



An honours project entitled

**An investigation of the relationship between
Asian Third Culture Kids' acceptancy towards multiculturalism
and their career aspiration**

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(Honours) English Language (Primary)*

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Key Concepts: multiculturalism, Third Culture Kids, international career aspiration

1. Research Background and Significance

This study aims to investigate on the relationship between third culture kids' acceptancy towards multiculturalism and how it may affects their career aspiration. The world is developing in the direction of becoming more interconnected globally and increasingly multicultural nationally (Van der Zee, Oudenhoven, Ponterotto & Fietzer, 2013). As a result, people have higher tendencies to move around the world and be immersed in different cultures, which increases the chance for people to be in contact with multiple cultures in different contexts such as work, school and personal life. With the expansion of such phenomenon, it leads to the significant growth and interest in Third Culture Kids. According to Pollock and van Reken (2001, as cited in Dewaele & Oudenhoven, 2009), a Third Culture Kid is someone who has spent significant part of their developmental years outside of their parents' culture. Some might have parents who lived and studied abroad or were refugees for a while, and some followed their parents and move regularly for their international jobs. Pollock and Van Reken (2001, as cited in Dewaele & Oudenhoven, 2009) also pointed out "because TCKs have grown up with different experiences from those who have lived primarily in one culture, they are sometimes seen as slightly strange by the people around them." Therefore, it would definitely effect their personalities and shape them differently to people with a more straight forward cultural background. In addition, Van der Zee, Oudenhoven, Ponterotto & Fietzer (2013) claim that "personality seems to be an important predictor of how successful individuals are in actually dealing with inter- cultural situations", and "many studies reveal that third culture kids demonstrate heightened language development and interest in third culture kids in their adult lives" (Cottrell & R.H. Useem, 1994; Fail, 1996; Gerner, Perry, Moselle & Archbold, 1992; Gleason, 1973; R.H. Useem & Downie, 1976; Willis, Enloe & Minoura, 1994 as cited in Thurston-Gonzalez, 2009), so it is interesting to investigate on the relationship between TCKs' past experiences, their personality and their future career aspirations. Moreover, educational values of such studies should be acknowledged, as it is beneficial for educators to learn and have the appropriate knowledge of the behaviors and backgrounds of their multicultural students, which, in today's society could be commonly found even in local settings.

Various of research with similar foci have been conducted, however, they tend to investigate on global levels instead of focusing on a targeted ethnic group. In this research, the target participants are all Asian. There is a mix of Third Culture Kids from numbers of different cultures such as Hong Kong, mainland China, India, Thailand, Taiwan, Pakistan and the Philippines. With such a focus, it could distinguished on whether or not the findings differ in the context of Asia.

Additionally, my personal background is part of the reason for choosing this topic, I am a third culture kid myself. My parents are both ethnically Chinese, who were born and raised in Hong Kong. I was born in Hong Kong, but immigrated to Bangkok, Thailand by the end of my primary studies. During my time in Bangkok, I attended an international where I was influenced by multiple cultures, namely American, Taiwanese and Thai, and languages. Hence, my schooling and personal experiences of being a Third Culture Kid played a significant role in forming my personality, attitude towards multiculturalism and, certainly, my career aspiration.

With this research being a cultural study piece on Third Culture Kids, someone who have similar ethnic background yet different cultural background than their parents, and is a hybrid of their parents' background and where they grew up, the usage of the terms race, culture and ethnicity should be considered and clearly defined. In this research, "culture" refers to practices or beliefs influenced by context and historical situation, while "ethnicity" is usually related to parents and long term history of the families' background and does not change throughout peoples' lives. Moreover, the use of "race" had purposely been avoided due to it being highly subjective and controversial. However, even with these definitions in consideration, it may be difficult to do a study like this due to the many overlapping interruptions of the concepts from different people.

2. Research Questions and Literature Review

2.1 Research Questions

1. What dimensions of Multiculturalism do Third Culture Kids tend to have higher acceptancy toward?
2. What are reasons for Third Culture Kids to have a higher acceptancy toward the dimensions of Cultural Empathy and Open-mindedness?
3. How might the experience of being a third culture kid help develop their international career aspirations?

2.2 Multiculturalism

According to Rosado (1996), “multiculturalism is a system of beliefs and behaviors that recognizes and respects the presence of all diverse groups in an organization or society, acknowledges and values their socio-cultural differences, and encourages and enables their continued contribution within an inclusive cultural context which empowers all within the organization or society”.

In western theories of multiculturalism, people are commonly categorized into indigenous peoples, national minorities and immigrants groups (Kymlicka & He, 2005 , p.11). However, that is not exactly the case in the context of Asia, for a long time, South and East Asia has been a region with a great ethnic and cultural diversity and the diversity continues to grow and develop as more people migrate within and between countries (Kymlicka & He, 2005 , p.2). Therefore, there might be differences in application to Asian contexts as when one adopt the Western modes, it requires the minorities to be categorized into a group one find in the West (Kymlicka & He, 2005 , p.11).

2.3 Third Culture Kids

According to Pollock and van Reken (2001 as cited in Dewaele & Oudenhoven, 2009), a Third Culture Kid (TCK) is “a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents’ culture.” As TCKs go back and forth between the culture of their parents’ and the culture they grew up learning, they build 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. Time itself does not determine how deep a TCK is affect, instead, variables such as age, personality, participation in local cultures do (Pollock and van Reken, 2009, p.21). In addition, as TCKs do not grow up in the culture of their parents, they usually have a different sense of “home” when compared to their parents (Pollock and van Reken, 2009, p.22).

2.3.1 Characteristics of Third Culture Kids

Even though every individual has unique sets of characteristics, in general, Third Culture Kids have some common characteristics. According to Thurston-Gonzalez (2009), Third Culture Kids tend to have a more internationalized mindedness. To have grown up in a multicultural setting, they are affected in ways such as “how they see the world, their levels of intercultural sensitivity, mobility tendencies, occupational preferences, family tendencies, and language development” (Cottrell, 1993; Cottrell & R.H. Useem, 1994; Fail 1996; Gerner, Perry, Moselle & Archbold, 1992; Gleason, 1969, 1973; Straffon, 2001; R.H. Useem, 1993a; R.H. Useem & Downie, 1976; Werkman, 1986; Willis, Enloe & Minoura, 1994 as cited in Thurston-Gonzalez, 2009). In addition, many Third Culture Kids

believe that it is a very important to have an international aspect in their lives (R.H. Useem, 1993a as cited in Thurston-Gonzalez, 2009).

Pollock and van Reken (2009) state that, Third Culture Kids tend to be have high adaptability, as it is a “primary tool for surviving the frequent change of cultures”, due to this characteristic, Third Culture Kids learn to adjust to situations or their surroundings calmly. As a result, Third Culture Kids tend not to mind for changes as much.

Another characteristic of third culture kids is to be less prejudice (Pollock and van Reken, 2009), because Third Culture Kids have greater chances to meet and befriend with people of diverse background, it often becomes “normal” when they meet someone who is different. Third Culture Kids would also use their cross-cultural experiences to give a reason behind someone’s behavior.

2.3.2 Linkage Between Third Culture Kids and Their Cultural Acceptancy

In a past research conducted by Dewaele & Oudenhoven (2009), the effect of TCKs and non-TCKs’ personality was being tested through a multicultural personality questionnaire. Dewaele & Oudenhoven concluded that TCKs scored higher than non-TCKs on the dimensions of Openmindedness and Cultural Empathy. Some of the reasons behind the result of Dewaele & Oudenhoven (2009) could be explained with the practical skills and personal characteristics of third culture kids described in Pollock and van Reken (2009). As TCKs have the opportunity to acquire great variety of cultural practices, they often develop strong cross-cultural skills (Pollock and van Reken, 2009, p.111) and social skills that allows them to “see beyond the local culture of the people in front of them” (Pollock and van Reken, 2009, p.116), it leads to the development of a TCKs’ characteristic of being less prejudiced (Pollock and van Reken, 2009, p.104), which explains the reason for TCKs to attain high scores on the dimension of openmindedness and cultural empathy in the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (MPQ) developed by Van Oudenhoven and Van der Zee (2002, as cited in Dewaele & Oudenhoven, 2009).

2.3.3 Third Culture Kids’ International Career Aspiration

Based on findings in the literature of Third Culture Kids (Cottrell, 1993; Fail, 1996; Gerner, Perry, Moselle & Archbold, 1992; Werkman, 1986 as cited in Thurston-Gonzalez, 2009), they tend to have higher international mobility. In the study of Gerner, Perry, Moselle & Archbold (1992, as cited in Thurston-Gonzalez, 2009) on Third Culture Kids in the U.S.A, “Third Culture Kids have more interest in travel than their U.S. American peers”. Moreover, most of the third culture kids

studied by Werkman (1986 as cited in Thurston-gonzalez, 2009) would like to return to another country and await for opportunities to continue to mobile.

According to Thurston-Gonzalez (2009), “many third culture kids report an international aspect in their lives is reflected in occupational preferences”, it was concluded that over half of the third culture kids include an international aspect into consideration when choosing their occupation (Cottrell & R.H. Useem, 1994; Fail, 1996 as cited in Thurston-Gonzalez, 2009). None of the college-enrolled third culture students studied by Useem and Downie (1976 as cited in Thurston-Gonzalez, 2009) would like to peruse a job simply in the U.S.A, instead, some named a place they would like to work in specifically, some would like to work in an international-based occupation and move from country to country, some would like to be assigned abroad periodically, and some would like to have opportunities for job-related travel.

3. Research Design

3.1 Participants

This research aims to investigate on Third Culture Kids within Asian contexts, therefore both the participants and their parents have Asian backgrounds. All participants are ethnically Asian and have spent their years before university in Asia. All participants are either undergraduate students or fresh graduates at the age of 18 to 24 of both genders. Their parents are all from Asia and have lived in Asia, including countries in East Asia (Hong Kong, Korea, Mainland China and Taiwan), South Asia (India and Pakistan), and South East Asia (Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines and Thailand). In this research, there is a mixed of Third Culture Kids from numbers of different cultures, for example, child of Indian immigrants who were born and raised in Hong Kong, child of Taiwanese immigrants who grew up in Thailand, child of mainland Chinese immigrants who grew up in Hong Kong, and child of Korean immigrants who grew up in Thailand. All of the In this research, all participants are addressed with pseudonyms.

3.2 Research Instruments

This research is a mixed method research with data collection through questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire (Appendix 1) is divided into two parts. Part A of the questionnaire is conducted with the purpose of collecting socio-biographical background information of the participants, such as nationality, ethnicity, place of birth, languages spoken, undergraduate major, current or future job preference and their parents' biographical information.

Part B of the questionnaire is the *Multicultural Acceptancy Quiz(MAQ)*. With the purpose of investigating on the participants' cultural acceptancy, the *Multicultural Acceptancy Quiz* was developed by myself with references to the five multicultural personality traits measured in the *Multicultural Personality Questionnaire* developed by Van Oudenhoven and Van der Zee (2002, as cited in Dewaele & Oudenhoven, 2009). In the MAQ, participants were required to rate their level of acceptancy to different scenarios on a scale of 1 to 4. By choosing 1, Definitely not, the participant shows a strong sense of disagreement or unacceptance of the scenario. In contrast, when the participant choose 4, Of course, they show a strong sense of agreement and acceptance of the scenario. All questions were given in random order. The usage of scenario is chosen because of its clarity, participants could easily understand the situation without having definite knowledge of the five dimensions measured. There is a total of 15 questions (Appendix 2) in the quiz and 3 scenarios on aspects such as dinning practices, fashion, languages and cultural practices has been developed on the following five dimensions measured in the *Multicultural Personality Questionnaire*:

1. Cultural Empathy: measures the ability to empathize with the feelings, thoughts and behaviors of individuals from a different cultural background.
2. Openmindedness: refers to an open and unprejudiced attitude towards outgroup members and towards different cultural norms and values.
3. Social Initiative: is defined as a tendency to approach social situations in an active way and to take initiative.
4. Emotional Stability: this dimension refers to a tendency to remain calm in stressful situations versus a tendency to show strong emotional reactions under stressful circumstances.
5. Flexibility: the fifth dimension is described as the ability to learn from experiences. Elements of flexibility, such as the ability to learn from mistakes and adjustment of behavior whenever it is required, are associated with the ability to learn from new experiences in particular (Spreitzer, McCall, & Mahoney, 1997 as cited in Van Oudenhoven and Van der Zee, 2009).

The MPQ is a trust-worthy questionnaire, as it has been used in various contexts such as The Netherlands, Taiwan, Britain, Canada, Singapore, Italy, Australia, China, Germany and New Zealand. Moreover, it has been applied to various groups of people such as students, employees, children and refugees (Dewaele & Oudenhoven, 2009).

The interview (Appendix 3) consisted of 9 open-ended questions. It was conducted with the purpose of investigating on the reasons behind their career aspiration, in addition to the linkages between the participants' past experience as a third culture kid and their result from *Multicultural Acceptancy*

Quiz. Five participants were chosen to participate in an interview based on their background, all of them are from different cultural backgrounds. The interviews were conducted through phone calls.

3.3 Research Steps

In the initial stage of data collection, targeted participants were given a set of questionnaires via Google form, which consists of a survey on their demographic information and the *Multicultural Acceptancy Quiz*. It was conducted over a period of two weeks. By the end of collecting data via questionnaire, some participants were selected for an interview with follow-up questions of their personal experiences over the course of a week.

4. Findings

4.1 Results of Multicultural Acceptancy Quiz

To unify and make clear of the referred questions, all questions had been numbered and categorized according to the five dimensions measured in the *Multicultural Acceptancy Quiz*. Please refer to the *Multicultural Acceptancy Quiz* scenarios (Appendix 2) for the complete list of questions in the order mentioned.

According to the results of the *Multicultural Acceptancy Quiz* (Table 1), on average, the responses of most participants are above 2 in all five dimensions with a small percentage scoring between 1 and 2. In addition, no participant scored below 1 with the average score of the three questions in each dimension. In the dimensions of Cultural Empathy, Open-mindedness and Flexibility, nearly 50% or more participants scored over 3 on average, while in the dimensions of social initiative and emotional stability, 50% or more participants scored between 2 and 3 on average.

Table 1: Average score of the Multicultural Acceptancy Quiz (Percentage)

Average Score	Five dimensions of multiculturalism				
	Cultural Empathy	Open-mindedness	Social Initiative	Emotional Stability	Flexibility
$n > 3$	48.5%	74%	37%	20%	66%
$2 < n \leq 3$	48.5%	23%	60%	50.0%	34%
$1 < n \leq 2$	3%	3%	3%	31%	0
$n < 1$	0	0	0	0	0

Table 2 displays the participants' responses with the 4 percentage of what they scored from the choices of 1 to 4. Through looking at the overall results, it is shown that in question 1, 9, 10, 11, the responses are scattered between different scores and in question 12, the tendency of participants choosing either 1 or 2 can be seen. A strong contrast can be seen in the rest of the questions, where

majority of the participants tend to score 3 or above, showing a strong sense of acceptance or agreement.

With the result of the MPQ (Van Oudenhoven and Van der Zee, 2002, as cited in Dewaele & Oudenhoven, 2009) in mind where the TCKs tend to score higher on cultural empathy and open-mindedness, the responses on question 1, where participants did not show a strong sense of acceptance is unexpected.

Table 2: Result of Multicultural Acceptancy Quiz (Percentage)

Score	Questions														
	Cultural Empathy			Open- mindedness			Social Initiative			Emotional Stability			Flexibility		
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15
4	17%	57%	68%	20%	68%	80%	51%	57%	14%	31%	26%	3%	48%	60%	46%
3	31%	32%	26%	60%	26%	17%	31%	40%	29%	43%	26%	26%	43%	37%	31%
2	31%	11%	6%	20%	3%	3%	11%	3%	43%	23%	34%	37%	6%	3%	20%
1	20%	0	0	0	3%	0	6%	0	14%	3%	14%	34%	3%	0	3%

In addition, the result of one participant caught my attention. 97% of the participants scored over 2 with only one of the participants, participant 22, scoring 1.8 overall (Table 3). Out of 15 questions, he only gave one 4 and two 3s, which is an extremely low number compared to the results of other participants.

Table 3: Overall result of Multicultural Acceptancy Quiz

	Cultural Empathy			Open-mindedness			Social Initiative			Emotional Stability			Flexibility			Overall
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	
1	3	4	4	2	3	4	3	4	2	4	4	2	3	4	4	3.3
2	2	4	2	3	3	4	2	4	1	3	1	2	3	3	3	2.7
3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	4	3.3
4	1	4	4	3	2	4	3	4	2	3	2	1	4	4	4	3.0
5	2	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	3.6
6	3	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	2	3	2	2	4	3	3	3.2
7	2	4	4	3	3	4	1	3	3	2	2	2	3	2	4	2.7
8	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	3.2
9	2	3	4	2	4	4	3	3	2	3	3	1	4	4	3	3.0
10	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	3	3	4	4	4	3.7
11	2	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	3	4	3	3	4	4	4	3.6
12	4	4	4	4	4	4	2	4	2	3	1	3	4	4	2	3.1
13	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	2	3	3	3	4	3	4	3.5
14	4	2	4	2	3	4	3	4	2	3	2	1	4	3	2	2.8
15	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	1	3	4	4	3.5
16	1	3	4	3	4	4	4	3	2	2	3	2	4	4	4	3.2
17	1	4	4	2	4	4	4	3	2	3	4	1	3	3	3	3.0
18	1	4	3	2	4	3	3	3	1	4	4	1	4	4	4	3.1
19	1	4	3	3	3	3	2	4	2	3	4	2	3	4	3	3.0
20	3	3	4	3	4	4	4	4	3	4	2	1	4	3	3	3.3
21	3	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	4	2	1	2	4	4	1	3.0
22	1	2	3	2	1	1	1	4	1	1	2	2	2	3	2	1.8
23	2	2	4	2	4	3	4	2	2	3	2	1	3	4	2	2.7
24	3	3	4	3	4	4	3	4	1	2	1	1	4	4	2	2.8
25	2	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	3	3	4	3.6
26	2	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	3	4	4	3.7
27	3	4	4	3	3	4	4	3	1	4	4	2	2	3	4	3.1
28	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	2.9
29	3	3	4	3	4	4	2	4	3	2	4	2	3	4	2	3.1
30	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	1	3	4	3	2.7
31	3	2	4	3	4	4	4	3	2	2	2	1	4	4	3	3.0
32	2	3	4	4	4	4	3	4	2	4	2	2	1	3	4	3.1
33	4	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	3	4	3	3	3.6
34	2	3	3	3	3	4	4	3	2	2	3	1	3	4	2	2.8
35	1	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	2	4	4	4	3.5

Based on Part A of the questionnaire, 37% of the participants claim to speak four languages, 46% claim to speak three languages and only 17% claims to speak two languages or less. By looking at the overall results of the *Multicultural Acceptancy Quiz* according to languages the participants speak (*Table 4*), it could be concluded that the more languages they speak, there is a greater tendency for them to score higher. 60-70% of the participants that could speak 3 or 4 languages tend to have an average score of over 3. The majority of the participants who speak 2 languages scored between 2 and 3. Lastly, 50% of the participant who only speaks 1 language score between 1 and 2 and 2 to 3 respectively.

Table 4: Result of Multicultural Acceptancy Quiz according to languages spoken (Percentage)

Average Score	Number of Language(s) Spoken			
	<i>4 languages</i>	<i>3 languages</i>	<i>2 languages</i>	<i>1 language</i>
<i>n>3</i>	69%	63%	25%	0
<i>2<n≤3</i>	31%	38%	75%	50%
<i>1<n≤2</i>	0	0	0	50%
<i>n<1</i>	0	0	0	0

29% of the participants had experiences or are currently abroad (*Table 5*) for their university studies, exchange program or work and most of them have spent at least 6 months there. In this research, to be “abroad” refers to when the participants are outside the countries they or their parents grew up or have spent a significant period of time in. According to the result of the *Multicultural Acceptancy Quiz* (*Table 6*), over 70% off the participants who had experience abroad scored more than 3 and only 30% of less scored between 2 and 3 in the dimensions of cultural empathy and flexibility. Notably, all of the participants who had experience abroad scored over 3 in the dimension of open-mindedness. As for the dimensions of social initiative and emotional stability, 80% of the participants scored over 2. Moreover, when looking at the overall score of all five dimensions, 60% of the participants score over 3 and 40% of them score between 2 and 3.

Table 5: Result of Multicultural Acceptancy Quiz according overseas experiences

<i>Experience Abroad (Duration; reason)</i>	<i>Cultural Empathy</i>	<i>Open- mindedness</i>	<i>Social Initiative</i>	<i>Emotional Stability</i>	<i>Flexibility</i>	<i>Average</i>
3.5 years; University	3.7	4.0	3.3	1.7	3.0	3.0
2.5 years; University	3.0	3.3	3.0	2.7	3.0	3.0
2 years; University	4.0	3.7	3.3	3.0	3.7	3.5
2 years; University	3.3	3.7	2.7	1.3	3.3	2.8
1.5 years; University	3.7	4.0	3.7	3.3	4.0	3.7
1 year; University	3.3	3.7	3.7	2.3	3.3	3.3
9 months; Work	3.3	3.7	3.7	3.3	4.0	3.6
6 months; Exchange	3.3	4.0	3.7	3.0	4.0	3.6
6 months; Exchange	3.0	4.0	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.7
2 months; Study	3.0	3.3	2.7	2.3	3.7	3.0

Table 6: Result of Multicultural Acceptancy Quiz according overseas experiences(Percentage)

<i>Score</i>	<i>Cultural Empathy</i>	<i>Open- mindedness</i>	<i>Social Initiative</i>	<i>Emotional Stability</i>	<i>Flexibility</i>	<i>Average</i>
$n > 3$	70%	100%	70%	30%	80%	60%
$2 < n \leq 3$	30%	0	10%	50%	20%	40%
$1 < n \leq 2$	0	0	20%	20%	0	0
$n < 1$	0	0	0	0	0	0

4.2 Participants' Career Aspiration

4.2.1 Undergraduate studies

To many people, their undergraduate studies reflect their career aspiration and allows them to be a step closer to it. According to the questionnaire, there are six main types fields the participants majored in, Communications, Education, Business, Language, Science and Fine Arts. 6% of the participants majored or are majoring in Communications, 26% in Education, 14% in Business¹, 6% in Language, 31% is Science² and 17% is Fine Arts³.

4.2.2 Career Aspiration

Based on the responses to question 4 in the questionnaire, "What is your current job or what you would like to apply for? Why?", from Part A of the questionnaire, the participants might not have fancy dream jobs. However, not many of them mentioned money as the reason for wanting to apply for the jobs. Instead, the reasons they gave for applying to such jobs are as follows: "it's my passion", "because of passion", "deeply fascinated by the field", "I believe teachers are in a privileged position where we get to nurture and educate the next generation leaders", "to write music to share with others and add value to their lives", "I have interest", "it is meaningful and important to cultivate students into possessing qualities that they need to pursue happiness" and "I want to help others". Similarly, in the interview responses, when participants were asked about their

¹ Business: Economics, Commerce, Finance, international business

² Science: Dental Medicine, Mechanical Engineering, Biochemistry, Environmental Engineering, Psychology

³ Fine Arts: Creative Media Design, Architecture, Jazz Composition, Visual Communication Design

career goal in the next five years, none of them mentioned about getting jobs for money or the desire to be stable. In contrast, some gave reasons such as “figuring out that they are more interested in and find meaningful doing” and “writing their own music for their own playing”.

Through looking at question 8 of the interview, “Do you prefer to work in a local setting or an international setting? Why?”, in the interview, it can be seen that 4 out of 5 interviewees prefer to work in an international setting with reasons of “it is beneficial for the company to have people from different cultures”, “having opportunities to work somewhere else”, “there’s a mix of different perspectives and ideas”, “it is difficult for them to just stick to one culture”, “would like to keep learning more about different cultures” and “can better relate to people”. Surprisingly, there is one interviewee who stated to have the preference of working as a teacher in a local setting with the reason being “I may not understand it very well because I was not from an international school.”

In addition, in question 9, the interviewees were asked about whether or not they are open to date people from different culture background. Similar to the responses in question 8, the 4 interviewees who indicated to have the preference of working in an international setting claims that they are open to dating people from different cultural background, while the other interviewee states not to be open to do so.

5. Implications and Suggestions for Future Studies

5.1 Third Culture Kids’ Acceptancy Toward Multiculturalism

To answer research question 1 and 2, the results from the *Multicultural Acceptancy Quiz* were analyzed and compared to the participants’ cultural background and responses from both the questionnaire and the interview. Similar to the result of the MPQ (Van Oudenhoven and Van der Zee, 2002, as cited in Dewaele & Oudenhoven, 2009), Third Culture Kids tend to have high acceptancy when it comes to scenarios having to do with open-mindedness and cultural empathy. Such tendency could be explained because TCKs are inclined to develop strong cross-cultural and social skills that allows them to be less prejudice and to take something not from their local cultures into considerations (Pollock and van Reken, 2009). Moreover, they also tend to have high acceptancy towards scenarios regarding flexibility, yet it was not an unexpected result because it is an important in terms of being multicultural to have the ability to learn from experiences (Spreitzer et al., 1997 as stated in Van Oudenhoven and Van der Zee, 2002).

5.1.1 Level of Closeness of the Scenarios

Within the general trend of the participants scoring higher in the three dimensions of Open-mindedness, Cultural Empathy and Flexibility, and scoring relatively lower on the two dimensions of Social Initiative and Emotional Stability, unexpected drop of scores were noticed on some questions, meaning the participants have a relatively low acceptancy toward scenarios in the following questions from the *Multicultural Acceptancy Quiz* (Appendix 2):

1. *You are taught to take off your shoes when entering someone's house. However, a friend from a different cultural background enters your house without taking off their shoes unintentionally. Do you find it acceptable?*
9. *It is not common to hitch-hike in your country. You are lost in your country with limited access to public transport. Would you hitch-hike?*
10. *You are travelling in a foreign country on your own and you are lost. Would you stay calm and go with the flow?*
11. *You are on exchange and about to attend class. Would you show up to class without worries as if you are back in your own university?*

Some contrasting features among these four questions and the rest of the questions can be identified. In all of these questions, no culture was specifically linked, instead, they are directly related to the participants' personal space or comfort zone, meaning the scenarios being more personal or intimate to the participants. Conversely, the other questions tend to either be related to a specific cultural practice or are not directly related to the participants themselves. For instance, question 2 was about the cultural practice of Japanese slurping noodle, question 3 was about unspecified children playing in mud, question 6 was about a man wearing a kilt in Scotland and question 15 was about addressing an elder person without using honorific titles in a culture that is acceptable of doing so. It can be concluded that the participants are more accepting and willing to engage when the scenario is on a more surface level, where their privacy is not threatened. However, no theory that I could see within the context of TCK that explains behaviour, and it can be presumed that it is a result of TCK being a more static and unchanging idea on cultural diversity. To fully explain such behaviour, it would be necessary to delve into social theories which are more dynamic and inclusive.

5.1.2 The Role of Language

The data was also analyzed according to the number of languages spoken by the participants and a trend was identified. According to the result of the *Multicultural Acceptancy Quiz*, 83% of the

participants claimed to be able to speak three or more languages and there is a parallel growth in number of languages spoken by the participants and their overall score. With language being an essential role in cultural studies, it can be normal for third culture kids to value linguistic achievements (Gardner & Lambert, 1959, p. 267 as cited in Clément & Kruidenier, 1986), and to have an integrative orientation, which is ‘the reflection of an individual’s desire to learn about other cultural communities in order to become part of that cultural group’ (Clément & Kruidenier, 1986).

5.1.3 Overseas Experience

According to the study conducted by Gerner, Perry, Moselle & Archbold (1992, as cited in Thurston-Gonzalez, 2009) on Third Culture Kids in the U.S.A, “Third Culture Kids have more interest in travel than their U.S. American peers”. Such preference could be explained as TCKs tend to have higher international mobility (Cottrell, 1993; Fail, 1996; Gerner, Perry, Moselle & Archbold, 1992; Werkman, 1986 as cited in Thurston-Gonzalez, 2009). As a result, they are able to learn and experience different cultures. As stated by the results of the *Multicultural Acceptancy Quiz*, 29% of the participants had experiences or are currently abroad for their university studies, exchange program or work, and most of them have spent at least 6 months there. Reasonably, majority of these participants tend to have higher overall cultural acceptancy, 70% of them scored over 3 overall.

5.2 Third Culture Kids’ Career Aspiration

5.2.1 International Career Aspiration

According to Thurston-Gonzalez (2009), “many Third Culture Kids report an international aspect in their lives is reflected in occupational preferences”, it was concluded that over half of the third culture kids include an international aspect into consideration when choosing their occupation (Cottrell & R.H. Useem, 1994; Fail, 1996 as cited in Thurston-Gonzalez, 2009). Such preference could be proven with the fact that four out of five interviewees state that they prefer working in an international setting over a local setting. Reasons behind such phenomenon could also be expressed through the beliefs and desire of Third Culture Kids. Third Culture Kids often believe that it is important to have an international aspect (R.H. Useem, 1993, as cited in Thurston-Gonzalez, 2009), and they tend to have the desire for the opportunities to continue to mobile (Werkman, 1986 as cited in Thurston-Gonzalez, 2009). In addition, the responses of Cherry and Tammy in their interviews align with the previous reasons. Cherry, who has Hong Kong Chinese parents but grew up in Thailand, stated that her “ideal job would be somewhere with an international population” and “have opportunities for her to work somewhere else”. Tammy, who has Taiwanese parents but grew up in Thailand, expressed her preference to work in an

international setting with the reason of “a mix of different perspectives and ideas result in better communication and innovation.”

In order to answer research question 3, further explanation on how the experience of being a TCK developed their international career aspirations will be discussed. In question 6 of the interview, interviewees were asked to indicate to what degree had their background affected their decisions in life. Tammy and Kate made reference to local Asian practices of Taiwanese and Hong Kong cultures. According to Tammy, she had more time to explore and figure out what she wanted and had more freedom in choosing her major, whereas her undergraduate classmates, who had been through local Taiwanese education, could only make decision based on their scores. Kate recounted her experience in local Hong Kong education as someone not considered as part of the dominant Chinese community, she was not given opportunities to show her Chinese ability. Therefore, she expressed her desire in working in an international setting where she could “better communicate and give her all to her workplace.” Similar to Kate, Cherry indicated her preference in using English as she has attended an international school and uses English as a lingua franca to communicate with others, which is the reason she chose to major in English Education. On the other hand, Roger, who is ethnically Korean but grew up in Thailand and attended an international school, would like to become an musician working in an international setting. He believes his rich experiences in culture “definitely go into part of making music that a lot of people would understand.” Positive attitudes on their experience shaping their international career aspirations could be seen from the responses of most of my participants.

5.2.2 Influences of Asian Cultures

As this research was conducted with the target of Asian Third Culture Kids, the influences of Asian cultures on their career aspirations shall also be discussed. According to Adler (2011, as cited in Liu, McMahon & Watson, 2015), “Asian children’s development had strongly been influenced by their parents with regard of xiao(孝: filial piety), a core concept in Confucian culture, resulting in the parents being more authoritarian than western parents” (Chuang & Gielen, 2009; Su & Hynie, 2011, as cited in Liu, McMahon & Watson, 2015). Also, Confucian is often time the only idea presented in philosophies behind Asian beliefs. In addition, one of the interviewee, Kate, also brought up the “Asian parents preference” of wanting their children to enter “professions such as doctor, engineers and lawyers”, which she claimed to have affected her initially as well.

However, based on the responses from the participants' undergraduate major, dream job, and reason for wanting to enter a certain field or choosing a certain career has proven that Asian Third Culture Kids were not heavily affected by Asian cultures, parental influence in particular.

By looking at the participants' undergraduate majors, only 31% of them chose science related majors, namely Dental Medicine, Mechanical Engineering and Biochemistry, which Asian parents commonly interpret to lead to career with higher status, stability and being professional. Moreover, as explained in findings, most of the participants gave reasons such as being passionate, fascinated by the field or interested for wanting to choose their current or future job, instead of the wealth a certain profession could bring them.

5.3 The label of Third Culture Kid

A unique “third” culture based on the experiences and cultures Third Culture Kids learned were constructed as they have spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents' culture (Pollock and van Reken, 2001 as cited in Dewaele & Oudenhoven, 2009), yet they do not have full ownership in any specific culture. Such phenomenon could be supported with the responses of the interviews. For instance, when being asked if there is a culture the interviewees relate to the most, Roger states that he could not relate to one culture and described his culture as “a whole bunch of everything”, and Kate, who is ethnically Indian but was born and raised in Hong Kong, also described her culture as “a mix of so many[cultures].” However, as international diaspora has become relatively common in the past decades, such usage of the term “Third Culture Kid” seems not to be entirely accurate. Based on the background of Sammi, who was born to mainland Chinese parents and only moved to Hong Kong for her primary studies, she is also qualified as a Third Culture Kid. Yet, in the interview, she clearly stated that she is from Hong Kong and related best to Hong Kong culture without hesitations. Sammi's situation could be explained by looking at her parents' mainland Chinese culture and the Hong Kong culture she grew up learning through local schooling, she became a local Hongkonger instead. Moreover, with such diversities, is it appropriate to categorize participants with multicultural background as a “Third” Culture Kid?

6. Limitations of the Study

Firstly, a challenge for me was the great diversity within the targeted participants' backgrounds, namely their cultures, languages and social biographical backgrounds. As Third Culture Kids themselves are already so unique and diverse individually, it is difficult to generate trends based on specific features of different Asian cultures, which could possibly lead to more precise analysis of the trends.

Secondly, based on my research, it is found that many of the Asian Third Culture Kids had have some sort of western cultural experience which would add value to my research when having such valuable data included. However, due to the limitation of time and resources, I could not account to the various western cultural influences on the participants, such as where the participants went to school, types of curriculum the school used, their nationality and location of their experiences studying abroad.

Thirdly, usage of the words multicultural, international and intercultural, and race, culture and ethnicity should be used and considered more precisely throughout data collection process. Due to the different interruptions of the words, participants might have used them interchangeably and caused confusions or misunderstandings.

7. Conclusion

As the world is becoming more interconnected globally and increasingly multicultural across nations (Van der Zee, Oudenhoven, Ponterotto & Fietzer, 2013), people have higher tendencies to move around the world and be immersed in different cultures. People have more chances to come in contact with multiple cultures, which has led to the significant growth and interest in Third Culture Kids.

According to Pollock and van Reken (2001, as cited in Dewaele & Oudenhoven, 2009), a Third Culture Kid is someone who has spent a significant part of their developmental years outside of their parents' culture. With such in mind, this study aimed to investigate the relationship between Asian third culture kids' acceptancy towards multiculturalism and whether or not it affects their career aspiration, based on three research questions. 1) *What dimensions of Multiculturalism do third culture kids tend to have higher acceptancy toward?*, 2) *What are the reasons for third culture kids to have a higher acceptancy toward the dimensions of cultural empathy and open-mindedness?*, and 3) *How might the experience of being a third culture kid help develop their international career aspirations?*

A questionnaire on participants' cultural background and the *Multicultural Acceptancy Quiz*, developed based on the five dimensions measure in the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire(MPQ) developed by Van Oudenhoven and Van der Zee (2002, as cited in Dewaele & Oudenhoven, 2009) was first distributed to the participants. Later, five participants were chosen for

a 9-question individual interview with the purpose of investigating the reasons behind their career aspiration, in addition to the linkages between the participants' past experience as a third culture kid and their result from *Multicultural Acceptancy Quiz*.

Based on the findings, the participants scored higher on the dimensions of open-mindedness, cultural empathy and flexibility. Reasons behind the participants' results in the *Multicultural Acceptancy Quiz* were concluded to be affected by the level of closeness of the scenarios given, the number of languages they speak and their overseas experience. Further investigation was also conducted through data analysis of both the questionnaires and interviews with the purpose to identify linkage between the participants' past experience as a third culture kid and their career aspiration. It was also found that many of the participants had an international career aspiration, which was strongly influenced by their past experience as a third culture kid. With the focus of Asian Third Culture Kids, the influences of Asian cultures on them had also been discussed. However, there were no signs of very heavy Asian parents' influence on the Third Culture Kids' career aspirations.

In conclusion, with characteristics and criteria of being Third Culture Kids in mind, the concern of whether or not the label of Third Culture Kids is still an appropriate concern. As international diaspora continues and became relatively common in the past decades, is the definition and concept of Third Culture Kids still applicable to people today?

8. List of references

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9. Appendix

Appendix 1: Questionnaire on google form

Page 1: Information Sheet

Honours Project Questionnaire

'An investigation of the relationship between Asian third culture kids' acceptancy towards multiculturalism and their occupation preference'

You are invited to participate in a project supervised by CHANG, Benjamin Johnson and conducted by CHEUNG Man Wai, who are staff and student of Department of Curriculum and Instruction in The Education University of Hong Kong.

The purpose of the research is to investigate on the relationship between third culture kids' acceptancy towards multiculturalism and whether or not it affects their preference in occupation. You are chosen to participate in this research because you are qualified as a third culture kid and I would like to investigate on how might have affected or is affecting you.

In this study, 25 participants will be included. All participants are either my friend or a friend of friend. All participants will be asked to fill in a questionnaire regarding to their cultural acceptancy. Some participants will later be asked to participate in an interview.

Your participation in the project is voluntary. You have every right to withdraw from the study at any time without negative consequences. All information related to you will remain confidential and will be identifiable by codes known only to the researcher.

Results may be published in forms of thesis, conference presentation and oral presentation.

If you would like to obtain more information about this study, please contact me by email at benjaminjohnson@eduhk.hk or telephone number [27501700](tel:27501700), or my supervisor CHANG, Benjamin Johnson by email at manwai.cheung@eduhk.hk.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research study, please do not hesitate to contact the Human Research Ethics Committee by email at hrec@eduhk.hk or by mail to Research and Development Office, The Education University of Hong Kong.

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study.

CHEUNG Man Wai

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Page 2: Consent Form

Honours Project Questionnaire

* Required

Consent Form

I, _____, hereby consent to participate in the captioned project supervised by CHANG, Benjamin Johnson and conducted by CHEUNG Man Wai who are staff and student of Department of Curriculum and Instruction in The Education University of Hong Kong. I understand that information obtained from this research may be used in future research and may be published. However, my right to privacy will be retained, i.e., my personal details will not be revealed. The procedure as set out in the attached information sheet has been fully explained. I understand the study involves no potential risk. My participation in the project is voluntary. I acknowledge that I have the right to question any part of the procedure and can withdraw at any time without negative consequences.

Name *

Your answer

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Honours Project Questionnaire

* Required

Part A

Please fill in the following information.

Your information

1. Age *

Choose ▼

2. What is/were your major? *

Your answer

3. You are... *

- ☐ an undergraduate
- ☐ a postgraduate
- ☐ working full time

4. What is your current job or what would you like to apply for? Why? *

Your answer

5. Nationality *

Your answer

6. Ethnicity *

- ☐ Chinese
- ☐ Thai
- ☐ Japanese
- ☐ Indian
- ☐ Pakistani
- ☐ Filipino
- ☐ Other: _____

7. Language(s) *

- ☐ English
- ☐ Cantonese
- ☐ Mandarin
- ☐ Thai
- ☐ Other: _____

8. Place of birth *

Your answer

9. Have you lived outside of your place of birth? If yes, for how long and why? (eg. Hong Kong 4 years- university) *

Your answer

Your father's information

If not applicable, please write NA.

10. Place of birth *

Your answer

11. Ethnicity *

Your answer

12. Language(s) *

Your answer

13. Has your father lived outside of his place of birth? If yes, for how long and why? (eg. Hong Kong 4 years- university) *

Your answer

Your mother's information

If not applicable, please write NA.

14. Place of birth *

Your answer

15. Ethnicity *

Your answer

16. Language(s) *

Your answer

17. Has your mother lived outside of her place of birth? If yes, for how long and why? (eg. Hong Kong 4 years- university) *

Your answer

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Honours Project Questionnaire

* Required

Part B

Please read the following scenarios, and choose between 1-4 based on your opinion.

1. Definitely not
2. No
3. Yes
4. Of course

1. You are taught to take off your shoes when entering someone's house. However, a friend from a different cultural background enters your house without taking off their shoes unintentionally. Do you find it acceptable? *

	1	2	3	4	
Definitely not	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Of course

2. If your romantic partner is from a different cultural background and they ask you to move to their country with them. With only cultural differences to consider, would you move? *

	1	2	3	4	
Definitely not	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Of course

3. You encountered some backpackers from different countries in a hostel, would you initiate a conversation with them? *

	1	2	3	4	
Definitely not	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Of course

13. You are taught to address an elder person using honorific. However, you meet an elderly person from a different cultural background where it's alright to call them directly with their first name. Would you talk to them directly with their first name? *

	1	2	3	4	
Definitely not	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Of course

14. You are taught not to play on muddy grass. On a rainy day, you see children playing on the grass and their parents allow it. Do you find it acceptable? *

	1	2	3	4	
Definitely not	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Of course

15. You are taught that men should wear pants. During your visit to Scotland, you see a man wearing Kilt. Do you find it acceptable? *

	1	2	3	4	
Definitely not	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Of course

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4. You are travelling in a foreign country on your own and you are lost. Would you stay calm and go with the flow? *

	1	2	3	4	
Definitely not	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Of course

5. You are required to follow courtesy of a foreign culture during your travel abroad but are not comfortable with it. Would you still do so? *

	1	2	3	4	
Definitely not	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Of course

6. You have the opportunity to live and work in a country with different cultural practices compare to your own for a few years. Are you willing to take the opportunity and explore the country? *

	1	2	3	4	
Definitely not	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Of course

7. You find a new flat that you really like, the surrounding, rent, interior are all perfect. However, the people living there all speak different languages from you. Would you move in? *

	1	2	3	4	
Definitely not	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Of course

8. You are on exchange and about to attend class. Would you show up to class without worries as if you are back in your own university? *

	1	2	3	4	
Definitely not	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Of course

9. You are moving to a foreign country where people speak little to none of the languages you speak. Are you willing to learn and practice their language? *

	1	2	3	4	
Definitely not	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Of course

10. You are aware that it is a Japanese practice to slurp while eating ramen. However, you are taught to eat quietly. You encounter Japanese eating ramen loudly outside of Japan. Do you find it acceptable? *

	1	2	3	4	
Definitely not	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Of course

11. It is not common to hitch-hike in your country. You are lost in your country with limited access to public transport. Would you hitch-hike? *

	1	2	3	4	
Definitely not	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Of course

12. You are on your way to a foreign country without a booking for the night, but there's nothing you could do at this moment. Would you feel comfortable to relax now and worry about it later? *

	1	2	3	4	
Definitely not	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Of course

Honours Project Questionnaire

* Required

Thank you for your time and help! :D

1. If necessary, are you willing to participate in an interview for follow up questions? *

☐ Yes (Please go to Question 2)

☐ No

2. Please indicate the best way to contact you

☐ Email

☐ Whatapp

☐ Other: _____

3. Please enter your contact info from the previous question

Your answer _____

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Appendix 2: Multicultural Acceptancy Quiz scenarios

Cultural Empathy

1. *You are taught to take off your shoes when entering someone's house. However, a friend from a different cultural background enters your house without taking off their shoes unintentionally. Do you find it acceptable?*
2. *You are aware that it is a Japanese practice to slurp while eating ramen. However, you are taught to eat quietly. You encounter Japanese eating ramen loudly outside of Japan. Do you find it acceptable?*
3. *You are taught not to play on muddy grass. On a rainy day, you see children playing on the grass and their parents allow it. Do you find it acceptable?*

Open-mindedness

1. *If your romantic partner is from a different cultural background and they ask you to move to their country with them. With only cultural differences to consider, would you move?*
2. *You have the opportunity to live and work in a country with different cultural practices compare to your own for a few years. Are you willing to take the opportunity and explore the country?*
3. *You are taught that men should wear pants. During your visit to Scotland, you see a man wearing Kilt. Do you find it acceptable?*

Social Initiative

1. *You encounter some backpackers from different countries in a hostel, would you initiate a conversation with them?*
2. *You find a new flat that you really like, the surrounding, rent, interior are all perfect. However, the people living there all speak different languages from you. Would you move in?*
3. *It is not common to hitch-hike in your country. You are lost in your country with limited access to public transport. Would you hitch-hike?*

Emotional Stability

1. *You are travelling in a foreign country on your own and you are lost. Would you stay calm and go with the flow?*
2. *You are on exchange and about to attend class. Would you show up to class without worries as if you are back in your own university?*
3. *You are on your way to a foreign country without a booking for the night, but there's nothing you could do at this moment. Would you feel comfortable to relax now and worry about it later?*

Flexibility

1. *You are required to follow courtesy of a foreign culture during your travel abroad but are not comfortable with it. Would you still do so?*
2. *You are moving to a foreign country where people speak little to none of the languages you speak. Are you willing to learn and practice their language?*
3. *You are taught to address an elder person using honorific. However, you meet an elderly person from a different cultural background where it's alright to call them directly with their first name. Would you talk to them directly with their first name?*

Appendix 3: Interview Questions

Interview questions

- 1. How would you answer when people ask you the question, “Where are you from”?**
- 2. Where do you consider “home”? Why?**
- 3. Is there one culture you relate to the most?**
- 4. How does the culture you grew up learning differs from your family’s?**
- 5. Can you give examples of how you and your parents’ cultural background might have caused contradictions or arguments?**
- 6. In what degree do you think your background affected your decisions in life?
Choice of tertiary education or work?**
- 7. What are your major career goal in the next five years?**
- 8. Do you prefer to work in a local setting or an international setting? Why?**
- 9. Open to dating people from different cultural background**