Third Culture Kids and How They Can Teach Multiculturalism

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Abstract

Examined in the following paper is the social individual known as a Third Culture Kid (TCK), and how they are essential in communicating support for multiculturalism. Globalization has increased the prevalence of diversity within nations worldwide, and populations are only becoming more mixed. This is an inevitability, yet there remain voices of uncertainty and opposition against it. Therefore, advocates of multiculturalism must put an effort into persuading a more supportive attitude in more people, and this is where TCKs come in. TCKs are individuals that spent their childhood and adolescence living in (usually) more than one culture outside of that of their parents. What defines TCKs is unidentified they are. They typically do not identify with a single culture because of the brief amount they reside in a culture and their frequent relocation. Though this mobility can be emotionally distressing, it also awakens adaptability and openmindedness; traits that are ideal in an increasingly diversified world. TCKs both directly and indirectly have a lot to teach on pro-multiculturalism, ranging from their mere presence, to advice and assistance on multicultural teaching methods. With more support and inclusion of TCKs, nations can slowly adapt more culturally open attitudes; something necessary to their changing world.
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Preface

It has been a wonderful opportunity to construct a fully-fledged paper centered on a lifestyle with which I identify. This is not my first academic coverage of third culture individuals, but it is my largest and most intricate. My whole family has lived a third culture lifestyle, which allowed for a much-appreciated personal angle to tackle this subject. It is one of the main reasons I wanted to explore this subject.

International Studies in Education and its curriculum has offered me valuable insight on multiculturalism and how it has been taken for granted in several educational institutions worldwide. Prior to this program, I have never taken any formal multiculturalism classes because none of my schools heavily incorporated it in their curriculums, and this is the other reason I believed this needed discussion.

This thesis was written solely by me. I have read and understand the university code of conduct (November 7, 2003, http://www.hi.is/is/skolinn/sidareglur) and have followed them to the best of my knowledge. I have correctly cited to all other works or previous work of my own, including, but not limited to, written works, interviews, and data. I thank all who have worked with me and take fully responsibility for any mistakes in this work.
Introduction

It is the 21st century, a time where global societies are becoming more intertwined, and have slowly eliminated the concept of distinct cultures. Now more than ever, families have been highly mobile, moving to other countries in hopes securing better lives (Grant & Robertson, 2014). We are still in a politically uncertain time period as diversity has progressed and blossomed in numerous nations, yet still effects political controversy. Attitudes towards it still have much progress to make. Increasing diversity has created a series of benefits, such as an increase in innovations and introductions of several cultural aspects like music, traditions, and beliefs (BIPT, 2015). The benefits of multiculturalism amount to tolerant, open-minded societies that enable a cohesion that may allow one culture to adapt another’s positive traditions, positively affecting the community. Of course, multiculturalism is not a unanimously praised societal aspect. One of the most common critiques of multiculturalism is that it can lead to volatile social conflicts rooted in contradictory cultural norms and aspects such as religion, or ethnic paradigms. There is also the fear of losing ethnic identities that define who you are, which can effect cultural protectionism in minority groups (Ratansi, 2004). The possible number of advantages and disadvantages of multiculturalism are too vast to cover in a short, contained analysis, but there is one area that I will focus on: education.

An idealized view of multiculturalism is that it is a peaceful way of existence where every member of a community is open-minded and tolerant, and that this diversity leads to a better world. Unfortunately, this is not a mindset that is universally adopted, but neither is anti-multiculturalism, or more extreme views such as racism. The goal here is to teach multiculturalism through positivity. After all, education is built as a societal foundation of nations all over the globe, and teaching positive multiculturalism may eliminate many of the social issues that it go against it. But, multiculturalism is not something that can simply be taught by a teacher to students. It should be incorporated into more school curriculums, but there is more to it than simply adding lectures that talk positively about multiculturalism. How can schools effectively make their students adopt
multicultural values and attitudes? A valuable source that is often overlooked is the Third Culture Kid (TCK).

TCKs are individuals who have lived in various cultures in which they do not identify, to the point of having little to no national identity. This already eliminates the risk of protectionism in their case, but also exhibits to mono- or bi-cultural individuals that it is okay to not have a strong national identity. The mere presence of TCKs in the classroom can promote diversity and open-mindedness, and may serve as assistance to teachers. The mixed nature of TCKs will also help professionalism, where they can use their extensive background knowledge and perspectives for problem solving and improvement. However, TCKs do bring about challenges of their own, such as compatibility issues in teaching. TCKs in the classroom are not an automatic recipe to effectively teach a society about multiculturalism, but it is an optimal foundation. Third Culture Individuals have a lot to teach society in multiculturalism, both directly and indirectly.

What Are Third Culture Kids? Context

In order to get grasp of TCKs as an asset to multiculturalism, we must first examine what is means to be a TCK. Sociologists John and Ruth Hill Useem originally coined the term ‘Third Culture Kid’ in the 1950s to describe the children of Americans who worked as diplomats, missionaries, businessmen, and various other professionals that required consistent travel and residence abroad (Melles & Schwartz, 2013). “The first culture was that of the parents, the second culture was that of the current country of residence, and the third was “the expatriate community in the host country” (Melles & Schwartz, 2013, p. 260). However, its definition slowly developed over the years, most notably with sociologist David C. Pollock’s update. In a more concise definition, Pollock and Ruth Van Reken defined TCKs as:

A person who has spent a significant part of their development years outside the parents’ culture. The TCK builds relationships to all of the
cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture are assimilated into the TCK’s life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar background. (Pollock & Reken, 2009, p. 19).

The reason the original definition by the Useems has been antiquated is because communities are no longer as culturally distinctive as they were in the 1950s (Pollock & Reken, 2009). Increasing globalization and immigration has significantly reduced the collective identity that cultures once had. In an interview with the New York Times, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau identified Canada as the world’s first postnational state i.e. the political mindset that determines national identity is no longer of high importance (Lawson, 2015). Trudeau elaborates on this by praising Canadian society’s shared values, mutual respect, and compassion, but he also emphasizes that there is “no mainstream” in Canada, and that it is defined by a wide variety of cultural identities. The last few decades have also seen spiking rates of globalization, weakening national sovereignty, and an increase in cosmopolitanism (Ratansi, 2004). John Oakland in his book, British Civilization: An Introduction surmises that the UK has notably gone through an identity crisis in the 20th and 21st centuries, given the abandonment of imperial politics, and the increasing societal diversity (2011). It is clear that cultural identity is not what it once was when John and Ruth Hill coined the term ‘TCK,’ making Pollock and Reken’s definition a more appropriate update. Ruth Hill herself even acknowledged that the concept has developed over the years, surmising that “concepts change as we get to know more; other times concepts change because what happens in the world is changing” (Pollock & Reken, 2001, p.21). This is not to say that cultural identity has dissipated altogether. While cultural identities are not as clean-cut as they once were, they are still defined by their differences from other cultures, and this is what encapsulates the concept of TCKs.

Imagine spending your childhood in a culture with which you do not identify. For example, you and your parents may be of Spanish nationality, but
you spend a majority of your developmental years living in Canada. If someone were to ask you where you are from, how would you respond? Another way to imagine it is to be living in multiple countries throughout your childhood and adolescent years. I for example, have lived in Switzerland, Canada, Panama, Iceland, and made two stops in the U.S. My niece has lived in New Delhi, Abu Dhabi, and Chicago. This is the typical characteristic story of a TCK, yet this term is not typically applied to adults. Plenty of adults may work in professions that require them to often travel abroad not only for brief visits, but for extended periods of time that may stretch for years. But, the concept of TCKs is structured on the idea that it is our developmental years that shape us (Hoerstin & Jenkins, 2011), therefore we may refer to an adult as an adult TCK (ATCK) only if he or she spent their early years living as expatriates to a host culture. A German citizen who grew up in Germany with German parents is not a TCK even if he or she consistently travels in their adult professional life, because that person will most likely identify as German. TCKs are not only defined by their physical travels, but also their lack of identity.

What is the reason for ending up in this lifestyle as a third-culture kid? Even though the original Useem definition of TCKs does not entirely hold up, it is still accurate in one way; parents working as diplomats, businessmen, missionaries, military personnel, and in other globally mobile professions generate TCK communities (Pollock & Reken, 2009). For example, my father has worked as a diplomat for the US State Department since before I was born, and he still does to this day. My sister eventually started work at the State Department with two children, and has since lived in India, the UAE, and will soon live in Estonia. The reasons for the frequent relocations vary between professions. In the context of international education, diplomats in particular should be examined because their professional objective revolves around international communication. In an interview with my father, a U.S. diplomat of three plus decades, he elaborated the job and mindset behind our frequent relocations, saying:
“In our job, our mission is to build bridges between the U.S. and other countries. We try to understand countries, and explain to them what we stand for, and figure out where we have common interests and perspectives, in order to work together. This is the point of diplomacy…we do this by practicing. To practice, we go from place to place…what I learned in Iceland is different from what I learned in other countries, like Spain or Panama. Now, why do we stay in a place no more than three years? Well, when going to a foreign country, you need to remember who you represent. Staying too long may have you lose touch of who you are…” (Arreaga, 2017).

The last segment may sound contradictory in claiming that we have a belonging to a certain nationality even though the TCK definition is all about not having a belonging. But, the TCK concept only applies to children and adolescents and not to their parents.

We have established that TCKs are the children of people working in mobile professions, but should this qualify as the only prerequisite in terms of parents? What if a child leaves his or her culture due to legal or political reason? An increasingly prevalent reason for ending up in a mobile lifestyle may be being the child of an immigrant or refugee. But, Pollock and Reken’s updated definition still defines TCKs in partial accordance to their parents. Granted, this does not only separate refugees and TCKs in terms of parents; there is also a level of privilege that refugees often do not have (Suaylia, 2016). But on balance, the characteristics of refugee children overlap with TCKs, so why not include them in the same category? Pollock and Reken actually address this difference in their book, stating that historically, TCKs and immigrants were categorically separated by mere virtue of the extent of their stay in the host country (2009). But, given increasing global mobility, TCKs are no longer the only children constantly on the move. In an appropriate update to distinguish the two, Reken coined the term “cross-cultural kids,” defining them as: “…a person who is living or has lived in – or meaningfully interacted with – two or more cultural environments for a
significant period of time during childhood (up to age 18) (2009, p. 31). Cross-cultural children share much of the same challenges and benefits that TCKs have, including an adeptness at adaptability, and the psychological stress of loss, which will be elaborated on in the following section.

**Culture Shock and Adaptation**

Transition, the physical and psychological change from one location to another, is a staple element of third culture kids and their life. Undoubtedly, many do not need an explanation of the challenges of transition, as it is a common, and for TCKs, inevitable stage of adolescence. TCKs typically go through it several times throughout their cycle, which opens up additional challenges and benefits. Described as “cultural chameleons,” TCKs more often than not, exhibit a notable adeptness at switching languages, appearance, mannerisms, and other cultural behaviors to the point of being nigh indistinguishable from other cultures, though never completely (Pollock & Reken, 2009, p. 100). Of course, this is not innate, but comes with experience through childhood and adolescence.

Transition in third culture life can be notably confounding when it comes to social relationships. Pollock & Reken (2009) formulated five stages of TCK transition:

(a) **Involvement**: A feeling of belonging and settlement in a place we know.

(b) **Leaving**: The realization and anxiety over leaving our settled place. We may break away from responsibilities and relationships that are established in the current place of settlement.

(c) **Transition**: This is when the actual relocation takes place. This is the peak of the emotional stress

(d) **Entering**: The initiation of settlement into the new territory. People in this stage of transition reach out to their new environment
(e) **Reinvolvement:** This brings the stages to a full circle, bringing us right back to where we were; we have established a sense of belonging and are ready to call it a new home.

The stages that Reken and Pollock formed are not necessarily a clean-cut model that can be generalized to every TCK, but they do encapsulate every part of the transition process. The extent of these stages will vary by person, and if not supported by parents and other professionals, TCKs may linger in this cycle and develop emotional instability (Limber & Lambie, 2011). Emotional grievance and adaptation are prevalent emotions in changing territory, but with each supported completion of this cycle, TCKs can develop peculiar perseverance in transitioning.

The first emotional grievance I went remember as a TCK was moving from Vancouver, a place where I had a very close social circle, to Panama, a place to which I had never been. Pollock and Reken’s five-stage model is more or less the same experience I went through. The move from Vancouver was devastating, and I did not want to open myself up to Panama. But with encouragement from my teachers and parents, it did not take long before I connected with some new friends, for which I was happy. However, their conventions greatly differed from those in Vancouver. For example, I would arrange some casual hangouts, as I did in Vancouver. My new friends would agree to meet up, but what shocked me was that they were almost always late. I never said anything, but I initially took it to offense, because before Panama, my friends were always punctual. I could not help but wonder, were my new Panamanian not interested socializing, and only showing up as an obligation or out of politeness? As it turned out, not being punctual was almost a fashion Panama, justified by the mindset that 'no one will be there at the scheduled time, so we will show up when everyone else is there.' I have also found this to be the case in Iceland from personal experience.

Numerous other TCKs have attested to the difficulty in adjusting, such as complying with local norms, and avoiding not behaving too differently from what is customary in the host culture (Lijadi & Schalkwyk, 2014). A major contributor to
the challenge of social adjustment is the language barrier (Pollock & Reken, 2009). Besides the extremely limited communication this barrier effects, it may also invite misunderstandings and unintentional impoliteness. In English, the term ‘of course’ can come off as rude and condescending in certain contexts, but in the Spanish direct translation, ‘por supuesto’ is a very common utterance within those same contexts and does not yield offense. Outside of language, other customs can create radically different connotations across cultures. A gesture that is rude in one culture can be completely not an issue in another. A famous example would be Bill Gates’ incidental ‘disrespect’ of South Korea’s president; Gates had shaken the president’s hand with his left hand placed firmly in his pocket, which sparked a negative local reaction (Irvine, 2013). In many western cultures, a hand in the pocket is not seen as an offensive gesture, but rather an informal one. The backlash by some South Korean outlets caused some controversy, with them being deemed too sensitive, but we must put things into perspective. There are definitely conventions that the US deems rude, but other cultures do not. For example, I felt discomfort when my Slovenian friend asked me about my financial situation, but to him, it was a perfectly normal question. The list of possible misunderstandings and cultural differences is endless, but by now it should be clear; transition is often difficult in the social context.

Transitional difficulties are not only inconveniences, but can be problematic. TCKs are always moving to different countries, which gives them little time to adapt fully to the host culture. We established that TCKs never fully form an identity within a culture, but they still form social relationships that allow them to function. But, given the small relative time they spend in each culture, they may not have enough time to fully form cultural behaviors that are compatible with their current region, thus inviting unwanted isolation and a lack of a basic need for relatedness (Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011). Individuals that experience transitions are often stricken with anxiety and depression (Kotenskey, 2008), and I can confirm that I experienced these emotions during my move to Panama City from Vancouver. Transitioning people can experience stress due to
the amount of grief and loss that transitions bring about, and Davis et. al surmise that this can “result in feelings of vulnerability and loss of control” (as cited in Limber & Lambie, 2009).

Adults may not take the grief that comes from frequent relocating seriously because it is ‘a natural part of life’ and not related to something more traumatic, such as a death experiences (Pollock & Reken, 2009). TCKs do not usually have a choice about their moves, which can instill anxiety over a loss of control. These issues can prevail to adulthood, as Pollock and Van Reken (2009) note: “In spite of the growing efforts to help current TCKs to better understand and use their cross-cultural experiences, many ATCKs…have grown up with little assistance in sorting out the full effect of their TCK upbringing” (p. 249). TCKs may also be prone to dysfunctional identity development, such as an overly cautious approach to relationships or inaccurate self-image, because they are more focused on adjusting to their current environment than on their inner identity (Walter & Koffs, 2009). Limberg and Lambie state that the difficulties caused by transition distance TCKs from being in the “here-and-now” (2011, p.47), because they are more focused on future aspirations. Transition among TCKs can open up several emotional and psychological issues, and that is why parents and teachers should always put an effort into counseling (Limberg & Lambie, 2011) and encourage them to open up to their new environment.

At the other side of the relentless transitional difficulties is the reward of adaptability and confidence. The constant international exposure can positively affect children as they grow to adulthood. Cross-cultural adaptability instills confidence to go on ventures that a non-TCK may be more apprehensive about. For example, a notable adult TCK named Helga went on a five-week trip to New Zealand and Australia all by herself because of her simple desire to travel cross-culturally, but this decision shocked all of her friends (Pollock & Reken, 2009). TCKs may find more comfort meeting new people because they do it quite frequently, or at least be more open-minded (Limber & Lambie, 2009). Former U.S. President Barack Obama, a raised TCK who grew up in Indonesia used his multicultural experiences as a capability for strong cultural understanding, and in
an interview with the *Financial Times*, he spoke of how he “benefited from his chameleon power to make a lot of different people feel he represents them…” (Pollock & Reken, 2009, p. 100). Pollock and Reken (2009) talk about how adaptability starts out as a tool for survival, but later evolves into something very practical. I picked up hobbies as a result of my cross-cultural social interaction, such as dumpster diving, or hitch-hiking; activities I would never have attempted had I lived mono-culturally.

Multilingualism is another common characteristic in TCKs (Pollock & Reken, 2009). In the duty of diplomats, missionaries, and other mobile workers, their children will often end up in environments that do not practice English as their first language, if at all. Therefore, TCKs need to make an effort to learn the host culture’s language (Walters & Anton-Cuff, 2009). Even if they do not make a conscious effort to learn the language, they may pick it up naturally. Multilingualism has also generated open-mindedness and cultural empathy, which affirms that the stressful experience of transition pays off with these positive multicultural traits (Dewaele & Oudenhoven, 2009).

These perks to being a TCK are confirmed in research, but there is no evidence that these traits are necessarily exclusive to this particular group. To live mono-culturally does not automatically mean that that individual is not as capable of open-mindedness and adaptability. There are plenty of mono-cultural individuals who are capable of exceptional adaptability and multilingualism. But, literature has identified a more definitive correlation between these multicultural traits and TCKs (Pollock & Reken, 2009). The TCK lifestyle does not equal more cultural adaptability and open-mindedness by default, but it does allow a great foundation on which one can build that.

**A lack of identity**

What might be the most essential and layered characteristic of a TCK is their feeling of little to no belonging. Even though they are good at *appearing* as part of a culture, they may feel withdrawn and cautious internally (Pollock &
Reken, 2009). This can lead to inconsistent behavior that changes depending on the circumstances, and to other non-TCKs, this inconsistency is noticeable and gives a sense of insecurity (Pollock & Reken, 2009). Illustrator and art director Elaina Natario illustrated the diagram shown below based on her interactions with her third culture peers.

The three “cultures” represented signify any culture at TCK has experienced. They will refer to cultures with third or second person articles such as “this” or “yours,” but there is never the use of “my culture.” A TCK’s culture is undefined.

Some may ask why TCKs do not just form an identity to their first culture i.e. the culture of their parents (Walters & Anton-Cuff, 2009). After all, the first culture is one’s biological connection through their parents. Even if they do not
reside within the first culture, they still can give themselves a root of belonging by virtue of being related to their parents, and therefore to the culture. The problem with this view is that it negates the more effective influence that our surroundings have on us compared to our genetics in cultural identity. But, even if we were to take our social surroundings out of consideration, it would still be pointless to form cultural identity strictly through one’s parents. TCKs may develop a view of their first culture even if they have not been there, but this is likely to lead to disconnectedness and disappointment when they actually do visit or return (Limberg & Lambie, 2011). TCKs may do this in order to superficially set themselves up with an identity, if for no other reason than to ‘properly’ answer where they are from.

To many TCKs, the question “where are you from?” is perhaps the most tiresome in their lives. Several TCKs have made it abundantly clear that when they are asked this question; they cannot answer easily or with confidence (Bautista, 2012). I too dread this question because it is inevitability when meeting new people, and it leads to lengthy explanations that serve as a constant reminder that I have no real original identity. Though I am happy to have TCK experiences, I often wish that I could answer this question with one simple word. More often than not, I will say that I am from the U.S., but this is not a sincere answer. While I have a U.S. passport and my mother was born of American nationality, there is a lot that pulls me away from a sincere U.S. identity. My father is from Guatemala, I have only spent six years of my life in the U.S., and this was not even on one post. I lived in five other countries, and am soon to head off to a sixth for the next three years. Half jokingly, my friends say that I should say I am a global citizen. Of course, this is too narcissistic for me to use, but even if there is some truth to it, it is only a superficial trait. If I feel like I belong everywhere on the surface, then deep down, I feel like I do not belong anywhere.

While language does impact our attitudes towards multiculturalism, it does not significantly factor into personal identity formation. TCKs have stated that their mother tongue may give them the appearance of a certain nationalities, but it is not reflective of the reality (Bautista, 2012). The language is a means of
communication, but it does little in the way of identity formation if the TCK cannot connect with other users of the same language.

Third Culture Kids clearly do not have a definite belonging to any place, but that does not mean that they are isolated from all communities? What is it that makes a community? The general answer may be that communities are formed out of similarities that their members share, such as a specific culture. This applies to TCKs; the circumstances in which they feel most at home are with other TCKs (Greenholtz & Kim, 2009). Let us remember that part of the staple definition of TCKs is that their sense of belonging is “…in relationship to others of similar [TCK] background” (Pollock & Reken, 2009, p.23). The feelings of belonging from TCKs have more to do with interpersonal relationships than with geographical similarities (Limberg & Lambie, 2011).

At this point, it is clear that TCKs are defined by how ‘undefined’ they are. They are the product of multiculturalism, and present its positive, but also negative traits. The mixed nature of diversity encourages adaptability, and sensitivity to other cultures. In fact, it even encourages a desire for mixed communities, as a mono-cultural community may inadvertently give rise to feelings of withdrawal and exclusion for those whom are not locals, thus will seek out others who are less defined. Of course, TCKs also present difficulty in that they are more focused on future aspirations than the present, causing inconsistency in their behavior and confusion to others (Pollock & Reken, 2009). They also exhibit more emotional instability due to the constant changing environment for their development, and depression that comes from leaving a secured foundation (Dewaele & Oudenhoven, 2009). But, more often than not, their diverse experiences let them see the world through diversified lenses that would work well in teaching multiculturalism. TCKs already have a secure mindset on societal diversity, but what about non-TCKs? Simply reading about TCKs and their multicultural traits is not enough to persuade others who are more opposed. What can TCKs specifically do in the classroom to promote diversity, beyond their mere presence? What else can teachers do to teach multiculturalism? These questions will be addressed in the following sections.
Increasing globalization and multiculturalism

As we covered earlier, the globe has seen spiking rates of globalization and multiculturalism. Given the increasingly developed methods of travel, expanding businesses, and digital communication, and also poverty and political reasons, many of the world’s leading nations are characterized by a blur of cultural identity. The increasingly diversified civilization has a lot to teach people about culture, but unfortunately, multiculturalism and more specifically, policies that make it grow, are not unanimously agreed upon.

Around the globe, there is a common, strong mindset that policies that promote multiculturalism do not work, and has even failed in some respects. When the politics of multiculturalism first began taking hold, there was a majority widespread support for it, but during the 1990s and 2000s, there has since been a growing criticism and backlash against it, especially in Europe (Banting & Kymlicka, 2010) (Levrau & Loobuyck, 2013). It may be easy to rule off critics of multiculturalism as close-minded, or even racist, but the concerns over it are not so simple. One of the most common criticisms of multiculturalism is that contrary to its concept, it actually discourages social cohesion, by means of negating cultural values (Levrau & Loobuyck, 2013). It is not hard to see why many are opposed to it; cultural identity comes with an ‘ownership’ of values and practices, and to suddenly be asked to share that with everyone may bring about an undesired change in that cultural lifestyle. Not all speakers of this critique mean to abolish multiculturalism altogether. On a surface level, many political officials are still open to having their nations populated immigrants, but they do not agree with the integration of values. Other critics have cited that multiculturalism degrades social cohesion and national trust because there is not enough integration (Malik, 2015). Former French President Nicolas Sarkozy famously said “If you come to France, you accept to melt into a single community, which is the national community, and if you do not want to accept that, you cannot be welcome in France” (as cited in Tyrrell, 2011, p. 83). In other words, political leaders may open to population diversity, but not to integrated multiculturalism.
Even Canada, a country consistently renowned for its pro-multicultural policies has been subject to criticism, both from other countries and within (Banting & Kymlicka, 2010). The overlying critique is that multiculturalism should not simply be treated as the co-existence of cultural values, but as assimilation.

Multiculturalism has also been highly supported across the globe, especially from immigrants and TCKs (Pollock & Reken, 2009). Many major countries are often more populated by immigrants than by locals, and a large portion of the former makes up an educated, skilled workforce (Ratansi, 2004). Madeleine Bunting of The Guardian newspaper makes an interesting note that multicultural communities teach “passive tolerance” i.e. in a multicultural context, “simply living in an area of high diversity rubs off on you” (2014). Multicultural acceptance can also reduce the likelihood of political upheaval and other violent conflicts, as these issues are often started by a lack of tolerance of race, religion, and other cultural factors. India is a great example of positive multiculturalism. The country does face many issues in its education system, but is extraordinary in the context of multiculturalism, exhibited by its diverse religious population, including Buddhists, Sikhs, Muslims, and even atheists. A third culture kid named Elena Tiffany lived in India for two years, and was able to identify and explain several religious aspects of which she had not been aware prior to her move. She surmised “by surrounding myself in this multi-religious culture, I learned a lot of things about religion that just made me not only open, but even interested” (Tiffany, 2017). Another way interesting way to learn about the positivity of multiculturalism is to look at countries that advocate it, but did not in the past.

Australia is a notable country in that it used to strongly oppose multiculturalism, but now revels in it. In 1901, the Australian government instigated the ‘Immigration Restriction Act’ into law, which ruled that immigrants of non-European descent were not all allowed to immigrate in Australia (Jones, 2017). This act was eventually coined as the ‘White Australia policy.’ The policy cemented Australia as a radically mono-cultural state, which was used as a commercialized ideology (Jones, 2017). However, the course of the 20th century put Australia’s white population in crisis, such as WWII and the Vietnam War.
Through the years, the Australia government slowly dismantled its ‘White Australia’ ideology through the implementation of more multicultural advocating policies (Jones, 2017). Now, Australia government officials consistently pride their nation on its multi-ethnic policies, though there still remain political critiques.

Multiculturalism is clearly a divided subject for various complicated reasons. It is not just a matter of pro-diversity versus anti-diversity; many critics of multiculturalism do not oppose it out of mere bigotry (though that is a frequent mentality too), or ‘disgust’ with a diverse population, but they do not see it as simple as a mere multi-ethnic presence either. There has to be integration. But, advocates of multiculturalism may do not take issue with it because of all the cultural aspects that can be enjoyed all around the globe. Once again, if we were to advocate multiculturalism, then describing its benefits is only one step in a much more layered process of teaching it.

**Importance of Education as Societal Foundation**

“Racism isn’t born folks, it’s taught” – Denis Leary

Though this is merely a quote from a stand-up comedian, it has nonetheless prevailed and been quoted numerous times in various talk shows and academic papers. Though racism is not the core theme of what this paper discusses, this quote can still represent a subset of attitudes towards multiculturalism. If people seek to convey multiculturalism in a positive light, there are many ways in which this can be done, and one of the most essential mediums is formal education. Many of the critiques that are founded against multiculturalism are rooted in a lot of sources, such as religion or politics. This is not to say that these should be written off as ‘bigoted’ or ‘close-minded’ but what is definite is that none of it is inherent. There is no gene that makes people uncomfortable in multi-ethnic settings, thus educational institutions can encourage a foundation for pro-multiculturalism. TCKs are often indifferent to multiculturalism, but this comes from their mixed lifestyle, which is not shared by everyone (Pollock & Reken,
Many critics of multiculturalism have lived mono-culturally (Grant & Roberston, 2014), and large part of this is due to a mono-cultural classroom. Again, monoculture does not necessarily equate to anti-diversity, but it is certainly a more compatible foundation for that mindset. Of course, it is not possible for every educational institution in the world to suddenly shift their curriculums to a model more adaptable to multicultural oriented classes, at least not immediately. Instead, schools should start by dedicating a handful of multiculturalism-based sessions to whatever class is most suitable, such as social studies, or history. The results of using this approach will take time, and are likely to vary between schools. But, with professional teachers and well-equipped schools, implementing multiculturalism into more curriculums will persuade societal openmindedness.

Better Principles of global awareness and understanding

The people we meet are a huge factor of how we perceive different cultures. Seeing as TCKs feel most comfortable with others that have similar experience, they can learn something from each other. A TCK named Karolina relocated five times in her youth. She outlined the way she deals with differences when meeting new people:

“Every time I move, I meet new people who share the same [third culture] experiences, and we learn from each other. Sometimes, I don’t agree with people and their beliefs, but I have to understand that they have different culture, that they were raised differently … I understand that was their beliefs … I understand and accept that” (as cited in Lijadi & Schalkwyk 2014).

TCKs can make great mediators between groups that are prejudiced towards each other (Pollock & Reken, 2009). They are able to adapt to new social environments will often allow them to befriend people who may have been
initially prejudiced towards them, and I can confirm this from my experience. However, befriending that person will not necessarily eliminate their prejudiced attitude towards the broader demographic. The friendship established here can be used to communicate the necessity of a more open attitude. Studies have also found that people of cultural differences befriend each other based more on shared cultural experiences than superficial differences (Greenholtz & Kim, 2009). Going back to the interviewee Elena Tiffany, she spoke about how when she discussed all the religion she learned about in India to her US classmates, she was shocked by “ignorant” they were (Tiffany, 2017). However, she then acknowledged that she only learned about this through her third culture experience, and should not have been so quick to judge her mono-cultural classmates, as various religions were not a core feature of their curriculum. Nevertheless, Tiffany’s TCK experience allowed her to share her religious knowledge with many of her peers, and found the subject fascinating even though she identified as an atheist.

It is important for TCKs to share their broad cultural knowledge whenever they can. Social interaction is a huge factor into how we form our views of the world. Once again, this is why TCKs do not feel like they have a solid identity, because they spend their adolescence in various settings. But, this does give them a foundation for tolerance of diversity, and they may be able to do the same for those around them.

**Third Culture Presence in the Classroom**

Intolerance of other cultures is not something that people are born with, but something that is taught, whether directly or indirectly. It is easy to say that racism comes from close-minded persons, but that will not help us uncover any new ground in teaching positive diversity. Even if a classroom teacher teaches diversity and all of its benefits, this does not automatically guarantee that the students will become open to multiculturalism. To be realistic, there is no guaranteed safeguard in education against racism, but there are methods that effectively reduce the problem, and TCKs can be of great help here. In addition
to their developed global principles and awareness, and variety of perspectives, there is another major component they can use to promote multiculturalism; their presence.

One of the reasons TCKs learn so much culture is because of how immersed they are in it. It is not just the variety of school curriculums they attend; it is also the variety of communities and physical environments they explore. Third Culture Kid Elena Tiffany was interviewed, questioned about her attitudes towards diversity and how her experiences shaped her. She elaborated on a lot of aspects, surmising:

“When people ask me things like, ‘what’s your opinion on gay marriage, or the increasing immigration population?’ I just say ‘I really don't care.’ Not in a way that I think those things don’t matter, but I think they are such a normal part of society, because I grew up around that…”

Elena went on to talk about examples that we have previously discussed, and concluded:

“I think I am open to multiculturalism not just because I identify with multiple countries, but also because I am used to living in a mixed community. Just by being in one really kept my mind open” (Tiffany, 2017).

In a series of studies led by Oxford sociologists, participants were asked questions about their attitudes towards mixed communities, including how they interacted with them, and what they thought of their impact on the economy and crime rates. The studies were carried out over ten years in the U.S., and what they found was that participants that lived in mixed neighborhoods tended to respond with more tolerant attitudes. Even the participants that initially expressed intolerance were show to grow more open to diversity because of the mixed neighborhoods in which they lived (Bunting, 2014). The mixed community is what
effected open-minded attitudes, and I believe that the same circumstances in a classroom can produce the same results.

Political discussion will often come up in classrooms (Melles & Schwartz, 2013) and as is the case with many other contexts, wrongheaded information will come up. In a heated discussion about immigration policies, religion, or other social issues, TCKs can be of great help in encouraging people to put more things into perspective e.g. explain cultural customs unbeknownst to others (Greenholtz & Kim, 2009). In my experience, I have used this in discussing LGBT issues. My TCK experience brought me to Iceland, a nation that has a very progressive and open attitudes towards LGBT rights. My friends in the U.S. have often asked what my opinion is on homosexuality, and I always respond by telling them it is of little significance to me, because it is so ingrained in the culture where I live. Many TCKs express progressive attitudes towards controversial political and multicultural topics, which can be seen as a means of support. Peers that are undecided in subjects pertaining to multiculturalism may inadvertently pick up the same opinions as their progressive TCK peers merely by sharing the same discussion space (Pollock & Reken, 2009).

TCK presence in the classroom may also form friendships between third-culture students and monoculture students. Due to the mobile lifestyle of TCKs, they are likely to not remain in the current country of residence for a long-term period, and will have to part ways with their local friends. Monoculture students may wish to fly abroad in order to visit their third culture friends, giving them an incentive to visit another country and explore a different culture.

One of the most effective means of developing more sophisticated knowledge towards almost anything is to immerse oneself in an environment relating to it, and the case of multiculturalism, an environment of third culture students. If there is one weakness to be found, it is that more classrooms have become more characterized by diversity of people that have more defined cultural identities e.g. students in a US classroom who fully identify as Spanish, or Ethiopian (Pollock & Reken, 2009). This may undermine the mixed nature of TCKs, but this is still a positive movement towards pro-multiculturalism. Maybe
the mixed identity of TCKs will not be as compelling as a mixed class of people with fully formed national identities, but they are still mono-cultural. The benefit with TCKs is that they can offer a multitude of perspectives.

**Multicultural Teaching Methods for Mono-cultural students**

All of these facts and benefits to multiculturalism must be taught if we are to move it forward, but even in a class filled with TCKs, teachers should still develop their teaching beyond simple lectures. In order to encourage students to become more open to diversity, teachers should *immerse* their students in the subject. Bring students out on more field trips, or quiz them on vexillology (the study of flags). In terms of TCKs, they can help by delivering presentations on their previous locations and residence, and if they want to make it tangible, they can bring an item that relates to the previous culture in which they resided, such as a necklace or painting. If schools can afford it, they should definitely take their students on international trips to other countries, as this is a very immersive way of exploring a culture. In classes of older students, TCKs can be encouraged to assist in teaching, and use their multicultural experience to teach other students.

These methods can be used to great effect, but it will not necessarily work in all contexts. Firstly, the methods involving TCKs may put them in the classroom spotlight, which might make some of them feel uncomfortable. Others might deem these methods too generic or expensive. If a teacher of multiculturalism seeks a teaching method more involving and less costly, then a more hands-on cultural way of learning would be to create a cooking assignment. This would be ideal in a culinary class, but it can be created for something more common such as social studies, or even history. Teachers can create a class session around cooking a meal of choice preselected by the students. The selection of meals should all be original recipes from countries other than the one in which the school is located. For example, the teacher may present a series of pre-selected countries France, Japan, Egypt, Brazil, New Zealand, and Guatemala. Then, in a method of random selection, such as pulling the names
from a jar, the students decide a country. Once the country is selected, the teacher organizes an additional list of recipes originally from the selected country, and then the students cast a vote. The teacher can use a school owned kitchen facility to initiate the cooking and then eat the meal with the students in celebration. Next, the teacher would briefly go over the history of said recipe, or the country’s food in general. This can be done over multiple sessions, and can effectively engage the students.

TCK Interviewee Briana Sharp was interviewed online through a series of questions about her diverse class experiences in Albania, Honduras, and Finland. She explained one of her most memorable class sessions, and how it provided the entire a class a very rich learning experience on multicultural aspects:

“One time, our whole had to do a project that involved some role-playing. In it, we were asked to be ‘executives’ that were supposed to pitch a city to our peers. So in my case, a friend and I dressed up in uniform, and pitched Helsinki and why everyone should visit. Some of us took it more seriously than others, but everyone was having fun, so I think it registered with them” (Sharp, 2017).

Sharp’s activity can be an effective template for teaching multiculturalism in a class because not only is it immersive, but it can even be fun. If schools are ill equipped to apply something like the culinary example, or think there is too much levity to Sharp’s activity, then what teachers can do is teach a brief lecture on something political as well as topical. Afterwards, the teacher can organize the students into groups, whilst mixing it up by diversity as best they can, and separate TCKs if they are present. A diverse classroom is at an advantage here, as the mixed groups will less likely succumb to ‘group think’ i.e. making decisions by mere virtue of collective thinking, eliminating individuality. It will also make for good practice in being politically informed and communicating in a civil manner.
Conclusion

Multiculturalism has become more ingrained global society than it ever has before. The concept of post nationalism has slowly characterized more nations around the world, yet population diversity and an acceptance towards it still has a long way to go. It is still a politically divisive subject that accentuates bigotry and conflict, but also open-mindedness and development. The effects of multiculturalism vary by country, but they are present worldwide. Art, clothing, food, music, and technology have increasingly become interconnected through nations, but they do not all come from one place. The intersection of these societal aspects is a product of multiculturalism, and they can continue to intersect of society develops more positive outlooks towards them. But in order to persuade positivity, societies and policies must integrate these cultures.

Third Culture Kids are a relatively new social group in the grand scheme of history, but they are rapidly growing in numbers not only because of an increase of international employment, but the increasingly diverse populations. The question “where are you from” has produced more uncertain answers, with people elaborating how their parents come from different cultures, or how they themselves have lived in more than one location. They are positive example of what multiculturalism critics seek: integration. One mindset that gives rise to multicultural criticism is a strong sense of national pride, but TCKs show that it is not necessary to have this. Granted, a lack of identity and constant mobility can lead to emotional issues such as stress and grievance, but the reason TCKs experience these emotions is because the world around them feels a lot more defined. This is not to argue that countries should ‘do away’ with their nationalities and pride. Instead, they should merge their cultural lifestyles together so as to promote the set up of a multi-ethnic society.

Educational institutions that wish to teach multiculturalism can use immersive teaching methods to engage their students, and will benefit if their classes are highly occupied by TCKs. Institutions that are hesitant to teach it should examine successful TCK figures, and how their mixed nature can inadvertently teach us so much.
Can TCKs make a substantial difference in multicultural attitudes by themselves? The answer is probably not, but that has never been the point. There are undoubtedly other ways to positively communicate multiculturalism, but those are unlikely to work on their own either. The objective here is to support TCKs and work together with them whilst using other means of promoting societal diversity, like assimilation. Assimilation with TCK communities will be one of many steps to assimilation in global society.
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