

WHEN GERMAN CHILDREN COME “HOME.” EXPERIENCES OF (RE-)MIGRATION TO GERMANY – AND SOME REMARKS ABOUT THE “TCK”-ISSUE

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Foreword: On proceeding from experience to agency without knowing it (right away)

I was not sure whether to write this paper. It is based on randomly collected material I have gathered during the past 12 years while concentrating on other issues. It also draws a link to my M.A. thesis, which was published 15 years ago.¹ It is based on material I gathered in personal encounters and conversations, on notes, which I penned down – piling them in a tray labelled “Misc.” – and on recollections of conversations stored only in my memory.

In my M.A. thesis I dealt with the upbringing of mainly German and Swiss children and youths in Ghana and with the experiences they made upon their “return” to Germany and Switzerland. I spent many years of my childhood in Ghana myself and the description and analysis of my own experience is part of my M.A. thesis. After that, I decided not to ever include any of that “personal stuff” in academic writing again. Not because this had been an awkward experience (although it was, to some extent), but somehow, I felt, that now that I had restored and analyzed my own past and that of my (re-)migrant peers anthropologically, I could proceed to becoming a “real,” a more “professional” anthropologist and – as a such – could do what “real” and “professional” anthropologists should do, namely study and explore the “real” others’ existence. I knew about the dialectics of “self” and “other” then, and in anthropological endeavours and writing, it seemed, the “self” – situated in a relativistic frame of mind – should serve the better understanding of the “other.” Apart from that, whenever I had told people I studied anthropology *and* had lived in Ghana for many years as a child and young girl, I was greeted with a reaction of something like “Oh, that’s why you study anthropology.” I was sick of it.

For the past 15 years – since finishing my M.A. thesis – I have primarily been studying identity matters related to processes of creolization, migration, poli-

1 Knörr 1990. Cf. Lenzin (2000), who studied the social and historical background and context of the Swiss community in Ghana. His study includes an evaluation and analysis of some of the parts of Knörr’s study.

tization, and interethnic contact. The people I study mostly live in towns, they are settlers, migrants, members of creole societies and diaspora groups. They are culturally heterogeneous, live in multiethnic environments and are involved in interethnic relations. They live in West Africa (in Sierra Leone and other countries of the Upper Guinea Coast) and in Indonesia (Java).

Several years ago, I was invited by the late Professor Albert Wirtz to present a paper at the Institute for African Studies at the Humboldt University in Berlin. It was about Freetown, about my Ph.D. thesis, which had then just been published.² In the discussion that followed, someone asked me why I had chosen this topic after having written an M.A. thesis about German and Swiss children in Ghana. I said something about new theoretical interests, open research questions and that anthropology needed to deal with contemporary issues and the like, and that all this had nothing to do with my M.A. thesis. Professor Wirtz frowned, and asked me, what had gotten me interested in that part of the world, in creole societies, and processes of creolization. (He had been quite positive about my M.A. thesis and I had been quite flattered when he considered it a good example of how personal experiences could be analyzed for the development of anthropological theory. He was not so impressed now, obviously.) I shrugged my shoulders and said something like: "Well, of course, originally there are always personal reasons for choosing specific themes and approaches as well as research regions, but..." He then made me summarize (almost) all of them. I ended up with the impression I was studying creole societies because I was somehow a creole myself. Now, I do not think I am, but I will never claim again that my interests in specific matters and regions are not (still) also related to my childhood and youth experience.

By "othering" myself in the process of writing my M.A. thesis – in putting my own childhood and youth experience within a comparative framework of analysis – I had put myself in a position that enabled me to examine and analyze anthropologically a topic that included my personal experience. By examining and analyzing a topic that included my personal experience, the process of "othering" the latter was enhanced and put in (a comparative) perspective. Whereas this did not free me of my childhood and youth – you are never free of that anyway – and whereas I had not proceeded from being a "not so real" to being a "real" anthropologist – I had proceeded from experience to agency by choosing to deal with my own childhood and youth experiences and with those of others "like myself" by means of anthropological research and writing – without being fully aware of it. So I might just as well write another contribution about something that is simply more directly related to personal experience than most other topics I deal with.

2 Knörr 1995.

Who and what this paper is (not) about

In this paper I will highlight some aspects concerning the experiences of German children and youths coming to live in Germany after having spent many years or almost their whole lives in Africa. I will deal with their reception by their new social environment in Germany and with their perception of and reaction to it. I will focus on white children because their experience is a special case that differs considerably from that of children with a mixed African-German background.

I deal with an issue that is hardly ever mentioned in migration studies, namely children of a Western – in my case German – background, who are brought up in a non-Western environment before “returning” to a “home,” which in many cases has never been or is no longer home to them. These children are usually not considered (re-)migrants by their German teachers, peers, and relatives.³ They are considered “homecomers” – and they are expected to behave accordingly.⁴ I will come back to that.

There are several publications on what has for some time now been labelled “TCK” and “ATCK” – “Third Culture Kids” and “Adult Third Culture Kids.” It was John and Ruth Useem who coined the term in the 1950s when they studied Americans living and working in India.⁵ They defined the home culture of the parents as the first culture and the host culture where the expatriate family lived as the second culture. The “Third Culture” to them was the culture of the expatriate community, which they understood as a “culture between cultures” integrating cultural features of home and host societies. More recently the definition was broadened to include all children who move into another society with their parents. With regard to cultural identity, a TCK is defined as a person “who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents’ culture. The TCK builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership of 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.”⁶

- 3 Some of the more recent works on returning migration include: Allen 1994; Arowolo 2000; Firat 1991; Hammond 2004; Martin 2005; Paraschou 2001; Wolbert 1995. There are also studies on (and accounts of) Namibian children and youths who were brought up in the German Democratic Republic and returned to Namibia later on. They give an impression of childhood and youth re-migration “the other way round” – from Germany to Africa; see Engombe 2004; Kenna 1999.
- 4 Wolbert (1995) describes similar experiences of Turkish children and youths re-migrating to Turkey after having spent many years in Germany. Cf. Stenzel, Homfeld & Fenner 1989.
- 5 Useem & Useem 1955; 1993.
- 6 Pollock & van Reken 2004: 19. The authors adopt this definition from “The TCK Profile” seminar material, Interaction, Inc., 1989: 1. See also: <http://www.tckworld.com/tckdefine.html>. This website is a forum for TCKs.

This broadening of the term – while being inclusive, not making a difference between a Sierra Leonean refugee in the United States and an American son of an ambassador somewhere in Africa – is in danger of covering up some of the specific concepts and ideologies connected to the TCK approach. It stresses that the term TCK is not restricted to Western children – particularly not to Western children brought up in the so-called Third World – but it is nevertheless mostly connected to the latter and not to immigrant children in the USA or Germany. Most of the literature dealing with the topic – scientifically and/or (auto)biographically – is written by Western (mostly American) authors who deal with experiences of Western children living abroad and with the challenges they meet upon repatriation. Some of their most common experiences and emotional problems have been described and analyzed in Pollock's and van Reken's book on "Third Culture Kids," which also deals mainly with Western expatriate children.⁷ Whereas it is stressed in current writing that a Turkish child growing up in Germany is a TCK as well, the simple fact that authors feel they need to point this out shows that a distinction is usually made, even if it is made implicitly. Turkish – and other – immigrant children are generally not perceived or treated as TCKs in academic research and writing. They are usually not studied with regard to the "Third Culture" they are producing, but with regard to their being "caught between different cultures," their integration problems, problems in learning the host country's language or with regard to the problems they are causing for their host society. To put it very simply, whereas the upper class of young, mostly Western migrants to – mainly – Third World countries are likely to be considered "Third Culture Kids," producing creatively a culture for themselves, the lower classes of young migrants – those from Third World or poorer countries migrating or fleeing to mostly Western countries – are likely to be considered immigrants with a cultural background, which does not fit their new environment and thus produce problems for themselves and their host society. There is an implicit – and qualifying – distinction made between TCKs on the one hand and other young (im)migrants on the other. With regard to the former, (appropriate) cultural creativity is emphasized; with regard to the latter (inappropriate) cultural conservatism. Academic approaches thereby largely and mostly implicitly reflect the – usually not so implicit – qualifying distinctions made in society at large.

With regard to the production of "Third Culture," however, these distinctions seem inadequate in real social life. Most of those, who are "classical" TCKs – Western expatriate children and youths, for whom the term TCK was invented in the first place – often do not produce much of a culture of their own located somewhere "in between" home and host society.⁸ Many of them,

7 Pollock & van Reken 2004 (English edition); Pollock, van Reken & Pflüger 2003 (German edition). Other contribution on this group of migrants include: Roth 2001; Smith 1996; Storti 2001.

8 There are, of course, also many children who mix with the local population, especially children of missionaries and of parents who work in development pro-

I claim, are brought up largely within the boundaries of an expatriate culture, which is often socially and culturally isolated from its local environment, and which does not integrate much or any of the local culture. On the contrary, more often than not, expatriate communities – especially the Western ones – screen themselves off from local influences. Thus, in real life, a German child in Africa may survive quite well within the boundaries of a German or Western expatriate world, whereas a Turkish child in Germany is forced to deal with both its parents' Turkish and its host country's German culture in order to manage life in Germany. The definition of the TCK's "Third Culture" as a blend of one's parents' home and of one's host country's culture therefore does not apply to many contemporary expatriate children living in expatriate environments. Their social lives and cultural worlds, especially if located in places whose culture is experienced as very different from one's own, are rarely made up of such home-and-host composites. Many children of expatriates do not even experience much local culture because they largely share their parents' social lives and cultural worlds. These are, in many cases, expatriate forms of one's own home culture that have been adapted to the local social, cultural, and physical environment – a process, which under the condition of temporary – and sometimes even long term – stays abroad, rarely includes much incorporation of the culture prevalent in one's host culture, even less so, when the latter is not just experienced merely as different but as inferior as well. Thus, in many cases, expatriate worlds are not worlds that integrate fruitfully and creatively one's own and one's host culture; they remain apart from the latter while being far away from the former. The "Third Culture" that such TCKs produce – at least while abroad – is therefore in many cases nothing more than a children's and youths' version of the adults' (parents') expatriate culture containing little local input.

However, expatriate cultures may very well be unique for different reasons, even if they do not involve much mixing with the local culture. An expatriate culture may be unique in its ways of avoiding contact with the host country's culture or in its ways of avoiding the incorporation of the latter. It may be unique in its finding ways to maintain as much of one's own culture of origin while living abroad. It may be unique in its preservation of a colonial lifestyle unthinkable back home. It may indeed be unique in interconnecting and mixing different expatriate communities' cultures and ways of life, thereby producing a "Third Culture," but not one which involves home and host culture; it is this former sort of mixing which may often be confused with a mixing of the latter sort.

Despite these observations – and reservations with regard to the definition of "Third Culture" in the context of expatriate childrens' lives – I do believe and know from my own experience that expatriate culture, expatriates' social lives and lifestyles may indeed be very different from those of their compatri-

jects in locations far away from where the majority of contemporary expatriates live.

ots “back home.” These expatriate worlds in many cases are the only ones they are familiar with, the only ones they consider home. Children of expatriates, even if they have not experienced much of the local culture of their host country, have a different cultural and social identity than those who they will meet upon repatriation in their parents’ home countries, which in many cases is not home to them.

Whereas I agree that the term “Third Culture Kids” is not to be reserved for Western expatriates alone, I think one should not simply hide the, mostly implicit, ideologies of difference that often occur in its usage. Many children for whom the term “Third Culture Kids” was originally coined – children who are brought up in expatriate communities – are often not TCKs in the sense of creating an identity based on both home and host culture,⁹ whereas others, who are still only rarely considered TCKs – like Turkish children in Germany and Sierra Leonean refugee children in the United States – usually are. “Third Cultures” may be different in content and structure and they may or may not be produced by (re-)migrant children of all sorts. Such differences, however, should not be ignored; neither should the differences in the experiences and treatment of (re-)migrant or repatriating children depending on social status and origin, differences, which affect the process of integration as well as the production of “Third Culture.”

There are certainly similarities among TCKs all over the world – probably as a result of the similarities and interconnectedness of (many) expatriate communities and of sharing the experience of being brought up “elsewhere.” But there are also differences between expatriate communities as such and their treatment of their child members in particular as well as differences between different “home” countries with regard to their treatment of repatriating children and youths.

I will focus on the experiences and agencies of the German species in this paper, on children and youths who have spent large parts of their lives in Africa before (re-)migrating to Germany.

Although Germany as an export country also “exports” a lot of manpower and “experts” to foreign countries, who become expatriates abroad and repatriates upon their return, and despite the fact that many German children are therefore brought up elsewhere before (re-)migrating to Germany, there is hardly any research on that topic and hardly any awareness of this phenomenon, neither in public nor in academia.

Who are the people whose information this papers is based on?

They are a rather mixed crowd. Since publishing my M.A. thesis I on occasion met some of the people I had interviewed back in the late 1980s in the framework of my fieldwork. We talked about their experiences since we met last,

9 They might be “Today’s Colonial Kids” – which is a rather unique way of life and experience as well.

about changes that had occurred in their lives and attitudes. Some of the people I interviewed in Ghana and Germany as children and youths in the late 1980s were adults when we met and talked again. Others, who I interviewed about their (past) experience of having been brought up in Ghana and integrating in Germany were already young adults then and somewhat less young adults when we encountered each other later on.

Apart from those I already knew, I met others who had come from different African countries to live in Germany at different times in the past. There were children, youths, and adults among them.

Thus, the time span the experience of (re-)migration in childhood and youth relates to is around 30 years (1973–2003), the people were between seven and 50 years at the time of the interviews/conversations. They had experienced (re-)migration between a few months and 30 years ago. Thus, it is "new" and "old" experiences that I am dealing with. With regard to issues that are strongly influenced by the receiving social environment in Germany, the analysis will be able to show some of the changes that have occurred in Germany during the past 30 years – and point out, where continuities seem to dominate in the reception of (re-)migrant German children and youths. In some of the cases I can also point out some of the developments related to growing up and getting older.

The material gathered will be presented and analyzed in the form of "highlights." These highlights are in no way intended to give a complete picture encompassing all that can be experienced in the process of (re-)integration in Germany. They are meant to shed light on some of the experiences shared by many and on some of the major social dynamics involved in the process of (re-)integration in Germany and in the interaction of experience and agency.

Where is home and why?

As mentioned above, German children moving to Germany after having spent many years in Africa are usually not considered (re-)migrants but homecomers. Thus, their families, peers, and teachers do not expect them to have a lot of problems adjusting to their German environment. They are considered to be returning to their "real" home and in many cases they are supposed to feel to be "home at last." Frank,¹⁰ who is 44 today and returned to Germany 25 years ago, said: "The first day I attended school in Germany, my teacher asked me 'how does it feel to be back home after so many years in Africa?' But I did not really understand. I felt like being in a strange country and I felt that I had left my home behind."

10 For the sake of confidentiality all names have been changed and specific African countries mentioned in the conversations/interviews have been "translated" to "Africa."

To feel at home is not something that comes with being where one's ethnic or national roots are according to one's parents' descent. It is something that comes with personal and emotional attachment. German "homecomers" have often had little opportunity to develop such an attachment before they are "repatriated" into what in many cases is only their parents', but not their own home country. Instead, they leave what they consider home behind. They leave behind what they feel attached to – their friends, their school, the place they used to live – and in many cases their parents, brothers, sisters, cats, and dogs. Their social environment changes as well as their way of life – and at the same time they are expected to feel at home "at last." Christina, 28 in 1995, after 12 years of living in Germany, said:

When I came to Germany to live with my uncle and aunt, it was okay for them that I missed my parents and my sister. They could understand that. But they didn't understand that I missed Africa. They thought I should be glad to be back in the civilized world or something like that. But I didn't like this kind of civilization. I wanted my home back where I felt free to do the things I liked.

In many cases children "coming home" only know Germany from summer vacations. Germany thus is a more or less strange place and not home at all. Judy (12) who had just returned to Germany at the time of our conversation felt that "[...] everything is different here and I feel homesick a lot. I miss my friends and my school and our garden. And I hate this weather... it's all so grey and depressing here." Conny, who is now 44, showed me an entry in her diary at the age of 15, several months after she had come to live with relatives in Germany. All across two pages, written in red capital letters, it said: "I want to go home!!! I want to go home!!! That's all I want, I just want to go home!!!" I asked her what it was that she had missed so much then and whether it was mainly her family, who had stayed behind. She replied: "I missed my parents, too, but most of all I missed... I don't know, I missed my home. Everything. I felt lost in Germany. Like a stranger. And there was nobody to relate to, who shared my experience, my attachment to Africa. Nobody."

This seems to be the worse part in many cases. Whereas "real" migrants in most cases have other "real" migrants with whom they can share their experience, who know the place back home and who go through similar experiences and feelings in their host country, German children and youths – especially 30 years ago – hardly met anyone like that. There were no other children and young people around at one's school who knew what they were talking about when talking about "home." Germans who grew up in Africa are still few and it is unlikely they will meet at the same school somewhere in Germany. Raul, who was 12 when I talked to him in 1996, after he had been living in a small Bavarian village for a year, said: "The other children think it is interesting to have someone like me around, someone from Africa. But of course they asked all sorts of silly questions like 'Are they really all black there?' or 'Did you live in a little straw hut?', 'Did you eat snakes?' Lots of things like that. When

I told them we lived in a big house, they could hardly believe it. I thought they were stupid."

Thus, children and especially youths – who often come to Germany as teenagers, at an age which is problematic anyway – tend to feel lonely and alone in Germany. They are expected to feel at home – at least to find it easy to integrate and adapt. They look the same as everyone else, they speak the same language, but they often have no one who shares their experience, no one who could make them feel at home "at home."

Of course there are other – and opposite – cases as well. Especially children who came to Africa at a later stage in their childhood and only stayed there for a short period of time, may feel the other way round – to them Africa sometimes remained the strange place, the place they did not feel at home. These children are, in fact, the real re-migrants. They are coming back home, feeling relieved – like Giseller, who was 11 when his family took him along to Africa and 13 when they all returned to Germany: "Gosh, I was so happy to be back here," he told me, "I hated it there. And I do not think, I will ever want to return."

It largely depends on the social environment, whether children and youths manage to feel at least a little bit at home upon their "return" to Germany. It is usually easier for those who come to Germany with their parents – and all the more so for those who have siblings to share their experiences with. It seems hardest – in most cases – for those coming back on their own, for those who move to small towns, who live in conservative settings where people are less familiar with dealing with difference and with people who have not shared their social and cultural world.

Some children, especially those whose families stay behind in Africa, often experience Africa as their first and "real" home, while Germany may become something like a second home, the place, where they go to school. After several years – with more and closer contacts in Germany, and with time – this might change and Germany might very well become their first, Africa their second home.

Many children leave Africa once and for all when their parents decide to leave and take their children along. While leaving Africa might also cause adults and parents some heartache after living there for many years, the situation for children is different, especially for those who have lived there for large parts or all of their lives. Whether their life happened to be integrated into the local context or isolated from it – it is often the only life they know and which they are familiar with. Doris, 13, who came to Germany to live with her grandmother six months ago, told me: "It is not because I think Germany is terrible. But everything is different here. It doesn't fit me. I'm different. It's because I don't feel I belong here. I belong to Africa. That's where my heart is, and home is where the heart is, they say. My heart longs for Africa all the time, and it hurts a lot." Doris got so homesick some months later, that, apart from the emotional "heartache" she developed physical disorders to

a point where she was virtually unable to move because of “pain in my heart” at the age of 13.

On being a white child in Africa and how this affects re-migration

Although I will be concentrating on the experience of re-migration and (re-) integration in Germany there are some particularities concerning the social life of German (and other Western) expatriates in Africa that have a major impact on the process of integration in Germany and need to be addressed to understand what will follow.

Children and youths coming to Germany from Africa have experienced social lives and forms of sociability that differ from those in Germany. This is true especially for those who lived in Africa some 20 or more years ago. The “intra-ethnic” cohesion among Germans (and other groups of expatriates) was rather close then since there were not many of them and they tended to stay for longer periods of time than today.¹¹ In many African countries there was no television, much less video available, so people socialized by visiting each other in their leisure time, by spending weekends together etc. There was no internet in those days either, which would allow closer contact with “back home.”¹² Apart from that, most German expatriates had little close personal contacts to Africans. But even today, whites largely stay among themselves with a few exceptions, consisting mainly of African spouses. Thus, most German children and youths in Africa experience a pronounced gap between blacks and whites, between the local population and themselves, that is.

Being white in Sub-Saharan Africa usually goes along with being part of the upper class in economic terms. Whereas there might be considerable variation in the income structure of whites in Africa, compared to the overwhelming part of the local population, most of them were and are rich. As well, being white – from the point of view of most whites, but many Africans as well – is associated with being more advanced, civilized, and educated than the local African population.

Despite internal hierarchies even within small expatriate communities, its members often cannot afford to cultivate too much of an internal bias with regard to class and income since they are too few. Thus, “otherness” is attrib-

11 This is true for all Sub-Saharan countries where my informants lived. Things are different in South Africa and Namibia and – to some extent – Zimbabwe, but none of my informants had lived there.

12 Many Germans who lived in Africa then and still live there today consider the introduction of videos and the internet the worst that could happen to the expatriate community because social life suffered immensely because “newcomers don’t integrate [into the local expatriate community] but just sit at home and watch a video or sit in front of their computer to chat with their family or friends in Germany through the internet.”

uted first and foremost to the local Africans with varying degrees of "otherness" in between them and one's own group – which correlate with shades of colours as well as with social and cultural differences. The message the majority of white children growing up in "black" Africa get is that being white goes along with being rich and superior. While blacks may also (be)come rich and advance economically for different reasons, being rich appears to be an innate and natural feature of being white, a feature of social class, which in most cases goes along with a feeling of cultural superiority. Whereas white parents in most cases have experienced that being white does not have such implications everywhere, many white children lack this experience altogether – and many of their parents prefer forgetting it while in Africa.

Coming to Germany, being white suddenly does not mean anything at all. Additionally, most children and youths experience a social decline when coming to Germany – not because their parents suddenly become poor but because they suddenly shift from being members of a small upper class in Africa to being members of a large middle class in Germany. To some children and youths this is a rather traumatic experience, to others it is at least surprising. Janet, aged 24 now, and Max, 25, told me about the experiences they had after their arrival in Germany.

I once saw a beggar in the street. A young African man who was just walking by stopped to put some money into the old man's hat, which was lying in front of him. I could not believe my eyes. A black man giving money to a white beggar! I felt this could not be true (Janet, 13 then).¹³

When I came to Germany nine years ago, I had an African boy in my class. He was from Guinea, really black. I went to a school in Africa where they were mostly whites, except some children with African mothers and then there were some Africans, too, but we didn't have much contact. The Africans I had contacts with most were servants. Now, this boy was a really bright student and he was also very nice. That really made me think. In a way I was surprised. We became good friends after a while. Now, don't you think it's funny that the first time I made friends with an African was after I had come to Germany? After having lived in Africa most of my childhood? (Max, 16 then).

When I myself went to Abidjan from Accra as a young girl, we went to a restaurant, where white waiters were serving African customers. I was truly puzzled since I had never seen anything like that before.

For children and youths who are brought up in families with pronounced racist attitudes and condescending ways of behaviour towards Africans, it often seems quite natural to give orders to African "boys," nannies, drivers, gardeners, and watchmen at an early stage in life. Upon their return to Germany, they often experience that their behaviour toward "the locals" is perceived as

13 Many Africans coming to Germany have similar feelings and thoughts when seeing beggars in Germany for the first time – and realizing that Africans are not always and everywhere poorer than Europeans.

inadequate, to say the least. Jonathan, now 34, told me what happened to him shortly after he had come to Germany at the age of 16.

When I came to Germany, I was taking a ride on a moped which belonged to someone I had met. I was used to driving a car before so I didn't think about it. I was stopped by the police. When the policeman asked me for my licence and said something about legal consequences, I took out five Marks and handed the money to him casually, saying something like 'this should be enough, ey?' Of course, he did not take it and asked me, whether I also wanted to be fined for trying to bribe the police. I was puzzled and said something like: 'You don't want money, ey?' The police in Africa are not as fussy.' And he said: 'Young man, this is not Africa, this is Germany.'

It is not surprising that children and youths behave in this way if that is what they have learned to be adequate behaviour. Of course, there are many expatriate children who are brought up in less racist environments and whose parents do not act like colonialists. Children, whose parents do not cultivate racist attitudes, who socialize with Africans, who do not "protect" their children from local influence, may in fact experience Germans "at home" as racist and xenophobic. Lukas, 29, who was raised as a son of missionary parents, explained: "I was always among both white and black children. This seemed normal to me. In Germany many of my new friends thought of this as strange. They hardly communicated with their Turkish peers at school, for instance, whereas for me, this was perfectly natural. In fact, I enjoyed their company more because at least they knew what it was like to be different from the rest."

The experience of "being superior by nature" can also have negative effects when children start attending school in Germany. First of all, it is usually difficult anyhow to change schools and it is more so when everything else changes as well. Secondly, in many cases the schools the children attended in Africa do not meet the standards of schools in Germany. Schools in Africa are often modelled on different educational systems than the German one (British or French in most cases).¹⁴ Thirdly, for many children it is the first time they experience something like "serious competition" and serious stress. This may be the case simply because it is difficult to catch up, but also that many (former) expatriate children are not used to having to do much for school, either because the standards were a lot lower and/or because "muddling through somehow" was common practice at the schools they attended. Tina, 12, who had attended school in Germany for only four months at the time of our conversation three years ago, said: "Oh God, school is so much more difficult here. It was so much easier before and you could talk to the teachers if you didn't understand something and then they would explain it to you again until you would understand and pass somehow. But here it's just take it or leave it, pass or fail, nobody cares."

14 German schools can only be attended where they exist, like in Nigeria, where the German community is quite large.

In some cases, schools and classes attended by expatriates in Africa were small; students know each other well and spend their time at school as well as most of their leisure time together. Teachers were often part of the expatriate community and if it is a small one, letting a child fail was a much more personal matter than in a setting where teachers are not parents' friends at the same time. The latter, of course, can also be the case in a small village in Germany. But the "way out" – for teachers, parents, and students – may have been even more limited in a small expatriate community. In many such communities, inter-personal relations were close and loyalty within them was expected to be high. Thus, in many cases, competition is also limited because "they would never not let us pass in the end." I am not saying all expatriate children were – and even less are – situated in school environments of that sort. Neither am I saying that such environments are necessarily bad, but in Germany things are different.

As white expatriates in Africa, even children who perform weakly at school often do not experience this to be a threat to their future because of their "naturally" superior status as whites and as members of the upper class. Sarah, 24 at the time of the interview, told me about her attitude when she came to Germany eight years ago: "In Africa, I did not care so much about the marks I got. It seemed to me that I would always be rich enough to live a comfortable life. I was white after all. But then in Germany I realized that not performing well at school may lead to a life in misery. And after a while I started working harder in order to get better marks."

Being white is normal in Germany – and competition is stronger. Most children returning from Africa are no longer members of the upper class in Germany. For many, it is the first time they experience not being "naturally" superior to most others around them. And to many this experience is a highly frustrating one. Kevin said, at the age of 17, after having come to Germany six months ago: "Everything is much smaller, our house, our garden, my room. And my freedom to move about." In fact, the potential mobility in Germany is usually larger, but would involve taking a bus. For children and youths who are used to being driven around or to drive themselves, this may very well feel like a limitation of their personal freedom. Kevin: "I could drive in Africa, why should I take a bus here." Household chores, unheard of before, may also lead to frustration. Kevin: "We had a boy to do these things before, and here I am expected to make up my room myself. I hate it, it's boring." Many children and youths who have been brought up "colonial style" think of the latter as the only style appropriate (to them). They feel de-privileged, punished, or humiliated by having to do such "boring" duties themselves.

Soon after Janet had come to Germany, she was invited to some of her classmates' homes. She experienced most of them as "poor, because they lived in flats. I knew that most people in Germany live in flats, but in a way I thought that most people in Germany are... well, not as poor as most people in Africa were poor... but a little bit poor." Most children know from vacations in Germany that housing conditions for most people are not as spacious as

they are in Africa – it is just that they do not see themselves as or expect to be one of “most people” when coming to Germany. They see themselves and expect to be superior to the majority of the “locals” – to those in Germany now as to those in Africa before.

On the other hand, there are also many expatriate children who are highly flexible and adaptable – both in attitudes and behaviour – due to the many different conditions of life they have already experienced at an early age. Like Laura, 13, who said, a few months after moving to Germany in 1997:

Well, I knew things were to be changing again. We had always moved every two or three years, so I was used to moving and to things being different everywhere. In Africa white people were usually rich and we had a big house. In Brazil a lot of white people are poor and many are just so la la... and we had a nice place, but not so big. In Germany now, we have a nice place too. But not like in Africa. I don't mind that. But the weather, I really hate the weather.

There are also many children who had lived in Germany long enough before moving to Africa to remember more clearly that being white does not automatically correlate with being rich and superior. They usually have a more realistic image of life in Germany and what they are returning to.

How to continue feeling naturally superior “at home” – “Expatriate Germans are superior to Germans here”

How do you manage to continue feeling superior as a white person when suddenly everyone else is white too? One option is to turn to “culture” as a source of (superior) identification. You forget about being white and take on a different identity based on “being” or “having been an expatriate,” or, more fashionably, on being a “Third Culture Kid” and – later on – an “Adult Third Culture Kid.”

Strategies as such, in many cases, remain the same in Germany as in Africa. In Africa it was “the Africans” – the locals that is – who were looked down upon, who were considered and treated as different and – more often than not – as inferior. In Germany it is the locals as well, who are looked down upon, and who are considered and treated as inferior. An adult (and parent) “returnee” told me that there is “an enormous difference between those Germans, who have never lived anywhere else in the world, and us. They may go somewhere on holiday but that's not the same. They don't know what life in Africa – or elsewhere – is really like. They just know their way of life in Germany. Not like us who have lived abroad, who have seen the world.”

It is often the parents who foster such attitudes in their children as well, especially when they try to comfort them when having problems integrating in Germany, when feeling lonely and rejected – at school and elsewhere. And parents often suffer as well when being “downgraded” to the middle class upon their return to Germany. Although many will have prospered economi-

cally – having earned well and saved while in Africa – fewer of them will manage to retain their membership in the upper class upon return. They often transform their superiority based on race and class to a superiority based on having lived abroad, on having been an *Auslandsdeutscher* (literally: a German from abroad). Even on vacations in Germany, while still living in Africa, many such *Auslandsdeutsche* – both adults and children alike – brag about their servants, houses, positions etc. in Africa. They thereby also try to maintain at least some sort of superiority to all those whites in Germany “who have never lived abroad.” Despite the different environments, the cultivation of superiority, in both cases, is based on “being different from” – and “being better than” – the local population.

Feeling different

The (re-)migrant children under study here look the same and (usually) speak the same language as their counterparts in Germany. The repatriated children, however, are different because 1) they have no or only limited experience of life in Germany and 2) because they have lived in Africa for a long time and therefore have been exposed to social lives and lifestyles different from German ones in Germany. They have been influenced – to varying degrees – by African and/or by expatriate culture.

With regard to “sameness versus difference” most children and youths I have talked to experience themselves as being different from the children they encounter in Germany, all the more so, the greater the part of their childhood and youth spent in Africa.

For one, they often experience the lives of children in Germany – and of youths in particular – as “not as free as in Africa.” They feel they had more liberties in Africa than in Germany – which in many cases they have indeed had due to their status and due to less rigid rules related to age. As well, weather can make a real difference in “feeling free” and less restricted in one’s activities, especially to children and youths. One popular and common theme is the “party issue.” Ask a 14-year old German boy or girl who has lived in Africa before about the things they miss most “about Africa” and a large percentage of them will tell you it is “the parties we had.” It seems that due to a somewhat restricted field of potential other activities – or to a lack of interest in such – partying is a major sport at an early age among expatriate youths. One such boy explained to me:

You know you don’t have neighbours the way you do here [Germany]. Seeing your friends means driving there. And of course, our parents had to drive us – or our drivers – unless you were 16 and could drive yourself. And there isn’t much else to do at night, anyway. So usually we had a party every Friday. And, of course, our parents left the house or stayed upstairs then. Now, here, I can’t believe it. I mean, we are 14 – 14! – and parents tell their children they have to be home at 10 or 11. They actually sit there with their children at the party – they hang around! There is no hiding.

We used to have boyfriends and girlfriends and I tell you, we didn't just kiss! But here, I mean, at 14, they are like children! We were really different, much more mature.

There are other differences as well. Whereas many children have been more or less isolated from their African environment in terms of social contacts, they have usually experienced a more international life than in Germany. They often had friends from all over the world. Expatriate culture might be isolated from its local environment, but internally it may be very varied with regard to nationalities, social and cultural backgrounds. In Germany, many children therefore find life rather "German." Uta, 15, said to me recently: "It's boring sometimes. All these Germans. In Africa I had friends from everywhere. From Italy, England, America... but here, only Germans." And Frank, 13, complained:

In Africa my friends were more interesting because they came from all parts of the world. And we had more fun because everybody was more open-minded. And you know, my friends' fathers were diplomats and... well, they had good professions, they came from good families. It's more mixed here when it comes to that... I mean, in my class there are children whose fathers are politicians and children whose fathers are just simple workers... it wasn't like that in Africa. And it was international... more international and... well, more people with better professions.

Many children and youths experience themselves as different because they have mixed more with children from around the world and because they are used to a different group of people. Whereas they often only had little social contact with their local environment, they were often exposed to different lifestyles of different (other) expatriate individuals and communities. In Germany, most children do not share that experience. Being exposed to different lifestyles in childhood – even if the local African lifestyle remains excluded – may very well result in being more open towards other cultures than one's own – even if such experiences are made within the boundaries of expatriate communities. Many expatriates – children as well as adults – may not get to know much about Africa, they may not socialize much with Africans while living in Africa – but they may very well get to know Italians, French, British, Americans etc. Expatriate environments may be rather exclusively expatriate, but they may nevertheless be rather international. Many expatriates therefore live a very international life indeed and get to know a lot about all sorts of different cultures existing outside of Africa.

There are also German children in Africa who live a more locally integrated life. They associate mainly with members of the local community, go to local schools etc. They will incorporate more African "ways," they will know a lot more about Africans and African life – but all this does not usually make them feel "more different" or "more disconcerted" in Germany than those children who have lived a less African lifestyle. It seems, living in an expatriate environment in Africa is experienced as being just as different from living in Germany as living in an African environment – not with regard to the

"cultural stuff" but with regard to way of life, to the "feel" of life. Thus, "Germanizing" Germans in Africa might have a (more or less) German Christmas tree for Christmas, they might sing German Christmas songs and eat a goose. All this, nevertheless, feels completely different from celebrating Christmas in Germany. It is differently different than the difference experienced when joining an African Christmas celebration, but it does not necessarily feel less different in retrospect. Petra told me some years ago about her first Christmas in Germany at the age of 14: "I know, we had a German Christmas tree and all that – and we more or less did the same things that we do here now, but it was still all different there, it all feels completely different now. It is just not the same, no way." And a young woman told me about her family's experience in a rather remote African environment: "We used to celebrate Christmas with our African neighbours and friends. And with some of our German colleagues who lived just a few miles away. We joined the Africans in their celebration of Christmas. It was all very different from the German way. And now that we are back in Germany, our own ways of celebrating Christmas feel quite strange." More "Africanized" Germans – children and adults alike – will relate their feeling and being different more to having been influenced by African ways, whereas more "expatriatized" Germans will relate it more to having been influenced by expatriate ways.

Experiencing school: Why German teachers don't like German re-migrants (either)

Listening to experiences of migrant children in general, one thing seems to be quite clear – the majority of German teachers are ill-prepared to deal with culturally heterogeneous groups of students. Many seem to experience other cultural backgrounds than their own first and foremost as problems and nuisances, which need to be overcome. The backgrounds and motivations for their attitudes and approaches may very well differ – and are not my major concern here.¹⁵ Those rooted in more conservative political thought often consider integration a success only if it results in a student feeling and acting like a real German. Anything that does not seem familiar – wearing a headscarf, speaking one's mother tongue, not eating pork, going to mosque, eating with sticks – makes them feel uncomfortable and is in many cases interpreted as a sign of unwillingness on the part of the migrant student to integrate properly. Germans tend to expect being disliked for being German and therefore tend to take migrants' desires and efforts to maintain (some of) their own culture as a sign of the latter's rejection of German culture and German people – because,

15 When criticizing teachers, one is often referred to the difficult situation they work in. Much has been written dealing with teachers' difficult situation. I do not deny that it is indeed difficult, but I am dealing here not with teachers' but with students' problems.

why would they want to maintain their own culture if they liked the German one? As well as that, a concept of identity that connects “culture” and “race” as closely as the German concept does, leaves little room for (internal) variety based on social or cultural influence. In very simplified terms – such influence may make a difference, but it cannot change the major essence of being German.¹⁶ And, more importantly here, due to this interconnection of “culture” and “race” in German thought, it is also difficult to conceptualize “being German” as an identity that can be connected to “being something else” at the same time.

Those who have a more liberal or progressive outlook on the world – especially (former) members of the ‘68-movement and those influenced by it – often have strong feelings about the ideals and ideologies that many of them seemingly fear will not survive them. There is a strong notion of being a very special generation among many of them – especially in Germany, where they cultivate a belief of being the ones who unmasked and exposed the Nazi-generation. But despite their proclaimed anti-authoritarianism and their criticism of German nationalism, many of them tend to have rather dogmatic views when it comes to accepting those who do not concur with their understanding of the world, sometimes reacting in rather authoritarian ways in defence of their concepts of anti-authoritarianism. Mannitz describes in her contribution in this volume how this affects “the Orientals,” but, as I will show, it affects (re-)migrating German children and youths as well.

Many German children and youths have problems catching up after having attended school in Africa. Their experiences at school have a major impact on the process of integration and play a substantial role with regard to developing a sense of being at home.

As mentioned before, the fact that they look the same and speak the same language as everyone else can make integration easier for them than for migrants who look different and speak a different language. On the other hand, there is often no one around who shares their experiences and their background. There are of course teachers, who understand that a child who has attended a school in Africa or elsewhere will have problems catching up and adjusting. But on the whole, German re-migrants – “homecomers” – are expected to function well in Germany.

From what I have been told and from what I have seen, it is not usually all that simple for re-migrant Germans to feel at home at school. Many teachers are experienced as friendly and helpful by repatriating children and youths, others as narrow-minded, ideology-ridden and nasty – and seemingly it takes only a few teachers to make life at school – and beyond – a rather unpleasant experience.

16 On German ideology about being German, see, e.g.: Dumont 1994; Bornemann 1991, 1993; Forsythe 1989.

Thomas, now 32, 13 at the time he came to Germany, told me : "One day I was late for school. When I entered the classroom the teacher said 'Thomas, you are not in Africa any more. This is Germany. This means you have to be on time.'" Now, one would think, this could happen to an African child as well – and it probably could. Yet, I am sure it is less likely, because it is a statement that could easily be regarded as racist if directed at an African child. Thomas told me that he was very angry and that he replied that he had to be on time in Africa as well.

When Susanne, 14 then, had problems in catching up in some of her classes, one of her teachers told her it would be better if she left the *Gymnasium* (German high school leading to *Abitur*/A-levels) to attend the *Realschule* (German high school, leading to *Realschulabschluss*/B-levels) instead, because "you cannot advance from an African bush school to a German *Gymnasium* just like that. I really don't understand how this could happen." Again, an African child might evoke the same kind of thoughts in a teacher, but I suppose he or she would be more careful when it comes to actually putting them into words and directing them at a child.

Peter, 29 at the time of the interview eight years ago, was 14 when he came to Germany and he spoke English fluently. He told me his English teacher – a German – could not deal with that fact. Once Peter – according to his teacher – made a mistake and the teacher remarked: "Maybe this is correct Pidgin English, but we learn Standard English here." This was not the only time such comments occurred, said Peter: "she told me that my English sounded like Bush English to her. And that with that kind of English I might get ahead in Africa, but not in Germany or elsewhere in the civilized world."

Karin, 14 when coming to Germany 14 years ago, described a scene from a geography lesson where at the time they were dealing with the "developing world," taking the example of the African country where Karin had lived. The teacher asked her what languages were spoken there and she named several. Apparently the teacher knew only one or two of the ones she mentioned, saying: "I have never heard about some of these languages you mention. They're probably just dialects." The teacher then asked her about the different ethnic groups living in that country and again Karin named several, of whom the teacher knew only some, saying: "Well, some of those tribes you mention... I don't know whether they still exist... they are not mentioned in my book."

From my own experience I remember that a teacher told us that it rained in Ghana every evening. I said that this is only the case in the rainy season and he reacted promptly: "Of course, it rains in Ghana every evening – Ghana is in the tropics, so you were probably already asleep or just didn't pay attention."

Instead of integrating the specific knowledge of children coming (back) from Africa, letting other students share it, some teachers seem to reject it altogether. Ideologically motivated reactions against German (re-)migrants were also not uncommon.

When Karl misbehaved in class at the age of 12, punching his (white and German) neighbour, his teachers said: "Hey, you are not to play the colonial

master here. I know how these whites behave in Africa, but you are not going to do this here.” And when Karl replied that he had not done what he was being accused of, the teacher said: “I am just telling you to make sure you know where you are now.”

In many cases such accusations are not made as directly as in these examples, but in the framework of dealing with specific topics. One teacher mentioned that a lot of whites in Africa are like “modern slave-holders,” without pointing out Hubert explicitly, who was 11 at the time (1983) and had just come back from Africa some months previous. Soon afterwards he was teased, children pointed at him, shouting “slave-holder, slave-holder!” Such accusations – whether expressed implicitly or explicitly – can have a variety of effects, depending on the character of the child and on other factors related to the respective social environment. Many children react by refusing to integrate, to comply with the rules, to go to school etc. I know of several cases where children ended up not eating. Hubert’s mother told me: “He wouldn’t eat. He wouldn’t go to school. He said he would only eat if we would all go back to Africa.” He finally started to eat again when his parents found a school in a nearby city where the setting was more multicultural and teachers more open-minded.

In general, children and youths attending a boarding school or an international school in Germany are less likely to suffer discrimination and isolation. They are more likely to meet people who share their experiences and teachers who are used to dealing with the different backgrounds of their students. Young children attending boarding school tend to miss their families though, and, depending on the boarding school, may miss the freedom they are used to.

The more openly discriminating reactions of German teachers towards German repatriates seem to have become a lot less during the past decade or so. But even today, even those teachers who are experienced as friendly and helpful usually make little effort to integrate (re-)migrant children’s knowledge and experience into their classes. Michael, who is now 28 told me: “I think this is really strange. Our teacher took us to the Museum for Ethnology [*Museum für Völkerkunde*] once and showed us a replica of an African village they had put up there. He read out some information and all that... but he never ever asked me to tell the class something about what I knew about Africa. I think this is very strange.” I think so too. Interestingly enough, even teachers who show some awareness of the impact of cultural differences when it comes to “real” migrant children – from Turkey for example – show little interest in German repatriates’ cultural background. The latter rarely experience any genuine interest in their past lives, in their experience and knowledge. With no peers to share their experience – a serious disadvantage compared to most “real” migrant children and youths – this lack of understanding and receptiveness encountered at school may very well deepen their feeling of being alone and isolated in what is supposed to be their home country.

Many (German) teachers clearly have little interest in what children and youths have to tell them about social and cultural worlds beyond their own. However, learning about different ways of life and different ways of looking at things – not only elsewhere in the world, but within Germany as well – takes teachers who value and integrate diversity in a class instead of disregarding and suppressing it by ignoring their students' experience and knowledge.

"One day I will go back" – and then they hardly ever do: The African experience in retrospect

Especially children and youths whose experiences of re-migration to Germany are unpleasant tend to idealize their former home. They paint their former lives in Africa in bright colours, a life in stark contrast to the "grey life in Germany" (Tom, 11).

In some cases the idealization of "Africa" or "life abroad" goes along with a condemnation of life in Germany and with withdrawal from social life which – if pursued for long – can hinder children in their development and adolescents from growing up. It makes (re-)integration a painful and sometimes endless experience, which may end up in experiences of failure at different levels of life.

This problem in its more destructive form seems to affect boys and male adolescents more than their female counterparts. I know of several who have lived in Germany for more than 20 years, who are in their mid-thirties to early forties now and still fantasize about "going back" or "going to live abroad one day." Some of them have been back for short periods of time, but most of them have never made any serious attempt to actually establish an adult life "back in Africa." Why have they not done so? The reasons are quite simple, I think. It is not an image of adult life in Africa that these adult men are adhering and clinging to. It is an image of "Africa," of "life in Africa," of "life abroad" connected to childhood and youth. It is an image that would not survive a serious and adult "reality check." It seems, in fact, that the fantasies of going back on the one hand and not making any serious attempt at putting them into practice on the other are connected to the fear of destroying one's bright, but little realistic images. Adult life in Africa – even if it takes place in a white, upper class context – is a life, which involves doing adult stuff – like work, maintaining a house, struggling with shortcomings etc. It is not just beach, parties, servants, swimming, sailing, and having fun. I am not saying that white childhood in Africa is all about that – but it is what these nostalgic images of life in Africa and life abroad in many cases largely consist of. By maintaining such an image and connecting it to (potential) adulthood in Africa – or rather, by not realizing its childhood and youth connotations – it may very well keep a person from growing up and leading a fulfilled adult life in Germany. Why does this problem seem to affect mainly males?

I think the “superiority issue” described above affects men more seriously than women. Boys and young men in particular suffer more when they lose their upper class status and have fewer options for compensating that loss. To (re-)gain an equivalent status, they need to change both their attitudes and their lifestyle. Many expatriate children growing up in an expatriate environment (in Africa) do not get a chance to learn what society will expect from them later on in Germany. Boys learn it even less and boys would need to learn it even more. They are expected to work (themselves) to make things work out for them. As well as that, it is more socially accepted for a woman to share her husband’s than for a man to share his wife’s status, so getting married to a high-ranking spouse to secure or regain one’s high status is an alternative strategy for women more than it is for men. To be successful, to be socially accepted, to achieve something – you are expected to work for it in Germany, especially as a man and especially when not belonging to the upper classes. This is the lesson many expatriates have not learned while growing up in Africa. Boys seem to suffer more when losing social status in Germany, probably because boys – especially adolescent ones – are more status-oriented, they depend on status more to impress their peers, girls, teachers etc. They feel more humiliated by “suddenly” having to work for a higher status that had seemed perfectly natural to them before. At the same time, they are – even more than girls – expected to be successful and tough. As a result, especially male adolescents tend to suffer more seriously and more self-destructively – often carrying their problems with them well into adulthood.

With regard to the bright images, which are maintained or constructed of Africa in Germany – often to compensate for the “grey life here” – I would like to point out that in many such cases of retrospective idealization the images are not so much related to Africa as such but to the kind of life one has lived – or retrospectively imagines having lived – there as a child and youth. It is not necessarily Africa as such that is missed, but particular lifestyles and ways of socializing. As well, due to the lack of peers who share their experience, many just want to escape their social and emotional isolation in Germany. I asked Roger, 17, after having lived in Germany for a year, whether he wanted to go back to the African country where he had lived before. He answered: “I don’t care, as long as it is like it was before. I want the sun to shine, I want to go to the beach, I want to be free again. I want to have people around me who are like me. So I think, any Third World country would be fine with me.”

“Going back” is important at least as a potential option – as a “way out” – for many. “If things don’t work out here, I’ll go back as soon as I can. I’ll manage there for sure,” said Karola (16) to me. Children, who got into closer contact with the cultural environment in Africa, sometimes also feel that liking Germany is somewhat disloyal towards their former home.¹⁷ They feel they need to defend Africa, especially because many people have a rather dis-

17 This has also been found by Pollock & van Reken 2004: 249.

torted picture of it. Anja, 12, said to me a year ago: "I mean, if I say, I like it here, they will think, well, of course, everyone would like Germany better than Africa. Because they think it's all poverty, snakes, hunger, and dirt in Africa. That's why sometimes I say I like Africa better, so that they will ask me why and then I can tell them good things about Africa."

Ways in and ways out

Many children who have lived large parts of their lives within expatriate environments have problems feeling at home and feeling integrated in Germany. Especially in cases where there is no opportunity to return now and then to "check reality" as life goes on, they often idealize what they have left behind and construct a black-and-white image with Germany on the dark and Africa on the bright side. Some of these children tend to isolate themselves from their potential peers in Germany.

Children and youths often simply perpetuate the arguments of their parents. But, whereas they might be saying the same things, in many cases they suffer more. Whereas most parents have lived in Germany before, knowing life there will be different than in Africa, children are often not (as) aware of this. Whereas most parents have maintained some social or family ties to Germany, which they can build on upon their return, many children have not.

As a result of feeling lonely and "different," some children become loners. Others try to make friends but are rejected as arrogant and snobbish by others. Sabine, who came to live with her aunt in Germany at the age of 15, told me (at the age of 31):

I think during my first two years after coming back, I must have been quite a snob. I told everyone about the servants we used to have, about our big house and all. Only when I was gradually made aware by some of the people I really liked about the reasons for all this luxury, did I start being more sceptical. That's when I changed – and that's when my problems with my parents started.

This happens quite a lot as well. Some children and youths brought up in expatriate environments turn against their parents once they become – and are made – aware of the injustices involved in some of their (past) privileges. At an age where young people are prone to be critical of their parents anyway, the process of (re-)integration in Germany in combination with feelings of frustration and rejection can also trigger conflicts between parents and children. Sandra, now 32, said: "After having lived in Germany for a year or so, at the age of 14, I virtually told my parents, they are to blame for the injustices in Africa, for the racism in Africa, and for me having been involved in all that." On the other hand, the reaction might be quite different. A child or young person might defend his or her parents when being attacked by others, like Karl did at the age of 12: "When my teacher told the class that whites in Africa exploit blacks, I told him he is a communist and that it is the white people in Af-

rica who civilize Africa and that Africans needed whites to develop the place. Well, I defended my parents and myself. I did not want to be a child of racists and exploiters.” But setting oneself apart from one’s parents often serves as a (first) step towards integration.

A lot of so-called “Third Culture Kids” in fact only become real “Third Culture Kids” in Germany. They turn to self-exotization – but they do so as a “way in.” In fact, some of them try to “turn black” somehow, they “Africanize” themselves in Germany, thereby finding a place for themselves in German society. From what I have heard and experienced, this is one of the most creative and promising ways of integration, because it combines “being different” with “being here.” Instead of cultivating difference by remaining an “ex-patriate” – someone who is really “out-of”-Germany, they turn – at least a little bit – African IN Germany. Christian, now 29, told me that he started wearing his hair Rastafarian style at the age of 17, two year after he had returned from Africa.¹⁸

I felt different but I looked the same. I wanted to show I am different. So I got dreadlocks to make me look African or... well, in a way, I suppose I wanted to show my African part. I had a friend who was half Ghanaian, half German. He had never been to Ghana, but he was always considered an exotic person somehow, whereas I, having spent 15 years in Africa, was considered the same as everyone else. I felt I was far more different than him. So I got myself dreadlocks and a Rasta cap. I also became an expert in Reggae and Highlife Music. In fact, that’s when I started to feel at home somehow. After turning my African part inside out... Yes, I turned my African part inside out.

Turning the African part inside out” instead of carrying it “inside” enabled Christian to position himself culturally – and socially. He had found a way to integrate his African part by externalizing it, thus making others aware of it. Several years later he cut his dreadlocks off. “I didn’t need them any more. They had lost their importance. I could now do without them. I had somehow found my place in Germany without having lost my African part.

In many cases, children and youths only discover – or (re-)invent – their African identity in Germany. Some convert their expatriate identity into an African identity, because this is a more promising strategy for integrating “being different” with “being here.” Many children (initially) go into hiding in the process of being integrated – and disintegrate as a result, often going unnoticed until things get really bad. Disintegrating may end up in a vicious cir-

18 One of the more popular German TCKs – never labelled as such – is Momo (he has a brother as well, but he is not much of a TCK). He was and still is one of the main figures in the Lindenstraße, a popular series on German TV, which has been running for more than 20 years. Momo had lived in Ethiopia between the age of eight and 18 before returning to Munich with his family. Momo has always worn his hair Rastafarian style.

cle, it leads to the deepening of a child's or youth's desperation, it confirms its feeling of being alone and of being separated from the outside, German, world – which then leads to further disintegration. This can lead to complete emotional isolation, which in some cases can have devastating psychological and physical effects. Some of the people I know have suffered from anorexia or bulimia at some stage in their life. I know of two suicide attempts and of one suicide. There are many ways out of such vicious circles – and ways not to get into them in the first place. Getting out of hiding, externalizing one's experiences and feelings – turning one's self inside out – seems to be a first promising step.

It is usually children and youths who had a chance to learn how to deal with cultural differences and who were not secluded from their (African) environment that manage to integrate best in Germany. It is not those who were brought up in an exclusive – and seclusive – expatriate environment. They may find integration difficult – because things are all so different – but they will not fall into despair. They may rebel, but they will not disintegrate. The more secluded the social life children are part of while living abroad, the more difficult integration is in Germany. German children who have been a part of their local environment in Africa, will not only have become more "Africanised" and know more about Africa and Africans, they usually have less – and less serious – emotional problems when integrating in Germany. They are better able to adjust, to integrate and to make the best of a situation.

It is important for (re-)integrating children and youths to know that they are not the only ones. Therefore finding others sharing one's experience is important. Nevertheless, creating a "TCK" world and ideology of difference as a result of having been brought up in an expatriate environment may well not be primarily a sign of actual third-culturedness, but of a transformation of an expatriate ideology of "natural superiority" over the local African population to a "TCK" ideology of "cultural superiority" over the "ordinary" local German population – a transformation, which neither supports a child's (re-) integration nor its further personal development.

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