

**Bryant University**  
HONORS THESIS



# **Comparison of Socialization and Culturalization Amongst Mono-cultural and Multicultural College Students**

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**ABSTRACT**

This Honors Thesis aims to analyze and study college individuals who are raised in other countries and brought up with multicultural backgrounds (relating to several cultural or ethnic groups) and compare them to a sample of students who are considered mono-cultural (relating to one or few ethnic groups). From two samples my research is aimed at investigating how these two samples socialize and adapt themselves in a university and how their social circles vary in terms of diversity and cultural intelligence. This study uses data from a sample (n=71) of individuals who are or have been in universities and have either a monocultural or multicultural background and focuses on greater diversification in universities.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Though most people are similar to some extent, by this time we know that no two people are exactly alike. Attributes such as sex, gender, physical characteristics and upbringing all have a lot to do with how each of us are different and adapt later on in life. Here in the United States some groups are often raised in a background with few ethnic groups while others are raised in groups with greater diversification amongst different groups and ethnic backgrounds.

This research project focuses on examining the socialization and culturalization of college individuals who are raised in other countries and brought up with multicultural backgrounds and compare them to a sample of students who are considered to be mono cultural. This subject seemed important for me to pursue because I wanted to see disparities in socialization amongst these two samples' social groups. Based on my research it was determined that most of the monocultural social groups were ethnocentric whereas the multicultural sample had a more diversified circle. More so this study is important to pursue because it can have helpful cultural impacts on colleges and universities. The survey done along with this sample has recommendations and insights from both college students and alumnus that aim to integrate an environment where students can learn and immerse themselves with those from an array of different backgrounds and ethnicities.

This study also has important ramifications on my own life considering that I have been raised by Bengali parents in the United States while also having the opportunity to live in China for eight years and study abroad. Being in college, some students often have difficulties in integrating themselves socially and culturally. Oftentimes when friend groups are based in a monocultural setting we see ethnocentrism and lower cultural intelligence compared to their multicultural peers. Due to this, some social circles fail to integrate properly, and such issues can manifest themselves into larger scale racial crises. The end question is whether having a cultural and ethnic background, whether be travel, social circles, or other aspects affect integration and social circles in university students' lifestyle and culturalization.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### College Adjustment for Multicultural Students in Universities

A multicultural person is relating to or constituting several cultural or ethnic groups within a society. These students often build up relationships with cultures through their parents, travel, and living in foreign countries. Though they may be raised with one culture, they often are connected to many without having any ownership over any. Third culture kids (TCKs) can also fall into this category and these are people who have spent a significant part of their developmental years outside of their parents' culture. Like multicultural people, they build relationships to multiple cultures without having dominance in any. It has been stated in the literature that I have reviewed that, "TCKs are seen as people who are more mature for their age, have an expanded worldview, and oftentimes speak multiple languages" (Pollock and Van Reken, 2009). These people are considered to be huge assets for educational institutions as well as valuable members to society when they mature and enter the workforce. Though there are perceived benefits of this, like anything, there can be negative consequences. People who fit this profile may lack a definite sense of home and experience a pervasive restlessness which enters with them into their college years and adulthood. This can affect them in personal relationships because of how often they may have been uprooted (moving physically or adapting to more cultural norms). Some of the norms that they have to cope with include loss of status, possessions, lifestyle, relationships, role models, system identity, worlds, and their past (Hu, 2015).

In another qualitative study by Dorothy Weigel to explore the experiences of multicultural and third cultured students who repatriated to the United States for their first year in college, it was observed that a majority of participants were in the hidden immigrant cultural domain during their first semester. What this essentially means is that though most participants resembled their peers physically, they thought differently and in terms of their norms, values, and beliefs. This study included significant variations among students in terms of differentness from their country-of-origin peers and the differences in view of American culture. This study also delved into key issues such as what students face in terms of identity, relationships with peers, culture shock, and concept of home (Weighel, 2010).

In this study we also see the differences which multicultural students face when making new friends. International students (hidden immigrants/ high variance students) were interviewed and when asked about their adjustment it was noted that most people did not care for their experiences abroad. Most people were not able to relate to what these students were talking about and people seemed more closed minded and uninterested than learning about international experiences. It was also interesting to see the multicultural view on alcohol restrictions when coming to the United States. For most of these students' alcohol was already legal for their age. When coming to America and attending college, these students noted how much more recklessly these students drink compared to them. Some students even went on to state that this behavior is what scared them away from their school environment (Weigel, 2010).

In another study by Wendy Quinton, it was noted that international students bring many benefits to universities and colleges, but the environments are not always welcoming. This study uses a theoretical framework guided by predictors of prejudice to investigate a key aspect of climate, domestic students' prejudice against internationals on campus. In a sample of (N = 389) of domestic students attending a university with a large international student population experienced less prejudice against them. On the other hand, negative stereotypes, conservatism, and support for President Trump predicted higher negative attitudes toward internationals. This group of predominantly White Americans held higher negative attitudes towards internationals than their Non-White counterparts (Quinton, 2019).

#### Experiences of Multicultural People Relocating to the United States

In "The Third Culture College Student Experience: Navigating Between Worlds" by William Bruce Bouslough, published in 2016, he documents the experiences of relocating to the United States for third culture and multicultural kids. The guiding research question for this study was "What are the lived experiences of TCKs as they relocated between their home culture, that cultural setting where the individual feels most comfortable, and the cultural setting of the United States and their college of choice?" This study explains that these students are often expected by their student peers and college professors to be like other

students coming to college from the United States. Their uniqueness is that they have not lived in the United States for most of their lives leading up to their coming to college. They may look, dress, and talk like students from the United States but their transition from high school to college entails moving from one world to another (Bouslough, 2016). It is also worth noting also that the length of time to assume the characteristics of a TCK is indefinite and factors such as the parents' attitudes and behaviors, politics, and age all factor in significantly in shaping the child's life (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009).

#### Comparison of Multicultural and Monocultural

In a survey with a response from 267 self-initiated expatriates it was seen that when comparing third culture and multicultural kids with mono-cultured (ethnocentric kids being raised with and around one culture), third culture kids have a higher extent of general adjustment. Expatriate experiences generally had a positive association with the adjustment of adult mono-cultured kids, but this only existed in terms of general adjustment for third culture kids (Selmer, 2013).

In another study with 26 one on one interviews with students who identify as a TCK it was observed that all of the participants reported that they felt different from their home country peers or did not identify with an American mindset. Some found that dealing with culture shock or relating to American peers were more challenging than aspects such as identity, support, and concept of home. This study found that the business subpopulation third culture students were the most likely of the subpopulations to encounter the most challenges in their repatriation process during their first year of college. Most participants in the study reported that they did not fully identify with the American culture or felt different from their American peers in terms of values, beliefs, and norms (Weigel, 2010).

Previous research has shown that third culture students typically find that their home country peers have a different worldview or behaviors, or their country of origin is unfamiliar or changed when they repatriate (Fontaine, 1983; Gaw, 1995; Pollock & Van Reken, 2001). Weigel's major unexpected finding was the significant variation observed among the students

in terms of differentness they felt from their country of origin or the overall American culture. The expressed levels of differentness and reported degree difficulty with the first-year college transition appeared to be related to one another. Another unanticipated finding was that among the subpopulations (business, government, military, and missionary) third culture students whose parents are business workers experienced the greatest degree of difficulty with identity issues (Weigel 2010).

In another qualitative paper done by Nguyen studying “Changes in self efficacy and cultural intelligence, and the adjustment of multicultural and monocultural students abroad” the changes in both multicultural and monocultural students' self-efficacy, cultural intelligence and adjustment during a short-term study abroad program was examined. Longitudinal data from 79 participants found that general self-efficacy and cultural intelligence were higher after studying abroad than before studying abroad for monocultural individuals but not for multicultural students. It was found that multicultural students had higher cultural intelligence at both points (before and after study abroad) compared to their monocultural counterparts. General self-efficacy and cultural intelligence before studying abroad were related to intercultural adjustment after studying abroad for all participants. In an interview with 15 participants, it was revealed that multicultural and monocultural individuals had different trajectories of intercultural competence while abroad. Unfortunately, one of the limitations of this study was that there were no statistics on the percentage of multicultural vs monocultural American students studying abroad; therefore, it was necessary to estimate these numbers using race as a proxy for culture (Nguyen).

The experiences of these multicultural individuals abroad may be different from those of their monocultural counterparts, who have internalized only the national (i.e., mainstream American) culture. For example, multicultural individuals are more aware of different cultures and multiple perspectives, so the experience of culture shock (Oberg, 1960) may not be as extreme for them as for their monocultural peers (Selmer & Lam, 2004; Sussman, 2000). Moreover, they already have experience learning at least two cultures, so they may be more



skilled at learning, yet another culture compared to monocultural individuals (Bell & Harrison, 1996).

#### Methodologies and Social Experiments Used

In the 10-week psychosocial program (Tarmac) some data was able to be gathered in respect to the third culture student and their life in college. This experiment/ study was a 10-week psychoeducational and process-oriented group therapy program on the psychological wellbeing and adjustment in college aged third culture kids. Participants were a group of 29 TCK emerging adults. 15 of them were in the Tarmac program and 14 were included in the no treatment control group. The hypothesis of this program was to report lowered levels of depression, anxiety, and stress and higher levels of adjustment as compared to the TCKs that did not participate. Contrary to the hypothesis the results show that there were no significant group differences between those TCKs who participated in the program and those who did not. However, those participated did not report any significant differences in their level of depression and anxiety (Post, 2017)

In a regression analysis, university identity, standardized college admission test scores, and positive stereotypes predicted negative attitudes toward internationals suggesting that such attitudes are multiply determined. An analysis revealed that for those most likely to hold negative attitudes toward internationals, greater socialization with internationals was related to lower negative attitudes toward them. The results suggested that colleges and universities may lower prejudice against the international student body by boosting university identity and increasing high quality interaction between international and domestic students (Quinton 2019).

## **RESEARCH QUESTION**

This Honors Thesis used both qualitative and quantitative data as well as primary and secondary sources from scholarly articles and a survey. The survey was sent to both students and alumni from a variety of cultural, ethnic, and educational backgrounds and asked both demographic and social questions to understand their adjustment and social groups. It was important to focus on those who are or have been in college considering that they are the ones who can give us the best data describing adjustment and integration in college. The survey was also sent to an array of international students to compare the results from the monocultural sample.

It was compelling to see how certain demographics, whether it be age, race, or ethnicity, influence their social circles and the diversity which they are surrounded by. Responses from the multicultural sample were also very insightful. Being in a monocultural environment I wanted to see how diverse their background and everyday lives are compared to their monocultural peer counterparts. I wanted to see how different it is for multicultural students to adjust themselves in college, or social situations, and what they do in order to integrate themselves comparatively with the other sample. It was also a goal to compare the pool of diversity which these two samples integrate themselves with and how these disparities can be either strengths or weaknesses.

The responses provided by this survey also helps analyze what it is like for these two social groups to adjust in both a social and educational environment in which they spend a majority of their time. In my time at Bryant University these past few years and interacting with students from both the international and domestic stage I see how diverse the school is, while also lacking saturation in their student body. Though most of these social groups exist in the same environment, they often do not interact with one another. This is the issue this thesis aims to help; integrating social groups more thoroughly and allowing for both multicultural and monocultural students to interact and learn from one another more.

## **METHODOLOGY OF STUDY**

To test my hypothesis, my initial methodology for this study began with collecting secondary research and collecting sources for my research. It was important to see what background information I could gather on my thesis and build off of others so I would not have to reinvent the wheel. My next step was to develop a survey where the questions were aimed to fill the gaps in both my research and questions that were unanswered from previous studies. A convenience sample was collected through social media promotions such as Snapchat, Instagram, and LinkedIn to gather an adequate pool of participants who fit the demographics of having been or currently going to university.

The goal of this survey was to understand the gaps in cultural intelligence and understand the degree of integration to which the two samples hold their social circles. When participants first opened the survey, they were prompted with a question for their consent which was a simple yes or no. The next questions prompted the individual to answer whether they were mono or multicultural in order to gather how large each sample size would be. Afterwards, some questions were demographic based while other examples were: How diverse would you say your friend group is? How adept is your cultural intelligence? How exposed were you to other cultures growing up? How exposed are you to other cultures now? Etc... After the survey was completed, it was distributed and analyzed to see where significant differences presented themselves when comparing the two samples.

Along with gathering data from students, it was important to also include faculty and alumnus as well in order to gather as many accurate responses as possible which would portray answers coming from a college or college graduate sample. Once the survey had an ample number of respondents it was then closed, and the information was examined and interpreted for presentation.

## **ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

An IRB form was submitted and approved by the Bryant University Institutional Review Board in late 2020. The most important ethical consideration was human consent and confidentiality. The survey was sent to an array of students from both the Bryant and other University communities. The questions ranged from college adjustment to asking them in-depth questions about their social circle and cultural intelligence which were aimed at trying to gauge their awareness and openness to other cultures and ethnicities and how willing they are to integrate.

The survey invited participants in a study of comparing socialization, culturalization, and cultural intelligence amongst those in a university demographic. Participation was totally voluntary, and their decision did not affect future relations with Bryant University and their data was used in an anonymous manner with no risk to themselves.

## **RESULTS - ANALYSIS**

I conducted an independent sample T Test comparing monocultural and multicultural groups and primarily focused on the means of these two groups (out of five-point scale). From the study my data showed six significant questions. Beginning with question eight which asks, “How diverse is your friend group?” ( $p = .000$ ). We see that multicultural people had a more diverse friend group ( $M_{\text{multi}} = 3.7$ ) compared to the monocultural group ( $M = 2.57$ ). Question ten which ( $p = .001$ ) asks participants how adept their cultural intelligence (CQ) is. The monocultural sample scored an average mean ( $M_{\text{mono}} = 3.61$ ) lower than that of the multicultural sample ( $M_{\text{multi}} = 4.41$ ). This can be interpreted as; multicultural people having a higher sense of CQ than monocultural people since they are more exposed to a broader range of people and cultures.

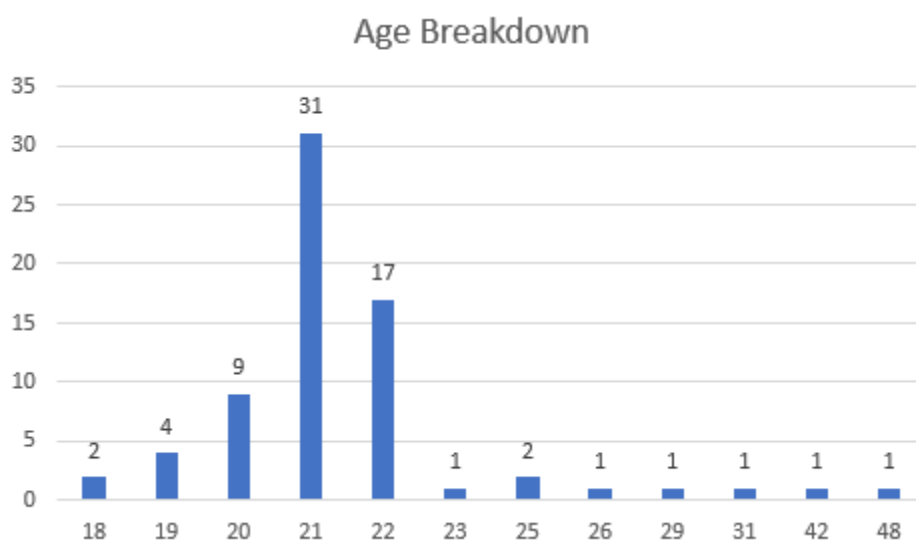
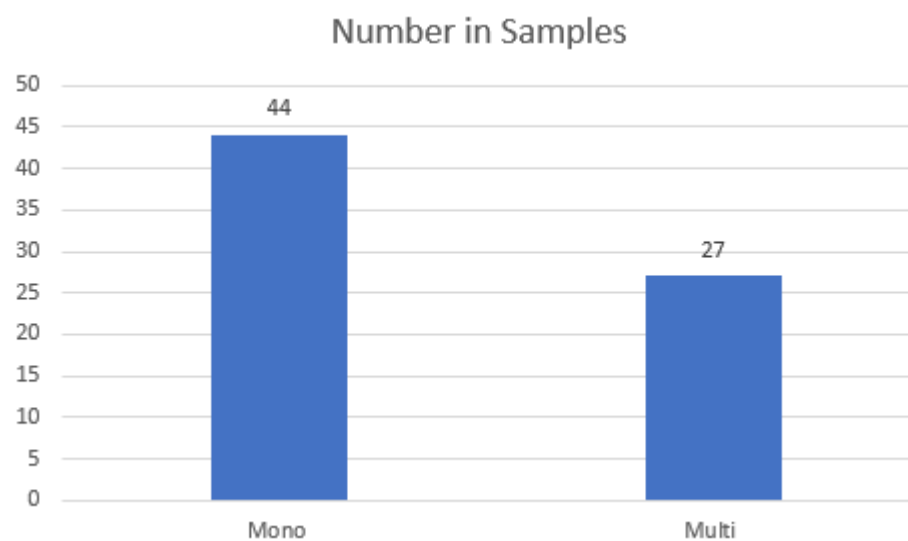
Moving on to question thirteen, it asks how exposed the participant was to other cultures growing up ( $p = .000$ ). Monocultural sample ( $M_{\text{mono}} = 2.75$ ) compared the multicultural sample ( $M_{\text{multi}} = 4.22$ ) showing that the multicultural sample was more exposed to other cultures during their upbringing compared to the monocultural sample. This question works in cahoots with question seventeen which asks how exposed the two samples are to other cultures now. The monocultural sample had a mean of 3.64 while the multicultural sample had a mean of 4.41. It was interesting to see this finding because the monocultural sample expresses that growing up, they were primarily exposed to those who had similar backgrounds to themselves. This changes a whole point when coming to college because this is where you meet some of your most diverse friend circle. In the multicultural sample we already see them having a high mean, but this mean only grows higher later on in life because they accept diversity and are willing to implement this into their own lives. In the monocultural sample we see that diversity does in fact rise when coming to college, however, their mean is still significantly lower than that of their multicultural peers. At the end of the survey participants were prompted with answering what they thought would be a good way in order to implement cultural intelligence teachings in order to engage in a diverse and integrated environment. In this question we saw answers which consisted of study abroad, diverse professors, required

# Comparison of socialization and culturalization amongst mono-cultural and multicultural college students

*Honors Thesis for Safeen F. Ahmad*

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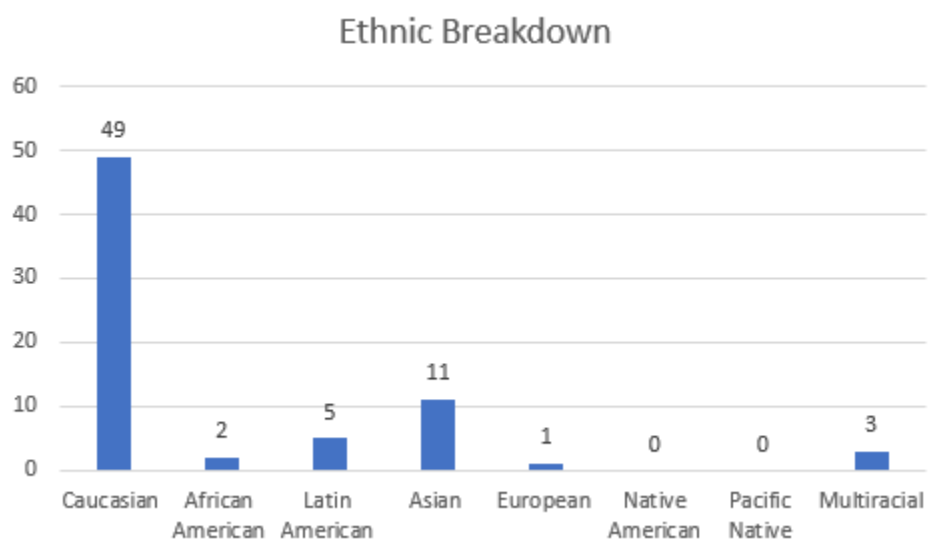
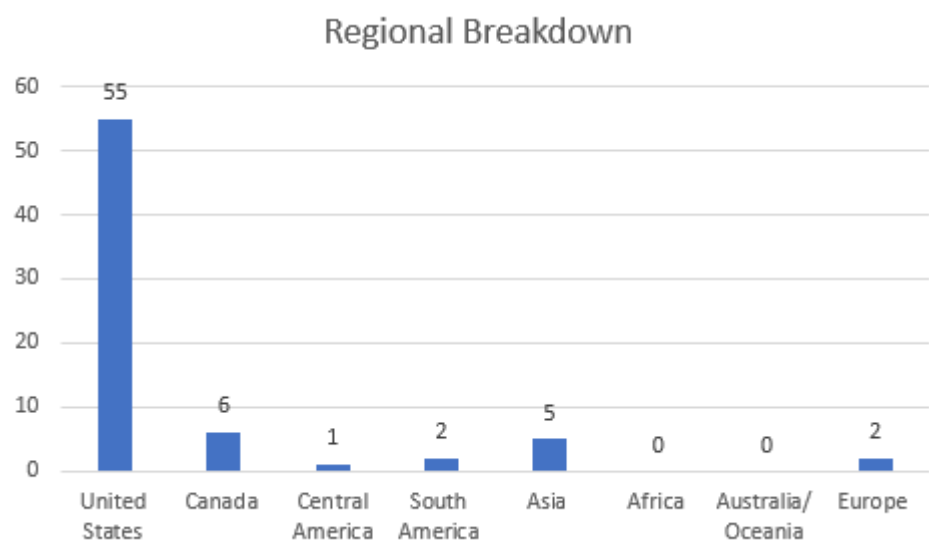
courses, and teaching these issues to people earlier on in life so these issues do not arise in college.



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## **CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS OF STUDY**

Some of the limitations to this study were that it was difficult to get a proper sized sample of multicultural students and alumnus. Had the survey been sent to a wider range of universities and students it would have been clearer to see on the greater level how different aspects such as cultural intelligence and integration may be. In addition, it was easier to get data on Third Culture Kids compared to multicultural students and it was also difficult to get data on monocultural students as well. Studies that were focusing on American/ Monocultural students were primarily focused on their adaptations to college and how well they adjusted whereas we needed more data on the cultural intelligence and integration amongst other multicultural students.



## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

For future research I would aim to focus on a larger sample size on both multicultural and monocultural levels as well. When sending out the survey through social media a lot of my responses were on the monocultural end and so it would have been helpful to get more insight from multicultural, international, and third culture kids. I would recommend a future study to see how well these findings can be integrated into other countries as well to observe their academic system and see if they too face similar problems of cultural integration.

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January 2021

Safeen Faqueer Ahmad:

RE: IRB Proposal #2021-0123

TITLE: Comparing and contrasting culturalization and socialization of third culture and monoculture college students

Dear Safeen:

Your proposal, entitled "Comparing and contrasting culturalization and socialization of third culture and monoculture college students" was considered under IRB Guidelines for full review. The IRB Committee of Bryant University approved the proposal on January 23, 2021.

Bryant University is strongly committed to adhering to the basic ethical principles related to the conduct of research involving human subjects as set forth in *The Belmont Report: Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research*. The submission of your proposal to the IRB Committee supports the goals of Bryant University and the IRB Committee and ensures that research involving any members of the Bryant community is in strict accordance with these ethical principles and guidelines.

Thank you for your submission, and good luck with your research.

Very truly yours,

*Yoon sukki (ms)*

Sukki Yoon  
Chair, IRB Committee