[**Refusing to Be Erased**](http://news.tckid.com/refusing-to-be-erased/)

[19 Comments](http://news.tckid.com/refusing-to-be-erased/#disqus_thread)

**Refusing to Be Erased:**

Acknowledging the TCK Experience

*[An exploratory opinion piece by Myra Dumapias.  Opinions shared in this article do not necessarily reflect the opinions of TCKid as an organization, or its staff and volunteers.]*

[](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/2.0/legalcode)

**“Erase and Rewind” by Neys Fadzil**

I love great conversation.  I love stimulating intellectual discourse, and I love passionate debates that stay within the boundaries of mutual respect.  However, there are some topics that are not up for debate.

If I had a conversation with colleagues about how I made my career decisions, most likely, they would not argue with me about it.  If I spoke about my influential teachers and role models, they probably would not debate me in response.  If I described the utmost significant relationships and events that impacted my life, people probably would not challenge me about it, and it would be unthinkable to minimize my expressions of reverence about family members who have passed away.

Most people would not scoff at matters close to another person’s heart or stories out of someone’s struggles, battle scars (literal or metaphorical) and victories. Yet, for some odd reason, there still seems to be a point that some people doubt, minimize or challenge:  [the Third Culture Kid (TCK) identity and/or experience](http://tckid.com/what-is-a-tck.html).

***It is as if the cause of what many TCK’s experience as adults cannot be due to growing up as a global nomad or in a mobile family.  The cause always has to be something else…***

Throughout the years, I have heard the below responses that minimize the impact of a globally or culturally mobile childhood and adolescence, the first three of which I heard before I knew the term TCK:

“Yes, but I’m talking about real childhood struggles, like about money, gangs or drugs, not just emotions.”

“Maybe you’re affected this much about (best friend) leaving because you don’t have brothers or sisters.”

“But what does moving frequently have to do with romantic relationships?”

“You sure it’s not because you’re single?”

“Oh, I always wanted to travel and you’re complaining because you travelled so much?”

“You’re just being nostalgic.”

“Isn’t it just abandonment issues?”

“But I know some military brats and they didn’t complain.”

It is as if the cause of what many TCK’s experience as adults cannot be due to growing up as a global nomad or in a mobile family.  The cause always has to be something else: being overly nostalgic, sensitive, single, sheltered, abandoned, the list goes on.  Some people cannot seem to accept that the frequent relocations or good-byes, the ever changing cross-cultural environments, the occasional separation from one or both parents, the constant pattern of leaving and making new friends, the sheer impact of multiple losses and other experiences can lead to the struggle to belong, the risk for depression (and in some cases, risk for suicide and PTSD), the existence of certain attachment issues, the itchy feet, or the sense of isolation.

***…If adult children of parents with career paths entirely different from each other, but share the commonality of global or cross cultural mobility, have found validation among one another in ways other identities or experiences do not, then it is not an imagined correlation***

Of course, the effects are not only negative.  There are also the gifts that are common, such as the tendency to be able to engage in dialogue or relate with just about anyone, global consciousness, innovative thinking, sharp observational skills, the ability to adapt to different environments, insight to cultural nuances, an ability to navigate language with advanced analytical and communication skills and other talents.  However, the negative impact is something that is either underestimated or just dismissed.

It is true that global mobility or mobility through different cultures is not the only cause of these traits or experiences. Non-TCK’s can also share certain traits with TCK’s.  However, if adult children of parents with career paths entirely different from each other but share the commonality of global or cross cultural mobility have found validation among one another in ways other identities or experiences do not, then it is not an imagined correlation. It should not be dismissed.

It is also true that in the grand scheme of everything within the scope societal problems, the struggles of TCK’s do not have the same impact as the struggles of youth born into forced slavery or trafficking, for example, or major illnesses or extreme poverty.  Still, for those who are affected, it can impact many things in life.  This is why the persons who know the impact of certain experiences should be experts of these experiences, rather than someone who never experienced them.

***Some Words for My Readers:***

**For my readers who may have thought or uttered statements similar to the above,** I am not angry with you and do not hold anything against you.  I only ask that you try to “listen” to the rest of what I have to share, letting me be the “teacher” for once.  Questions from a place of curiosity are welcome, but please not from antagonism.  I do not presume to know more than you about your life and the significance of your experiences.  In return, I respectfully ask you to see how you cannot be the expert of my life experiences nor that of thousands of people who have benefitted from discovering they were not alone in our shared experiences.  I ask this from you especially if you interact with TCK’s or provide any services specifically geared towards TCK’s (military brats, foreign-service brats, missionary kids, corporate dependents, and others who grew up globally mobile).

**For my readers for whom this may be new or more in-depth knowledge,** I hope this will be somewhat informative for you.  I appreciate your time in even reading this far and am grateful for any support for the TCK tribe.  If, through your further discovery of other TCK topics, you find yourself relating to this identity, welcome to the tribe!

**For my readers who may fit the TCK definition,** but do not necessarily relate to how global nomads have connected with one another around their TCK experiences, I am grateful to those who support us nonetheless. To those who were alongside us on our journey at some point but “got over it,” I celebrate the diverse ways different people have moved on from the initial stages of discovering the TCK identity. Continuing to work in this field as it evolves is simply my way of “getting over it”

**Last but not least, for my readers who can relate to my experiences above,** may the remainder of this article remind you that your voice is valuable and that you are not alone.  **To the early community leaders, artists, writers, researchers, speakers, educators and supporters out there,** I would not even be here discussing this were it not for the hard work you have paved the trail with, which you blazed for us.  I am deeply grateful for your sacrifices.

Written by TCKid Admin

December 13, 2014 at 2:54 pm

Posted in [Third Culture Kids News](http://news.tckid.com/category/third-culture-kids-news/), [Uncategorized](http://news.tckid.com/category/uncategorized/)

Tagged with [Military brats](http://news.tckid.com/tag/military-brats/)