

This essay will be based on a case study (see appendix 1) and will examine how barriers in communication can lead to social exclusion and will refer to the concepts of ethnocentrism and cultural relativism.

TCKs stands for Third Culture Kids who are defined by the authors as individuals who have lived in a different culture to that of their parents during their developmental years (Pollock, Van Reken and Pollock, 2017). The suggestion to Third Culture appears as the first culture relates to the parent's culture, the second culture refers to the country in which they live, and the third culture refers to an amalgamation of these cultures within the individual (Sobre-Denton, 2017; see appendix 2).

Culture is a very contested subject among researchers and is described as 'a complex multilevel construct' (Madalina, 2020, p.226) 'that is learned and shared between members to enable interaction with one another with the least amount of ambiguity and misunderstanding' (Andreatta and Ferraro, 2013, p. 36). Some of the layers proposed by researchers within their models and frameworks include: perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, norms, patterns of behaviour, language and communication, values, symbols, rituals, practices and artifacts (Hall, Neitz and Battani, 2003; Hofstede, 2001; Rosseau, 1995). These layers are taken for granted within a culture as the characteristics are acquired, learnt, and shared amongst its members (Burr, 2015). Culture has been compared to an iceberg, where a small portion is exposed and visible while a large proportion is unnoticed on the surface and is rooted deep underneath the water (Pollock, Van Reken and Pollock, 2017). Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010) further distinguish culture from personality and human nature - with human nature being at the bottom of the pyramid, personality on the top of the pyramid and culture sandwiched between (see appendix 3).

Culture influences ways of thinking, acting and feeling that originate from one's social environment and yet each individual also has a unique personality and inherited human nature which influence the programming of the mind (Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010). For TCKs this mental programming has needed to adapt, at least once, to understand the social rules of their new environment, which over time, will redefine which group they belong to (Pollock, Van Reken and Pollock, 2017). This transition of adapting to the new culture reshapes the individuals' cultural identity through verbal and nonverbal communication (Sobre-Denton, 2017). This process is crucial for individuals because the need to belong and feel accepted are important to humans and influence how one perceives their personal value (Leary, 2006).

Intercultural communication requires flexibility to understand and decipher the new and diverse context (Jandt, 2004). Feeling like an outsider can cause instability, with stability only being re-established when the desired social interactions provide security, remain unthreatened and offer social inclusion (MacDonald and Leary, 2005). Bateson wrote about patterns of interaction and explored how sense making is woven together by immediate experience, and how this is recognised and discerned by the individual and then the impact this has upon relationships (Lock and Strong, 2010). Throughout the experience rests communication, another facet of culture which can be said to be a dynamic and transactional process, that uses codes and symbols and these must be learnt and shared for maximum transaction (Jandt, 2004).

Culture influences worldview and teaches how to understand and process the world around us (Jandt, 2004), while ‘cultural relativity is a cognitive tool that helps us understand why people act and think the way they do’ (Andreatta and Ferraro, 2013, p. 19). The experiences of a TCK can be a great asset for intercultural communication as many develop skills to interpret diverse codes, however when TCKs return to their country of origin these same experiences can lead them to social exclusion and marginality (Bonebright, 2010). This encountered social dilemma exposes a conflict between the cultural differences of the home culture and the third culture within the individual (Lange *et al*, 2014). The characteristics of culture aforementioned, may not be understood by the TCK in the home country and a communication barrier may arise. Communication is ‘ones ability to share who we are and what we know with others’ (Liu, Volvic and Gallois, 2019, p.56) and interference can create a communication gap and ‘when a misunderstanding arises, we abandon neutrality and cultural sensitivity and our language swings back into culture-bound mode’ (Lewis, 2018, p.67).

The culture mode of a TCK is highly mobile and adjusting to a culture that one is connected to and yet does not understand can be very distressing, can impact upon one’s sense of identity, while igniting feelings of grief and loss (Pollock, Van Reken and Pollock, 2017). Learning to understand the patterns of the culture can help make sense of one’s social and personal experience whilst recognising the diversity within how and what is known (Lock and Strong, 2010). The cultural values of the parent’s home country can appear so different from the cultural values learnt within their host country. And learning to adapt communication for a culture that you should already ‘fit’ into may generate reverse culture shock (Liu, Volvic and Gallois, 2019). Culture shock is a ‘form of psychological distress that appears in response to one entering into an unfamiliar culture’ (Andreatta and Ferraro, 2013, p.36). And in reverse

culture shock 'the home culture is compared adversely to the admired aspects of the new culture' (Jandt. 2004, p. 322).

Reviewing the case study, the marginalisation experienced by the TCK within their parent's home culture may be reflected as an expression of ethnocentrism (Pollock, Van Reken and Pollock, 2017). Ethnocentrism refers 'to the belief that one's own culture is superior to other cultures' (Liu, Volvic and Gallois, 2019, pg.38). Andreatta and Ferraro (2013, p.18) describe ethnocentrism as 'viewing the rest of the world through the narrow lens of one's cultural perspectives'. The values embedded within one's mind are implicit, and it is important to question personal motives (Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010). Cultural values influence individual behaviour and attitudes which are reflected in one's evaluations, as described in Schwartz's cultural taxonomy (Schwartz, 2012). As TCKs embrace their cultural experience it may be difficult to notice that they too hold an ethnocentric viewpoint (Pollock, Van Reken and Pollock, 2017; Andreatta and Ferraro, 2013).

References

- Andreatta and Ferraro (2013) *Elements of Culture*. Wadsworth: Cengage Learning.
- Bonebeight, D.A. (2010) 'Adult Third Culture Kids' *Human Resource Development International*, 13(3) pp. 351-359.
- Bonvillain, N. (2014) *Language, Culture and Communication*. New Jersey: Pearson. Seventh Edition.
- Burr, V. (2015) *Social Constructionism*. Hove: Routledge. Third Edition.
- Hall, J. R, Neitz, M.J., Battani, M (2003) *Sociology on Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Hofstede, G. (2001) *Culture's consequences*. London: SAGE Publications
- Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G. J. and Minkov, M. (2010) *Cultures and Organizations*. London: McGraw-Hill Education. Third Edition. 4
- Jandt, F.E. (2004) *An introduction to intercultural communication*. London: SAGE Publications. Fourth Edition.
- Lange, P.A.M. et al (2014) *Social Dilemmas*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Leary, M.R. (2006) *Interpersonal Rejection*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Lewis, R. (2018) *When Cultures Collide*. London: Nicolas Brealey International. Fourth Edition.
- Liu, S., Volcic, Z. and Gallois, C. (2019) *Intercultural Communication*. London: SAGE. Third Edition.
- Lock, A. and Strong, T. (2010) *Social Constructionism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- MacDonald, G. and Leary, M.R. (2005) 'Why Does Social Exclusion Hurt?' *Psychological Bulletin*, 131(2), pp.202-223.
- Madalina, D. (2020) 'Culture as a Multi-Level and Multi-Layer Construct' *Review of International Comparative Management*, 21(2) pp. 226-235.
- Pollock, D.C., Van Reken, R.E. and Pollock, M. V. (2017) *Third Culture Kids*. London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing
- Rosseau, D.M (1995) *Psychological contracts in organizations*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Schwartz, S.H. (2012) 'An Overview of the Schwartz Theory of Basic Values' *International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 2(1) pp.1-20.
- Sobre-Denton, M. (2017) 'Multicultural third culture building' *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, 45, no page numbers. Available at: <https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/docview/1979153434?OpenUrlRefId=info:xri/sid:primo&accountid=130472> (Accessed:21 January 2021).
- Taras, V., Rowney, J., and Steel, P. (2009) 'Half a century of measuring culture' *Journal of International Management*, 15(4) pp.357-373.

Appendix 1

Title: EXCESSIVE ANGER AT "HOME" CULTURE AND PEERS

'Ironically, Third Culture Kids (TCK's) can often be culturally tolerant anywhere but in their own passport culture. In a "foreign culture," most TCKs will usually keep quiet about their opinions or only express them to fellow TCKs or expatriates. These rules seem to change, however, on re-entry. Suddenly some TCKs feel free to express every negative opinion they have about their home culture, no matter who is around. While chronic put-downs may be an

unconscious defence for the TCKs' own feelings of insecurity or rejection, such remarks further alienate them from everyone around them. But, like it or not, they are (usually) a member of this group by birth and citizenship. In affirming one part of their experience and themselves, they reject another' (Pollock, Van Reken and Pollock, 2017, p.280).

Appendix 2

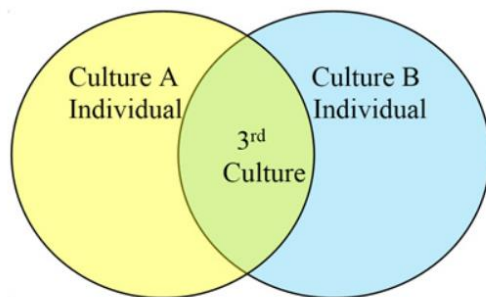
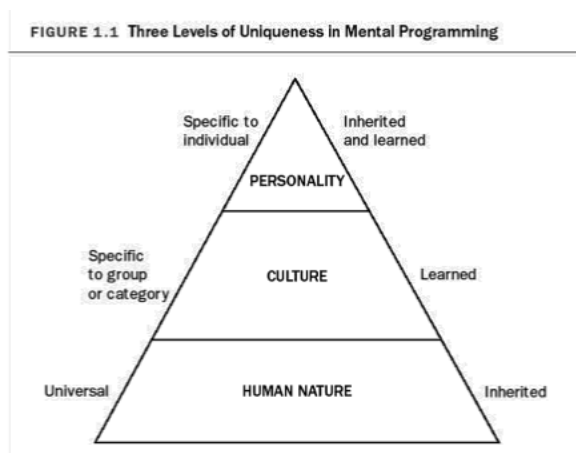


Figure 1: *Traditional Third Culture Theory*
Context: Culture A = home-culture; Culture B = host-culture *or*
Culture A = host-culture; Culture B = home-culture
Overlapping space = third culture

(Sobre-Denton, 2017, no page)

Appendix 3



(Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010, pg.6)