

Book Releases and Reviews

New Release: *Third Culture Kids—The Children of Educators in International Schools*

By Daniel Lincoln

As many of us know and as author Ettie Zilber explains in her new book, *Third Culture Kids* (or 'TCKs' for short) are children who follow their globe-trotting parents around the world, integrating the traditions and elements of many different cultures into their own.

Dr. Zilber draws on many years of research to explore one specific section of this group: "EdKids", the children of international school educators. Allowing them to voice their own opinions, feelings and stories for the first time, the author unearths a positive, enthusiastic and self-assured group with a strong sense of belonging to others of the same background.

Zilber's work will strike a chord with international school educator-parents, counselors, administrators and researchers—and of course the eponymous EdKids themselves (it's always a pleasure to learn that you are not alone).

Among other things, *Third Culture Kids* offers up activities to help increase awareness and understanding of relationships in international schools; additional perspectives on the hiring, orienting and support of educators and

their families; help and information to parent-educators in the decision-making process regarding international careers; and guidance for educators on their professional responsibilities in caring for the children of colleagues.

As a parent as well as an international educator, Zilber is sensitive to the pleasures and pitfalls of raising and teaching children in a lifestyle of international mobility. The topic of *Third Culture Kids* is close to her heart, both personally and professionally, having raised three children in various countries, and as an international school director she has first-hand experience with recruiting, relocating and retaining quality educators.

The book:

Third Culture Kids—The Children of Educators in International Schools, by Ettie Zilber. Publisher: John Catt Educational Ltd. ISBN 978 1 90472 475 9; GBP£ 14.99 (available from <http://www.johncattbookshop.com>, or email booksales@johncatt.co.uk). ●

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A Chalkboard Tribe of EdKids

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families with children. The results were interesting, and pointed out unique qualities of this sub-group of expatriates:

- Chalkboard Tribe families may simultaneously be members of the working class of the larger expatriate community and the highly-respected class of educator. Rarely, however, is the economic level of these families matched to expatriate families working for governments or multinational businesses. This can be a source of social tension.

- CTKs (Chalkboard Tribe Kids) often find other teachers' kids as their best friends because of the similar social and economic status, and because they are brought together by their parents' friendships.

- CTKs describe the difficulty of dual-role relationships: "I am at a family party on the weekend with my teacher who is drinking a beer and singing and then I have to go to school on Monday and remember not to say anything and to just be his student", said one middle-schooler I interviewed. These dual relationships are more pronounced in international schools because staff families often socialize together and travel together.

- The cycle of grief, loss, and transition is timed to the school year and takes on a more predictable pattern than in many other expatriate groups. Breaking contract is considered bad form, and Chalkboard Tribe families usually recruit in the middle of the school year, giving family members time for the transition process.

- In addition to predictable transitions, the Chalkboard Tribe experiences greater control over the decision to move to another school. Even young children are often included in the decision-making process. Togetherness is a hallmark of the Chalkboard Tribe family.

- When a move to a new school is made, having the whole family on campus provides much-needed support for all family members. "When I worried if she was adjusting well, I could walk by her classroom and be relieved to see her happily making new friends", commented one teaching mother.

- The all-together-at-school system cuts both ways. CTKs complain of not having enough privacy at school. "I usually like having my parents with me at school, except when I get into trouble. They always know right away," lamented a CTK Grade 5 student.

- CTKs returning to their home country for a year or more face the same challenges of other TCKs, such as being seen as snobs for having first-hand experience with global living, but the dual-role experience requires a greater adjustment for CTKs because they have such strong personal ties with many staff at their international school.

- Finally, one difficulty I have had with the definitions for being a 'third-culture anything' revolves around the suggestion that developmental impacts occur before we are 18 or 20. It is my belief that we develop in critical ways, albeit at different rates, from birth to death: our identity develops over and over again.

Many Chalkboard Tribe adults will attest to the profound ways in which moving overseas to join an international school community has changed them. "In my first year overseas, I went from being a single travel-bum to a 'responsible person' with a steady salary, built-in social network, a girlfriend, and a lifestyle that I now saw as my future", stated a young teacher in 2001. He is now married to that girlfriend, a fellow teacher; they have two children, and are enjoying their third international school posting. ●

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A Chalkboard Tribe of EdKids

By Daisy Pellant

Recently, I became aware of *Third Culture Kids—The Children of Educators in International Schools*, referred to above, and I have had the opportunity to take a peek at it. What I have come to coin the 'Chalkboard Tribe', she calls 'EdKids'.

Ettie Zilber's book, stemming from her dissertation research, is comprehensive and practical. To say I was delighted to learn of her work is an understatement; it will be my next purchase. Her contributions to our personal and professional experience as international educators will be appreciated by many.

Most of us know the terms 'Third Culture Kid' or 'Global Nomad'. The pioneering work of Ruth Hill Useem, David Pollock, Ruth Van Reken, Norma McCraig, and others, brought to light the benefits and challenges of being raised outside the parents' culture for a significant part of the developmental years. The newest edition of *Third Culture Kids: Growing up Among Worlds* (2009) explores this original definition, questioning the need to update it to reflect changes in expatriate communities worldwide and our new ways of living in a post-modern world characterized by high mobility and instant communication. Chapters 2 and 3 of their book

go into a detailed discussion of Traditional Third Culture Kids (TCKs), cross-cultural kids (CCKS), and children from bi/multicultural homes, adoptees, immigrants, borderlanders, minorities, and domestic TCKs.

I kept waiting to read about a group I wrote about in 2001, coined the 'Chalkboard Tribe'. Nearly 10 years ago, as I trudged through graduate school, one of the research projects I conducted was a qualitative study of the challenges of transition times for families working in schools overseas. Although there were many similarities to other international family groups, I saw some profound differences.

My small study drew from surveys and interviews with parents and children from the International School of Beijing, the American School of Warsaw, the American Community School of Abu Dhabi, the International School of Bangkok, and Jakarta International School. Yes, I talked to or surveyed a bunch of friends from our international school network and they talked to their friends and so on... you know how it goes.

While the Chalkboard Tribe as a whole includes singles, couples, those child-free or full-house, my original study focused on transition points for

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