Multiculturalism and creativeness

Impact of a multicultural background on creativity

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Abstract

Coming from a culturally diverse environment I wanted to study the impact of a multicultural background on the identity of someone. I believe multiculturalism plays an important role in the formation of the individuals and their vision of the world. I decided to link multiculturalism and creativeness together because in my opinion creativity is about understanding the world around us. The research questions for this thesis are; what is the impact of multi-culture on the identity of someone? How does the fact of being from a multicultural background influence someone’s creativity?

People coming from a multicultural background need to know their origins and cultures in order to be able to flourish. Their environment gives them a different perspective, a different point of view based on their experience that can allow them to be creative. Their creativeness is rich in new ideas that can enable changes in our societies.
## Index

Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 5

1. Culture and Multiculturalism ......................................................................................... 6
   1.1 Culture ....................................................................................................................... 6
   1.2 Globalization ............................................................................................................ 7
   1.3 Multiculturalism ....................................................................................................... 8

2. Identity and Multiculturalism ......................................................................................... 10
   2.1 Identity ..................................................................................................................... 10
   2.2 Identity in globalization ......................................................................................... 12
   2.3 Identity crisis ......................................................................................................... 14

3. Identity and creativeness ............................................................................................. 15
   3.1 Identity of the artist ............................................................................................... 15
   3.2 Creativity and Art .................................................................................................. 16

4. Artists from multicultural backgrounds .................................................................... 17
   4.1 Araki Koman ......................................................................................................... 17
   4.2 Hassan Hajjaj ...................................................................................................... 20

Conclusion ......................................................................................................................... 22

Bibliography ..................................................................................................................... 24
Introduction

The question of identity has changed since the phenomenon of globalization became established. We have to deal with a new pattern of dual-identity families, where father and mother come from different countries and cultures. Social presentations of the "European" type, based on mono-linguistic and mono-cultural norms have definitely changed, and there will be more and more multicultural individuals. Coming from a multicultural family pattern myself, I often find people asking me questions about myself, and of who I actually am. “Where are you from?”, “do you feel more Icelandic or French?”, “where do you want to live when you get older?”, “do you prefer Iceland or France?” Few questions out of many, I could even answer because I have always struggled evaluating the consequences of biculturalism on my life and on the way I see things. It is the reason why I got interested in studying this topic about culture and the identity of people coming from, one way or another, a multicultural background.

The fact is that coming from a culturally diverse environment plays an important role in the formation of the individual and their vision of the world. I decided to link multiculturalism and creativity together because, in my opinion, art can be seen as a kind of metaphor for modern society: it is diverse and varied and it is a human activity. The product of this activity or the idea is addressed to the senses, emotions, intuitions and mind. From one artist to the other, art will be different, and people will have different views on art depending on who they are and where they come from. Therefore, the research questions for this thesis are both interesting and important; what is the impact of multi-culture on the identity of someone? How does the fact of being from a multicultural background influence someone’s creativity?

In this thesis, I will start on explaining multiculturalism and where it comes from by discussing topics such as culture and globalization. Then, I am going to show the link between multiculturalism and identity by explaining how coming from a multicultural background influences one’s identity. After that, I will go over the connection between creativity and identity and finally I will show the different impacts that multiculturalism and identity have on people’s creativity, by referring to two artists.
1. Culture and Multiculturalism

1.1 Culture

Culture is in many aspects of our lives and is all around us every day. If you were asked to define the term culture, you would probably go ahead with music, literature, visual art, architecture or language. You would not be wrong, but you would not be totally right either because culture is even wider than that. Indeed, the cultural elements we recognize with our senses are the expression of what culture really means. Culture is also what we feel, what we think and what we do.

Edward Burnett Tylor an English anthropologist and the founder of cultural anthropology provided the first definition of culture, he said: “Culture or Civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.” Culture is obtained, acquired and shared between people from the same society. It is not monolithic; it is flexible and can evolve. Also, individuals exist differently inside a culture and a society. Culture is in fact more like a symbolic, it is not one particular thing. Culture is of great importance because it allows people who share a similar one to communicate together and to understand each other. It is a set of determined ways of thinking that are learned from early age and are shared by many people in a symbolic way to constitute a group.

The word culture descends from the Latin word cultura, which literally means the care that is given to a land to make it fertile and profitable. In fact, culture is essential for a dynamic society; it is about telling stories, celebrating, remembering the past, entertaining and imagining the future. The benefits that culture brings to individuals can spread to a society as a whole. It helps to build social capital and it is a unifying element. Bringing people together in cultural activities (festivals, fairs, and gatherings) generates solidarity and social cohesion, promoting social inclusion, community empowerment and sense of belonging somewhere. The diverse resources of our cultural heritage tell the story of our common past and are inseparable from our sense of belonging. That makes the individual feel that he or she is part of a unit.

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1 Edward Burnett Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the development of mythology*.
Individual’s construction of identity is closely linked to culture, tradition and history.\(^3\) Since the early 90s there has been an evolution in the term culture, due to a change in our societies and especially due to globalization.

### 1.2 Globalization

To understand it better, it is helpful to look at what globalization is exactly. It characterizes in particular the development of exchanges and human interactions on the whole planet. Trade liberalization, advances in information and technologies, and the modernization of means of transport have helped this process. Globalization is accompanied by the disappearance of national borders and changes in the conditions of interaction between cultures. It is a unifying phenomenon of the different civilizations of the world. Globalization was first economic, but then it became cultural as well. More than a standardization of cultures, globalization has led to a blending of them, and has allowed the easy moving of people, goods and ideas.\(^4\)

Today we speak of a standardization of cultures, but many people continue to show their cultural uniqueness in globalization. Geographical landmarks do not limit culture anymore and there has been a growth of diasporas since globalization started, which means that people move from their homeland to go working and living in another country.\(^3\) In this globalized society, people nevertheless still want to be able to locate you. "Where are we?" "Where does she/he come from?" These are the questions that people ask each other when they meet.

In front of human diversity, we necessarily differentiate according to a geographical area and a place of origin. But in globalization, what used to be far away is becoming closer, and links develop across borders. Currently, human differences are by habitat and behaviour in particular, and not as much in terms of appearances as they used to be. We face another form of geography including habits, traditions and lifestyles. If we can distinguish a Japanese from an Icelander it is by how they dress, their cooking habits, their way of organize things and of course their language and not only anymore by their appearance.

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With globalization, we are dealing with a new pattern of dual-identity families. There are more and more individuals now from more than one country and culture. It is easier to meet people from a different culture and to live abroad. The typical European type that was built on monolithic, mono-linguist and monoculture norms has definitely changed, and there are more and more individuals from diverse/mixed cultural backgrounds over the world. Cultural multiplicity in the world of globalization has become the new term multiculturalism.

1.3 Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is a term that has been developed in the United States and Canada first. It referred to the institutional recognition of multiple cultures, ethnic, social identities within the same society. It recognizes through globalization the legitimacy of all these identities, because societies are not only conceived by one social identity. It is about recognizing the different cultures in their values and their customs in one society and it is also the recognition of the different communities through their cultural manifestations. Multiculturalism changes the perception of cultures within a society, from a negative and discriminating status to an inclusive and acceptance ideology.

Arthur Horton, a professor at Lewis University, in the USA, said about multiculturalism and diversity:

From the multicultural perspectives there is a multiplicity of sociocultural contexts, which influence values over time. These values influence all levels – individuals, families, communities and institutions. From the multicultural perspective, diversity is a valuable resource for growth and enrichment of all societies.

In a multicultural society, different cultures live together. A list of words and expressions appeared in recent decades to describe this phenomenon: Culture, intercultural, multicultural, cultural mixing, melting pot, pluralism, cultural plurality ... and so on. This proves that a change happened in our societies. The prefix "multi" evokes diversity and plurality of cultures in the world. According to the author Jacques Audinet:

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7 Tariq Modood, Multiculturalism, p. 18.
It’s impossible for individuals to take no account of the land on which they were born, no account of their ancestors’ territory. In a thousand ways, the body carries the marks of these roots and their soil, marks going way beyond physique, skin color, or facial features.⁹

So according to Audinet, no matter where we live and which society we belong to at a certain time, our origins or our parent’s ones will always influence us. A child from a multicultural background will learn things differently and will therefore develop in different conditions. First of all they could evolve surrounded by people who speak a language other than the one spoken in the country they live in. Then, the culinary habits around them might not be the same at home as at school, and they could also learn to adapt to different kinds of customs (for example celebrating both New Year’s eve and Rosh Hashanah a Jewish festivity). This will necessarily cause the child to evolve in two different ways and being aware of its differences and adapting to situations someone in a monoculture situation would not need to encounter.

The countries that created multiculturalism are western countries. Seeing the world change and evolve they decided to put a word on what cultural diversity in globalization was. Multiculturalism was a way to make people accept multicultural diversity, and prevent discrimination and exclusion within a society. If for some it may seem reassuring and encouraging that our societies care about cultural diversity, for others it might also be seen as a control over certain cultures and their evolution in society. It can be complicated to come from a culture, considered as a minority, when you realize that the country in which you live, decides what is good to take or not from this culture.

Rasheed Araeen an artist, curator and critic working in London talks about multiculturalism as a Western framework and says that most Western societies now include people from cultures which are not from Europeans origins. He tells that these people form a considerable minority within the societies they live in. Still, there are about twenty million people in Europe with roots and ancestors in Africa or Asia, which makes their cultures really strong in Europe. These cultures and cultural practices, according to Rasheed Araeen are therefore part of the european individuals’ daily life. He says that it is really important that our societies recognise these practices as part of “hallmarks of

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multicultural society”. In the matter of fact, not everything from these cultures is accepted or acceptable and according to him what is accepted is extremely selective.11

Certain things in cultural diversity are celebrated, while others are disapproved of or not allowed.12 By doing a selection of what is acceptable or not from someone’s culture in a society does not completely integrate the people that are part of that culture. It might actually make them feel that their culture is not totally welcome and they could start questioning themselves and their sense of belonging.13 As a matter of fact, belonging to a social group is a deep aspect of someone’s identity. Multiculturalism refers to the cohabitation of different cultures, but when some of the culture feel that they are not completely welcome or face amalgams and prejudices people will tend to feel different and excluded.

This raises the question of the place and identity of each person within the same society. The multicultural identity can be defined from both an individual and a social perspective. It is important to figure out how individuals with multiple cultural backgrounds manage these different identities within the self. More and more people are in a position where they need to negotiate with different cultural identities, and figure out who they are, and where they come from.

2. Identity and Multiculturalism

2.1 Identity

Identity is a dynamic process in perpetual construction that is developed throughout life. There are several types of identities, which work with each other: personal identity, social identity and cultural identity. Personal identity corresponds to a conscious feeling of individual specificity, to an unconscious effort to produce a continuity of life experiences and a feeling of being linked with a group.14 Self-image, the “I am” is the foundation element of personal identity. The group get us to social identity, and it also makes us realise if the personal identity we have built up is coherent with the social group identity we are part of.15

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11 Rasheed Araeen, “What’s Wrong with Multiculturalism?,” p. 15.
12 Rasheed Araeen, “What’s Wrong with Multiculturalism?,” p. 15.
A social group is a set of individuals having common characteristics. It is the sense of belonging to a group that led to social identity. Belonging to a social group could be necessary for an individual to develop and define their self-image and to be able to distinguish themselves. Personal and social identity is brought together through cultural identity and translates 'I' into the "we": me and others governed by the same cultural and sharing the same cultural heritage composed of representations, beliefs, values, customs, rituals and feasts, as it says in the book *Social Identity: International Perspectives*:

Social identity refers to a feeling of similarity to (some) others; personal identity refers to a feeling of difference in relation to the same others. This distinction between personal identity and social identity is indeed only an example of duality between the individual and the collective or difference and similarity. On the basis of generally accepted definitions of what is continually called social identity and personal identity, we have to deal with the conflict between the individual and the social.

Nowadays, due to the changes in the world and changes in family patterns, an individual might be born somewhere and grow up somewhere else. Or, someone can have a parent from one culture and the other from another culture. Then, he is a part of more than one culture and can deal with having several social identities. Jette Sandahl, director of the National Museum of World Cultures in Gothenburg, talks about identity:

So, for me, identity is dynamic rather than static; not something one has, nor something one is, but something one is in the process of becoming. (…). It is the nature of societal development of both globalization and internationalization that the number of possible choices is at present increasing. In our time we face a deconstruction or a revision of the concept of identity.

The author means that there is a transition in the concept of identity itself. Individuals create their identity through their life and choices, they modify and transform when people go through changes. The societies have evolved and the question of identity has changed due to globalization. Due to the diversity of cultures in societies there is a new multi-identity that both individuals and groups must adapt to. Also, identifying yourself to a social group does not automatically lead others to identify you as a full member of

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their group, and that might make you feel like a stranger and question your personal and social identity.

2.2 Identity in globalization

Globalization has developed cultural diversity everywhere and populations are becoming much more blended. Someone coming from a multicultural family will evolve differently than a person coming from a mono-cultural family. The education of a multicultural person is made between at least two cultures, which can sometimes be the opposite of each other. When a child grows up in a multicultural context, it is aware that it is part of two groups. And sometimes even the social groups she/he is part of might not consider them part of their group. There is a need for social groups to identify every individual clearly. People want to be able to tell if you are part of their social group, and if you share common characteristics with them.

In a TedTalk video I watched about growing up between two cultures, a young woman named Abeer Yusuf talks about the difficulty in knowing where home is. She was born in India and raised in three different countries (Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and Malaysia). Yusuf has struggled with the definition of identity and sense of belonging since she was a child. She talks about the relation between culture and identity. Being herself from a multicultural background, she talks about herself being a ‘TCK’ a Third Culture Kid. A TCK is someone who has spent a big part of their development years living in a culture other than their parents culture (or other than one of their parent culture). She says:

As a Third culture kid, how do you know where you are from? How do you know where home is or what your identity is? Identity matters to answer this question. It matters that you know where you are from so that you know what your place in the world is. Each one of us understands the world because of the way we have been brought up because of where our home is and because of the people we have been growing up with.

Abeer Yusuf explains that the TCK’s first culture is the culture where the parents come from, so basically where the passport is from (if both parents are from the same culture). The second culture of a Third Culture Kid is the culture he/she grow up in, and the third

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20 TEDxTerry Talks, “What is home? Growing up between cultures, Abeer Yusuf, TEDxTerryTalks.”
culture is a culture that he/she negotiate as a result of being in his first and his second culture. This takes identity and culture to another level, and implies that TCK have different cultural identities and create their own cultural identity, resulting from the two others.

People from a multicultural background have to know who they are by taking into consideration the several places they come from. This influences the perception someone has on it self-esteem and on its sense of belonging. Social groups also want to be able to identify you, either as a foreigner or as someone sharing the same origins as their own.

The appearance, the name, the look for example can have an influence on the way someone looks at you and might difference you. The language can in some cases even become a barrier, and can be an element that makes you question your social identity within the society in which you live in. Speaking the language of the country in which you live allows you to be an individual better integrated and especially not to be seen as a stranger or to face unfair discriminations. Let’s give a concrete example; if you would move back to the country where you are originally from (or where your parents are originally from), after living in another country for many years, and came back to your home country speaking the language with an accent. Will it make you a foreigner? No. But, it will probably make people act towards you like a foreigner. And, that will have consequences on your social identity.

Appearances also tend to play a role on how you see yourself in a society, unfortunately. I remember talking about it with a young Icelandic girl with a bicultural background. Her father was from Iceland and her mother was from Cameroun. She was born and raised in Iceland in a bicultural family, which made her of course Icelandic. She inherited from the dark skin colour of her mother and all of her cultural background. She explained how she had always faced exclusion in her own country due to her appearance, and how she had to actually put more efforts than anyone else into proving she was Icelandic. This kind of situation, without a doubt, plays a big role in how people identify themselves within a society and on how they evolve. In some cases, it can even make them experience confusion in their life, and in the way they look at themselves.

TEDxTerry Talks, “What is home? Growing up between cultures, Abeer Yusuf, TEDxTerryTalks.”
2.3 Identity crisis

Identity crisis corresponds to a period of identity changes. Erik Erikson a German psychologist found this term and diagnosed it as the confusion suffered by teenagers. He also said that identity crisis in adults is common, and can be a passing stage in a personal development.22

To explain this better we can use the tree as a metaphor, as this metaphor is often used to explain other society elements. For a person the roots of the tree would be the cultural heritage he/she has received. A rootless tree does not hold and goes down in the first storm. This is exactly what happens when someone does not really know who she/he is and is confused about one’s social role: we are talking about an identity crisis.23 As for identity, any multicultural people have been asking themselves the questions “who am I really?” and “what culture do I belong to?” There has always been a need for belonging somewhere and to call somewhere home, but nowadays with globalization it is not as obvious anymore where people belong.

The identity crisis is the feeling of belonging nowhere; it forms the individual and shapes their personality in the wrong way. In fact, during the development of the personality, the identity crisis can have bad consequences on someone’s trust, confidence and autonomy. A multicultural person is neither a sum of two cultures, nor the container of the two distinct cultures, but an entity that combines, aspects and features these two cultures they are from, in an original and unique way.24

Abeer Yusuf explains, from her experience, explains how multicultural people (TCK’s) evolve, and how they are likely to be. According to her TCK’s get lot more culture sensitivity and do understand more about other people because of their own environment. They also are kind of sociable, being used to move from one country to another and used to create new friendships. She says they make lots of relationships, lots of friends and connect really quickly with others.25 Each one of us understands the world because of the way we have been brought up, because of where our home is and because

24 TEDxTerry Talks, “What is home? Growing up between cultures, Abeer Yusuf, TEDxTerryTalks.”
25 TEDxTerry Talks, “What is home? Growing up between cultures, Abeer Yusuf, TEDxTerryTalks.”
of the people we have been growing up with. TCKs are described as “cultural chameleons”, they most of the time have a great sense of adaptability; a social intelligence and they tend to be open-minded because of their own family pattern.\textsuperscript{26}

David C. Pollock an American sociologist and Ruth E. Van Reken an American author also talk about the consequences of being a TCK on ones behaviour: “Some TCK’S who flip-flop back and forth between various behavioural patterns have trouble figuring out their own value system from the multicultural mix they have been exposed to.”\textsuperscript{27} Being adaptable and aware of cultures around us does not mean that we are completely conscious about the place we have in our society and the role we play in it. Multicultural people tend to have a different perspective, a different point of view based on their experience, tastes and values from two cultures, which makes their knowledge diverse and their skills various. In the art industry multiculturalism is highlighted and many artists combines their multicultural backgrounds with their creativity.

3. Identity and creativeness

3.1 Identity of the artist

Individuals can combine their multicultural backgrounds with their creativity. A creative identity develops with time, experience as well as personal and cultural identity. To be creative is leaving a fingerprint in history, by putting an idea into form. The process of creativity starts when a person opens oneself to others. A person must be able to give to others by showing and exposing what they create and therefore to know oneself. To leave fingerprints is what we do every day, more or less voluntarily and more or less consciously. In arts it has to be a form of translation of our identity and cultural background. The arts are certainly the most immediately recognizable form of creativity and are to be considered as a product of culture.

David Novitz an author from South Africa says art and culture are intimately related with each other\textsuperscript{28}. The object of art or the cultural product is in fact the echo of the cultural background that the artist interprets. They are also a mark of the artist’s personal trajectory and personal identity. The act of creating is essential to human life; man is defined by creation. To create means to transform things, to give them meaning. Man

realizes himself, recognizes himself in everything he creates. We are all potential creators and mirrors of our cultures. Art allows the artist to come into contact with its cultural diversity. David Novitz also explains that cultural identity cannot depend on art only, but art does clearly contribute to express ourselves on our culture\textsuperscript{29}.

According to the German philosopher Nietzsche only art can provide such a humanly interpretation of existence\textsuperscript{30}. A person coming from a multicultural background, living in a country where his second culture is part of a minority, tends to highlight its origins in order to affirm them in the eyes of others. Beyond putting forward representations of his culture, the artist will also be able to get a message across. An artist of multicultural origins will want to represent one or several of his cultures. The influences he can get comes from his cultures are history, traditions, customs and will be found through shapes, colours, sounds or rhythms for example.

\section*{3.2 Creativity and Art}

Creativity is about understanding the world around us. It is an interpretation of things: to capture and to express. It is a process of reflection that leads to an innovative, intelligent, original solution. The creativity based on cultural background is linked to the ability of individuals, especially artists, to use their imagination, emotions, origins and senses to communicate to others. An artist breaks the conventional perspectives to allow the emergence of new ideas in a spontaneous, intuitive, singular way. The expression of human sensitivity enriches the society. When an artist uses the best practices, values and rich traditions from their mixed backgrounds it can result to an explosive positive fusion.

Creativity based on culture plays a key role in generating social understanding. The artistic approach adopted depends on the individual cultural construction. There are a lot of artists around the world using their origins as a source of inspiration in their art. Whether it's through sensations, colours, shapes, textures and emotion or even only in the message they are carrying. A multicultural artist has a global view on his multicultural background, which enables him to have a wider perspective. He can choose, compare or even take what he wants of his multiple backgrounds. By taking into consideration the several places he comes from in the process of creation, the artist is like an open book, and brings new perspectives on his cultures and on the world. Some artists work and live from their art, and find inspiration in their multicultural backgrounds.

\textsuperscript{29}David Novitz, “Art, culture and Identity,” p. 199.

Araki Koman and Hassan Hajjaj are two artists I chose, and they are both aware of the impact of their cultural diversity on the artist they became. Therefore, they wanted to use their experience and multicultural backgrounds in their creation. Both of them grew up in a multicultural environment that allowed them to have a different look on things. Today, through their art, they proudly show their cultural heritages.

4. Artists from multicultural backgrounds

4.1 Araki Koman

Araki Koman is my friend and is also an illustrator and graphic designer from Paris. She was born and raised in Paris in a Guinean and Malian family. I met her in Iceland, where she was living for almost a year. We immediately got along well, due to our similar French origins. She soon told me about her journey, and that when I met her, she was in a personal reorientation. She wanted to devote herself fully to her career as an artist. I deeply think that Iceland allowed her to rediscover herself, as a person and as an artist. Indeed, coming from a country where cultural diversity is very rich and various (France), she found herself in Iceland to be perceived as the ‘colored girl’. Which was not necessarily to displease her, but which made her realize her differences. From there, she also realized how proud she was of her African origins and how much she wanted to use cultural diversity in her creations.

She is currently living and working in London and has been living in 6 different countries in her life (including Iceland). She finds inspiration in anthropology, documentaries, films, photography, travelling and traditions from around the world and also in the impact cultural diversity has on her. Araki aims to create bridges and wants the public to rethink their relationship with appearance to define identity.

As a French black woman with a West African heritage and a passion for cultures and people, she feels that she needs to bring a message through her works and open minds about the cultural diversity that surround us. Through her art she talks about her creative identity, about how travelling shaped her life and how her origins had impact on all of her projects.31

In an interview in The Glossary, a platform collective of talented women, Araki talks about how she started illustration and graphic design: “From my early childhood, I developed a strong interest for drawing and the world’s cultures and diversity.” When she got older she had a strong need to travel. After living, working and studying abroad for several years, she finally came back to Paris to focus on a new project named OUMxYUKI, an anthropological blog project in which she interviewed people with multicultural backgrounds, in their environment. This project proves how much cultural diversity interested Araki.

Today, her style is a mix of minimalism and Wabi Sabi philosophy (the Japanese beauty in imperfection) with a lot of multicultural influences. Her base is worked with black and white colours, organic shapes and patterns and she recently started adding more earthy and pastel colours on her fine drawings. “To me, creativity is our ability to use our inner world’s resources to create on the outside. Everyone has it but not everyone is willing to listen and trust themselves.” This is how she developed her style, by using her own cultural resources, and taking inspiration in her background.

She also says that multiculturalism and growing up in a “multicultural Paris”, in a multicultural family and having friends from different backgrounds, influenced and shaped her identity and vision of the world. It had the most impact in the way she expresses herself. She gets inspiration from every woman around the world, from her African ancestors, from all her travels. You can see the impact of her cultural background in what she creates, as on the drawings below. “How women dress, move and express themselves no matter the cultures and era is so inspiring to me. Growing up had a poor level of self-love and confidence and only embraced my feminine energy recently.”

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Image 1: Drawing by Araki Koman.

Image 2: Drawing by Araki Koman.
Her cultures and her background influenced Araki, and being of a multicultural background made her the artist she is today.

I was also touched by another artist and wanted to talk about him in my thesis. Hassan Hajjaj, as Araki Koman has roots in Africa, and is also inspired by his multicultural background, which influences him as an artist.

4.2 Hassan Hajjaj
Hassan Hajjaj is an artist, photographer. He was born and raised in Larache, Morocco. He moved to the UK when he was twelve years old, and has spent most of his life travelling between his two countries and cultures. One of the reason why I chose to talk about him is because he is working with the concept of duality in culture. He mixes his Moroccan and British cultures. This cultural blend has been giving him and his work a distinct multicultural identity.36

The materials Hajjaj uses include patterned textiles, furniture, clothes and props often made by him and inspired by Moroccan culture. The materials influence the public understanding of the subject in the picture and are chosen deliberately to put forward the individual’s identities. He has decided to mix the aesthetic of the European fashion industry with Moroccan tradition and culture. In his art he is challenging the Western perceptions of the Moroccan culture. “My work started because I wanted to show another side of Moroccan culture, something more than that, and the imagery that they’d understand in the same way.”37

Hassan also gets his inspiration from multiculturalism and from his own experience and all his creations are “Moroccan-infused”38 as you can see on the pictures bellow. He makes people rethink cultural relationships, through his own perspective. Hassan makes traditions meet contemporary, Western cultures meet African culture, through dynamic, colourful and beautiful pictures.

Image 3: Picture by Hassan Hajjaj – Kesh Angels

Image 4: Picture by Hassan Hajjaj - Rider
Hassan grew up in a multicultural environment, and that had a lot of impact on him as an artist and a person. “In the 90s, a friend of mine was doing a fashion shoot and asked me to help him because I spoke English. The photographer was American, the stylist from somewhere else – in fact, the whole team was foreign. Morocco was just the backdrop, which frustrated me but also made me think. Rather than just using the country as the backdrop, I wanted to make it look grand. I wanted to take the Moroccan clothes and the people and shoot them in this celebratory way. At the time, I just wanted to share it with friends, though! I wanted to show off my country in the way that I perceived it.”39 He has decided to show a new face of his perspective of Moroccan culture in a way his European audience could understand.

It was necessary for him to know both of his cultures well to do so, and his own perspective on those cultures abled him to mirror it through his creations. When you look at his work, you can see the big impact multiculturalism had on his creations and on him. He is proud of both of his origins and want to show to his public how he combines them.

**Conclusion**

As a person growing up in France, I do think that all different cultures are integral part of the French society, and France would not be France without those cultures. France is a society rich in colours, religions and diversity. I grew up surrounded by people in similar situation as me. Either they had one of their parents from another country, or they had ancestors that immigrated to France one or two generations before them. For some reason, I always felt close to people sharing a similar background with me. I did not feel different anymore; I felt like they understood what I was going through.

People coming from a bicultural background find it difficult to know where they are from, because many places feel like home to them. They also can feel like they belong nowhere. When you don’t know where you are from, you struggle to figure out who you are and what your identity is. The identity of a person is built on their environment, their story, their past and their present. When each of them (story, environment, past, present) has many different components it can end up being chaos. When someone has a multicultural background, they tend to choose one of their identities to be the main one. That can lead with time to an identity crisis, because every part of our

39 “Meet Hassan Hajjaj, the ‘Andy Warhol of Marrakech’,” *Dazed Digital.*
cultural background is part of us. There is no need to choose, it is possible to live with both of them.

When I look a little further on the subject I also realize the reality of the situation of multiculturalism. Some things are chosen in our society to represent multiculturalism, such as food, music, art, dance, fashion, languages and others, for the pleasure of all. Individuals need to feel completely accepted for what they are in order to be active in the society. Nobody can understand a culture as well as someone that has grown up in it. Therefore, someone that grew up in a multicultural background has the best perspective on how to communicate on cultures. The background a person grew up in, and the cultures the person is from will always be there.

The impact becomes positive from the moment the individual accepts where he comes from and what his different cultures can bring to him and to the society he lives in. From that moment, the individual will be able to get something positive from his backgrounds. In my opinion, art and creativity can be influenced by multiculturalism. In fact, as I said, creativity is about understanding the world around us, and put into form the way you see things. Multicultural people tend to have a different perspective, a different point of view based on their experience. They are more likely to be open minded, to have a sensitivity to foreign cultures and curiosity on the world. That makes their knowledge diverse and their skills various and they can therefore bring something new to their society. They have the opportunity and the right cultural conditions to be more creative.

In the art industry multiculturalism is a combination of ideas. Araki Koman and Hassan Hajjaj are two artists out of many that blend their multicultural backgrounds with their creativity and bring something new and different to our societies. Multicultural people have their own cultural competences that they need to share with others, and they can do it through creativeness.

It is only when the cultural identity is understood, and cultural diversity accepted that we will be able to fully recognize multiculturalism and enable individuals to assume their own specificity.
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