



Navigating International Transitions And Raising Third Culture Kids (TCKs)

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Navigating International Transitions and Raising Third Culture Kids (TCKs)

SESSION 1 (March 19)

- Understanding the TCK Experience

SESSION 2 (April 2)

- Identity and Belonging in a Multicultural World

SESSION 3 (April 16)

- Building Resilience in Globally Mobile Families

SESSION 4 (April 30)

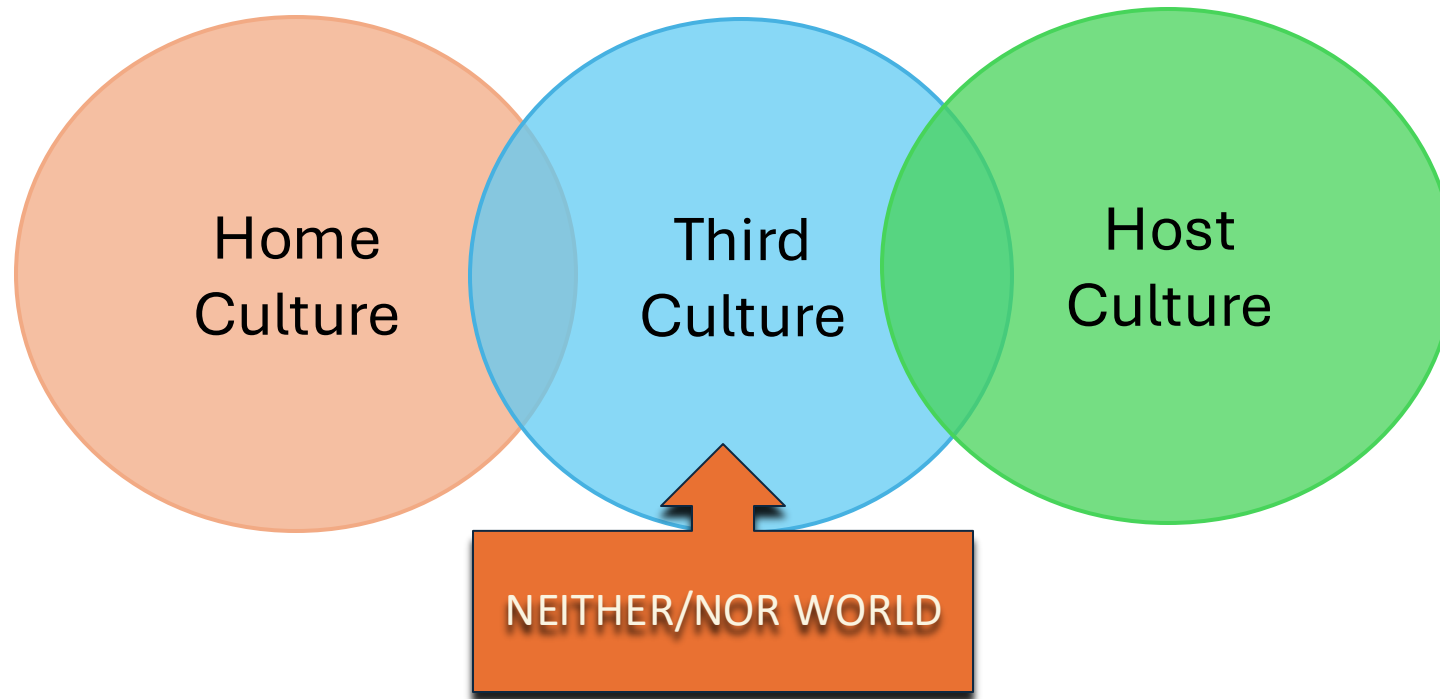
- Relocation – Leaving Well, Arriving Ready

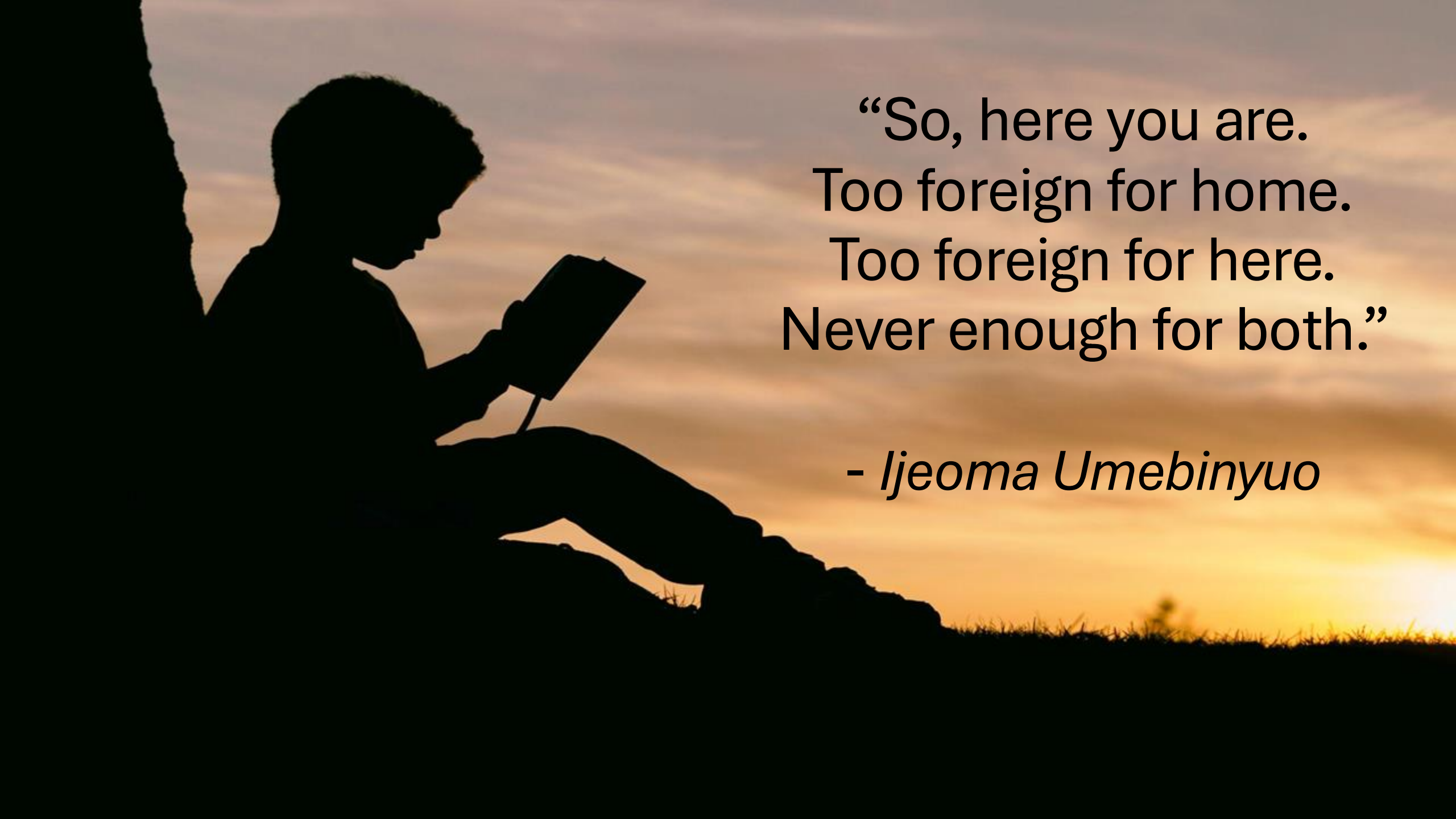
Understanding Third Culture Kids (TCKs)



Third Culture Kids (TCKs)

A Third Culture Kid (TCK) is a person who has spent a significant part of his/her developmental years outside their parents' culture



A silhouette of a person sitting on a grassy hill, leaning against a tree trunk on the left, and reading a book. The background is a sunset sky with warm orange and yellow hues. The person is in profile, facing right.

“So, here you are.
Too foreign for home.
Too foreign for here.
Never enough for both.”

- *Ijeoma Umehinyuo*



Identity and Belonging in a Multicultural World

Identity vs. Belonging

IDENTITY

Who am I?



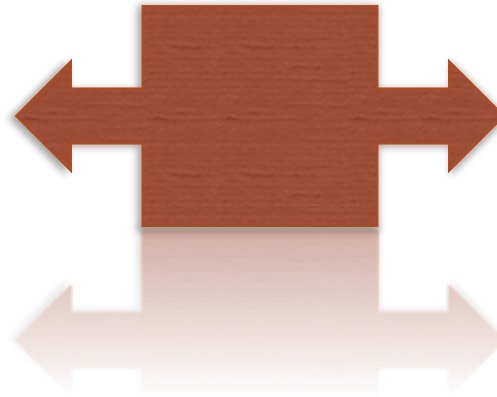
IMAGE OF SELF

BELONGING

Where do I belong?



THE WORLD AROUND US



A World of Changing Cultures



Why High Mobility During Childhood Matters



Frequency of Separations

Changing Places

Changing Cultures

Hidden Losses

The Iceberg of Hidden Losses



Home

School

Friends

Food

Teachers

Coaches

Neighborhood

Belongings

Stability

Status

Language/Accent

Emotional Safety

Traditions/Rituals

Identity

Belonging

Extended Family

Future Dreams

Emotional Landscape of TCKs



CHAMELEONS

- Try to find a “same as” identity
- Hide their time lived in other places
- Try to conform externally through clothes, language, attitudes



SCREAMERS

- Try to find a “different from” identity
- They will let other people around know that they are not like them and don’t plan to be



WALLFLOWERS

- Try to find a “non-identity”
- Prefer to sit in the sidelines and watch rather than engage in the activities at hand



ADAPTERS

- They just “are”
- They feel comfortable in their own skin
- Don’t have a need to conform or rebel
- They slip right into a new place and move ahead

Why High Mobility During Childhood Matters

	ADULTS	TCKs
STAGE OF IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT	Established identity; change layered onto existing sense of self	Still forming their identity; highly impressionable and in search of belonging
SENSE OF CONTROL	Usually participate in decision-making; move is an opportunity or challenge.	No choice in the move; feel powerless.
CULTURAL REFERENCE POINTS	Compare with culture of origin	Don't have a single cultural "home" to refer to
BELONGING	Internally anchored (family, work, values)	Peer belonging is central and often disrupted
COPING MECHANISMS	Develop cognitive coping strategies (rationalizing differences, understanding cultural differences)	May become chameleons, wallflowers or screamers as coping strategies.

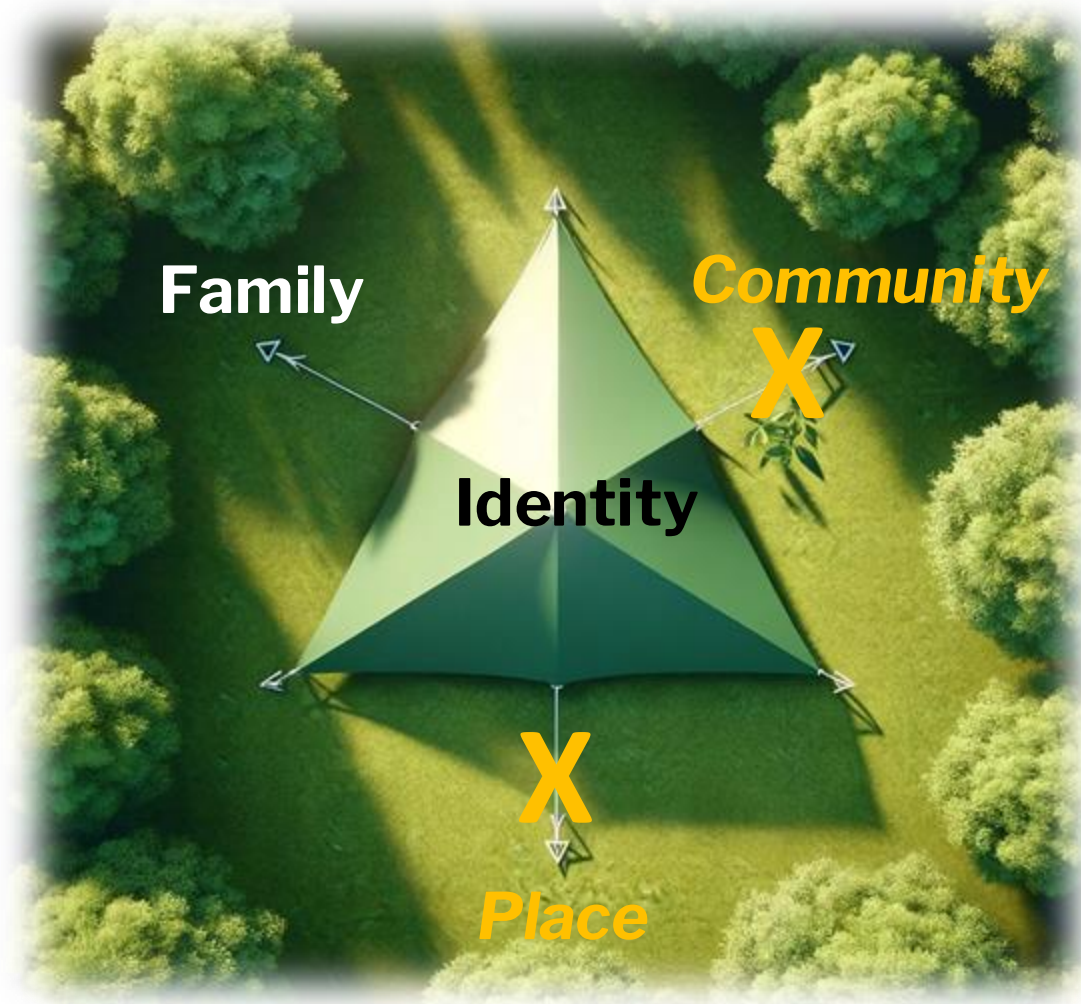
Why High Mobility During Childhood Matters

	ADULTS	TCKS
IMPACT ON IDENTITY	Identity is impacted by mobility, but retains core cultural anchors from earlier life.	Identity is formed through mobility; culture is lived and interpreted.
GRIEF AND HIDDEN LOSSES	More likely to suppress grief and losses due to work and family responsibilities.	Experience “hidden losses” which may be unrecognized.
FAMILY AS ANCHOR	Adults rely on family for support; carry the role of anchor for children.	Family is primary anchor; parental awareness and support are crucial.
BENEFITS	Gain new perspectives; broaden worldview; cultural agility.	Adaptability; empathy; multilingualism; cross-cultural skills.

Personal Identity Formation



Personal Identity Formation of TCKs



Identity vs. Belonging

IDENTITY

- *“Who am I?”*
- *“Who am I in this world of shifting cultures?”*
- Inward
- Consistent self-image despite change
- Clarity, stability and authenticity

BELONGING

- *“Where do I fit?”*
- *“Where and with whom do I feel at home?”*
- Outward
- Forming bonds and being accepted by others
- Safety, connection and inclusion

The Tug of War Between Identity and Belonging

To belong, I must
blend in.

But to be authentic,
I must stand out.



How Parents Can Support Identity & Belonging

A.N.C.H.O.R.

Affirm their story

Normalize complexity

Create safe spaces

Help name behaviors

Offer identity mirrors

Reinforce internal anchors



"Our job as parents isn't to define identity for our children—but to hold space while they discover it for themselves."

– *Ruth Van Reken*



Thank you!

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