



Invited summaries of research for scholar and practitioner advocates for, traditionally hidden college student populations

Current Hidden College Student Populations

May include those who have foster care or justice-involved experiences, who are survivors of sexual violence, who are recovering drug or alcohol addicts, who face housing insecurity, or who are considered Third Culture Kids

R is for Thursday

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National Conference for Engaged Scholarship on Hidden Student Populations

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The Scholar-Practitioner is a monthly publication of invited research summaries that target the research-to-practice gap for U.S. scholar and practitioner advocates for former foster youth and other hidden college student populations.

This publication reinforces the work of the **National Conference for Engaged Scholarship on Hidden Student Populations (NCHP)** by providing a space to share research applications for practice. NCHP was the first research conference dedicated to this interdisciplinary area of study. The NCHP 3rd conference will be held at Oklahoma State University, September 14-16, 2022.

Third Culture Kids (TCKs) and their Sense of Belonging on U.S. College Campuses

Elsheikh, W. (2020). *Third culture kids (TCKs) and their sense of belonging on U.S. college campuses*. [Master's Thesis, Oregon State University]. https://ir.library.oregonstate.edu/concern/graduate_thesis_or_dissertations/

Research Summary

Third Culture Kids (TCKs) are people raised in a culture other than their parents' or their passport country (country of nationality) for a significant part of their early developmental years (Van Reken & Pollock, 2010). TCKs are a rapidly emerging student population within colleges and universities. TCKs balance the myriad of experiences of growing up among worlds with the amplified implications that it entails as college students (Van Reken & Pollock, 2010).

This study attempts to fill the gap between the TCK literature and the college student literature, by providing analysis of narratives from TCK college students on their interpretation of their own TCK identity.

The three main research questions that initiated this study are:

- What is the TCK definition of sense of belonging?
- What factors influence sense of belonging for TCKs?
- How does their sense of belonging influence their level of engagement with campus activities?

Collaborative Research (Engard, 2010) and Grounded Theory (Glaser et al., 1968) were the methodologies I maintained throughout my data collection process. Collaborative research is a form of relational research that invites rich dialogue between and among participants and the researcher. Grounded theory is a process of utilizing inductive reasoning while analyzing the data points through methodological gathering and creation of theories based on the results (Glaser et al., 1968). I had a total of 9 participants from two different college campuses, Oregon State University and Lewis & Clark College.

After analyzing the six main themes that emerged using narratives from the TCK participants, the following are the most dominant findings that emerged:

- The standard TCK definition no longer applies to all TCKs
- TCK participants are taking ownership in their TCK identity
- A shift in TCK definition is underway
- Different components of sense of belonging were considered important by TCKs

Conversations with the participants signal a shift in the TCK definition, especially with the increased globalization and travel in the world. In addition, different participants associated various elements on the college campus to matter for their sense of belonging.

Some needed a TCK mentor to feel heard, while others needed culturally competent faculty members and staff. These findings have resulted in a plethora of suggestions for Higher Education and Student Affairs (HESA).

These findings imply that four main campus sectors need to contribute: faculty members, student affairs staff, student peers and campus departments. Faculty members and student affairs staff need to be culturally competent to provide a welcoming environment for students as they have the greatest percentage of student interaction. All campus departments will benefit from an increased awareness of TCKs including cultural resource centers, counseling services, student engagement and student life and housing services.

Based on the implications, outlined below are five main

recommendations that can be applied by practitioners and college campuses to address TCK college students' needs:

1. An Identifying Process for Incoming TCK College Students

This includes having a question on the admissions application such as "Have you ever lived in another country for more than one year due to a parent's work?" Or "Do you identify as a Third Culture Kid (TCK)?" This will allow incoming students who already know that they are TCKs to feel acknowledged in their identity.

2. TCK Hiring, Training, & Professional Development for Staff

A direct method to increase TCK awareness on campus is to hire TCK identifying individuals. Adding TCK awareness language to job descriptions when hiring will aid in recruiting individuals who already have that expertise. Similarly, TCK training for existing staff members is just as important to address the need for having culturally aware and competent staff.

3. TCK Events & Programming

Providing TCK-specific programming and events will aid in developing a sense of community for students, acknowledging their TCK identity as well as providing an opportunity for TCKs and non-TCKs to meet and connect.

4. TCK Affinity Space on Campus

A designated TCK affinity space on campus would be the ideal recommendation to incorporate

on campus. It would acknowledge TCKs in their identity and provides a safe space for them on campus. Additionally, hiring a TCK advocate in this affinity space will serve as a mentor figure for them too.

5. TCKs Themselves

The last recommendation I would like to give TCKs is to take note of their positive characteristics! It is such a privilege to grow up with a global worldview, impressive adaptability skills as well as an understanding of diversity in all its forms from a very young age. It is important that TCKs take ownership in how they define their TCK experience.

This was a brief research summary of a more detailed thesis study that I have poured my heart and soul into during my time as a graduate student at Oregon State University. This summary provides a quick overview of the main findings and implications for the TCK identity and college students. I truly hope you find it of use to implement these findings in your own campus departments to continue to support underrepresented college student demographics such as TCKs.

Engard, N. C. (2010, April 1). *Collaborative research*. Collaborative Librarianship. <https://link.galegroup.com.ezproxy.proxy.library.oregonstate.edu/apps/doc/A239529521/AONE?sid=lms>

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Van Reken, R. E. V., & Pollock, D. C. (2010). *Third Culture Kids 3rd Edition: The Experience of Growing Up Among Worlds*. Quercus.

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Sept. 14-16, 2022

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