

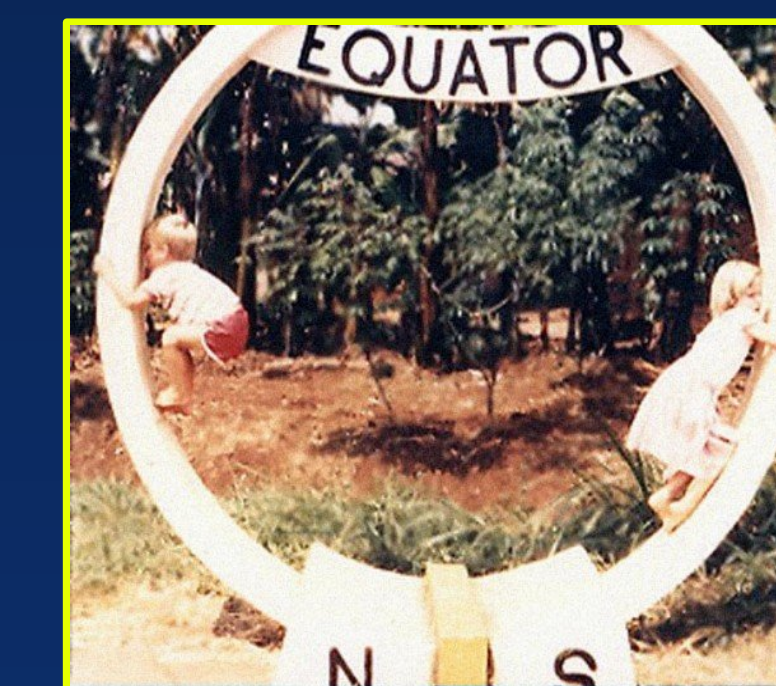


# Third Culture Identity Expressed in Online Communities: “Life is a Suitcase, Half-Packed”

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## THIRD CULTURE KIDS



“A person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside their parents' culture [with the intention of repatriation]” (TCKid.com, 2008).

- “Hidden immigrants” (Bell, 1997)

- Includes children of ambassadors, military, missionaries, educators, and other international professions.
- TCKs are usually flexible, well-cultured and travel-loving. However, they also have unresolved grief and loss anxiety.

## THIRD CULTURE KIDS ONLINE

Third Culture Kids Everywhere – Facebook group (18,296 members)

TCKid.com – online website, forum for TCKs (3,240 members)  
– has YouTube channel (youtube.com/user/tckidvideo)

TCKWorld.com – online website for TCKs

Denizen-mag.com – online magazine by and for TCKs  
– has Twitter and Facebook sites

## THIRD CULTURE IDENTITY ONLINE

**Write your life story in 6 words**  
POSTED BY TOKYO ON MARCH 12TH, 2008 | CATEGORIZED AS FEATURE, GENERAL FORUM | 1,343 VIEWS AND 86 COMMENTS  
I was reading an interesting suggestion from equal inspirer about writing our life stories in 6 words and thought this would be fun to do!  
“I’ve been to the Families in Global Transition conference in Houston and had a wonderful time among friends old and new, learned a lot, laughed a lot and drank too many margaritas. I was inspired by one of my fellow speakers, Apple Gidley, who suggested we might write our life stories bear in mind that those who attended FGT were global nomads: like me in six words.  
She gave the examples of:  
Roast beef to barbecue via noodles  
For sale baby shoes never worn  
I guess mine might be:  
likes to canals via sand dunes  
what would yours be?”

The Internet as a “confessional booth” and “counselor” for marginal groups like TCKs:

I’m [name withheld], I’m 19, and I just discovered I’m a [Third Culture Kid] ... I’ve always known I had the “restlessness to move” but I never knew it was something common among people, and I love find it out now (TCKid.com, 2008).

Unit of Analysis: TCKid.com discussion forum “Write Your Life in 6 Words” (posted March 2008):

- 86 responses (as of 12/12/08)
- 69 responses selected for text analysis

## TEXT / ART ANALYSIS

**Text Analysis:** number of sentences, complexity factor (lexical density), readability, word and phrase frequencies, and emergent themes. Used Textalyser.net.

“**Selective Sample Poetry**” (my term): Compiling comments by themes into poem structures.

## RESULTS

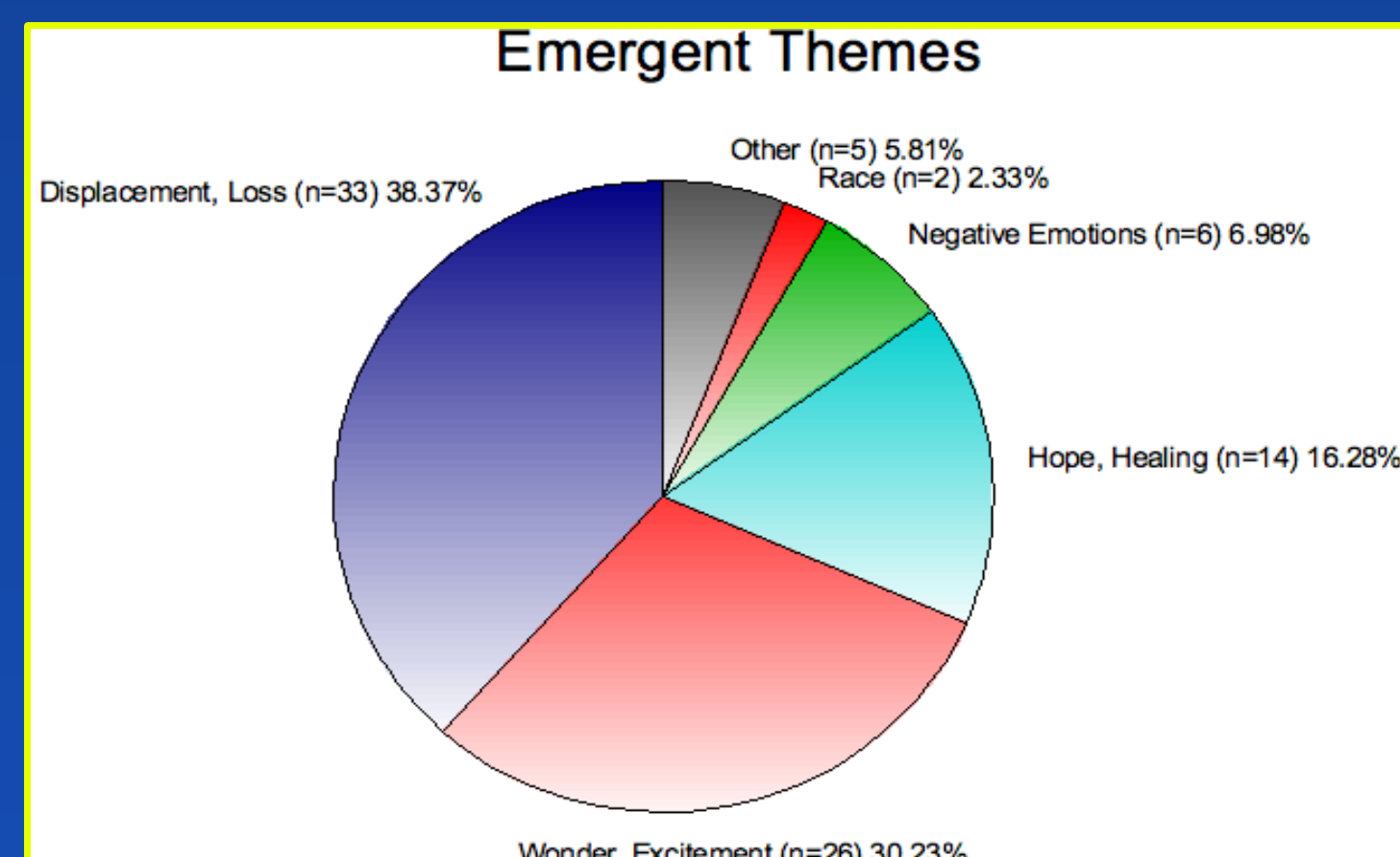
Number of sentences	69
Complexity factor (lexical density)	83.9%
Readability: (100=easy; 20=hard; optimal 60-70)	48.5

**Word Frequency List:**

Word	Occurrences	Frequency	Rank
life	5	1.60%	1
home	5	1.60%	1
always	4	1.30%	2
where	3	1.00%	3
you	3	1.00%	3
lost	3	1.00%	3
searching	3	1.00%	3
heels	3	1.00%	3
early	3	1.00%	3
restarting	2	0.70%	4

**Two-word Phrase Frequency List:**

Expression	Occurrences	Frequency
searching for	3	0.70%
is a	2	0.50%
soul rebellion	2	0.50%
ethnic soul	2	0.50%
out of	2	0.50%



## SELECTIVE SAMPLE POETRY

**Displacement and Loss**  
I am from everywhere and anywhere.  
Searching for meaning, never finding it.  
Searching for something that doesn't exist.  
always was the outsider - and still  
  
Life is a suitcase, half-packed.  
I've done my share of packing.  
"But you said we were staying..."  
  
Wandering lost, searching for self/home.  
Holding lightly onto earth.  
  
and then, and then...and then

**Negative Emotions**  
...shock, depression, denial...  
...depression...  
boring...  
traumatized...  
...tired earlv...

**Hope, Healing**  
wanderer on earth, heaven is home  
  
emotional connection, upheaval, phases and healing  
accepting, changing, loving, losing, restarting, living  
  
lost in a pot hole but seeing a glimmering of light...  
  
Outside, looking in - Loved - Headed Home

**Wonder, Excitement**  
North and South, East to West...  
drifting along, enjoying what life offers  
  
deserts, oceans and skyscrapers. oh my  
red soil, brown dust, grey concrete  
couscous-stropwafel-gruyère-vie-mort-ihla  
  
So, winter coats or bathing suits?  
All a girl needs is a pair of high heels and a dream  
Wonder if space will soon open

## DISCUSSION

**1. The majority of comments (38%) expressed feelings of displacement and loss.** A further 7% had negative emotions. This finding corresponds with most TCK research.

- **Solution:** Campus support for TCKs

**2. The second most common category (30%) was “Wonder and Excitement.”** This finding corresponds with some TCK research, while contradicting Stonequist-like assumption that TCKs are “conflicted.”

**3. Comments mostly excluded mention of race or nationality, except as part of a multi-national perspective** (“Asian and American and Asian and European”). This finding supports research that TCKs are more comfortable with other TCKs than their own nationals.

**4. Comments mostly excluded mention of friends and family.** There is conflicting research on TCKs and familial feelings, so this does not add any further findings.

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