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Third Culture Kids - Representations of the Phenomenon according to Third Culture Kids and Non-Third Culture Kids

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**THIRD CULTURE KIDS - REPRESENTATIONS OF THE PHENOMENON
ACCORDING TO THIRD CULTURE KIDS AND NON-THIRD CULTURE KIDS**

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Aqueles que passam por nós, não vão sós, não nos deixam sós.
Deixam um pouco de si, levam um pouco de nós.
– Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

So here you are.
Too foreign for home, too foreign for here.
Never enough for both.
– Ijeoma Umebinyuo

Resumo

O termo *Third Culture Kids* (TCKs) refere-se a crianças que crescem em países diferentes da sua origem e partilham entre si uma terceira cultura, que emerge entre a cultura de origem e a(s) de acolhimento. A literatura sobre TCKs é escassa, no entanto, verifica-se um interesse crescente nesta população, nas implicações desta experiência e em como melhor apoiar e promover o seu bem-estar. O presente estudo visa contribuir para a compreensão do fenómeno TCK, recorrendo à técnica de associação livre de palavras (TALP) em conjunto com o método *rank-frequency* para aceder às representações sociais de dimensões deste fenómeno. Recorreu-se a um total de seis indutores, representando seis dimensões. Três incidem nos contextos associados ao fenómeno (“*Global society*”, “*International school*”, “*Home*”), dois correspondem a dimensões do perfil TCK (“*International mobility*” e “*Cross-cultural experience*”) e um a uma definição simplista do conceito (“*Children or youth that grow up in different countries to that of their origin*”). Os participantes foram 202, na sua maioria jovens adultos do sexo feminino, sendo 100 participantes considerados TCKs. Encontraram-se diferenças significativas nos universos semânticos, ou seja, representações sobre o fenómeno TCK, entre os dois grupos. As representações do grupo TCK enfatizam aspetos relacionados com os impactos já estudados deste estilo de vida e realidade, tais como a amizade como indicador do sentimento de pertença. Além disso, os sujeitos TCK produziram ideias mais diversificadas, enquanto que os não TCKs apresentaram ideias mais estereotipadas. Entre os dois grupos foram observadas mais semelhanças para o indutor “*Children or youth that grow up in different countries to that of their origin*” e mais diferenças para o indutor “*International School*”. Torna-se evidente que é relevante continuar o estudo deste fenómeno e contribuir para o conhecimento sobre esta população que surge como um grupo não totalmente homogéneo, mas particular, com características distintivas nas suas representações sobre a condição dos TCK, relativamente ao grupo não TCK.

Palavras-chave: Third Culture Kids; Representações Sociais; Técnica de Associação Livre de Palavras; Núcleo Central

Abstract

The term Third Culture Kids (TCKs) refers to children who grow up in countries different to their origin and who share a common third culture, which emerges between their home and host culture(s). Literature on TCKs is scarce, but there is a growing interest in this population, in the implications of this experience and in better supporting and promoting their well-being. The present study aimed to contribute to the understanding of the TCK phenomenon, by employing a multiple response free word association technique (FWAT) with a rank-frequency method to access the social representations of dimensions of this phenomenon. A total of six inductors was used, representing six dimensions. Three focused on the contexts associated with the phenomenon (“*Global Society*”, “*International School*”, “*Home*”), two pertained to dimensions of the TCK profile (“*International Mobility*” and “*Cross-cultural Experience*”) and there was one simplistic definition of the term (“*Children or youth that grow up in different countries to that of their origin*”). The participants of the study were 202, to a great extent, female young adults, out of which 100 were considered TCK. Significant differences were found in the semantic universes, i.e., representations of the TCK phenomenon, between the two groups. The representations of the TCK group highlight aspects relating to the studied impacts of this lifestyle and reality, such as friendship as an indicator of belonging. Additionally, TCK individuals produced more diversified ideas, whereas non-TCKs showed more stereotyped ideas. Amongst the two groups more similarities were noted for the inductor “*Children or youth that grow up in different countries to that of their origin*”, and more differences for the inductor “*International School*”. It becomes more evident that it is relevant to continue the study of this phenomenon and contribute to the knowledge on this population, who appears to not be completely homogenous, but seems to show distinctive characteristics in their representations about the TCK phenomenon, in comparison to the non-TCK group.

Keywords: Third Culture Kids; Social Representations; Free Word Association Technique; Central system

Résumé

Le terme *Third Culture Kids* (TCK) désigne les enfants qui grandissent dans des pays autres que leur origine et partagent une troisième culture, qui émerge entre les cultures d'origine et d'accueil. La littérature sur les TCK est rare. Cependant, il y a un intérêt croissant pour cette population, pour les implications de cette expérience et pour la meilleure façon de soutenir et de promouvoir leur bien-être. Cette étude vise à contribuer à la compréhension du phénomène TCK, en utilisant la technique d'association libre de mots à réponses multiples ainsi que la méthode rang-fréquence pour accéder aux représentations sociales des dimensions de ce phénomène. Au total, six inducteurs ont été utilisés, représentant six dimensions. Trois se concentrent sur les contextes associés au phénomène ("*Global society*", "*International school*", "*Home*"), deux correspondent à des dimensions du profil TCK ("*International mobility*" and "*Cross-cultural experience*") et une à une définition simpliste du concept ("*Children or youth that grow up in different countries to that of their origin*"). L'échantillon est composé de 202 participants, principalement de jeunes femmes adultes, et 100 participants étaient considérés comme des TCK. Des différences significatives ont été trouvées dans les univers sémantiques, c'est-à-dire les représentations sur le phénomène TCK, entre les deux groupes. Les représentations du groupe TCK mettent l'accent sur des aspects liés aux impacts déjà étudiés de ce mode de vie et de cette réalité, tels que l'amitié comme indicateur du sentiment d'appartenance. De plus, les TCK ont produit des idées plus diversifiées, tandis que les non-TCK ont présenté des idées plus stéréotypées. Entre les deux groupes, plus de similitudes ont été observées pour l'inducteur "*Children or youth that grow up in different countries to that of their origin*" et plus de différences pour l'inducteur "*International School*". Il est évident qu'il est pertinent de poursuivre l'étude de ce phénomène et de contribuer à la connaissance de cette population, qui n'est pas un groupe totalement homogène, mais un groupe particulier, avec des caractéristiques distinctives dans leurs représentations sur le phénomène TCK, par rapport au groupe non-TCK.

Mots-clés: Third Culture Kids; Représentations sociales; Technique d'association de mots libres; Noyau central

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Abbreviations

TCK – Third Culture Kid

ATCK – Adult Third Culture Kid

CCK – Cross-Cultural Kid

ACCK – Adult Cross-Cultural Kid

TCA – Third Culture Adult

FWAT – Free Word Association Technique

Introduction

The history of humankind encompasses different stages where, in order to survive, the species had to uproot and adapt their lives frequently. Throughout time humans started to settle down and claim land as their own and as their home. Nowadays the nomadic lifestyle has been claimed by many, although the reasoning behind it is diverse. This type of movement of people is commonly referred to as migration. It can be both international, as well as within the country, and of short duration or last a lifetime. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2020) estimates that there were 281 million people living outside of their country of origin in 2020, out of a global population of 7.75 billion. The International Organization for Migration (2019) emphasizes how migration can “span the range from unproblematic family relocation to traumatic forced displacement caused by the violence of war, attempts at ethnic cleansing or State disintegration”. Thus, it becomes clear how this event can have lasting effects on the lives of those who migrate.

One of the populations implied in migration is children. These migrating children sometimes do the journey alone, in search of better education opportunities or looking for a safer environment to grow up in. Other times they accompany adult family members, such as their parents, as these have better or more enticing job opportunities somewhere else. As is the case for Third Culture Kids (TCKs). The term TCK was coined by John and Ruth Useem and refers to “children who live abroad with their parents, are exposed to a wide diversity of cultural and educational influences, are internationally oriented, and have high career aspirations” (Useem & Downie, 1976).

There is a growing interest in the TCK population, in understanding how the TCK experience shapes and provides new challenges in the lives of these individuals, as well as how to better support and promote their mental health and general well-being. The American Psychological Association has included this phenomenon and population in their multicultural guidelines. Its recommendations are that professionals, when addressing the TCK population, resort to interventions utilized for expatriates, immigrants, or international students (American Psychological Association, 2017). Criel (2021), however, points out how there are fundamental differences between these populations and the TCKs. While the academic study of this phenomenon has increased during recent years, there is still a lot that research can uncover and contribute to this phenomenon, not just regarding the TCK experience at its core, but also the aspects and dimensions that relate to it.

1. Terminology

Oftentimes, the term TCK is used interchangeably with the term “Global Nomad”, coined by McCaig in 1984, who defined it as a person of any age or nationality who has lived a significant part of their developmental years in one or more countries outside their passport country because of a parent's occupation (McCaig, 1996). Additionally, other terms are used to refer to TCKs, for example, “Cultural Hybrids” (Greenholtz & Kim, 2009); “Third Culture Individuals” (Moore & Barker, 2012); “‘Internationally Mobile Adolescents’” (Gerner et al. 1992); “Internationally Mobile Children/Individuals” (Bagnall, 2012). In a recent systematic review of literature, Tan and colleagues (2021) identify other denominations such as “Internationally mobile adolescent, expatriate child [and] sojourner”.

Nonetheless, “*Third Culture Kid*” is the most consensual term and the definition that prevails is by Pollock and Van Reken, authors of the book *Third Culture Kids: The experience of growing up among worlds*, which was first published in 1999. “A Third Culture Kid is a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents’ culture” (Pollock & Van Reken, 2017). This definition covers a spectrum of privilege (Dillon & Ali, 2019), from a child in an international family, which has been fortunate enough to live a privileged life, to a child in a family that had to uproot due to economic or political constraints, which denotes less privilege. Within the TCK term, we can find children of missionaries, children of military service members stationed abroad, children of diplomats, and members of the foreign service (Espada-Campos, 2018; Headley, 2012; Pollock & Van Reken, 2017; Key, 2018).

Pollock and Van Reken (2017) go further in capturing the different ways in which children are deeply affected by culture. They introduce the umbrella term “*Cross-Cultural Kids*” (CCKs) to “include all children who for any reason had grown up deeply interacting with two or more cultural worlds during childhood” (Pollock & Van Reken, 2017). This definition focuses on the multiple and varied layering of cultural environments that are impacting a child’s life, rather than the actual place where the events occur. Added to that, it portrays how these children are having meaningful interactions with more than one culture as opposed to simply coexisting with them.

These experiences have lasting effects and repercussions on the lives of these individuals (Bonebright, 2010; Espada-Campos, 2018; Moore & Barker, 2012; Kwon, 2019). Throughout life, TCKs simply go on to be *Adult Third Culture Kids* (ATCKs). This term was first coined at the Families in Global Transition Conference in 2000 and refers to

people who fit in the definition of TCK, however, they are no longer children. “Their lives grow out of the roots planted in and watered by the third culture experience” (Pollock & Van Reken, 2017). In terms of the umbrella term, CCK, there is also an adaptation when talking about an adult that has previously experienced the cross-culturalism that pertains to CCKs. These are described as Adult Cross-Cultural Kids (ACCKs). Pollock and Van Reken (2017) make a distinction between ATCKs and “those who go overseas for the first time after growing up in a more traditional “monocultural” environment of their passport culture”, which they name “*Third Culture Adults*” (TCA). These experience the third culture phenomenon; however, not during their developmental years, a detail that is of extreme importance.

2. The Third Culture

From their experience as sociologists and missionaries in India, John and Ruth Useem, according to Useem and Downie (1976), came to the realization that these children had found a new culture between the one of their home or passport country and the one of the host countries. Hence the emergence of a third culture. Authors Dillon and Ali (2019) raised a relevant point regarding this terminology when they discussed how there could be a misunderstanding in using the term “third culture”, as mistakenly, an association with the developing world, which previously has been referenced as “the third world”, could be made. However, many authors have come to address this issue.

Pollock and Van Reken (2017), two main authors in the realm of academic studies of TCKs, have explained the third culture as the expatriate culture and community experienced by children and families who often move to a new country. This third culture is one that all TCKs share, as it refers to the experience of being one; whereas the first and the second cultures are specific to the individual themselves and relate to specific countries (Dillon & Ali, 2019; Fail, 1996; Headley, 2012; Key, 2018). Thus, even if individuals don’t share the same home culture and local culture, they can still relate through the common third culture (Tan et al., 2021). While Criel (2021) and Cottrell and Downie (2012) call it a bridging culture, Tan and colleagues (2021) portray it as an interstitial culture that is abstract.

3. Cross-Cultural Experience

It is thus given that a dimension associated with this phenomenon is the cross-cultural experience. While some authors, such as Pollock and Van Reken, looked at this aspect in comparison to home or passport country of TCK's; others, like Kwon, approached it from a more international standpoint. According to Kwon (2019), cross-cultural living refers to the experience of living in multiple or more than one culture. This same author highlights that "the Third Culture Kid builds relationships to all the cultures, while not having full ownership in any" (Kwon, 2019). This idea refuted what Pollock and Van Reken (2017) posited, namely, that TCKs have "a sense of ownership and interest in cultures other than just that of their passport country". Nonetheless, as Habeeb and Hamid (2021) point out, "this diverse cultural legacy is the major characteristic shared by TCKs".

By being exposed and participating in different cultures, it has been shown that this population slowly adds aspects of each experienced culture to their cultural identity (Criel, 2021). Carroll (2019) draws attention to the fact that culture and identity are deeply intertwined, meaning that they influence each other. In the case of TCKs, the cross-cultural background has shown to have promoted their identity development. This experience allowed TCKs to perceive "who they truly are in a multitude of situations, allowing them to better understand themselves, in turn developing a stronger sense of personal identity" (Carroll, 2019). While others may resort to categories such as geography or race to develop their cultural identity, TCKs resort to their "shared experience of multicultural or international settings" (Tan et al., 2021).

Despite that this characteristic may be one that gives a sense of unity to this population in particular, various authors also concerned themselves with more negative repercussions of this experience. In the opinion of Habeeb and Hamid (2021) the normal development of TCKs is affected by the sense of cross-culturalism. Additionally, their outlook on life, their sense of belonging, and even aspects such as humor, are impacted by being a part of this phenomenon (Pollock & Van Reken, 2017). Furthermore, according to Tan and colleagues (2021), "those whose lives are cross-cultural because of moves, especially international moves, share, in addition, issues of adjustment to new cultures and acculturation struggles". In order to dampen these effects these authors highlight how TCKs perceive a sense of comfort that results from being a part of a community of individuals that are not just like-minded but have also experienced a cross-cultural lifestyle.

4. International Mobility

Another dimension associated with the TCK phenomenon pertains to the fact that there is an international layer to their contexts, as well as an ease in movement. This is a reality that has been encompassed in the different terminologies used to refer to this population, such as the term “‘internationally mobile adolescents’” (Gerner et al. 1992). This terminology has been continuously used and has been adapted to be more inclusive, namely by Bagnall in 2012, who refers to TCKs as “‘internationally mobile children/individuals’”.

Currently, our lives are set in a “global era of increasing international mobility” (Warinowski & Lakkonen, 2020) and, while international mobility is not exclusive to this phenomenon and population, there are particular characteristics of international mobility which make it a pertinent aspect of discussion, within the realm of studies of TCKs. According to Pollock and Van Reken (2017), the reason why this is of concern relates to the frequency and degree to which TCKs experience international mobility. Furthermore, Tan and colleagues (2021), when trying to point to the reasons that distinguish the TCK population from the migrant one, highlight how expectations of belonging, together with the mobility pattern are intrinsically different. According to Colomer (2020), mobility, to TCKs, means more than just the displacement and the move between locations, it is “something that structures their life experience”. Collette (2002) puts forth the idea that this population exists in a “cultural no-man’s land” within the complex web of attachments to various places, the ones they are leaving behind and the ones they will experience next. The movement between places is characterized by a cyclical repetitive nature, as TCKs often move back and forth between their passport country and their various host cultures. “TCKs generally go through chronic cycles of separation and loss far more often than the population at large” (Pollock and Van Reken, 2017).

The impacts of early international mobility have already been pointed out in literature. In a 2012 study, Bagnall highlights the way the frequent moving influences the relationships TCKs build. This author emphasizes that “‘internationally mobile children become cautious about making deep friendships’”. In these relations both parties, those who stay and those who leave, will feel the repercussions of international mobility. “Besides a TCK’s personal mobility, every third culture community is filled with people who continually come and go” (Pollock & Van Reken, 2017). Sears (2011) concludes that TCKs’ own perception of being “people who move” is a means to make sense of the multitude of

attachments and experiences, in order to create an integrated identity, particularly within a community of other highly mobile individuals.

Various authors (Colomer, 2020; Moore & Barker, 2012; Tanu, 2015) point towards a lack of attachment to the cultures and national discourse of the host countries where TCKs grew up. Recently, Tan and colleagues (2021) call attention to how there is grief and identity loss related to this mobile life.

In sum, as Pollock and Van Reken (2017) suggest, while there are great outcomes to the mobility patterns of TCKs' lives, there are drawbacks, on emotional and psychological levels, that should not be overlooked.

5. Global Society

As previously seen, the terminology that refers to the TCK population is vast and diverse and often portrays a dimension associated with the phenomenon. As is with the term coined by McCaig (1984), "Global Nomads". While this designation highlights the mobility pattern that is present and has been presented before, it also denotes the ease with which the world is perceived as a whole by TCKs and with which TCKs move through the world. As Miller and colleagues (2020) put it "TCKs typically have a global mentality". Moore and Barker (2012) back this point, as they see that these individuals, who have a "culturally mobile upbringing, represent the very essence of multicultural beings in a global society".

The globalization phenomenon that can be seen in today's society is undeniable and has impacts in everyday life. Carroll (2019) accentuates this when stating that "there are people from every corner of the globe, spread around the world and with this increase in globalization the world is getting 'smaller'". TCKs are one of the populations that results and benefits from this reality. As citizens of the world, TCKs have a privileged perception of cross-cultural nuances when they move through the world. In a study carried out by Stokke (2013), TCKs presented a heightened sense of global mindset. This implies that the individuals "think and act both globally and locally at the same time" (Cohen, 2010). According to Bagnall (2012), TCKs "are often depicted as identifying more with a global than a national identity", hence their global mindset and their advocacy for a global society.

6. International School

One particular environment that is a setting of many TCKs' lives is international schools. Bagnall (2012) points out the disperse definition of what an international school is, particularly regarding it's "fundamental purpose and vision". In a 2018 study, Lijad and Van Schalkwyk report that there is an increased interest in international schools for TCKs to attend, as "these schools catered to the needs of expatriate families in terms of language (most international schools offer English as first or second language) and ensuring international accreditation".

The international school becomes another context where TCKs carry out their lives. Poonoosamy (2018) identified international schools as locations where students develop their sense of self and a characterizing international mindedness through experiences that these schools promote. This point is corroborated by Lijad and Van Schalkwyk (2018), who highlights how schooling influences the development of the identity of TCKs. The different stakeholders in the schooling environment, whether it be teachers or peers, are important in the role of giving the TCK validation for their identity and self-construct. Fail and colleagues (2004) draw attention to the fact that these "validators" will be elements who can change at any moment, since this population is so mobile, as discussed before. Dellos (2017) brings attention to the fact that international schools are also places that have negative connotations, namely the idea of leaving friends behind and the constant rebuilding of friendships. On the other hand, this same author, highlights positive aspects that TCKs identify with transitions regarding international schools, namely the fact that they imply new experiences. International schools are places where TCKs can identify others with similar life experiences and background stories. According to Bagnall (2012), in this context, the concern shifts from nationality and culture to aspects that students could have in common, such as interests, hobbies or clubs. Sears (2011) concluded that TCKs feel comfort and confidence when transitioning between international schools, as they fit in, and their lifestyle is seen as "normal".

There are undoubtedly aspects that contrast between an international and a local school. Pollock and Van Reken (2017) call attention to how in an international school there is no overlap between the culture, values and practices at school and at home, which are unconsciously taught. These authors also mention that boarding schools, which are another dimension to the local versus international school context, add a constant cultural environment that TCKs experience, as opposed to other schools, where students spend a

limited amount of time at. In regard to the teaching methodologies, Pollock and Van Reken (2017) mention how certain choices are different based on the cultural setting, such as literature works to be studied. But there is also the issue of teachers' perception of how they should teach, which is often "based on the philosophy of how their culture believes children should be taught" (Pollock and Van Reken, 2017).

For TCKs, attending a local school implies certain challenges. These pertain, for example, to how they and their peers are not alike. Fail and colleagues (2004) argue that there is a gap that results in misunderstandings, as non-TCKs don't share the same experiences. In order to mitigate the differences, TCKs "must stow away that part of who they are so that they can make friends and adapt to the new situation" (Bagnall, 2012). Whether attending local or international schools, students who live highly mobile lives often "come in and out of systems at different times with different curriculums, [which] has an impact on the daily life of the school and the student's learning" (Pollock & Van Reken, 2017). Hence, there are also challenges when attending international schools. Dellos (2017) has verified that this lifestyle results in students feeling anxiety and fear in regard to school transitions that are inherent to the TCK phenomenon. On the other hand, it has been identified how the school plays a role in preventing such feelings of hopelessness. According to Purnell and Hoban (2014) school and family can help prepare TCKs' transitions and this will directly affect their mental health. Additionally, literature has mentioned in-school systems when receiving new students, to welcome and support them (Bagnall, 2012).

7. Home

International school students have been depicted as having the belief that the world is their home (Bagnall, 2012). "'Home' is a shifting concept in a life of constant mobility" (Sears, 2011). This is a very present idea between TCKs. Although TCKs find ease in feeling at home in different places and in relating to others that have had a similar experience, generally being good communicators and seeing their experiences as beneficial, their sense of belonging is very diminished (Fail & Thompson, 2004; Moore & Barker, 2012).

The sense of belonging in this population has been explored by many authors (Bikos et al., 2009; Carroll, 2019; Cockburn, 2002; Colomer, 2020; Fail & Thompson, 2004; Halme, 2019; Hannaford, 2016; Ittel & Sisler, 2012; Kwon, 2019; Moore & Barker, 2012; Morales, 2015; Nette & Hayden, 2007; Pollock & Van Reken, 2017). Within this population, the

struggle with belongingness, in relation to rootedness, has been shown to increase with age (Halme, 2019). They often report feeling like a foreigner in their passport country (Fail & Thompson, 2004). Some individuals have pointed out they struggle with identifying a place of belonging, although they report having a sense of belonging (Nette & Hayden, 2007). To mitigate this discomfort, they make use of indicators of belonging, such as country of birth, passport country or country where they have lived for a long time. Nette and Hayden (2007) highlight the concept of anchors, which are specific factors that grant a place a heightened sense of belonging, e.g., friendships, familiarity with the environment, length of time lived there. These authors report that the longer TCKs lived in a country, the stronger their sense of belonging to that place. In a study by Kwon (2019) participants reveal having a “multilocal sense of belonging”, meaning they have a connection with diverse locations and thus they claim multiple home countries. According to Nette and Hayden (2007) there is a notion of multiple homes from a young age.

TCKs report an increased sense of belonging from relationships rather than geographical location (Bikos et al., 2009; Kwon, 2019). Carroll (2019) corroborates this idea when identifying the following factors as being influential towards the sense of belonging: “family and relationships, time spent in that place and the ability to communicate with others with ease”. Pollock and Van Reken (2017) agree; they say that for some TCKs a sense of belonging is not “geography based” but is instead dependent upon relationships formed through common interests and experiences. This is corroborated by Allen and colleagues (2021), according to whom a sense of belonging is heightened and diminished by considering others, objects, experiences and a multitude of factors that are part of the diverse contexts that TCKs frequent.

Home and the feeling of belonging does not have to relate to a specific country, as seen before. Hannaford (2016) points out how there is a sense of continuity with digital worlds, making them valuable spaces where TCKs can grow a sense of belonging. Pollock and Van Reken (2017) corroborate the use of technology as a tool to promote the sense of having a home, since it allows individuals to stay in touch and connected to their friends, contexts, and previous experiences. A 2020 study by Colomer, draws a comparison between airports and the idea of home, according to the TCK population. This is because this location is perceived as “comforting, familiar and gives security” (Colomer, 2020). Additionally, there is a sense of constancy and consistency, which often lacks in the highly mobile, cross-cultural lifestyle.

This population faces various challenges in relation to this issue. Criel (2021) states that TCKs often feel culturally homeless as a result of the lack of sense of belonging. According to Colomer (2020) “after several international relocations, most TCKs do not have a tangible and clear sense of home”. This results in crises since it is expected that TCKs return home, as it is often perceived by others as a place TCKs are said to belong; however, for these individuals that is often not the case (Tan et al., 2021). This relates back to the idea that, as global nomads, this population “might not feel that they have a single place of origin or arrival with which to negotiate; instead, they have many of both” (Colomer, 2020). As a result of high mobility in their formative years, TCKs often reproduce the same patterns later in their life, meaning they relocate frequently, leaving and arriving at different locations often (Pollock & Van Reken, 2017). The ease with which these patterns occur, is however not mirrored when referring to their passport country, as they “tend to harbor ambiguous and ambivalent feelings towards their roots” (Bagnall, 2012). Fail and colleagues (2004) have reported reverse culture shock in this population. These individuals return to a place they do not relate to and do not understand (Tan et al., 2021), while their parents often do not comprehend or share the same feelings (Pollock & Van Reken, 2017). Although they may look and sound like natives, they are “hidden immigrants” as they feel a deep sense of foreignness that is not perceived by those who surround them (Tan et al., 2021).

8. Conclusion

This introduction aimed to provide a literature review of various topics, focusing on the TCK phenomenon, as well as on some of the contexts TCKs move through and on certain dimensions of the phenomenon. In sum, various domains such as social, cultural, environmental, geographical, amongst others, seem to play a determining role in TCKs’ overall well-being, as well as their sense of belonging. Furthermore, this would allow for a better understanding of this population and could point to how best to provide them with support. In order to contribute to this, the present study will focus on the social representations of some of the main phenomena that have been presented, such as “*Home*”.

Methods

1. Methodological framework

1.1. Social Representations Theory

According to Moscovici (2003) “every representation is of someone and of something, configuring itself as a form of knowledge through which the one who knows replaces what is known”. Jodelet (2001) postulates that social representations are a form of knowledge which is created and disseminated socially. Social representations can also be understood as a process of familiarization (Moura et al., 2020), where previous knowledge influences the way people perceive and understand an element, whether it be an object, a person, or an event; and collectively build new knowledge about the element and the reality they live in (Goffman, 2011). It is through social representations that a common reality is achieved within a social group (Jodelet, 2001). The bridging of two worlds, the scientific one and the common sense one, is possible through social representation, argues Dos Santos (2013). This author draws attention to the fact that the creation of social representations happens within a specific time, culture, and space. Furthermore, these symbolizations and interpretations are intrinsically related to the language that is used (Jodelet, 2001). Studying social representations implies extracting not just an idea but also the beliefs, images, reflections, and other conceptualizations that surround it (Dos Santos, 2013).

1.2. Structural Approach Theory

The Structural Approach Theory, also known as the Central Core Theory, was first put forth by Abric in 1987 and posits that “a social representation is a hierarchized and organized system, composed of two interactive sub-systems: a central system and a peripheral system” (Dany et al., 2015). Dos Santos (2013) argues that, while the central system unifies and gives meaning to the social representation, the peripheral system sustains it and provides the structure of the social representation. Wachelke and Wolker (2011) go further, mentioning that the peripheral system provides information on how the representations present themselves in the day-to-day. Thus, the central and the peripheral systems are interdependent. Alves-Mazzotti (2007) postulates that the central core has a continuous and dialectical relationship with the periphery.

Taking a closer look at the central system, Dos Santos (2013) points out that what lies at the core of the representation is dependent on both the issue at hand, as well as on the way the social group relates to it. Furthermore, the social patterns and value system, as well as the objective and subjective dimensions of the object of study, are contemplated in the analysis, argue de Lemos Novais and colleagues (2016). By identifying the central system, it is possible to evaluate the group homogeneity in regard to the specific inductor.

1.3. Free Word Association Technique

It is through the Free Word Association Technique (FWAT) that one can gain access to the central core and peripheral elements of a certain social representation. Veiga and colleagues (2013) postulate that this technique allows the study of what is shared spontaneously and thus what dimensions of said social representation exist. The FWAT is a projective technique, which reveals implicit or latent contents that could be concealed in the employed communication (Abric, 2011). Originally, in the clinical context, Jung first aimed to reveal and analyze the structure of personality by means of the evocations, reactions, and choices of the individuals (Moura et al., 2020). Later, Di Giacomo (1981) used this tool as a research instrument in the realm of social representations (de Lima Coutinho & Do Bú, 2017). The expression of social representations occurs by means of evocations. These are produced by “asking a subject to produce, from a stimulus word (the object of representation being studied), the words or expressions which spontaneously come into their mind” (Wachelke & Wolker, 2011). Within this technique there are several different aspects to take into consideration, namely regarding the data collection.

On one hand, there are the criteria regarding the number of evocations, as well as the limitations, i.e., whether participants can answer with single words or longer expressions, or even if the words have to be adjectives or nouns. The present study allowed for multiple words and did not impose any restrictions; thus, it is considered a Multiple Response Free Association Technique. This is most frequently used when employing the structural approach (Dany et al., 2015).

On the other hand, there is the question of methodology, namely whether “appearance ranking” or “importance ranking” will be used. The study at hand employed the Rank-Frequency Method, which looks both at the frequency of the evocations, as well as their spontaneous appearance rankings. The first indicator, frequency, portrays how often an evocation is present in the population. This relates to the centrality of the evocation at hand.

The second indicator, appearance ranking, illustrates the individual's cognitive availability of said evocation, thus it is a more individual measure (Dany et al., 2015).

2. Aims

The general aim of this study is to contribute to the understanding of the TCK phenomenon by investigating the social representations that exist of dimensions of this phenomenon.

A specific objective, in relation to this general aim, is to characterize the social representations in terms of density and similarity. Additionally, a specific objective is to contribute to the knowledge of the central systems and peripheral systems that compose the social representations of dimensions of the TCK phenomenon. A further specific objective is to explore differences and similarities in the representational content according to whether participants are TCKs or not and how the representations of TCKs compare to those of non-TCKs.

3. Participants

This study included 202 participants aged between 15 and 78 ($M = 29.75$, $SD = 13.19$). 166 participants were females (82.2%), 35 were males (17.3%) and one participant would rather not answer the question regarding gender (.5%). Concerning the types of schools attended, 130 participants (64.4%) attended only national schools whereas 37 participants (18.3%) attended only international schools. Additionally, 35 participants (17.3%) had attended both national and international schools. 50.5% ($n = 102$) of the sample had prior knowledge of the TCK concept and 49.5% ($n = 100$) did not.

There are a total of 55 different nationalities, some participants having dual or triple nationalities, among the 202 participants. There were 116 Portuguese participants, 14 American participants, six German participants, four British participants, three participants were French and other three participants were Brazilian, there were two participants with each of the following nationalities: Belgian, Canadian, Filipino, Malaysian, Norwegian, Pakistani, South Korean; and there were 42 unique nationalities. More information can be found in the table below.

Table 1*Descriptive statistics for sample characterization (N = 202)*

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Gender (N = 202)		
Male	35	17.3
Female	166	82.2
Rather not answer	1	.5
Age (N = 202) range 15 – 78 M = 29.75 SD = 13.19		
15 – 21	55	27.2
22 – 24	56	27.7
25 – 34	44	21.8
35 – 78	47	23.3
Types of schools attended (N = 202)		
National	130	64.4
International	37	18.3
Both National and International	35	17.3
Prior knowledge of the TCK concept (N = 202)		
No	100	49.5
Yes	102	50.5
Nationality (N = 202)		
Portuguese	116	57.4
American	14	6.9
German	6	3.0
British	4	2.0
Brazilian; French	3 (x2)	1.5
Belgian; Canadian; Filipino; Malaysian; Norwegian; Pakistani; South Korean	2 (x7)	1.0
American and British, Australian, Australian and German; Australian and New Zealander; Belizean and American; Brazilian and Danish; Brazilian and Dutch; Brazilian and Italian; Brazilian, Danish and Italian; British, Dutch and Argentinian; Costa Rican, American and Polish; Danish and American; Danish and South African; Dutch; Dutch and Mexican; Dutch and Portuguese; Ecuadorian and American; English; Indian and Australian; German and Bolivian; German and Hungarian; Italian; Lithuanian; Mexican and American; Nepali and British; New Zealander; Norwegian and American; Panamanian, Irish and American; Peruvian and American; Polish; Portuguese and Italian; Portuguese and Mozambican; Portuguese and Venezuelan; Singaporean; South African and British; Spanish; Sri Lankan; Swedish; Swedish and American; Uruguayan, New Zealander and Italian; Venezuelan; Venezuelan and Spanish; Vietnamese, Cambodian and American	1 (x42)	0.5

The sample was divided between participants who, for the present study, were considered TCKs and those who weren't considered TCKs. This was done by taking into consideration variables that were suggested in the literature, such as having lived abroad for a minimum duration of one year (Tan et al., 2021). Additionally, to be considered TCK, participants had to have lived in more than one country and had to consider themselves at least barely a TCK.

Regarding the minimum length of residence to be considered a TCK in the present study, 55.4% of the sample had lived abroad for at least a year, while the remaining 44.6% had not. Out of the 202 participants, 68 had lived in one country and 134 had lived in two or more countries ($M = 2.97$; $SD = 2.28$). 32.2% of participants did not consider themselves a

TCK at all, while 67.8% considered themselves a TCK from barely to totally. This information can be found in table 2.

Taking these variables into consideration, in the present study, 100 participants were considered TCKs, while 102 were considered non-TCKs.

Table 2

Descriptive statistics for participant characterization as TCK or non-TCK (N = 202)

Variable	n	%
Minimum length of residence abroad of one year (N = 202)		
No	90	44.6
Yes	112	55.4
Number of countries of residence (N = 202)		
1	68	33.7
2	43	21.3
3	31	15.3
4	18	8.9
5	11	5.4
6	14	6.9
7	6	3.0
8	7	3.5
9	2	1.0
12	1	.5
14	1	.5
Extent to which consider self a TCK (N = 202)		
Not at all	65	32.2
Barely	24	11.9
Somewhat	30	14.9
To a great extent	33	16.3
Totally	50	24.8
Considered TCK in this study (N = 202)		
No	102	50.5
Yes	100	49.5

4. Measures

To assess the social representations of the TCK phenomenon, a questionnaire was created with a sociodemographic and participant characterization section, as well as a section composed of open-ended questions employing the FWAT. This technique aims to record participants' spontaneous responses to stimuli. Six stimuli were used and presented in the following order: “*Global Society*”, “*International School*”, “*Home*”, “*International mobility*”, “*Cross-cultural experience*” and “*Children or youth that grow up in different countries to that of their origin*”. The instructions started with “What comes to mind when you think of” followed by the stimulus. Participants were asked to answer with words or short ideas, and they had the opportunity to provide 8 spontaneous responses for each

question. This questionnaire was built in a bilingual format, being provided in Portuguese and in English, and included items for sample characterization related to the TCK phenomenon, such as “*What are all countries you have lived in and what was the duration of stay?*” or “*To what extent do you consider yourself a Third Culture Kid?*”.

The present questionnaire was built taking into consideration information collected from a pretest version. There was a total of seven stimuli used in that version, namely: “*Global Society*”, “*International mobility*”, “*Cross-cultural Experience*”, “*Children or youth that grow up in different countries to that of their origin*”, “*Expatriate children or youth*”, “*International school students*” and “*Home*”. The sample of the pretest included 12 participants.

From this pilot study it became evident that the stimuli used had to be adapted, as they didn't cover different dimensions of the phenomenon. The final version of the questionnaire focused on the contexts associated with the TCK phenomenon (“*Global society*”, “*International school*”, “*Home*”), on two dimensions of the TCK profile (“*International mobility*” and “*Cross-cultural experience*”) and also included a simplistic definition of the term (“*Children or youth that grow up in different countries to that of their origin*”).

5. Procedures

5.1. Data Collection and Treatment

Due to the ongoing global pandemic and to reach a larger sample of participants the questionnaire was made available online, as a *Google Forms*, on social media platforms, such as Instagram and Facebook, and on groups within those platforms composed of the targeted audience, namely TCKs. Participants were also reached via email, WhatsApp and Discord. It was requested that participants share the questionnaire with others. Therefore, the sampling method can be characterized as convenience and snowball sampling. The anonymity of participants was guaranteed. To access the questionnaire, participants had to grant their or, in case they were underage, their guardian's informed consent. The contact of the researchers was provided. Data was collected between March and June of 2021.

The treatment of the data collected involved resorting to a bilingual jury and implied two steps: first, the translation of answers submitted in Portuguese to English, and second, the application of the reduction rules commonly used in studies that employ this technique,

as is recommended by Rosenberg and Jones (1972). This process consists of reducing the responses by turning adjectives and verbs into nouns and transforming them into their singular and masculine form. Additionally, negative expressions were transformed into positive forms. Moreover, longer expressions were collapsed into a more simplistic code word. The same approach was used for synonyms. Spelling mistakes were corrected. Hereby the data is standardized and simplified allowing the analyses. In a 2020 study, the authors point out that there is risk in doing this reduction, as it can lead to an excessive interpretation or grouping of the evoked data (Bisconsin-Júnior et al., 2020). Hence the importance of the jury in the decision-making process. The jury worked from the original expression, trying to achieve a consensus for the final evocation, by discussing the possible dimensions of meaning which could be lost in the translation and considering previously used code words.

5.2. Data Analysis

For the analysis of the collected data two programs were used.

The software IRAMUTEQ (*Interface de R pour les Analyses Multidimensionnelles de Textes et de Questionnaires*), version 0.7 alpha 2, was used to analyze the qualitative data. The analyses used consisted of frequency analyses, as well as prototypical analyses.

Within the frequency analyses various indexes were calculated for each inductor and according to each sample group (Non-TCK and TCK). The fluidity index represents the number of total evocations, while the amplitude index is the number of different evocations. Taking these two values it is possible to calculate the richness index, by calculating the ratio between the amplitude and the fluidity. This index varies between 0, meaning the representations, within the sample, are completely consensual, and 1, which indicates that the representations are totally divergent. According to Oliveira and Araújo (1999) the higher the values, the more diverse the evocations, which may mean that there is not a common representation.

Additionally, taking into account the frequencies, the R_n of Ellegard index was calculated for each inductor. This index aims to assess the similarities between the evocations provided for each inductor according to the sample groups, i.e., the semantic fields. The R_n value is achieved by dividing the number of words common to the two samples for the same inductor by the square root of the product of the different words within each sample for the same inductor. This index varies between 0 and 1. The closer the value is to 1, the most similar the semantic fields are.

The prototypical analysis (Vergès, 1992) consists of the cross-tabulation of the appearance frequency and the mean appearance ranking of the evoked terms resulting in a table with four cells. The first quadrant consists of high frequency and high ranking, thus being called the *core zone*. This is the central system. Quadrants two and three correspond to the *potential change zone*, with high frequency and low ranking, and low frequency and high ranking, respectively. The fourth quadrant contains the elements of the *periphery*, which are cited with the lowest frequency and are also mentioned last.

In order to perform the chi-square tests, the quantitative data was analyzed resorting to SPSS (*Statistical Package for the Social Sciences*), version 26. The χ^2 values were calculated for each evocation with a frequency superior to 10 in each sample group per inductor. This calculation allows for a more detailed analysis of the content of the semantic fields and the effects of being or not being a TCK on the representations. For the χ^2 values to be accepted the tests had to fulfill the following assumptions: no more than 20% of the cells could have an expected value smaller than 5, and no cell could have an expected value under 1. If they do not fulfill these assumptions, the significance value is calculated resorting to Fisher's Test.

Results

As can be seen in Table 3, from the total sample of 202 participants only some provided evocations for all inductors. The inductor with the biggest participation sample was “Home”, with 200 participants, and the one with the least participants, namely 192, was “Cross-cultural Experience”. For the non-TCK group, the inductor that had total participation was “Home”. Whereas, for the TCK group, total participation was seen for the inductor “Children or youth that grow up in different countries to that of their origin”.

Table 3

Participants per inductor according to sample group (N = 202)

Inductor	n
Global Society (n = 200)	
Non-TCK	101
TCK	99
International School (n = 200)	
Non-TCK	101
TCK	99
Home (n = 201)	
Non-TCK	102
TCK	99
International Mobility (n = 198)	
Non-TCK	100
TCK	98
Cross-cultural Experience (n = 192)	
Non-TCK	96
TCK	96
Children or youth that grow up in different countries to that of their origin (n = 199)	
Non-TCK	99
TCK	100

Regarding the evocations participants provided for each inductor, Table 4 shows how many words each sample group evoked per inductor (fluidity index) and how many evocations are unique (amplitude index). Thus, it was possible to calculate the richness index, which indicates if and how homogenous the evocations in regard to an inductor are, within a sample group.

Table 4

Amplitude, Fluidity and Richness of the Semantic Material according to sample group for each inductor

Inductor	Fluidity	Amplitude	Richness ¹
Global Society			
Non-TCK	535	201	0.38
TCK	491	227	0.47
International School			
Non-TCK	477	167	0.35
TCK	535	240	0.44
Home			
Non-TCK	529	140	0.26

	Inductor	Fluidity	Amplitude	Richness¹
	TCK	527	230	0.43
International Mobility				
	Non-TCK	475	153	0.32
	TCK	450	196	0.44
Cross-cultural Experience				
	Non-TCK	404	142	0.35
	TCK	474	198	0.42
Children or youth that grow up in different countries to that of their origin				
	Non-TCK	437	154	0.35
	TCK	507	191	0.38

Note. ¹The richness index varies between 0 and 1, i.e., total consensus to total divergence.

The R_n of Ellegard index was used to assess the similarities between the evocations provided for each inductor according to non-TCK and TCK participants. This data is shown in Table 5, together with the number of common evocations in both samples for each inductor. The inductor with the lowest R_n value was “*International School*” ($R_n= 0.30$), while “*Children or youth that grow up in different countries to that of their origin*” presented the highest value ($R_n= 0.43$).

Table 5

Number of common evocations and R_n of Ellegard index for each inductor when comparing Non-TCK and TCK samples

	Inductor	Common evocations	R_n¹
	Global Society	83	0.39
	International School	60	0.30
	Home	74	0.41
	International Mobility	66	0.38
	Cross-cultural Experience	66	0.39
	Children or youth that grow up in different countries to that of their origin	73	0.43

Note. ¹The R_n of Ellegard index varies between 0 and 1, i.e., total difference to total similarity, regarding the semantic groups.

1. Representations of “*Global Society*”

1.1. Non-TCK’s representations of “*Global Society*”

A total of 101 non-TCK participants provided answers for the stimulus “*Global Society*”. These participants evoked a total of 535 representations out of which, 201 were different expressions. Thus, the richness index is 0.38. The evocation frequency ranges from 1 (112 unique words) to 24 (“Culture”).

Table 6*Structure of the representation of “Global Society” by Non-TCK participants (N=101)*

Core Zone <i>f</i> ≥ 9.85 <i>MOE</i> ≤ 3.2			Potential Change Zone <i>f</i> ≥ 9.85 <i>MOE</i> > 3.2		
Evoc.	<i>f</i>	MOE	Evoc.	<i>f</i>	MOE
Culture	24	2.6	Internet	15	3.3
World	23	2	Travel	12	3.3
Globalization	22	2.3	Multiculturalism	12	3.7
Diversity	20	2.5	Opportunity	10	3.8
People	15	1.9			
Potential Change Zone <i>f</i> < 9.85 <i>MOE</i> ≤ 3.2			Periphery <i>f</i> < 9.85 <i>MOE</i> > 3.2		
Evoc.	<i>f</i>	MOE	Evoc.	<i>f</i>	MOE
Equality	9	3.1	Unity	8	4.4
International	8	2.1	Knowledge	8	5
Population	6	2.5	Language	7	4
Inclusion	6	2.5	Education	6	5.3
			Respect	6	3.2
			Technology	6	3.7
			Social Media	6	3.8
			Difference	6	5.2
			Community	6	4.2
			Cooperation	5	5
			Tolerance	5	4.4
			Information	5	3.4
			Sharing	5	3.6
			Country	5	3.2

Note. *f* = Frequency (minimum considered was 5); MOE = Mean Order of Evocation

Table 6 shows the cross-tabulation of the frequency and rank criteria, which results in four quadrants, organized according to a frequency of 9.85 and a mean order of evocation of 3.2. The core zone shows the terms which were most frequently and readily cited. The term “Culture” stands out for being the most frequently cited one, where as “People” was the term most readily evoked, despite a lower frequency. In the second quadrant can be found the terms which were reported frequently but not cited first and in the third quadrant the ones that had low frequency but high ranking. These build the potential change zone, which consists of terms such as “Internet” and “Equality”. Lastly, in the periphery the evocations with higher frequency were “Unity” and “Knowledge”; and with the latest evocation order was “Education”.

1.2. TCK’s representations of “Global Society”

For the inductor “Global Society”, 99 TCK participants evoked a total of 491 representations, out of which, 227 were different expressions. Thus, the richness index is 0.47. The evocation frequency varies between 1 (152 unique words) and 22 (“Travel”).

Table 7*Structure of the representation of “Global Society” by TCK participants (N=99)*

Core Zone <i>f</i> ≥ 9.18 <i>MOE</i> ≤ 3.19			Potential Change Zone <i>f</i> ≥ 9.18 <i>MOE</i> > 3.19		
Evoc.	<i>f</i>	MOE	Evoc.	<i>f</i>	MOE
Culture	19	3	Travel	22	3.9
Diversity	17	2.1	Friendship	14	3.3
Multiculturalism	17	2.4	Language	12	4.1
World	11	2.2			
Potential Change Zone <i>f</i> < 9.18 <i>MOE</i> ≤ 3.19			Periphery <i>f</i> < 9.18 <i>MOE</i> > 3.19		
Evoc.	<i>f</i>	MOE	Evoc.	<i>f</i>	MOE
International	8	1.4	Education	7	5
Globalization	8	2.5	Community	7	3.4
Communication	7	2.4	Peace	6	4.7
Connectedness	6	1.5	United Nations	6	4.2
People	5	2.6	Understanding	5	5.2
Food	5	2.6	Togetherness	5	5.6
			Politics	5	4
			Ethnicity	5	3.8
			Plane	5	4.2

Note. *f* = Frequency (minimum considered was 5); *MOE* = Mean Order of Evocation

Table 7 shows the cross-tabulation of the frequency and rank criteria, which results in four quadrants, organized according to a frequency of 9.18 and a mean order of evocation of 3.19. The core zone shows the terms which were most frequently and readily cited. The term “Culture” stands out for being the most frequently cited one, where as “Diversity” was the term most readily evoked. In the second quadrant can be found the terms which were reported frequently but not cited first and in the third quadrant the ones that had low frequency but high ranking. These build the potential change zone, which consists of terms such as “Travel” and “International”. Lastly, in the periphery the evocations with higher frequency were “Education” and “Community”; and with the latest evocation order was “Togetherness”.

1.3. Comparison between semantic fields for the inductor “Global Society”

There are 11 unique words that scored a minimum frequency of 10, within each sample group. These words, together with their frequency for each group and total frequency, as well as the chi-squared values, are presented in Table 8. All the assumptions for each test were fulfilled. There is significant difference in the frequencies of the evocations “Friendship”, “Globalization”, “Internet”, “People” and “Travel” between the two sample groups.

Table 8*Frequent evocations, frequency according to sample groups and total, and chi-squared test*

Evocation	Total (n = 200)	Non-TCK (n = 101)	TCK (n = 99)	χ^2 (df = 1)
Culture	43	24	19	0.06
World	34	23	11	3.39
Globalization	30	22	8	5.56*
Diversity	37	20	17	0.06
Internet	19	15	4	5.57*
People	20	15	5	4.27*
Travel	34	12	22	4.00*
Multiculturalism	29	12	17	1.39
Opportunity	13	10	3	3.24
Friendship	14	0	14	15.47***
Language	19	7	12	1.82

Note. * $p \leq 0,05$; ** $p \leq 0,01$; *** $p \leq 0,001$

2. Representations of “*International School*”

2.1. Non-TCK’s representations of “*International School*”

A total of 101 non-TCK participants provided answers for the stimulus “*International School*”. These participants evoked a total of 477 representations for the inductor “*International School*”, out of which, 167 were different expressions. Thus, the richness index is 0.35. The evocation frequency varies between 1 (101 unique words) and 36 (“Language”).

Table 9*Structure of the representation of “International School” by Non-TCK participants (N=101)*

Core Zone $f \geq 11.08$ MOE ≤ 3.02			Potential Change Zone $f \geq 11.08$ MOE > 3.02		
Evoc.	f	MOE	Evoc.	f	MOE
Language	36	2.5	Education	22	3.9
Culture	28	2.9			
Diversity	26	2.3			
Multiculturalism	17	2.3			
English	16	2.2			
Multinationality	14	1.7			
Potential Change Zone $f < 11.08$ MOE ≤ 3.02			Periphery $f < 11.08$ MOE > 3.02		
Evoc.	f	MOE	Evoc.	f	MOE
Opportunity	10	2.8	Wealth	8	4.2
Expense	6	2.5	Knowledge	8	3.2
Foreignness	6	2	Privilege	7	3.9
Multilingualism	6	2.3	Quality	6	5.3
Country	6	2.5	Uniform	6	4.2
Child	5	1.8	Tuition	6	6.3
			Difference	6	4.7
			Tolerance	5	4.6
			Experience	5	3.6
			Globalization	5	4.6
			Private	5	3.2

Note. f = Frequency (minimum considered was 5); MOE = Mean Order of Evocation

Table 9 shows the cross-tabulation of the frequency and rank criteria, which results in four quadrants, organized according to a frequency of 11.08 and a mean order of evocation of 3.02. The core zone shows the terms which were most frequently and readily cited. The term “Language” c. In the second quadrant can be found the terms which were reported frequently but not cited first and in the third quadrant the ones that had low frequency but high ranking. These build the potential change zone, which consists of terms such as “Education” and “Opportunity”. Lastly, in the periphery the evocations with higher frequency were “Wealth” and “Knowledge”; and with the latest evocation order was “Tuition”.

2.2. TCK’s representations of “*International School*”

For the inductor “*International School*”, 99 TCK participants evoked a total of 535 representations, out of which, 240 were different expressions. Thus, the richness index is 0.44. The evocation frequency varies between 1 (176 unique words) and 25 (“Diversity”).

Table 10

Structure of the representation of “International School” by TCK participants (N=99)

Core Zone $f \geq 11.32$ $MOE \leq 3.13$			Potential Change Zone $f \geq 11.32$ $MOE > 3.13$		
Evoc.	<i>f</i>	MOE	Evoc.	<i>f</i>	MOE
Diversity	25	2.8	Culture	19	3.3
Friendship	23	3			
Language	22	2.9			
Multiculturalism	22	3			
Education	21	2.8			
Wealth	12	3.1			
Potential Change Zone $f < 11.32$ $MOE \leq 3.13$			Periphery $f < 11.32$ $MOE > 3.13$		
Evoc.	<i>f</i>	MOE	Evoc.	<i>f</i>	MOE
Multinationality	8	2.5	Privilege	11	3.7
Expense	8	2.9	Fun	10	3.4
Foreignness	7	3.1	International	9	3.2
			Baccalaureate		
Home	6	2.5	English	8	3.8
			Difference	7	3.7
			Open-mindedness	6	3.5
			Elite	5	3.2
			Uniform	5	3.2
			Opportunity	5	3.4
			Teacher	5	5.4
			Excitement	5	3.8

Note. *f* = Frequency (minimum considered was 5); MOE = Mean Order of Evocation

Table 10 shows the cross-tabulation of the frequency and rank criteria, which results in four quadrants, organized according to a frequency of 11.32 and a mean order of evocation

of 3.13. The core zone shows the terms which were most frequently and readily cited. The term “Diversity” stands out for being the most frequently cited one, and together with “Education” were the most readily evoked terms. In the second quadrant can be found the terms which were reported frequently but not cited first and in the third quadrant the ones that had low frequency but high ranking. These build the potential change zone, which consists of terms such as “Culture” and “Multinationality”. Lastly, in the periphery the evocation with higher frequency was “Privilege” and with the latest evocation order was “Teacher”.

2.3. Comparison between semantic fields for the inductor “*International School*”

There are 12 unique words that scored a minimum frequency of 10, within each sample group. These words, together with their frequency for each group and total frequency, as well as the chi-squared values, are presented in Table 11. The assumptions for the tests were fulfilled, except for the evocation “Fun”, for which Fisher’s test was used to retrieve the significance value. There is significant difference in the frequencies of the evocations “Friendship”, “Language” and “Fun” between the two sample groups.

Table 11

Frequent evocations, frequency according to sample groups and total, and chi-squared test

Evocation	Total (n = 200)	Non-TCK (n = 101)	TCK (n = 99)	χ^2 (df = 1)
Language	58	36	22	6.14*
Culture	47	28	19	3.06
Diversity	51	26	25	0.32
Education	43	22	21	0.29
Multiculturalism	39	17	22	0.20
English	24	16	8	3.76
Multinationality	22	14	8	2.46
Opportunity	15	10	5	2.33
Friendship	27	4	23	11.63***
Wealth	20	8	12	0.42
Privilege	18	7	11	0.50
Fun	10	0	10	9.01¹

Note. * $p \leq 0,05$; ** $p \leq 0,01$; *** $p \leq 0,001$. ¹ Fisher’s Exact Test indicates $p=0.002$

3. Representations of “Home”

3.1. Non-TCK’s representations of “Home”

A total of 102 non-TCK participants provided answers for the stimulus “Home”. These participants evoked a total of 529 representations for the inductor “Home”, out of which, 140 were different expressions. Thus, the richness index is 0.26. The evocation frequency varies between 1 (77 unique words) and 75 (“Family”).

Table 12

Structure of the representation of “Home” by Non-TCK participants (N=102)

Core Zone $f \geq 17.4$ $MOE \leq 3.16$			Potential Change Zone $f \geq 17.4$ $MOE > 3.16$		
Evoc.	<i>f</i>	MOE	Evoc.	<i>f</i>	MOE
Family	75	2.2	Safety	45	4
Comfort	63	2.6	Love	18	3.8
Potential Change Zone $f < 17.4$ $MOE \leq 3.16$			Periphery $f < 17.4$ $MOE > 3.16$		
Evoc.	<i>f</i>	MOE	Evoc.	<i>f</i>	MOE
Home	14	2	Peace	13	4.2
Coziness	14	3	Pet	10	5.2
Friendship	11	2.5	Happiness	10	4.3
Parent	10	2.3	Rest	9	5.1
Portugal	7	2.3	Food	9	4.1
Bedroom	7	3.1	Warmth	8	5.2
Place	5	1.8	Affection	7	4.4
			Bed	6	3.3
			Tranquility	5	4.6

Note. *f* = Frequency (minimum considered was 5); MOE = Mean Order of Evocation

Table 12 shows the cross-tabulation of the frequency and rank criteria, which results in four quadrants, organized according to a frequency of 17.4 and a mean order of evocation of 3.16. The core zone shows the terms which were most frequently and readily cited. The term “Family” stands out for being the most frequently cited and most readily evoked term. In the second quadrant can be found the terms which were reported frequently but not cited first and in the third quadrant the ones that had low frequency but high ranking. These build the potential change zone, which consists of terms such as “Safety” and “Home”. Lastly, in the periphery the evocation with higher frequency was “Peace” and with the latest evocation order were “Pet” and “Warmth”.

3.2. TCK's representations of "Home"

For the inductor "Home", 69 TCK participants evoked a total of 527 representations, out of which, 230 were different expressions. Thus, the richness index is 0.43. The evocation frequency varies between 1 (155 unique words) and 54 ("Family").

Table 13

Structure of the representation of "Home" by TCK participants (N=99)

Core Zone $f \geq 11.2$ $MOE \leq 3.33$			Potential Change Zone $f \geq 11.2$ $MOE > 3.33$		
Evoc.	<i>f</i>	MOE	Evoc.	<i>f</i>	MOE
Family	54	2.2	Safety	16	3.7
Friendship	27	3.3	Comfort	14	3.6
			Food	13	3.7
Potential Change Zone $f < 11.2$ $MOE \leq 3.33$			Periphery $f < 11.2$ $MOE > 3.33$		
Evoc.	<i>f</i>	MOE	Evoc.	<i>f</i>	MOE
People	11	3	Love	9	5.6
House	9	3.2	Peace	8	4.1
Parent	6	2.3	Happiness	7	4.6
Confusion	6	2.3	Feeling	6	3.5
Coziness	6	3	Warmth	6	5.2
Unknown	5	2.2	Memory	6	5.3
			Pet	5	4
			Everywhere	5	3.4
			Airport	5	4.6

Note. *f* = Frequency (minimum considered was 5); MOE = Mean Order of Evocation

Table 13 shows the cross-tabulation of the frequency and rank criteria, which results in four quadrants, organized according to a frequency of 11.2 and a mean order of evocation of 3.33. The core zone shows the terms which were most frequently and readily cited. The term "Family" stands out for being the most frequently cited and most readily evoked term. In the second quadrant can be found the terms which were reported frequently but not cited first and in the third quadrant the ones that had low frequency but high ranking. These build the potential change zone, which consists of terms such as "Safety" and "People". Lastly, in the periphery the evocation with higher frequency and with the latest evocation order was "Love".

3.4. Comparison between semantic fields for the inductor "Home"

There are 13 unique words that scored a minimum frequency of 10, within each sample group. These words, together with their frequency for each group and total frequency, as well as the chi-squared values, are presented in Table 14. All the assumptions for each test were fulfilled. There is significant difference in the frequencies of the

evocations “Comfort”, “Safety”, “Home”, “Friendship” and “People” between the two sample groups.

Table 14

Frequent evocations, frequency according to sample groups and total, and chi-squared test

Evocation	Total (n = 201)	Non-TCK (n = 102)	TCK (n = 99)	χ^2 (df = 1)
Family	129	75	54	3.80
Comfort	79	65	14	35.38***
Safety	61	45	16	14.52***
Love	27	18	9	3.04
Home	16	14	2	9.09*
Coziness	20	14	6	3.23
Peace	21	13	8	1.20
Friendship	38	11	27	7.05*
Parent	16	10	6	1.00
Pet	15	10	5	1.67
Happiness	17	10	7	0.53
Food	22	9	13	0.76
People	13	2	11	6.34*

Note. * $p \leq 0,05$; ** $p \leq 0,01$; *** $p \leq 0,001$

4. Representations of “*International Mobility*”

4.1. Non-TCK’s representations of “*International Mobility*”

A total of 100 non-TCK participants provided answers for the stimulus “*International Mobility*”. These participants evoked a total of 475 representations for the inductor “*International Mobility*”, out of which, 153 were different expressions. Thus, the richness index is 0.32. The evocation frequency varies between 1 (93 unique words) and 38 (“Travel”).

Table 15

Structure of the representation of “International Mobility” by Non-TCK participants (N=100)

Core Zone $f \geq 12.77$ $MOE \leq 3.09$			Potential Change Zone $f \geq 12.77$ $MOE > 3.09$		
Evoc.	f	MOE	Evoc.	f	MOE
Travel	38	2.3	Education	34	3.6
Erasmus	27	1.9	Experience	28	3.7
Culture	26	3	Knowledge	14	4.4
Opportunity	17	2.9			
Potential Change Zone $f < 12.77$ $MOE \leq 3.09$			Periphery $f < 12.77$ $MOE > 3.09$		
Evoc.	f	MOE	Evoc.	f	MOE
Migration	10	2.3	Language	10	3.3
Plane	8	1.9	Growth	10	3.6
Challenge	6	2.8	Work	6	4.5
Passport	6	2.5	Adventure	6	3.7
Exchange	5	2.2	Freedom	5	4.2

Potential Change Zone <i>f < 12.77 MOE ≤ 3.09</i>			Periphery <i>f < 12.77 MOE > 3.09</i>		
Evoc.	f	MOE	Evoc.	f	MOE
Discomfort	5	2.6	Friendship	5	4
Border	5	2.8	People	5	3.6
			Adaptation	5	5.2

Note. *f* = Frequency (minimum considered was 5); MOE = Mean Order of Evocation

Table 15 shows the cross-tabulation of the frequency and rank criteria, which results in four quadrants, organized according to a frequency of 12.77 and a mean order of evocation of 3.09. The core zone shows the terms which were most frequently and readily cited. The term “Travel” stands out for being the most frequently cited one, where as “Erasmus” was the term most readily evoked. In the second quadrant can be found the terms which were reported frequently but not cited first and in the third quadrant the ones that had low frequency but high ranking. These build the potential change zone, which consists of terms such as “Education” and “Migration”. Lastly, in the periphery the evocation with higher frequency were “Language” and “Growth”; and with the latest evocation order were “Warmth” and “Pet”.

4.2. TCK’s representations of “*International Mobility*”

For the inductor “*International Mobility*”, 98 TCK participants evoked a total of 450 representations, out of which, 196 were different expressions. Thus, the richness index is 0.44. The evocation frequency varies between 1 (129 unique words) and 35 (“Travel”).

Table 16

Structure of the representation of “International Mobility” by TCK participants (N=98)

Core Zone <i>f ≥ 9.26 MOE ≤ 3.07</i>			Potential Change Zone <i>f ≥ 9.26 MOE > 3.07</i>		
Evoc.	f	MOE	Evoc.	f	MOE
Travel	35	2.1	Passport	15	3.4
Freedom	15	2.9	Culture	13	3.5
Plane	15	2.8	Experience	11	4
			Visa	10	3.4
Potential Change Zone <i>f < 9.26 MOE ≤ 3.07</i>			Periphery <i>f < 9.26 MOE > 3.07</i>		
Evoc.	f	MOE	Evoc.	f	MOE
Flight	7	2.1	Privilege	9	3.2
Border	6	3	Airport	9	3.3
Adaptation	6	2.8	Move	7	3.3
Opportunity	6	2.3	Excitement	7	4.1
COVID 19	5	1.8	Knowledge	6	3.3
			Language	6	4.5
			Adventure	5	3.4
			Education	5	3.2
			Migration	5	3.8
			Work	5	3.2
			Friendship	5	3.8

Note. *f* = Frequency (minimum considered was 5); MOE = Mean Order of Evocation

Table 16 shows the cross-tabulation of the frequency and rank criteria, which results in four quadrants, organized according to a frequency of 9.26 and a mean order of evocation of 3.07. The core zone shows the terms which were most frequently and readily cited. The term “Travel” stands out for being the most frequently cited and most readily evoked term. In the second quadrant can be found the terms which were reported frequently but not cited first and in the third quadrant the ones that had low frequency but high ranking. These build the potential change zone, which consists of terms such as “Passport” and “Flight”. Lastly, in the periphery the evocation with higher frequency were “Privilege” and “Airport”; and with the latest evocation order was “Language”.

4.3. Comparison between semantic fields for the inductor “*International Mobility*”

There are 14 unique words that scored a minimum frequency of 10, within each sample group. These words, together with their frequency for each group and total frequency, as well as the chi-squared values, are presented in Table 17. All the assumptions for each test were fulfilled. There is significant difference in the frequencies of the evocations “Education”, “Experience”, “Erasmus”, “Opportunity”, “Growth”, “Visa”, “Passport” and “Freedom” between the two sample groups.

Table 17

Frequent evocations, frequency according to sample groups and total, and chi-squared test

Evocation	Total (n = 198)	Non-TCK (n = 100)	TCK (n = 98)	χ^2 (df = 1)
Travel	73	38	35	0.02
Education	39	34	5	20.92***
Experience	39	28	11	26.35***
Erasmus	27	27	0	4.81*
Culture	39	26	13	3.82
Opportunity	23	17	6	4.81*
Knowledge	20	14	6	2.85
Migration	15	10	5	1.43
Language	16	10	6	0.81
Growth	11	10	1	6.97**
Passport	21	6	15	4.46*
Freedom	20	5	15	5.68*
Plane	23	8	15	2.59
Visa	11	1	10	7.96**

Note. * $p \leq 0,05$; ** $p \leq 0,01$; *** $p \leq 0,001$

5. Representations of “Cross-cultural Experience”

5.1. Non-TCK’s representations of “Cross-cultural Experience”

A total of 96 non-TCK participants provided answers for the stimulus “Cross-cultural Experience”. These participants evoked a total of 404 representations for the inductor “Cross-cultural Experience”, out of which, 142 were different expressions. Thus, the richness index is 0.35. The evocation frequency varies between 1 (93 unique words) and 24 (“Education” and “Knowledge”).

Table 18

Structure of the representation of “Cross-cultural Experience” by non-TCK participants (N=96)

Core Zone <i>f</i> ≥ 11.4 <i>MOE</i> ≤ 2.97			Potential Change Zone <i>f</i> ≥ 11.4 <i>MOE</i> > 2.97		
Evoc.	<i>f</i>	MOE	Evoc.	<i>f</i>	MOE
Education	24	2.8	Travel	17	3.6
Knowledge	24	2.2	Growth	13	3.3
Culture	18	1.9			
Wealth	17	2.5			
Sharing	15	2.5			
Diversity	15	2.8			
Potential Change Zone <i>f</i> < 11.4 <i>MOE</i> ≤ 2.97			Periphery <i>f</i> < 11.4 <i>MOE</i> > 2.97		
Evoc.	<i>f</i>	MOE	Evoc.	<i>f</i>	MOE
Novelty	8	2.5	Language	9	3.8
Respect	7	2	Experience	9	4.1
Challenge	6	2.8	Friendship	8	4.8
			People	8	3
			Difference	8	4.2
			Change	6	3.2
			Acceptance	6	4.2
			Variety	5	3.2
			Food	5	3.4

Note. *f* = Frequency (minimum considered was 5); *MOE* = Mean Order of Evocation

Table 18 shows the cross-tabulation of the frequency and rank criteria, which results in four quadrants, organized according to a frequency of 11.4 and a mean order of evocation of 2.97. The core zone shows the terms which were most frequently and readily cited. The terms “Education” and “Knowledge” stand out for being the most frequently cited ones, whereas “Culture” was the term most readily evoked. In the second quadrant can be found the terms which were reported frequently but not cited first and in the third quadrant the ones that had low frequency but high ranking. These build the potential change zone, which consists of terms such as “Travel” and “Novelty”. Lastly, in the periphery the evocation with higher frequency were “Language” and “Experience”; and with the latest evocation order was “Friendship”.

5.2. TCK's representations of "Cross-cultural Experience"

For the inductor "Cross-cultural Experience", 96 TCK participants evoked a total of 474 representations, out of which, 198 were different expressions. Thus, the richness index is 0.42. The evocation frequency varies between 1 (121 unique words) and 23 ("Education").

Table 19

Structure of the representation of "Cross-cultural Experience" by TCK participants (N=96)

Core Zone <i>f</i> ≥ 9.38 <i>MOE</i> ≤ 3.58			Potential Change Zone <i>f</i> ≥ 9.38 <i>MOE</i> > 3.58		
Evoc.	<i>f</i>	MOE	Evoc.	<i>f</i>	MOE
Friendship	15	3.5	Education	23	4
Experience	12	3.5	Food	18	3.8
			Growth	15	3.8
			Open-mindedness	14	4.2
			Language	14	3.6
Potential Change Zone <i>f</i> < 9.38 <i>MOE</i> ≤ 3.58			Periphery <i>f</i> < 9.38 <i>MOE</i> > 3.58		
Evoc.	<i>f</i>	MOE	Evoc.	<i>f</i>	MOE
Knowledge	9	2.8	Appreciation	5	4.6
Diversity	9	2.6	Perspective	5	3.6
Wealth	8	3	People	5	5
Novelty	7	2.7	Communication	5	4.6
Travel	7	3	Culture	5	3.6
Life	6	2.8	Adaptation	5	3.6
Understanding	5	2.8			
Difference	5	3			

Note. *f* = Frequency (minimum considered was 5); *MOE* = Mean Order of Evocation

Table 19 shows the cross-tabulation of the frequency and rank criteria, which results in four quadrants, organized according to a frequency of 9.38 and a mean order of evocation of 3.58. The core zone shows the terms which were most frequently and readily cited. The term "Friendship" stands out for being the most frequently cited one. Both terms "Friendship" and Experience", were evoked in the same rank. In the second quadrant can be found the terms which were reported frequently but not cited first and in the third quadrant the ones that had low frequency but high ranking. These build the potential change zone, which consists of terms such as "Education" and "Knowledge". Lastly, in the periphery all evocations had the same frequency, namely the minimum considered. These terms were "Appreciation", "Perspective", "People", "Communication", "Culture" and "Adaptation". The term with the latest evocation order was "People".

5.3. Comparison between semantic fields for the inductor “*Cross-cultural Experience*”

There are 13 unique words that scored a minimum frequency of 10, within each sample group. These words, together with their frequency for each group and total frequency, as well as the chi-squared values, are presented in Table 20. All the assumptions for each test were fulfilled. There is significant difference in the frequencies of the evocations “Knowledge”, “Culture”, “Wealth”, “Travel”, “Sharing”, “Food” and “Open-mindedness”.

Table 20

Frequent evocations, frequency according to sample groups and total, and chi-squared test

Evocation	Total (n = 192)	Non-TCK (n = 96)	TCK (n = 96)	χ^2 (df = 1)
Education	47	24	23	0.51
Knowledge	33	24	9	9.85**
Culture	23	18	5	9.89**
Wealth	25	17	8	5.01*
Travel	24	17	7	6.12*
Sharing	18	15	3	10.30**
Diversity	24	15	9	2.70
Growth	28	13	15	0.00
Food	23	5	18	5.60*
Friendship	23	8	15	1.20
Open-mindedness	16	2	14	7.37**
Language	23	9	14	0.45
Experience	21	9	12	0.09

Note. * $p \leq 0,05$; ** $p \leq 0,01$; *** $p \leq 0,001$

6. Representations of “*Children or youth that grow up in different countries to that of their origin*”

6.1. Non-TCK’s representations of “*Children or youth that grow up in different countries to that of their origin*”

A total of 99 non-TCK participants provided answers for the stimulus “*Children or youth that grow up in different countries to that of their origin*”. These participants evoked a total of 437 representations for the inductor “*Children or youth that grow up in different countries to that of their origin*”, out of which, 154 were different expressions. Thus, the richness index is 0.35. The evocation frequency varies between 1 (94 unique words) and 33 (“Migration”).

Table 21

Structure of the representation of “Children or youth that grow up in different countries to that of their origin” by non-TCK participants (N=99)

Core Zone $f \geq 9.92$ $MOE \leq 2.93$			Potential Change Zone $f \geq 9.92$ $MOE > 2.93$		
Evoc.	f	MOE	Evoc.	f	MOE
Migration	33	1.9	Opportunity	18	3.1
Culture	16	2.7	Hardship	11	3.5
Adaptation	15	2.9	Education	11	4
Multilingualism	14	2.4			
Challenge	11	2.7			
Potential Change Zone $f < 9.92$ $MOE \leq 2.93$			Periphery $f < 9.92$ $MOE > 2.93$		
Evoc.	f	MOE	Evoc.	f	MOE
Diversity	9	2.6	Saudade	9	4.6
Bilingualism	9	2.7	Experience	8	3.1
Open-mindedness	8	2.5	Growth	8	3.4
Refugee	8	2.5	Travel	6	4.8
Language	7	2.7	Change	5	4.2
Difference	6	2.3	Wealth	5	3
Multiculturalism	5	2.5	Relocation	5	3
			Acceptance	5	4.6
			Development	5	3

Note. f = Frequency (minimum considered was 5); MOE = Mean Order of Evocation

Table 21 shows the cross-tabulation of the frequency and rank criteria, which results in four quadrants, organized according to a frequency of 9.92 and a mean order of evocation of 2.93. The core zone shows the terms which were most frequently and readily cited. The term “Migration” stands out for being the most frequently cited and most readily evoked term. In the second quadrant can be found the terms which were reported frequently but not cited first and in the third quadrant the ones that had low frequency but high ranking. These build the potential change zone, which consists of terms such as “Opportunity” and “Diversity”. Lastly, in the periphery the evocation with higher frequency was “Saudade” and with the latest evocation order was “Travel”.

6.2. TCK’s representations of “Children or youth that grow up in different countries to that of their origin”

For the inductor “Children or youth that grow up in different countries to that of their origin”, 100 TCK participants evoked a total of 507 representations, out of which, 191 were different expressions. Thus, the richness index is 0.38. The evocation frequency varies between 1 (102 unique words) and 30 (“Third Culture Kid”).

Table 22

Structure of the representation of “Children or youth that grow up in different countries to that of their origin” by TCK participants (N=100)

Core Zone $f \geq 8.62$ $MOE \leq 3.24$			Potential Change Zone $f \geq 8.62$ $MOE > 3.24$		
Evoc.	<i>f</i>	MOE	Evoc.	<i>f</i>	MOE
Third Culture Kid	30	1.4	Challenge	12	3.7
Open-mindedness	18	2.8	Friendship	11	3.8
Identity	10	3	Adaptation	11	3.9
Myself	10	1.7			
Luck	10	2.8			
Potential Change Zone $f < 8.62$ $MOE \leq 3.24$			Periphery $f < 8.62$ $MOE > 3.24$		
Evoc.	<i>f</i>	MOE	Evoc.	<i>f</i>	MOE
Migration	8	2.6	Education	8	4.2
Culture	8	3	Resilience	8	4.6
Multilingualism	8	3.2	Experience	8	3.5
Uniqueness	7	2.9	Confusion	8	4.4
Travel	6	2.5	Difference	8	5.5
Opportunity	6	3	Loss	7	4.4
Multiculturalism	6	3	Tolerance	6	3.7
			Language	6	4
			Hardship	5	3.6
			Perspective	5	3.6
			Diversity	5	3.8
			Bittersweetness	5	4
			Belongingness	5	3.8
			Understanding	5	5

Note. *f* = Frequency (minimum considered was 5); MOE = Mean Order of Evocation

Table 22 shows the cross-tabulation of the frequency and rank criteria, which results in four quadrants, organized according to a frequency of 8.62 and a mean order of evocation of 3.24. The core zone shows the terms which were most frequently and readily cited. The term “Third Culture Kid” stands out for being the most frequently cited and most readily evoked term. In the second quadrant can be found the terms which were reported frequently but not cited first and in the third quadrant the ones that had low frequency but high ranking. These build the potential change zone, which consists of terms such as “Challenge” and “Migration”. Lastly, in the periphery the evocations with higher frequency were “Education”, “Resilience”, “Experience”, “Confusion”, and “Difference”. The term with the latest evocation order was “Difference”.

6.3. Comparison between semantic fields for the inductor “Children or youth that grow up in different countries to that of their origin”

There are 14 unique words that scored a minimum frequency of 10, within each sample group. These words, together with their frequency for each group and total frequency, as well as the chi-squared values, are presented in Table 23. The assumptions for

the tests were fulfilled, except for the evocations “Myself” and “Luck”, for which Fisher’s test was used to retrieve the significance values. There is significant difference in the frequencies of the evocations “Migration”, “Third Culture Kid”, “Opportunity”, “Culture”, “Myself” and “Luck” between the two sample groups.

Table 23

Frequent evocations, frequency according to sample groups and total, and chi-squared test

Evocation	Total (n = 199)	Non-TCK (n = 99)	TCK (n = 100)	χ^2 (df = 1)
Migration	41	33	8	20.16***
Opportunity	24	18	6	8.16**
Culture	24	16	8	4.11*
Adaptation	26	15	11	1.40
Multilingualism	22	14	8	2.73
Hardship	16	11	5	3.03
Challenge	23	11	12	0.02
Education	19	11	8	1.05
Third Culture Kid	31	1	30	23.91***
Open-mindedness	26	8	18	2.59
Friendship	15	4	11	2.36
Identity	14	4	10	1.80
Myself	10	0	10	8.71¹
Luck	10	0	10	8.71¹

Note. * $p \leq 0,05$; ** $p \leq 0,01$; *** $p \leq 0,001$. ¹ Fisher’s Exact Test indicates $p=0.002$

Discussion

1. Who identified as a TCK

The number of participants who identified themselves as TCK, at least barely, is significantly larger in comparison to the number of participants who indicated they knew the TCK term. It would be expected that these numbers would be closer in size.

This can be justified by how accessible the internet is currently, together with the fact that the questionnaire was provided in an online format. This could mean that participants, who weren't familiar with the term, when asked to indicate how much they identified with TCKs, looked up what it meant, and thus could position themselves on the identification scale.

2. Inductors

Here the aim is to present an analysis focusing on the number of participants and the participation rate, as opposed to an analysis specifically looking at the evocations, e.g., in terms of number and diversity, that the participants produced.

Not all participants provided answers to all inductors. This suggests that, on one hand, for a certain number of participants nothing occurred to them for a certain inductor. On the other hand, it could be that the stimulus only sparks a poor representation about the topic.

The inductor with the biggest participation overall is "*Home*". This can be attributed to the fact that it is a shared experience between all. However, there are nuances to this, as TCKs would have more difficulty pinpointing where this place would be or even restricting to one place alone (Colomer, 2020; Criel, 2021; Kwon, 2019; Nette & Hayden, 2007), which could result in a larger number of submissions as they try to find the best way to convey the ideas this stimulus word elicits. The lowest participation overall can be seen for the inductor "*Cross-cultural Experience*". This seems to show that it is a stimulus that doesn't elicit strong representations. One reason this could come to be, is due to only half of the total sample being TCKs and therefore would be familiar with the nuances that pertain to this experience.

For non-TCKs "*Home*" was the stimulus that had the most participation. One way to understand this would be by recognizing that it is a concept that can be more generalizable

to everyone's experience, as opposed to being specific to the TCK phenomenon. Additionally, TCKs would face more challenges trying to come up with ideas related to this inductor, as they have a lesser sense of home and belonging than non-TCKs.

The inductor with the most participation by TCKs was "*Children or youth that grow up in different countries to that of their origin*". This, as a simplistic definition of the concept that relates to their personal experience, draws on a larger amount of shared knowledge that this population has as a result of being directly impacted by the phenomenon. While for non-TCKs this is a more unfamiliar experience, thus resulting in this stimulus generating a poorer representation, amongst this sample group.

3. Fluidity, Amplitude, Richness and Similarity

As previously mentioned, fluidity is measured by looking at the total amount of evocations provided. Amplitude, however, results from the number of different evocations out of the total. With these two indicators it is possible to understand the richness, i.e., whether the evocations within a sample group are homogenous or not. Similarity between the semantic universes of each sample will be analyzed according to Ellegard's index for each inductor.

3.1. Fluidity and Amplitude

Overall, the sample group with higher values in the fluidity index, i.e., larger number of total evocations, is the TCKs, for four out of the six inductors, namely "*Global Society*", "*International School*", "*Cross-cultural Experience*" and "*Children or youth that grow up in different countries to that of their origin*". Regarding the amplitude index, overall, the sample group with higher values is the TCKs, for all inductors. This means that TCKs presented a higher number of different ideas for each of the six inductors, when compared to non-TCKs.

Despite not providing the highest number of replies to all the inductors, TCKs still provided a higher number of different replies to each of the inductors. These results seem to point towards greater expressiveness and creativity by TCKs. Which, in turn, portrays the diversity that encompasses the TCK phenomenon.

Looking at the sample groups, the non-TCKs provided more replies and more diverse replies for the inductor "*Global Society*" out of all the inductors, which shows how the globalized world, and the globalization phenomenon does not just affect migrating

populations. Regarding the least number of replies submitted by this group, they were provided for the inductor “*Cross-cultural experience*”, denoting the low evocation power of the expression. The inductor that elicited the least number of different replies was “*Home*”, portraying a stereotyped representation of this concept.

Concerning the TCK sample, these participants provided a higher number of replies and of diverse replies for the inductor “*International School*”. The international school is a predominant setting of TCKs’ lives (Dellos, 2017; Poonoosamy, 2018; Sears, 2011). Regarding the least number of replies submitted by this group, they were provided for the inductor “*International mobility*”, which shows that this inductor does not elicit a high volume of representations. The least number of different replies was produced for the inductor “*Children or youth that grow up in different countries to that of their origin*”. This inductor shows a unified and homogenous representation, which would be expected as it is a very familiar concept for this population, being it a description of the TCK phenomenon.

Taking these two indicators into consideration, one can draw remarks on the similarity and lack thereof, within each group, as well as for each inductor. This will be done in the next section.

3.2. Richness

The richness index values show that although there is not a very high degree of homogeneity, the evocations that the inductors elicited are also not totally diverse, both within the sample group as well as in the total sample. It should be noticed that the highest richness index value for non-TCKs is the lowest value for TCKs (0.38). This shows that TCKs have more diversified ideas regarding the inductors, in comparison to non-TCKs. These results could be attributed to the fact the TCK sample consists of more diverse individuals that also had diverse life experiences. These would inevitably translate to the representations the population has. On the other hand, the non-TCK sample is relatively homogenous in its sociodemographic characteristics.

Non-TCKs present a lower richness index value for the inductor “*Home*”, in comparison to TCKs, meaning non-TCKs’ ideas about this stimulus are more homogenous. Regarding their most dispersed ideas, those can be seen in the evocations for the inductor “*Global Society*”. A more stereotypical representation of “*Home*” could be due to the notion that, as opposed to TCKs, non-TCKs tend to have one place that they identify as their home and where they belong. Whereas for “*Global Society*”, this group of people would have less familiar experiences and thus shared ideas.

The higher homogeneity in ideas for TCKs can be observed for the inductor “*Children or youth that grow up in different countries to that of their origin*”. More dispersed ideas were presented for the inductor “*Global Society*”. The first stimulus refers to a shared experience this sample group has, and since they identify with the term, it would elicit strong representations. What concerns “*Global Society*”, this can have various representations as it is a concept that will depend on the experiences that individuals have had. Since this sample is very diverse, their representations mirror that pattern.

3.3. Ellegard’s index

The variance between the values for Ellegard’s index suggests that there are very tenuous differences between the semantic universes and this points towards weak similarities between the groups in terms of their representations.

The inductor “*International School*” presented the lowest R_n value, which indicates that there is least similarity between the groups regarding their answers to this inductor. These two populations have completely different schooling experiences as most non-TCKs have attended local schools, whereas TCKs would have predominantly attended international schools. In the sample of this study, a total of 130 out of 202 participants have only attended national schools. This shows how the international school context might not be familiar to over half of the sample in the study.

The largest value was recorded for the inductor “*Children or youth that grow up in different countries to that of their origin*”, pointing towards higher similarities between the semantic universes that the two groups produced. In comparison to the other inductors, this one is more specific, which would narrow down the evocations that it would elicit and thus present a more concise sample of the representations of the stimulus. It is interesting to contrast this result with the fact that, as seen in the sociodemographic characterization, the total sample of this study was split between having and not having prior knowledge of the TCK concept.

4. Central Systems and Representational Content

An analysis of each inductor will be presented next. It will be done by looking at the representations that compose the central systems of each sample group. The central system is composed of evocations that are more frequent and more readily provided. This is what

unifies and sustains the meaning of the representations. Additionally, the representational content, i.e., the evocations, that each group produces for the inductor will also be compared and analyzed in this section.

4.1. Global Society

4.1.1. Central systems of the representations of “*Global Society*”

The central system of the representations of the inductor “*Global Society*” produced by non-TCKs comprises “culture”, “world”, “globalization”, “diversity”, and “people”. The TCKs’ representations built a central system on the words: “culture”, “diversity”, “multiculturalism”, and “world”.

The differences in the central core of the two groups pertains to the words “globalization” and “people”, present in the non-TCK group, and “multiculturalism”, in the TCK group. For non-TCKs, the representations of “*Global Society*” seem to relate to basic aspects of a possible definition of the term, depicting the idea that diversity in culture and people in the world is a product of globalization. This goes in line with what Carroll (2019) suggests, namely that there is an increase in globalization and how the world is getting smaller. Non-TCKs are included, as they too are affected by this phenomenon. Furthermore, despite the difference in the two words already discussed, TCKs show a tendency towards what non-TCKs also presented.

4.1.2. Comparison of the representational content for “*Global Society*” between the non-TCK and TCK sample groups

Within the semantic universes produced for this stimulus by each group, comparisons were drawn between the common evocations and differences could be observed. The term “friendship” was significantly more often mentioned by the TCK group. Additionally, significant differences could be seen for the evocation “people”, namely with higher frequency values for the non-TCK group. While non-TCKs go for a broad aspect about the relation with others, TCKs tend to focus on a particular relationship they build within the dimension of the world. TCKs don’t have specific locations of belonging, so they would associate friendships with a globalized context. This corroborates what Pollock and Van Reken (2017) state regarding the third culture community, namely that it is composed of individuals that come and go. This connected with the idea that TCKs must constantly rebuild friendships (Dellos, 2017) can justify the association between friendship and the globalized vision of society.

Although “TCKs typically have a global mentality” (Miller et al., 2020), significant differences were observed in the mention of the word “globalization”, with a higher frequency by non-TCKs. This can be attributed to, as previously mentioned, the ever-growing presence of this phenomenon in the general population and its impacts. In line with the previous result discussed, non-TCKs mentioned the word “internet” significantly more often than TCKs, which can be seen as a repercussion of the spread of globalization and the context of modern times. For TCKs this evocation is of relevance as, like Hannaford (2016) highlights, it promotes a sense of belonging as it connects TCKs to others and other places. Another evocation with significant differences between the two sample groups was “travel”, with a higher frequency observed in the TCK group. In terms of mobility, the setting for this population’s high mobility lifestyle is a global society, in the sense that they don’t identify, relate, or fit in one specific group, setting or location. They live lives on a larger scale.

4.2. International School

4.2.1. Central systems of the representations of “*International School*”

Non-TCKs’ representations of “*International School*” create a central system which consists of the following evocations: “language”, “culture”, “diversity”, “multiculturalism”, “English”, and “multinationality”. The central system of this inductor for TCKs consists of “diversity”, “friendship”, “language”, “multiculturalism”, “education”, and “wealth”. As previously mentioned, this inductor has a particularity, since only 35.6% of the sample has attended international schools, however, it is interesting to observe how there is an overlap in the elements of the central systems of the two groups, namely “language”, “diversity” and “multiculturalism”.

It is worth noting that non-TCKs don’t mention “language” alone but go further and refer “English” (this evocation was not summed into the term language due to its high frequency). This could be since it is the language associated with international and multicultural environments. Since non-TCKs’ working language at school was likely not English, there is a big contrast in regard to the international setting. Contrastingly, TCKs carry out their lives with English as their overall language, when talking to their peers and friends, in countries where they speak a unfamiliar language to them, and, sometimes, even at home. As Lijad and Van Schalkwyk (2018) put it, most international schools cater to a population that looks for English in the language education.

4.2.2. Comparison of the representational content for “*International School*” between the non-TCK and TCK sample groups

Two of the significant differences relate to higher frequencies in the TCK group. One of them relates to the evocation “friendship”, which was previously also recorded as significant with higher frequency for TCK. In the context of the inductor “*International School*” this word gains another meaning, as international schools are places where TCKs can identify others with similar life experiences and background stories, thus being the settings of meaningful relationships. It is where they find others who they relate to on a deeper level. However, this could have a negative dimension, as there is a cyclical renovation of peers and friends in these contexts, as Dellos (2017) points out. Nonetheless this could add to the preponderant presence in the representations of this inductor. On the contrary, since this place is unfamiliar for non-TCKs, they would not have this idea of friendship so present as it is for TCKs. This population associates their sense of belonging to friends and in this environment, there is less of a concern about where they are or come from, but more about topics that strain from that, such as their interests or favorite activities (Bagnall, 2012).

The second term that had significantly higher mentions by TCK for the inductor “*International School*” was “fun”. Dellos (2017) points out how there is excitement in the possibility of new experiences associated with international schools. There are new peers, new teachers, new traditions, and new overall experiences to be lived, with every new international school and even at the same school, throughout the years, as there is a constant renovation. While non-TCKs could find this unsettling, this is the normal for TCKs and they feel comforted by it (Sears, 2011). Thus, TCKs present a more positive and relaxed idea regarding this familiar context that constantly changes and renovates.

Non-TCKs mentioned the word “language” significantly more than TCKs, in regard to the stimulus “*International School*”. This could be since English is a dominant language in international settings (Tanu, 2015) and especially international schools (Lijad & Van Schalkwyk, 2018). Thus, language is a present representation for those who are less familiar with the detailed notions and nuances that are associated with this context.

4.3. Home

4.3.1. Central systems of the representations of “*Home*”

The non-TCK’s evocations that comprise the central system of the representations of the inductor “*Home*” are “family” and “comfort”. The words that are part of the central system for this inductor in the TCK population are “family” and “friendships”. Although

both groups mention family, the second most frequent and most promptly cited word differs according to each group. While TCKs' representations converge on the idea of relationships, which is supported by various findings, such as those by Allen and colleagues (2021), non-TCKs go beyond relationships and mention a feeling they associate with the idea of home.

These central system results are better understood when also reaching for the associated evocations part of the potential change zone and the periphery. For TCKs this inductor evoked dichotomic ideas, namely regarding emotions. There is a spectrum of various ideas ranging from "love" to "confusion". This portrays the challenges that TCKs are faced with when asked where home is, but also internal struggles, namely, in terms of identifying a home for themselves, which corroborates the point put forth by Colomer (2020) and Criel (2021), amongst others.

4.3.2. Comparison of the representational content for "*Home*" between the non-TCK and TCK sample groups

What concerns the significant differences in the representational content for the stimulus "*Home*", the results somewhat mirror the tendencies mentioned above. Non-TCKs mentioned the idea "home" significantly more often than TCKs. Despite this seeming like a redundant result, the word home can stand for ideas that relate it to a house, a building, or a specific place in general, thus a concrete location. Looking at the overall evocations, non-TCKs mentioned specific places, such as "Portugal", "bedroom", "place" and "bed". This, in turn, contrasts with the representations of TCKs. When looking for places, within the evocations by TCK, one can find "everywhere" and "airport". This goes in line with the ideas put forth by Nette and Hayden (2007), namely that TCKs have a notion of multiple homes from a young age. Therefore, they wouldn't think of a specific house or building. When they do, they point out a common transient location. As a 2020 study by Colomer reports, the TCK population compares airports to home. Sears, in 2011 already, pointed out how the shifting nature of the high mobility lifestyle results in a shifting concept of home.

Other ideas that had a significantly higher frequency for the non-TCK group were "comfort" and "safety". The concept of home creates a challenge for TCKs. Thus, they would find comfort and safety in their high mobility and in the cyclical nature of the patterns of change they live through, rather than in a specific place alone. TCKs mentioned these words as well, however, there were also contrasting terms amongst their evocations, such as "confusion", "unknown" and "everywhere". As previously mentioned, in a study by

Colomer (2020), TCKs identified airports as home, and this phenomenon was attributed to this location being perceived as giving a sense of comfort, familiarity and security.

On to the ideas more significantly presented by TCKs, these were “friendship” and “people”. This is the third stimulus that elicits this pattern in the evocations by TCKs and, thus this discussion. In this context, of “*Home*”, however, it is relevant to add to that conversation, that TCKs perceive a sense of belonging from social domains, going beyond geographical aspects. Bikos and colleagues (2009), Carroll (2019), Kwon (2019), Nette and Hayden (2007), Pollock and Van Reken (2017), amongst other researchers, have highlighted this pattern in relationships as a source of meaning for “*home*”.

4.4. International Mobility

4.4.1. Central systems of the representations of “*International Mobility*”

The central system of “*International Mobility*” for non-TCKs is composed of “travel”, “Erasmus”, “culture”, and “opportunity”, while for TCKs it is made up of the words “travel”, “freedom” and “plane”.

While for non-TCKs “travel”, together with the other elements of the central system, denotes an idea of leisure, for TCKs there is a utilitarian dimension in the central system, as they seem to mention the means for the travel, i.e., “plane”, and the expected outcome, i.e., “freedom”. The elements of the central core for non-TCKs also highlight the educational aspect of mobility, referencing the Erasmus Program that is offered by universities, so their students have an exchange experience. Additionally, it is relevant to pay attention to the evocation of “opportunity” by the non-TCKs as it contrasts with the reality of this experience for TCKs, as their lifestyle.

4.4.2. Comparison of the representational content for “*International Mobility*” between the non-TCK and TCK sample groups

The stimulus “*International Mobility*” elicited various terms of significantly different frequencies between the two sample groups. For TCKs the word “freedom” was significantly more often an answer, when compared to non-TCKs. This result holds meaning in regard to this population as it relates to their lifestyle, marked by a cyclical mobility. Thinking of the opposite of the stimulus, which could be “national motionless”, a dimension of the TCK phenomenon, which TCKs value, would disappear. This could result in challenges for the TCKs, which would stem from the stability that is unfamiliar. TCKs have various places of attachment (Sears, 2011), various cultures they relate to and various places of belonging

(Kwon, 2019). As Allan (2002) puts it, TCKs exist in a cultural no-man's land. There they are free to be themselves and to live out the multitude of experiences and expectations, without having limiting boundaries keeping them within a determined cultural identity. Additionally, TCKs find freedom in the nomadic lifestyle (Kannisto, 2015) and in the ability to change location if and when change is necessary (Grote, 2015).

Two more evocations are to be highlighted as significantly more frequent in the TCK representations of the inductor "International Mobility", namely "visa" and "passport". These two answers denote the familiarity with the concept and show specific knowledge about the requirements for said international mobility. This could be due to how this is a structuring element of their lifestyle (Colomer, 2020). Dervin and Benjamin (2015) highlight an aspect which should be considered in this context, TCKs often have multiple passports as they are descendants of individuals from various nationalities. Therefore, it can be expected that they have present the awareness that often, a passport is needed to travel. Additionally, passports could hold relevance in the social representations of this inductor, but also of the phenomenon as a whole. This is due to the frequent reference to a "passport country" which could be a place designated as home, but often does not represent that. Here, passport is an indicator of belonging, not just to a country but also to a culture and a people.

Non-TCKs provided various significantly frequent evocations which can be grouped in terms of the general ideas conveyed. On one hand we have words that relate to "*International Mobility*" as an experience that goes beyond their usual reality and is not a part of their daily life. The words "opportunity", "experience" and "growth" denote this. On the other hand, another group of answers consists of "education" and "Erasmus". These can be seen as dimensions within the three evocations mentioned, related to not being part of non-TCKs' daily life. While for TCKs this movement constitutes a regular aspect of their lives, which allows them to move between places where job and school are and family, non-TCKs tend to see it as moving away from these realities, or if for education, as a short-term experience, as is characteristic of the Erasmus program.

4.5. Cross-cultural Experience

4.5.1. Central systems of the representations of "*Cross-cultural Experience*"

The non-TCKs' evocations that comprise the central system of the representations of the inductor "*Cross-cultural Experience*" are "education", "knowledge", "culture", "wealth", "sharing" and "diversity". The words that are part of the central system for this inductor in the TCK population are "friendship" and "experience". As seen in the stimulus

discussed above, non-TCKs seem to place experience in the international sphere on a different level than TCKs. This is namely in regard to opportunities that these experiences provide them with, ranging from education to culture. TCKs, on the other hand, highlight the relational dimensions that are valued within not just the experience but also their lives. This sample group shines light on the predominant place that community takes up in providing them with comfort and sense of belonging, specifically if comprised of others who share the cross-cultural experience, corroborating what Tan and colleagues (2021) put forth.

4.5.2. Comparison of the representational content for “*Cross-cultural Experience*” between the non-TCK and TCK sample groups

There are significant differences in representational content for this stimulus. The evocations “food” and “open-mindedness” were significantly more often provided by TCKs than non-TCKs. This seems to denote the dimension of community associated to sharing this experience. On one hand, food can be associated to the cultural aspects that are part of this shared experience and that accumulate and account for their personal cultural identity (Criel, 2021). On the other hand, open-mindedness can emerge from having faced hardship in the adjustments that each move implied, as Tan and colleagues (2021) suggest.

Contrastingly, non-TCKs provided the terms “knowledge”, “culture”, “wealth”, “travel” and “sharing” significantly more often when compared to TCKs. These evocations mirror the patterns previously highlighted, namely how impersonal their representations seem and how distanced from the impacts of this experience they seem to be.

4.6. Children or youth that grow up in different countries to that of their origin

4.6.1. Central systems of the representations of “*Children or youth that grow up in different countries to that of their origin*”

The central system of the representations of the inductor “*Children or youth that grow up in different countries to that of their origin*” produced by non-TCKs comprises “migration”, “culture”, “adaptation”, “multilingualism”, “challenge”. The TCKs’ representations built a central system on the words: “Third Culture Kid”, “open-mindedness”, “identity”, “myself”, “luck”.

TCKs mention terms which denote a personal representation of the inductor, such as with the evocations “myself” and “identity”. Added to that, there is a clear association made between the inductor, and the term that is associated with the definition that composes the inductor.

Another interesting aspect that can be drawn out from these results pertains to the way the two sample groups categorize the experience depicted in the inductor term. While non-TCKs have the word “challenge” in their core zone, TCKs included “luck”. These results should be contextualized in order to be better comprehended. For non-TCKs this stimulus engaged ideas related to the “migration” experience, which, more often than not, has negative representations (Gilligan & Marley, 2010). For TCKs this was not the case, as for this group of individuals there is a strong positive representation of a minority group experience, which is a part of the migration phenomenon and with which they identify and thus have a biased perception, resulting in them being aware of the privilege that pertains to this lifestyle, as Dillon and Ali (2019) have proposed.

“Adaptation” is a part of the central core for non-TCKs, whereas for TCKs that is not the case. The third culture, within the designation of the TCK phenomenon, highlights, in it of itself, how TCKs do not necessarily fully adapt to the places, cultures, and contexts they are present in. There is a difference to be highlighted, regarding adaptation. While TCKs can easily adapt to the challenges they face, they do not adapt into a mold of a role in a population. That is, they stand out, and as pointed out by Halme (2019) fit in the “hidden immigrant” category, this is in the context of the PolVan Cultural Identity Model advanced by Pollock and Van Reken (2017). Additionally, TCKs build a multilocal sense of belonging (Fail & Thompson, 2004; Moore, 2011; Nette & Hayden, 2007), which means they don’t necessarily adapt but create various attachment points.

4.6.2. Comparison of the representational content for “*Children or youth that grow up in different countries to that of their origin*” between the non-TCK and TCK sample groups

Very interesting results can be observed when comparing the semantic universes produced by both sample groups, as this inductor was one that pertained to the phenomenon being researched in a more direct and specific way, while the others represented dimensions of it. Within the two groups curious patterns can be identified by the grouping of the significantly frequent inductors.

Non-TCKs gravitate towards a more general notion of what this inductor could refer to, not identifying the TCK phenomenon. They present the following significantly more frequent words: “migration”, “opportunity” and “culture”. As half of the total sample population did not have previous knowledge of the TCK concept, it can be expected that they would associate the description with the next best phenomenon, migration, and not with

the minority group, TCKs. Additionally, “opportunity”, highlights the idea of movement of people, with the nuances of it resulting from a need to move versus the choice to move. The third word mentioned was “culture”. While for TCKs this would be an expected dimension to the stimulus, as there is the notion of a third culture present, non-TCKs likely refer to it as an element that is taken from one place to the other, with the aim of not losing the roots but also to fit in.

For TCKs the significantly frequent terms were “Third Culture Kid”, “myself” and “luck”. This could be justified as they recognize the TCK phenomenon in this description, as it is a simplistic definition of the term. Additionally, they recognize the phenomenon in their own life and this identity in themselves. Furthermore, as the TCK experience implies notions of privilege (Dillon & Ali, 2019), the reference to luck can denote the awareness of the nature of this lifestyle.

4.7. Conclusion

It becomes clear that there are significant differences in the social representations of the TCK phenomenon between non-TCK and TCK individuals. This was seen both in terms of the contents of the central systems as well as in terms of the most frequently evoked words for each inductor.

The evocations that make up the central systems of the representations of certain inductors were common to both groups. This was seen for the inductors “*Global Society*”, “*International School*” and “*International Mobility*”. However, the two groups also presented totally different central systems for certain inductors, namely “*Home*”, “*Cross-cultural Experience*” and “*Children or youth that grow up in different countries to that of their origin*”.

What concerns the similarities and differences in terms of representational content, the largest number of differences, namely eight, was seen for the inductor “*International Mobility*”. Here non-TCKs provided five evocations significantly more frequently than TCK. There were significant differences observed between the two groups for all inductors. Overall non-TCKs had more evocations that were significantly more frequent in comparison to TCKs.

In sum, the non-TCK and the TCK individuals show differences, not just in the common words that the inductors elicited, but also in regard to the system that structures and unifies the representation amongst the individuals of the groups.

Conclusion

The present study aimed to contribute to the understanding of the TCK phenomenon, by investigating the social representations that exist of this phenomenon, focusing on six dimensions associated with it. More specifically, this study analyzed the differences and similarities in the representations between two groups, the non-TCK and TCK. Additionally, it intended to contribute to the characterization of the social representations, making use of various indicators. Finally, the present study sought to add to the knowledge on the central systems of the social representations for each group, by means of a prototypical analysis.

With regard to the general aim of the study, the results of the present study point to significant differences between the representational content according to whether participants are TCKs or non-TCKs. What concerns the second objective of the present study, TCKs tend to include representations that portray a more day-to-day perception of the impacts of the dimensions of the TCK phenomenon implied in this study in their reality and lifestyle, such as “friendship” and “myself”. Contrastingly, Non-TCKs go for more idealized representations which denote distance from these dimensions, such as “opportunity” and “education”. Regarding the third goal of this study, TCKs produced a larger number of evocations, in comparison to non-TCKs. Furthermore, more diversified ideas were produced by TCKs, while non-TCKs showed more homogeneity in their representations. Additionally, overall, more similarities were observed between the groups for the inductor, “*Children or youth that grow up in different countries to that of their origin*”, and more differences in relation to the inductor “*International School*”. Lastly, in terms of the fourth objective, on the central systems of the representations, some overlap could be seen regarding certain inductors, such as “*Global Society*”, “*International School*” and “*International Mobility*”, while for others the two groups showed different elements in their central systems, “*Home*”, “*Cross-cultural Experience*” and “*Children or youth that grow up in different countries to that of their origin*”. Overall, the content of the central systems seems to follow the tendency already mentioned in the results concerning the second objective of this study.

The present study has tried to contribute to closing some of the gaps present in the literature regarding the TCK phenomenon. As it is an understudied population, knowledge produced regarding TCKs holds relevance in the research arena. Additionally, it is relevant to point out how the definition of this population has showed controversy in literature, and this study tried to go against that tendency and used certain variables, such as having lived

abroad for minimum one year, which go in line with the recommendations that were published recently in a literature review (Tan et al., 2021).

What concerns the methodology, the present study sets itself apart, as social representations studies have yet to delve into the dimensions of the TCK phenomenon. Accessing their representations is increasingly relevant in order to better support the TCK population as, with the earlier and more frequent mobility, in comparison with other groups, they are a population that can be of concern for psychological support. Thus, by looking at this experience, unique nuances of dimensions that affect all, but particularly this minority in the population, come through and allow for a better understanding of the phenomenon. This can be seen, for example, regarding the inductor “*Home*”, which had the participation of 201 individuals out of the 202 in this sample. With this knowledge it is possible to identify how to better design and provide interventions and support programs for this population. A particular focus of these could be the return of TCKs to their passport country, often assumed to be home by others, but not perceived as such by TCKs.

Despite these potentialities, the present study has presented limitations which are worth noting. What concerns the sample characterization, this could have been more specific, such as including more details regarding the TCK phenomenon. Additionally, it could have been more representative of the Portuguese population, specifically what concerns the TCKs. Furthermore, in the realm of the phenomenon studied, it would be helpful to understand to what extent other mobility patterns were present in the participants’ lives, namely of non-TCKs, as social representations are affected by familiarity. Thus, if a non-TCK had had a migrant experience, but did not identify as TCK, their representations would be analyzed together with those of, for example, someone who had never left their country or even city. Despite not having the TCK experience, certain migrant populations have overlapping experiences which can impact their representations of certain dimensions.

Still in the sample characterization, it might have been relevant to have looked at the continents the participants have lived in, as there are cultural nuances, such as those associated with more collectivistic or individualistic societies. These aspects could be better contextualized and thus, the results could have been contrasted with those experiences.

Since there is so much divergence, even in the literature, in what concerns the definition of the phenomenon, when asking participants to which degree they identify as TCK, not including a definition of the concept, that participants should base themselves of, may have led to variance, which in turn could have affected the results, their interpretation and significance.

Regarding methodology, some limitations become evident. It might have been relevant to narrow down the scope and focus on a particular dimension associated with the phenomenon as opposed to covering a spectrum of experiences, such as in this study. This resulted in an extensive number of results, which would have been interesting to analyze more closely. Additionally, what concerns the inductors, these were chosen and researched mostly within the TCK literature. However, it might be interesting to, if the scope of the research is narrower, look at the way these inductors are present in the literature of other population groups. Furthermore, an importance ranking could have been added as well, to try to understand the perceived relevance of the evoked representations, as opposed to using appearance ranking, which only looks at how soon a certain word was evoked amongst the eight possible answers.

The study of this phenomenon and population holds relevance due to its increasing prevalence in the globalized world and since it is a topic of research that still has not been fully uncovered. While the present study looks to add to the knowledge on TCKs and thus help fill some of the areas of research that are still lacking, there is a plethora of opportunities within the scope of TCK studies. Hence, various recommendations for future research can be elaborated from the current study.

The definition of the concept has been frequently mentioned as an aspect that needs improvement. Regarding this, future research would profit from a unified approach to sample inclusion and exclusion criteria, stemming from a common definition of the term. Tan and colleagues (2021) suggest relevant and current criteria to focus on when doing this.

The understanding of the TCK phenomenon would benefit from a closer look at certain dimensions and how these influence and impact TCKs' mental health. This could, on one hand, be done using the FWAT methodology. Yet, this should be done with a more narrowed down spectrum of inductors, to allow for a closer look at the central and peripheral systems of the populations studied. On the other hand, it could also be done resorting to different methodologies that seek to study specific variables, such as sense of belonging or identity development.

As the TCK concept becomes more disseminated and well known within society, it would be relevant to use that term as an inductor to collect, analyze and possibly cross the representations evoked with the information presented and discussed in this study.

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