

Using Contextual Behavioral Science to Explore Complex Cultural Identities

LANAYA L. ETHINGTON, PH.D.
THRIVE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

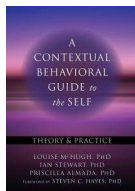
1

Speaker Information

- ▶ Licensed Psychologist
- ▶ Co-Founder and Co-Owner, Thrive Behavioral Health
- ▶ No Financial Disclosures

2

Acknowledgements



Darin Cairns, Clinical Psychologist

3

Educational Objectives

- ▶ 1. Describe features of the three selfing repertoires (self-as-content, self-as-process, and self-as-context) that may be present in people with complex cultural identities
- ▶ 2. Discuss how hierarchical framing contributes to healthy (and flexible) selfing
- ▶ 3. Identify how values-based behavior may be impacted by both flexible and inflexible selfing

4

Two Questions

- ▶ Where are you from?
- ▶ Where is home?

5



6

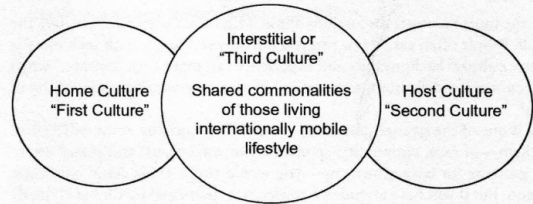
Third Culture Kid

► Useem (1976)

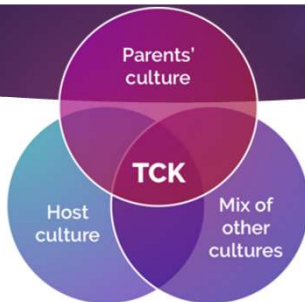
Although they have grown up in foreign countries, they are not integral parts of those countries. When they come to their country of citizenship (some for the first time), they do not feel at home because they do not know the lingo or expectations of others – especially those of their own age. Where they feel most like themselves is in that interstitial culture, the third culture, which is created, shared and carried by persons who are relating societies, or sections thereof, to each other.

7

The Third Culture Model



8



Graphic by Madison Zeller

9

WHAT IS AN UNCLE

SOMEONE WHO LIVES FAR AWAY AND IS OLD.

I. ANAYA

10

Third Culture Kid

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

Pollock and Van Reken, 1999

11

Third Culture Kid = Global Nomad

Individuals of any age or nationality who have spent a significant part of their developmental years living in one or more countries outside their passport country because of a parent's occupation. Global Nomads are members of a world-wide community of persons who share a unique cultural heritage. While developing some sense of belonging to both their host culture(s) and passport culture(s), they do not have a sense of total ownership in any. Elements from each culture and from the experience of international mobility are blended, creating a commonality with others of similar experience. Global Nomads of all ages and nationalities typically share similar responses to the benefits and challenges of a childhood abroad. (Schaetti, 1993)

12

Complex Cultural Identities

- ▶ People with complex cultural identities have life experiences during their formative developmental years (usually between 5-18) in contexts where their parents' culture or nation of origin is different from the external culture or nation of origin. This may include time spent in a variety of geographical or geopolitical contexts.

13

Complex Cultural Identities

- ▶ These identities may include:
 - ▶ Third Culture Kids
 - ▶ Adult Third Culture Kids
 - ▶ Global nomads
 - ▶ Missionary Kids
 - ▶ Military "brats"
 - ▶ Refugees
 - ▶ Members of a minority group who are raised in a context where the predominant culture is that of a majority group.
- ▶ This does not include expatriates

14

Benefits

- ▶ Expanded worldview
- ▶ Three-dimensional view of the world
- ▶ Cross-cultural enrichment
- ▶ Feeling "at home" everywhere

Challenges

- ▶ Confused loyalties
- ▶ Painful view of reality
- ▶ Ignorance of home culture
- ▶ Feeling rootless and restless

15

Benefits

- ▶ Adaptability
- ▶ Blending in
- ▶ Less prejudice
- ▶ The importance of now
- ▶ Expanded worldview

Challenges

- ▶ Lack of true cultural balance
- ▶ Highlighting differences
- ▶ More prejudice
- ▶ The "delusion of choice"
- ▶ Arrogance (real and perceived)

16

- ▶ Relational Frame Theory: A functional contextual theory of human language and cognition

- ▶ Once language is learned, it is impossible to return fully to the nonverbal world
- ▶ The more an area has been thought about, the more derived relations are available to maintain a given network

17

Different Relations

Coordination (the same as)

Comparison (more-less)

Opposite

Hierarchical relations (part of)

Spatial relations (in front of-behind)

Temporal relations (before-after)

Conditional relations (if-then)

Perspective/deictics (here-there)

A = B

A < B

A ≠ B

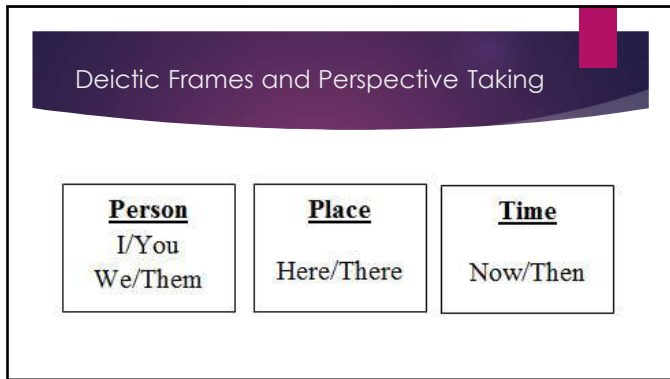
"Bananas are fruit"

P → Q

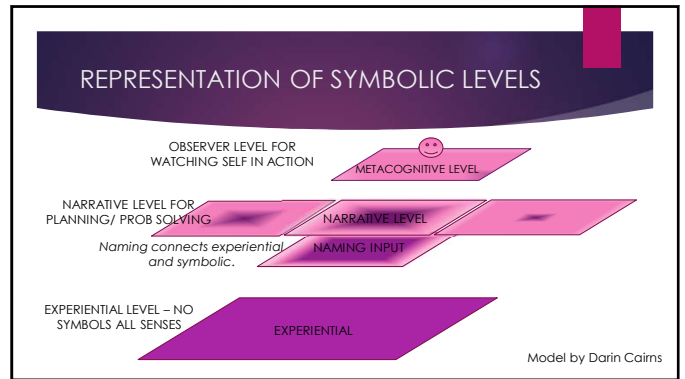
I/You, Here/There,

Now/Then

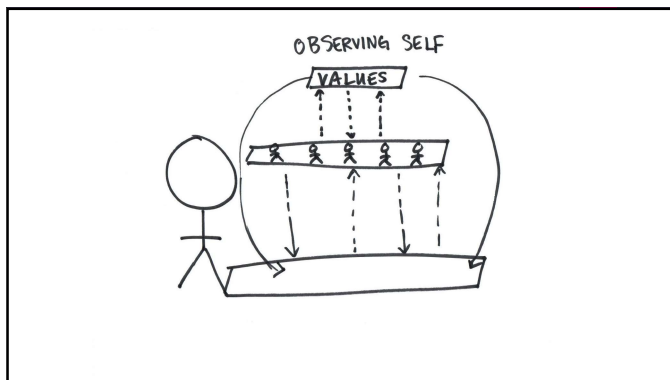
18



19



20



21

- ### The Three Selfing Repertoires
- ▶ Self-as-Content (the Conceptualized Self)
 - ▶ Self-as-Process (the Knowing Self)
 - ▶ Self-as-Context (the Observing Self)

22

WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

If you were to hold your stories and beliefs about yourself, others and the world a little more lightly, what would your life look like? - O. Moran

SELF AS STORY
We all tell stories about our selves, who we are, what we do, and what we like. These stories can have benefits going as far as a person's identity and even helping to give meaning to their experiences. It even becomes a part of who we are.

SELF AS PROCESS
Self-as-process is the way we think, feel, and act. It's the way we experience the world. Self-as-process involves watching things and reacting to them. It's the way we learn and grow.

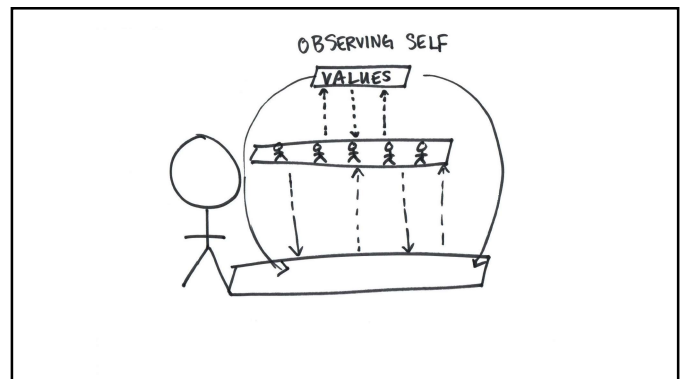
SELF AS CONTEXT
Self-as-context is the part of the self that can be in the background or in the foreground. It's the part of the self that is always there, watching and reacting to everything.

DOES IT MATTER?
Yes! Developing "self as process" and "self as context" can help you...
continually update stories about ourselves, ourselves and the world...
look at things that matter most when it's tough...
look at things that matter most when it's tough...
look at things that matter most when it's tough...

Graphic by Fiona Healy O'Neill

Content by Orla Moran, Louise McHugh, Priscilla Almada

23



24

The Importance of Coherence

- ▶ Coherence = relating in a manner consistent with what was previously learned in a particular socioverbal community (Hughes & Barnes-Holmes, 2016)
- ▶ Rational coherence is sometimes referred to in the CBS literature as sense making (Hayes et al., 2001)
- ▶ Self-concept may be described as having relatively high coherence (McHugh, Stewart, & Almada, 2019)

25

Healthy Selfing

- ▶ I as various (the variety of experience)
- ▶ I as perspective (stability in a sense of perspective)
- ▶ I as container (self-as-context as hierarchical relations)
- ▶ I as flexible (able to respond in line with values in action)

26

I as various

Notice variation of experiences across time

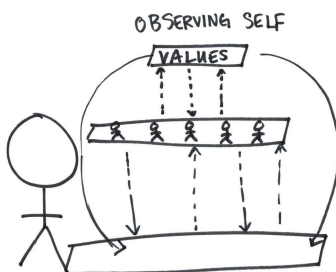
- ▶ Contact with a range of experiences and changes
- ▶ Experience across a variety of contexts
- ▶ Taking different perspectives of the same experience

27

I As Perspective

- ▶ Who notices the changes?
- ▶ Shift perspective to notice the stable and unchanging perspective
 - ▶ Observing Self

28

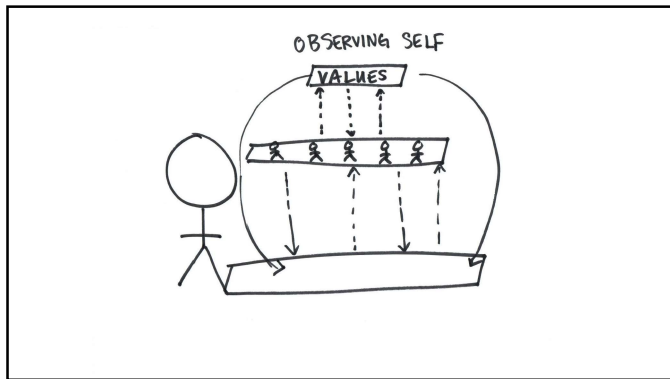


29

I as Container

- ▶ Hierarchical relation
 - ▶ I have and include my thoughts
 - ▶ I have and include my sensations
 - ▶ I have and include my feelings
- ▶ Your experiences are part of you
- ▶ You are the container of your experiences

30



31

I as Flexible

- ▶ Noticing the impact of context
- ▶ Noticing the impact of behavior
 - ▶ "What can you do with what is in line with what matters to you?"

32

Augmenting/Valuing

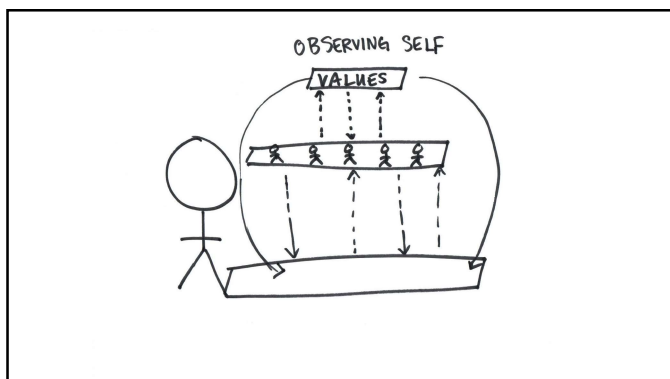
- ▶ Augmenting includes verbally formulated incentives
- ▶ Motivative augmenting increases the reinforcing values of something that is already reinforcing
- ▶ Relational frame theorists see motivative augmenting as the core process involved in valuing
- ▶ Values are conceptualized in RFT as types of verbal behavioral networks

33

The Importance of Values

- ▶ Chosen concepts
- ▶ Provide a sense of meaning and purpose
- ▶ Can coordinate behavior
- ▶ What matters
- ▶ What "makes your heart sing"

34



35

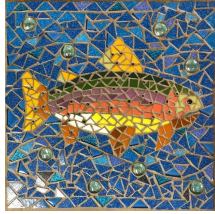
Mental Health Implications

- ▶ Fragmented sense of identity
- ▶ Fusion with "other"
- ▶ Chronic grieving
- ▶ Lack of connectedness or belonging

36

Interventions and Applications

- ▶ "Where did you grow up?"
- ▶ Transformation of stimulus function
other = connection
- ▶ I as container
= fragments into mosaic
- ▶ Identity as a process; healthy selfing



37

Identity as a process; healthy selfing

WHO = HOW

38

Where I'm From by George Ella Lyon

39

I Am From...

- ▶ Familiar foods, especially those associated with family gatherings
- ▶ Sights, sounds, and smells from your neighborhood
- ▶ Familiar sayings heard repeatedly growing up
- ▶ Familiar people, family members, friends, and ancestors



40

Breakouts

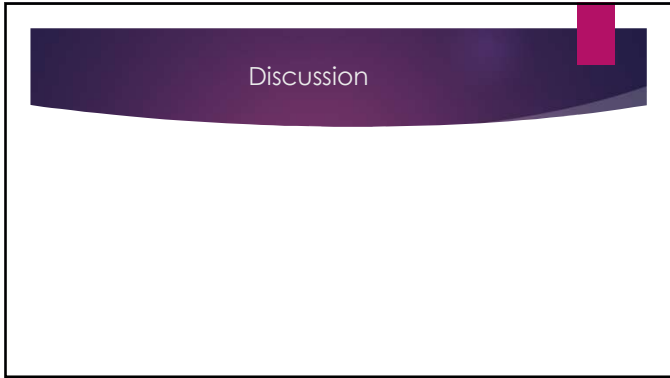
41

hiraeth

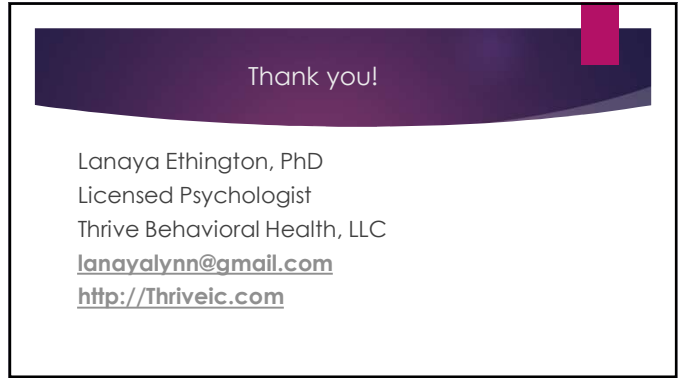
(n.) a homesickness for a home to which you cannot return, a home which maybe never was; the nostalgia, the yearning, the grief for the lost places of your past

pronunciation | 'hEr-rIth (HEER-eyeth)

42



43



44