very young. I was never into the other cultures. In High School all I wanted to do was play in my rock band. When I came back to the US I put all that [international] stuff (physical and emotional) in a box and put it away. I wanted to be completely American. I married a completely American girl, took a non international job and I live in a very American looking house in a very American suburb.”

others are ambivalent

others are determined, even desperate, to maintain the international

- 2) What *IS* international these answers and others suggest little consensus

for some it is a place, it is anywhere but the US

for others it is the people, they must be from somewhere else

others find it in their being -- it is independent of place and people

finally international can be a state of mind, intellectual pursuits

Data for. this presentation focus on external manifestations of international life choices

This does not tap rich inner emotional/intellectual side

We define adult life as begin with High School (HS) graduation

so start here -- 1/2 were still outside US when graduate from HS

mainly mission kids

International Dimension--Education

all but 2% some education post HS (many of those may have studied since return Q)

Vast majority have studied in college or university, most immediately after HS

81% at time of study had BA or more (more now since some were still in college)

Two aspects of higher education used to look at international dimension

field of study and study outside US

we recognize there are other ways can have international dimension to higher ed,
especially in extracurricular activities and friendships/association

- 1) Field of Study 30% international field of study (major or minor) for BA or grad degree

e.g. IR, area study, foreign language, anthropology, international bus

10% major or minor in another language

some want a new language

“I Majored in German because I was never taught it when there”

“I need languages to go abroad”

“it was the easiest and most natural thing for me”

also include some not so obviously international
e.g comp lit, ESL,
art history (mainly because so many say because abroad),

not included are non-international subjects which are international to these TCKs...

I got a teaching degree to teach overseas
Medical because of illness I saw in ..X when I was a child..
love of animals from overseas, want international wildlife career

commitment to international field study increased with degree
22% BA, 49% grad

related to length & age overseas
the longer and older the more international their higher ed.

also to sponsor
Most likely pursue international field study is "other" sponsor
And those abroad the shortest time.
may be the Wow factor, going abroad as epiphany
more like study abroad experience

government TCKs next most likely international study
(they are abroad a long time and in many places)
least likely (<1/4) military and missionary (explanation????)

International dimensions work

1/2 been outside US in occupational role (range from 1 trip to most of career)

includes summer jobs for college students home for summer (home= Germany etc)
State dept and Military provide summer jobs for college age dependents

nearly half (45%) use language in work... up to 5 languages

nearly half (45%) international dimension in work other than work abroad or use language
these 3 types overlap but not entirely same individuals

of those who mention international dimension other than abroad or language

42% mention internationally focused career-- (whole job is international)

area studies, international development/econ,
International Relations, foreign language /ESL, foreign student advisor

rest -- most common is work association with people from other countries

visits from parent/subsidiary company overseas,
joint projects, international clients

for others part of work is international e.g.

professor has some but not all courses w. international focus
management consultant, some international work ditto law

or international dimension is of a linking nature
e.g., produce international materials

comment... not all work outside US is ‘international’ in other respects e.g. military

but for many draw on TCK skills and are used in international -- 2 examples

“my military duties at communication, command control site were as bilingual person, coordinating events between German community & military on site including social events hosted by Germans. Interviewed locals for hiring, translated, interpreted speeches letters, contract negotiations, insurance”

“I was partnership officer, i.e. liaison officer coordinating joint activities with sister German units. I needed to speak German & understand customs to ensure our officers conduct selves properly”

Another way look at international side of work life is work history rather than activities
about 1/4 had no work w. international dimension at time of study

40% limited or minimal international in work history

20% intermediate

11 % most or entire career history was internationally focused work

In code this data again aware of lack consensus re: what is international

a few said job international when work with ethnic minorities in US

but many appear to feel not international unless done outside US

eg. say not international when has important international dimension
teaching Asian lit courses

say teach foreign language to Americans not international (disagree)
tho most will say ESL is international probably cuz involve foreigners

most extreme story... milit intelligence arab language specialist

International Dimension community life

in addition to participation in educational pursuits and work roles

individuals participate in their local and global communities at many levels

We asked these adult TCKs about volunteer activities---

78% reported some community- not for pay activities higher than national rate
of these majority (85%) included an international dimension in some
volunteer/community activity

thus some who do not have international involvement through work seek it in other areas of lives

even if live far from cosmopolitan centers and work in a locally circumscribed occupation can reach out to world by joining organizations such as Amnesty International, working on international adoptions, go on short term social service projects outside the US etc

International volunteer or interest activities often involve intellectual pursuits or interests which may not (though often do) involve interaction with people from other countries

Types of volunteer activity which are international to at least some degree are presented in order of frequency mentioned by respondents

1) participation in bi-national, multi-national or international group

(10% of all who do any volunteer/community work)
e.g. Chinese-American friendship association, Global Nomads International, UN Association, Sister city organization
NAFSA if not in professional association

2) Human rights and welfare activities (6%)

Amnesty, Oxfam, church adopted and supports a village abroad
short social service trips abroad, short volunteer medical service abroad

3) internationally focused interest group within larger organization 6%

e.g. international committee/interest group in church, AAUW

4) Educational activities 5%

involved in student exchange programs, tutor international students
teaching English to foreigners, work to internationalize school curriculum

5) Individual activities, (3%) most typically hosting international students,
sponsor family

also speaking on international topics, arranging visitors (e.g. artists)
translating and interpreting when called on.

6) Mission work, short term evangelizing in other countries 2+
involvement with church missions groups

International visitors

Whether through work or community roles or as a result of past friendship
whether they seek the opportunity or are sought, or by chance

most meet international visitors in their communities and homes

the fact that 3/4 say they welcome the opportunity to meet foreigners suggests they
do reach out or make the effort to connect when aware

meet/entertain (in order of % who have this kind of contact
friends from abroad (48%)
persons in business, industry
international students
international scholars
clergy, missionaries,

90% some though possibly very infrequent contact

2/3 at least several times a year and 1/4 do so at least monthly, some daily

Friends from TCK Days

most though not all of the above are new/adult acquaintances

In addition 80% maintain at least some contact with friends they knew abroad as a child
including school friends, host nationals, friends of parents

most do so in a number of ways, including visits, cards, phone calls, letters
(this was pre email!) Anecdotal evidence suggests TCKs are big
internet fans.

Mission TCKs are most likely to be in contact with friends from TCK days (91%)
not surprising since this sponsorship
generally provides sponsor community abroad, as well as schools
individuals participate in mission community, usually within a single country
many years (for some entire childhood)
and most likely to maintain association with sponsor community as adults (church)
and most likely to have sponsor based (in contrast to school based) reunions
e.g. ICMK conferences in Quito etc

“other” least likely to be in touch
many short time abroad,

increasingly popular way to stay in touch and to see one another is school reunion

These relatively recent

grads of large mission schools appear to have had reunions for longest

grads of DoDD schools slower because typical length of stay in
any school much shorter than for mission kids and no alumni
lists...The Organization Overseas Brats begun in '86 to help DoDD
alumni locate each other and do reunions.

as indication of growth of interest: in 10 years OSB has records of 434 school
alumni groups with approximately 54,000 participants which have held
reunions since 76 most since 81

relative newness of phenomenon seen in fact that 2/3 those graduating since 85
have been to a school reunion vs. 28% who graduated before 1955

Finally look at international activity solely in terms of activity outside the US

2/3 enough interest in getting abroad that they keep a current passport either because they regularly use it or if not
“because you never know when the opportunity to go abroad will arise and you need to be ready to seize it”

3/4 would like to live abroad again, though many qualified that with comments such as when kids are older, for short time, in particular countries or not in certain places

Great majority (89%) have been outside US since high school grad again... for some this was a single trip
for others regular feature of professional or personal lives
for some this was only staying at home w. family in UK, Japan etc post HS

look at ways have been abroad

most common (not surprising) holiday (61%)

work or volunteer work abroad for days to 6 months (52%)

living abroad for 6 months to many years (30%)

most because of own employment, some with spouse

of those who work outside US > 6 months at a time

most work for US employers

but 28% for host country employer (suspect > other US)

17% International or multinational employers or self

Study outside US (30%)

most do so on sponsored study abroad programs w. university
w. fellowship e.g. Fulbright

Other ways (probably > would find among US students in gen)

directly enroll in host institution (38%) some whole degree
American univ campus overseas, e.g. U of Maryland

for some in these categories study outside US
better term than study abroad (which suggests from
base in US university) cuz some attend university
near home... which happens to be abroad.

family visits (25%) underrepresents cuz no direct question

fact that nearly 2/3 have been abroad in more than one of the ways just listed suggests that for many getting abroad is fairly integral part of lives.

Going back

To what extent have they returned to country or regions in which lived as child

To what extent have they explored new territory as adult

How do they feel about visiting where lived as TCK

85% *disagree* w. statement “I have no interest in visiting where I lived as a child”
so there is an interest, but often qualified some examples of comments:

yes:

“I need to” “can’t wait” “get me outa here”

“I entered a profession about which I knew nothing solely for travel to India & Pakistan. On these business trips I felt at home for the only time in my adult life”

“I feel a strong connection to where I’ve lived as a child, especially India where I was for 11 yrs. I find whenever I go through a major change in life I have a strong desire & longing to go back”

“I want to share this with partner/kids” “want them to know that side of me”

mixed

this country yes, that country no

I often dream of visiting the country but never want to see that hellhole of a boarding school

can’t go home (literally)

“parents are persona non grata there, I can’t go back”

“I married an Israeli and converted to Judiasim I can’t go back to Saudi where I spent 11 of the most formative years of my life”

Iran is closed to Americans

“My heart is literally grieved with the closing of Clark AFB. It was always my dream to see those flame trees again and the flight line where dad and I stood”

“The tragedy that was Lebanon took ten years to get over... I cried

can’t go home emotionally

“I think things have changed for the worse. I prefer to remember as it was while I was growing up. Besides there are too many other places to see”

“I don’t want to spoil my memories by seeing those places thru the glasses of maturity”

“couldn’t bear to see MacDonalds on the Champs Elysee

not interested

some just not interested, others say prefer to see new places

Did they return?

close to half (45%) have been back to at least one country in some way as adult
even more have been back to the region though not necessarily to specific country
actually more because, especially on where holiday, many said, all over world

In terms of going abroad for instrumental reasons (work or study, vs holiday)

considerably more likely to go on short work related trips than
work abroad > 6 months or study abroad.

when look at how returned to where lived as kid somewhat more likely
return to region for long periods > 6 months than for study or brief work visits

nearly 30% of those who have been abroad have lived > 6 months in region
where were as child

Is there a difference among sponsor groups in returning to region where lived as child?

since most likely live in Europe and most likely to work and study in Europe
expect group which had TCK experience in Europe to be most likely

Not case... Mission kids, the least likely to have lived in Europe
are most likely to go home at least on holiday

2/3 Mks have been back to Asia, Latin America or Africa.

Milit next most likely visit home region -- mainly Europe

Tendency to visit where have lived also related to length of time overseas
at age at which lived overseas (which of course related to sponsor)
-- longer and older overseas more likely to return.

SUM

Appears that having home abroad as child does influence adult life decisions
this groups would appear to have far greater international dimension in lives than other
Americans.... even educated Americans I'd guess (though no comparative data)

To review most have some international dimension in their work,
(include work abroad or use other languages in work)
3/4 meet international visitors in their community at least yearly
80% maintain contact with someone they knew overseas as child
90% have been outside US as adults at least once

both drawn to international activities, and to going abroad
and lack inhibitions to do so

also many have language to support

should add 75% report use of some language other than English

1/2 > 1, as many as 8

and 20% use other languages regularly

Even with this level of international involvement (although for some superficial)

60% agree “I have more transnational knowledge skill and interest than I have the opportunity to use”

close with a few quotes on this subject

many disagreed and point out how they have used skills & knowledge

many others agree, often point out lack of opportunity where live

other responses a little more complex

“At times I’m able to directly use my past experience. Most of the time people don’t know of my past so they assume I am not aware of various cultures.”

I think my comfort with living under very different standards of living and my experience are difficult to relate and are not understood as skills

However I suspect that my transnational knowledge, though more than my peers’ is superficial re: real cultural issues of India because we were always separate and “observers.” Also regarding the religion & politics we were exposed to superficial levels

But I don’t feel my claim to being “international” is “legitimae” in some ways because though I love Korea & call it home, I don’t know that much about it -- I’m terribly ignorant considering I lived there 18 years

I have used my skills somewhat in the past, but have lived a rather schizophrenic existence mainly because I am unwilling to choose one or the other -- international or rootedness in a very American community

This was once too true, but now it’s an asset. I feel lucky but also know this is due to my own hard work -- continually insisting on integrating all my diverse experience and using them rather than suppressing or forgetting them