

**Elizabeth L. Rambo: "The Mission Is What Matters--Right?": Third-Culture Identity Paradigms in Buffy 7.17 "Lies My Parents Told Me"**

People "who...have been raised internationally because of a parent's career choice and have experienced numerous cross-cultural transitions" are called "Third-Culture Kids" (TCKs) or "global nomads" (McCaig). They include so-called "military brats," "missionary kids," and children of career diplomats and of international business executives. Sociologist David Pollock notes that "although elements from each culture may be assimilated into the TCK's life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar background" (Pollock and Van Reken 13), creating a "third culture" much like Homi Bhabha's "third space," but first described by Ruth Hill Useem in 1973. TCKs rarely feel that they have control over their lives; they may cope by idealistic commitment to the same missions that took their parents to far-flung and occasionally dangerous situations. Ambivalence may be crushed, only to emerge later in self-destructive patterns. In the controversial *Buffy* episode 7.17 "Lies My Parents Told Me," Principal Robin Wood (the son of a Slayer), re-ensouled vampire Spike, and Buffy herself, may be read as metaphorical Adult TCKs, illustrating some typical TCK coping strategies—some more successful than others, and some incomplete. Consideration of the series' characters as marginalized, outsiders, or otherwise transgressive will also be relevant, since one's "third culture" is not defined by place, but by common experiences, interests, and objectives.