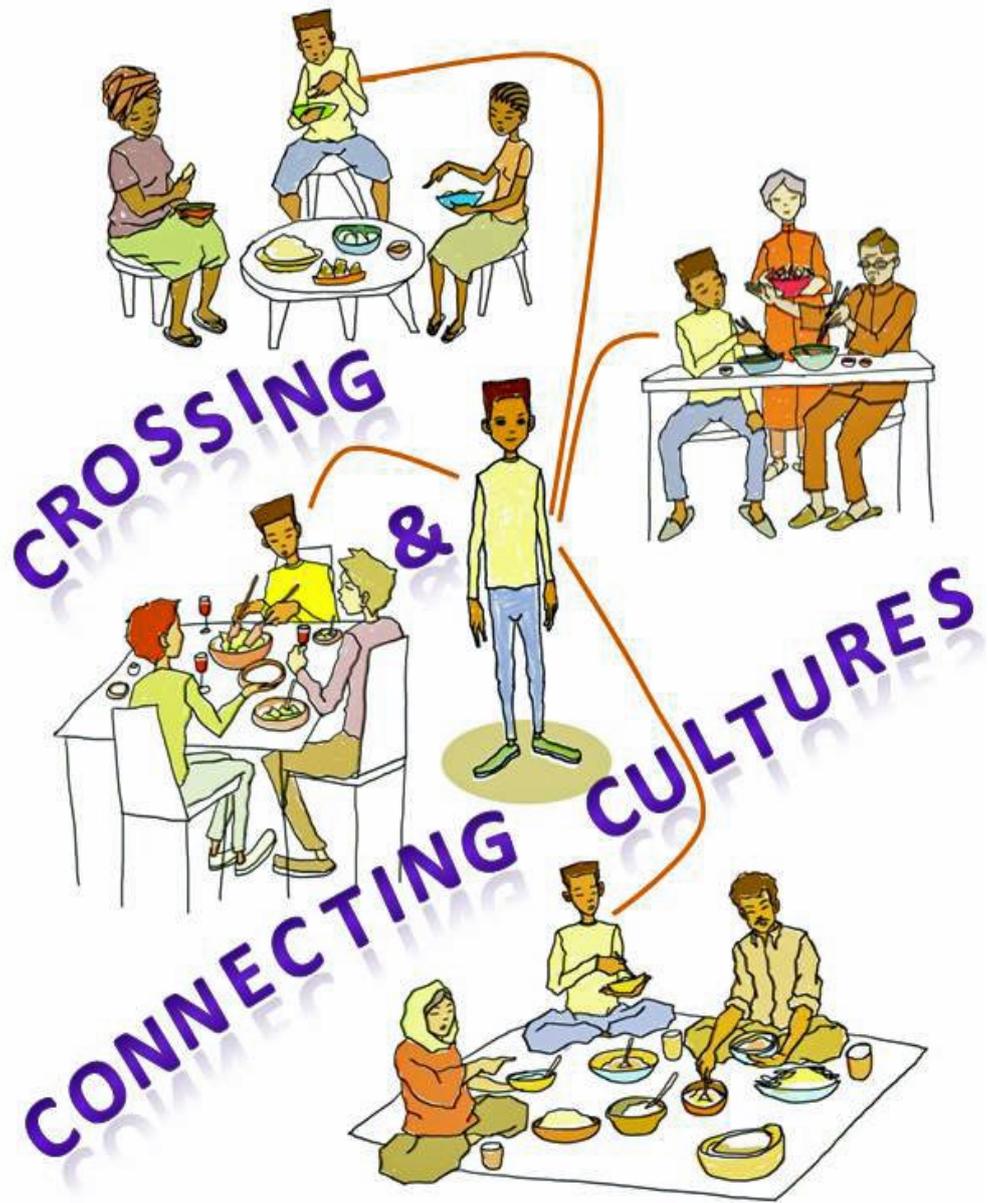




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The Ecology of Developing Cultural Understanding

Executive Editor: Jenny Willis



Commissioning Editor's Introduction

Norman Jackson

In this issue of Lifewide Magazine we are exploring how culture impacts on our learning, development and achievement as we move through and between the social-cultural contexts and spaces in our life. We are also exploring the idea that our ecologies for learning, developing and achieving¹ are the means by which we come to understand and adapt to the new cultural circumstances we encounter, where achievement means learning to function and perform in a cultural context that is not our own and we are seen as an 'outsider'. In this way our cultural understandings develop over a lifetime of encounters with cultures different to our own.

We learn and develop in lots of different contexts simultaneously and 'culture' is often an important aspect of the context. For example, our family, place of work or the educational institution in which we are studying all have their unique cultural characteristics and ways of doing things. Mostly we inhabit contexts that are familiar and culture is taken for granted as we understand what is expected of us and how people are likely to behave in these circumstances: nevertheless we soon know if we do something that runs counter to the prevailing culture. But there are points in our life where we move outside the cultural comfort zone we normally inhabit and encounter an unfamiliar culture or perhaps socialise or work with people who have a different cultural heritage to our own. In such circumstances the normal rules and principles we apply in our familiar cultural settings don't fit very well or not at all and we may well become confused and uncertain as to what is expected or how to behave. Learning in order to understand the new culture becomes a priority and an important goal for our learning ecology. Learning how to be/behaviour in a culture which we do not know is perhaps the most important way in which we develop our sense of what culture means in a social, symbolic and practical sense, and develop the confidence to live, work and socialise in other cultural contexts that are not familiar. Over a lifetime we may accumulate many such experiences and through these develop our understandings and sense of what culture means. Alternatively, if we rarely venture out of our familiar cultural settings our understandings will be limited and remain unchallenged. Perhaps such ignorance is the source of xenophobia that seems to have fuelled the BREXIT campaign.

What is culture?

Culture is a social phenomenon. It is manifested in the characteristics, knowledge and behaviours of a particular group of people, defined by everything from language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts and the way they conduct themselves in everyday social situations - like saying hello and goodbye.

Culture can be viewed as shared patterns of behaviours and interactions, cognitive constructs and understanding that are learned by and through a lifelong and lifewide process of socialization. Thus, it can be seen as the growth of a group identity fostered by social patterns unique to the group² Culture involves inheritance. We learn our cultural knowledge and practices through our parents and wider family, and through our friends and others we share our common heritage with⁴ Organisations too have their own cultures and we learn these through the day to day interactions with colleagues, our work and the organisational systems, policies, procedures and practices.

The concept of culture has an ecological foundation: the word "culture" derives from a French term, which in turn derives from the Latin "colere," which means to tend to the earth and grow, or cultivate and nurture. "It shares its etymology with a number of other words related to actively fostering growth. Culture is not a static 'thing' but something which everyone is constantly creating, negotiating, affirming and expressing.³ Culture is an important concept for individuals' learning and development. Attitudes and orientations are influenced by family and the society we grew up in and the culture of the contexts in which we try to learn (school, college, university) and work (different organisations and contexts) as adults. It becomes particularly important and at times challenging as we journey through life and transition from one cultural context to another, for example when we go to live in another country or we move from one organisation to another or one professional field/discipline to another. Every organisation has its own culture and as we conduct the day to day business of our own organisation we become acutely aware of its culture. Richard Seel⁴ captures the essence of culture when he says it's the emergent result of the continuing negotiations about values, meanings and proprieties between the members of that organisation and with its environment - in other words culture is the *result* of all the daily conversations and negotiations between the members of an organisation about the way we do things here.

We live in a globally connected world that often requires us to communicate and work with people with a different cultural heritage to our own and to experience and sometimes work and socialise in different cultural contexts to our own. We live in a world of inequality, instability and disruption which causes people to move from contexts that are impoverished, oppressed or insecure to seek a better or safer life, or perhaps to seek educational and economic opportunity that is not available to them where they live. The movement of refugees from Syria, Afghanistan and Africa is just one manifestation of this global phenomenon.

Consequently, more and more people have to travel through, engage with and adapt to new cultures to survive not just once but several and sometimes many times in their lives. Being able to move between cultures, work in and adapt to the expectations and norms of a new culture is an important life skill. It always has been but perhaps it is increasingly becoming the norm as human mobility increases and technologies that enable interaction across cultures improve and become more available. In this respect the rise of social media in the last decade has had an enormous impact on the ability of people to communicate, interact and share their cultural knowledge and artefacts in the virtual as well as the real world.

Some personal experiences of other cultures

Lifewide Magazine encourages people to share the personal stories that make up their lives, so I feel honour bound to share my own. Looking back on my life I count myself fortunate in the experiences I have had that have enabled me to develop my understanding of culture. I think my first experience of encountering people with a very different cultural heritage to my own was as a postgraduate research student. We were a truly international group with only 3 of the 12 members from the UK. Having trained as a geologist I anticipated working outside the UK and my first two jobs were in Saudi Arabia where I experienced two very different cultures - the expat way of life and the cultural norms of my host country. There was much about my everyday social experiences that I did not understand and it took me a long time to learn through my own experience and through conversations with people who were more experienced than me, what was expected of me. For example, as a field geologist I was dependent on the equipment and vehicles I needed to do my work but these were supplied by Government stores and garage. I had to learn how to work with the officials and managers of these services and form good relationships with particular individuals in order to achieve what I had to achieve - and that meant spending quite a bit of time drinking tea and chatting! I had to learn the politics and

bureaucratic procedures of a requisition and how to gather the necessary signatures to give my requisition meaning. I had to learn patience and tolerance with attitudes that felt that it was okay to put off today what could be done tomorrow (bukra

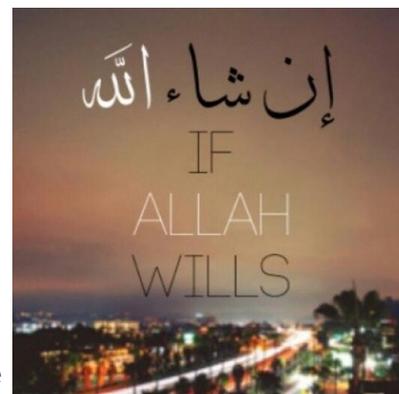
inshallah! tomorrow God willing). I had to learn what motivated people (good friendly relationships, humour and the sharing of stories about family). I had to involve others in my negotiations to help translate my requirements in ways that were acceptable and deliverable. But the eight years I spent living in Saudi Arabia were formative years and they changed my perspective on the world in so many ways and changed the way I appreciated perspectives that were not my own.

Throughout my career I have experienced changes of culture as I started a new job and moved into a new organisation sometimes the change was profound and completely disorienting, especially when compounded with a role that was entirely new to me. In one case I was helped by a mentor who accompanied me during my year long journey of professional induction, but mostly I learnt the ways of the organisation, which were mostly unwritten, through more experienced colleagues who explained various procedures, or told me stories about things that had happened or through my own experiences that revealed what culture actually meant as it was embodied in the behaviours, conversations and decisions of people.

As I have travelled through life I have gained insights into other cultures through travel, through conferences overseas and through short periods of work in other countries. On these occasions I have been helped and guided by new found friends who shared and explained their culture, often helping me to explore it through different experiences.

Families are very important vehicles for transferring and acquiring cultural knowledge and habits from one generation to the next. I acquired much of my own cultural knowledge from my parents but then extended and adapted this knowledge through my own life experiences, passing on my learning to my children.

Families containing more than one cultural heritage are becoming increasingly common. In 2013 I married a lady with a very different cultural heritage to my own, who continually shares her cultural identity with me and our children through



such things as her language and expressions, her cooking, music, history, books, films and many stories. I in turn have shared my English cultural heritage. Over the years we had au pairs from France and Germany who became a part of our family and we theirs. We benefited greatly from them sharing their cultural traditions.

Finally, as a teacher, I have had the privilege of teaching and interacting with young people from many different cultural backgrounds. While at the University of Surrey I recognised the enormous potential of our multicultural campus for developing cultural self-awareness and understanding and we developed something we called Cultural Academy as a pedagogic vehicle for this purpose. I can tell you that being a member of Cultural Academy was one of the most joyful things I have ever done as a higher education teacher.

Ecology of developing cultural understanding

Lifewide Education is developing an ecological model of learning, development and achievement in an attempt to view a person their purposes, ambitions, goals, interests, needs and circumstances, and the social, psychological and physical relationships with the world they inhabit, as inseparable and interdependent.

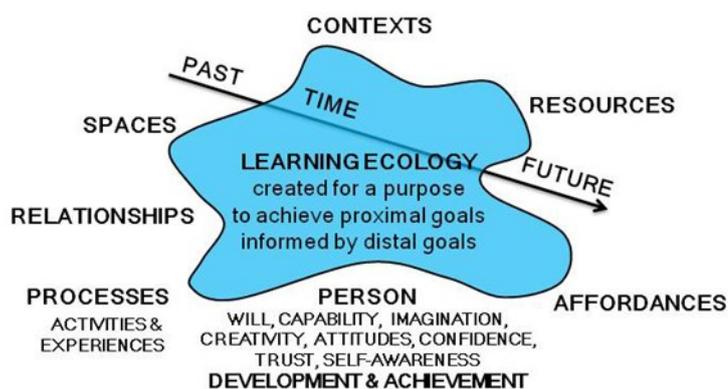


Figure 1 Conceptual tool for explaining the elements and dynamic of an ecology for learning and personal development ⁽¹⁾

Growing out of the exploration of this idea is a belief that our ecologies for learning embrace all the physical, virtual and psychological places and spaces we inhabit in our everyday

PAST
My past learning ecologies provided me with experiences through which I have learnt, developed and become aware of the affordances of my life. I can draw upon this in my new ecology for learning.

RELATIONSHIPS
With myself and with other people - both existing and newly developed, and with things, objects and tools and experiences that provide affordances in my physical, social or virtual environment.

PROCESSES
Enable me to explore the possibilities for action in my environment in order to learn, achieve and develop. They may be learning or task oriented and include the dimensions of time, space and purposeful action. My processes enable me to discover and create the affordances I need to learn, develop and achieve. They enable me to gain the feedback I need to develop my understanding and capability. They provide the means of connecting activities and experiences to create a more meaningful life.

CONTEXTS
The physical and social environment and situations I inhabit with their distinctive cultural and procedural settings physical characteristics and affordances



SPACES
The spaces I inhabit or create for exploration, inquiry & learning. Liminal spaces - between states of understanding. Smooth rather than striated spaces. Dialogic spaces for conversation and discussion. Creative spaces for imagining and reflective spaces for making meaning.

RESOURCES
Resources are things that have value to me in a particular situation or more generally in lots of situations. What makes something a resource is a matter of perception and my ability to utilise it. Resources help me learn and achieve my goals, they include information, knowledge, expertise, mediating artefacts - signs, tools and technologies

BEING A WHOLE PERSON
My learning ecology is self-motivated, self-directed and self-regulated. I have to trust that the ecology I build will enable me to achieve my goals. My will, agency and integrative thinking enable me to pursue my goals recognising the affordances in my life. My capability involves everything I can bring to a situation to deal with it and my self-belief enables me to work with whatever emerges. My honesty, integrity, openness and willingness to share helps me form good relationships with people who trust and respect me. My self-awareness enables me to monitor the effects I am having and change my performance to achieve better results and reflection helps me make better sense of what I have learnt.

AFFORDANCES
Any situation contains ideas, 'objects' - things, people, circumstances, experiences that provide affordances - possibilities for action formed by my interactive relationship with the situation

FUTURE
My learning and development will be drawn upon in future ecologies which may also be inspired and influenced by my distal goals

Figure 2 Explanation of the components of a learning ecology ¹

lives and the learning and the meaning we gain from the contexts and situations that constitute our lives. To help explore and evaluate the idea of a learning ecology we have developed a model (Jackson¹) to explain the elements contained in a learning ecology (Figure 1 & 2)

The proposition underlying this issue of the magazine is that we develop our awareness and understanding of culture through the ecologies we create to learn, act and achieve in a particular social-cultural context, but that our ability to act is dependent to greater or lesser extents on our knowledge and understanding of the culture in that context.

Many of the narratives in this issue describe journeys that people have made in which they created ecologies to gain the cultural understandings they needed in order to learn, act and perform in a new cultural setting. Some experiences, like living in another country with a very different culture and language to our own, are deeply immersive and may result in what has come to be known as 'culture shock': feelings of disorientation, frustration and anxiety when confronted with a world that is unfamiliar and does not perform according to the rules we know. In such *between-society*⁶ circumstances our ecologies may embrace the whole of our life. But in other instances, perhaps where we come into contact with people from a different cultural heritage than our own, in our work or other social setting (*within-society*⁵ cultural contact), the cultural dimension of learning will be one aspect of a broader ecology for learning or achieving something.

One might argue that culture is integral to the context of any social situation, which it is, but mostly, when we are interacting with people with a similar cultural heritage, shared assumptions and values it goes unnoticed. But it seems to me that culture influences every aspect of a learning ecology. Firstly, culture is embodied in the way a person sees and approaches a social situation. The way we think about and evaluate a situation is mediated by our appreciation of the cultural setting and our knowledge of what behaviours are acceptable and expected, and what behaviours are not. Our ability to recognise the affordances acting in a situation is fundamentally influenced by our understandings of the culture within which the situation is embedded. If I do not understand the language, symbols and cultural norms in a situation how can I act in effectively in that context? Without the language to communicate I am dependent on others to interpret and translate their understandings into something I can understand.

Similarly, my environment might be full of resources, mediating artefacts and tools that I could potentially use but these might have cultural meanings and significance that I cannot appreciate because I lack the necessary cultural understandings. Similarly, the physical spaces which contain these artefacts are likely to be difficult to interpret.

Most importantly, the relationships I am able to develop with people in these unfamiliar cultural spaces and situations might be limited because of my inability to communicate and my lack of cultural understanding. Indeed, in such situations one of the main functions of my learning ecology is to learn how to form relationships that will enable me to learn in this unfamiliar cultural context. But as some of the narratives in this issue reveal, the formation of significant relationships with people who act as our cultural guides and translators, is often key to beginning the journey towards cultural understanding.

Perhaps the processes we use to learn and perform is the one element of our learning ecology that we carry with us into new cultural environments. Although these practices might be inappropriate for these new cultural settings and our ability to deploy them might be inhibited. For example, if

we are heavily reliant on internet technology to provide answers and solutions to our questions and these are not available to us then our familiar way of solving problems might be compromised.

Crossing and connecting with other cultures

Culture is everywhere and we are all influenced by the cultural understandings and meanings we have absorbed and embodied in the way we think and act. But culture is carried by people who move from one cultural setting to another sharing their values and assumptions with the people they 'touch'. The idea of 'crossing and connecting with other cultures' is a way of recognising and exploring the affordance for learning about cultures as we journey across and through the different cultural contexts of our life, meeting and forming relationships with people from different cultural heritages and learning about culture through these relationships and experiences. In exploring the idea of crossing and connecting cultures we are also considering the role that higher education institutions play in using the affordances of their multicultural campus societies to enable students to develop new cultural understandings and in helping and enabling their international students to adapt to their new cultural setting.

I am proud of that part of British culture that welcomes people from other countries and cultural backgrounds who want to share their culture with us. But as I finish this introduction on the day we voted to leave the EU I do despair. I believe that affordance for a better world lies in our society's willingness to be open, inclusive, connected and collaborative not closed, exclusive, disconnected and separate as those who wanted to leave the EU seem to want. Lifewide Education will endeavour to sustain these principles with our European friends several of whom have shared insights they have gained as they have journeyed across cultures in their life.

The editorial team hopes that you enjoy this issue and we have set up a new Google+ space to encourage discussion around the issues raised. It's open to anyone who is interested so please join us and share your own perspectives <https://plus.google.com/u/0/communities/100364215733010324333>

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Guest Editors' Foreword

Maja Jankoska & Alfredo Gaitan



Maja Jankowska is a Lecturer in Educational Psychology at the University of Bedfordshire. Her work has always been inter-disciplinary, crossing the boundaries of psychology, education and cultural studies. In her previous role as a Research Fellow at the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at the University of Bedfordshire, she worked with other staff to help and support the implementation of PDP and the development of pedagogic research across the university. Her interests are in qualitative methodology, personal development, processes of identity development, cultural aspects of teaching, learning and therapy, internalisation of education, meaningful learning and creativity.



Alfredo Gaitán was born in Bogotá, Colombia, where he studied Psychology. After working for a short spell in organisational psychology, he decided to return to university and pursue an academic career. He later travelled to the UK and obtained a PhD from Southampton University and went back to lecture in Colombia for five years, before returning to the UK. He has worked for 20 years at the University of Bedfordshire. Alfredo continues to lecture and do research on topics of social psychology such as aggression, social identity and prejudice, but also (cross-)cultural psychology. He has also developed a strong interest in teaching and learning. Two teaching fellowships have allowed him to explore learner development and construction of knowledge. His research draws on ethnography, discourse analysis, grounded theory and narrative analysis. Alfredo has also supported the use of ePortfolios and patchwork text assessments.

This issue of Lifewide Magazine explores the significance and impact of culture on our learning and development, especially as we move through and across many different socio-cultural contexts in our lives. We believe that this topic is of paramount importance and comes at a time when the contributions of many migrants to their host societies, as well as the significance of learning from each other, are under threat.

The reader will encounter many narratives from people, young and not so young, who lived or worked in different cultures. Many of them include descriptions of painful or difficult experiences which often led to the narrators' feeling alienated, 'otherised', not fitting in or even being excluded. This contrasts with sociological and economic discourses that emphasise the benefits of movement of people across countries, in social and financial terms (both to the migrants and the host countries). The stories of teaching English abroad in Norman Jackson's article¹ portray experiences of intense culture shock and one's first reaction might be to be critical of the naivety of someone venturing into another culture without first preparing themselves. But how can one ever be prepared for being uprooted through conflict or natural catastrophe? How can anyone prepare for something that one cannot imagine exists? The psychological costs of moving across cultures can be considerable. They can include loss of confidence, self-esteem and sometimes, have a significant impact on well-being (depression, anxiety, etc.), as well as various disconnections, disruptions and challenges (see the students' stories in Maja's articles^{2,3} or Kamila Sobiesiak's narrative⁴). For many migrants going to work and live in another culture often means an initial de-skilling, loss of

cultural capital (a reference to Bourdieu made by Lynne Crook⁵ in her article) and a difficult phase of adaptation and adjustment. An initial shock and unpreparedness or certain degree of naivety about the host country is reported in many stories of crossing cultures. However, most of the stories showcase immense learning and personal growth that can be an outcome of overcoming challenges. As Irving and Williams^{6:234} argue, experiencing personal growth can change a person 'for good'. It is impossible to forget what has been learned, 'the clock cannot be turned back'.

Many authors in this issue developed various strategies and personal strengths in order to adapt and adjust to the challenges that they have encountered. For example, in her article, Melissa Hanh⁷ suggests 'engaging our curiosity, learning about the other's culture, developing empathy and moving towards a more productive resolution'. As Maja argued in an article in issue 16 Lifewide Magazine, remaining open and willing to learn from culturally diverse others and putting ourselves into entirely new and unfamiliar contexts are essential dispositions for lifelong and lifewide learning in the modern, cosmopolitan world⁸. By putting ourselves in new contexts, we encounter different ideas, perspectives and experiences which merge and diverge, are integrated or abandoned. In that way we broaden our horizon and expand our repertoire of languages, traditions, customs and ways of being and behaving in the world². We can also, at least at times, feel a greater sense of achievement, self-trust and personal empowerment^{2,3,4,9}; Mezirow^{10:3} suggests the beginning of transformative learning starts with a realisation that 'there are no fixed truths or totally definite knowledge, and because circumstances change [...] a continuous effort to

negotiate contested meanings [is required]'. Sadly, in the aftermath of BREXIT, as Michael Tomlinson¹¹ explains in his article opportunities for such meaningful cross-cultural exchanges are undermined and at risk of declining.

Those of us who have moved in and out of different cultures and have had the experience of adapting to new settings often become more flexible and agile learners⁸. Ildiko Eck¹² proposes that after settling in and achieving 'contentment', we realise that there is more to explore and achieve – this, in turn, leads to dissatisfaction and a search for yet another adventure. In our article⁹ we refer to our own 'insatiable desire to learn' which prompts us to engage with complexity and actively search for ways to understand and preserve (rather than reduce) it.

Many authors emphasise the importance of suspending judgement and questioning, 'letting go of knowing' (Jen Margaret, cited by Reeves) – in order to understand others¹³ worldview we need to let go of what we have always known and engage with different ways, tools, resources and types of knowledge.

We would like to argue that it is not merely about 'letting go' of what we know, but learning to combine the 'old' knowledge, beliefs, customs and traditions with the 'new' – this is an example of ecology for cross-cultural learning. It immensely enriches our lives. As Dory Reeves¹⁴ explains in her article, many people who are in a 'majority culture' are not interested in learning about and engaging with 'minority cultures' and hence it is those from minorities that 'have to learn about the majority culture in order to survive and progress'. This is very much evident in many narratives. It may be that migrants and other minority groups have important stories to tell and contributions to make, but as we emphasised in our article on being immigrant academics⁹ the (majority) audience may not always be receptive.

Many of the contributors emphasised identity as a developmental process – something that is not fixed, but continues to evolve over time. This process can be accelerated in unfamiliar social and cultural environments, with identities being co-constructed (with host and home cultures interacting, mingling) and reconstructed (like a phoenix rising

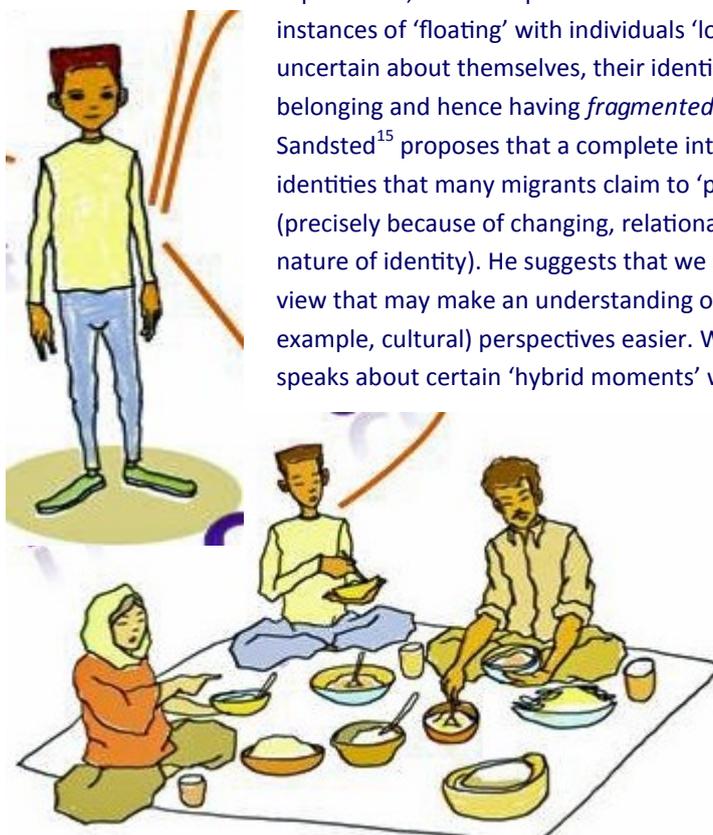
from ashes). Many authors talked about psychological deconstruction and difficult experiences to begin with (even to the point of rejection of own identity, see, e.g. Aneta's story²), but then eventually emerging usually successful, well adapted, but 'composite' individuals. Those, often initial experiences, are conceptualised in Kamila's story⁴ as instances of 'floating' with individuals 'losing their ground' – uncertain about themselves, their identity, place and belonging and hence having *fragmented* identities. Sandsted¹⁵ proposes that a complete integration of 'hybrid' identities that many migrants claim to 'posses' is impossible (precisely because of changing, relational and contextual nature of identity). He suggests that we can achieve a *partial* view that may make an understanding of different (for example, cultural) perspectives easier. With this in mind, he speaks about certain 'hybrid moments' where 'double

consciousness' emerges and hybridity settles down, freezes 'into a moment of contextual performativity', before it moves again. We think of these moments as developmental

positions of 'insight', which allow an individual to 'crossbreed' different cultural viewpoints and feel as someone who is no longer 'pure'¹⁶.

It is possible to sometimes experience moments of 'double consciousness' and, at other times, identify with one of the perspectives more or feel alienated by a perspective we are unable to grasp or incorporate. Hence we often find ourselves somewhere in-between 'here' and 'there'. In many of the narratives in this issue, one could see that this sense of belonging that 'double consciousness' moments offer is often interspersed with feelings of alienation or nostalgia for the ('pure?') past identity and a life of, perhaps, less cultural complexity. When inhabiting new and often very different spaces and places it is important to see the affordances in them – spot the opportunities and possibilities through which we may personally develop and grow⁷.

Many of the authors in this issue emphasise the importance of developing meaningful and nurturing relationships. Like in the story of the Canadian trying to teach English in Spain without knowing any Spanish¹, the breakthrough, the 'perspective change' can result from receiving simple but timely advice or feedback or support from a peer, a boss or a



mentor, or from listening to your students¹⁷ What is also apparent is that we have to be open to feedback and be willing to act on it. In this way a change in perspective is linked to the dispositions that enable us to change and accept things as they are and not as we had previously thought they were.

Perhaps the most valuable outcome of border-crossing is the fact that it forces us to question our own ways of being in the world and our own assumptions about how the social world works. Although not explicitly referring to creativity, many of the writers in this issue had to employ creative strategies in order to survive and find ways of navigating unfamiliar

contexts. Creativity, we argue, is an essential ingredient in lifelong and lifewide learning and it is through creativity, often sparked by interaction with diverse others, that progress is made in society. While we acknowledge the value of defining such 'global skills and cultural awareness' that would prepare students for 'culturally diverse and digitally interconnected communities'¹⁸, we believe that the OECD's three principles of global competence (equality, cohesion and sustainability) suggest three of the greatest challenges the world faces today, and therefore, there is a lot of work to be done before there can be an agreed framework. So, we will have to 'watch this space' as they say.

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Key Characteristics of Culture

Helen Spencer-Oatey

Helen's background is in both psychology and linguistics, and throughout her career she has worked at the interface of the two disciplines. Her first teaching experience was in Hong Kong, where she taught English language to sixth-form (pre-university) students, as well as to adults taking evening classes at a British Council language school. Later she spent 7 very happy years working at Shanghai Jiaotong University, training teachers of English language from colleges and universities in the eastern region of China. After completing her PhD at Lancaster University, she lectured at the University of Luton for 10 years and established the first MA in Intercultural Communication in the UK. In 2002 she started managing the major inter-governmental eChina-UK Programme on behalf of the Higher Education Funding Council for England, and found it a transforming experience. She joined the University of Warwick in September 2007.



These notes are taken from a compilation of quotations 'What is Culture?'.⁽¹⁾ They provide a useful introduction to the idea of culture so that subsequent contributions in this magazine can be better appreciated.

We inhabit a multitude of cultures

Culture is *shared* by at least two or more people, and of course real, live societies are always larger than that. There is, in other words, no such thing as the culture of a hermit. If solitary individual thinks and behaves in a certain way, that thought or action is idiosyncratic, not cultural. For an idea, a thing, or a behavior to be considered cultural, it must be shared by some type of social group or society. Ferraro⁽²⁾

The lifewide dimension of learning highlights the fact that people inhabit many different spaces and places across their lives simultaneously. In these different spaces we interact in different ways with different people.

Hofstede³ argues that almost everyone belongs to a number of different groups and categories of people at the same time, people unavoidably carry several layers of mental programming within themselves, corresponding to different levels of culture. For example:

- a national level according to one's country (or countries for people who migrated during their lifetime);
- a regional and/or ethnic and/or religious and/or linguistic affiliation, as most nations are composed of culturally different regions and/or ethnic and/or religious and/or language groups;
- a gender level, according to whether a person was born as a girl or as a boy;
- a generation level, which separates grandparents from parents from children;
- a role category, e.g. parent, son/daughter, teacher, student;
- a social class level, associated with educational opportunities and with a person's occupation or profession;
- for those who are employed, an organizational or corporate level according to the way employees have been socialized by their work organization.

Defining culture

Culture is a notoriously difficult term to define. In 1952, the American anthropologists, Kroeber and Kluckhohn⁽⁴⁾, critically reviewed concepts and definitions of culture, and compiled a list of 164 different definitions. Here are a few of them.

'Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiment in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other, as conditional elements of future action.' Kroeber & Kluckhohn^(4:181) cited by Adler^(5:14)

'Culture consists of the derivatives of experience, more or less organized, learned or created by the individuals of a population, including those images or encodements and their interpretations (meanings) transmitted from past generations, from contemporaries, or formed by individuals themselves.' Schwartz 1992 cited by Avruch^(6:17)

When we consider the lifewide dimension of learning it means that we are inhabiting and experiencing multiple socio-cultural settings every day of our life. Intuitively we learn to manage these different cultural contexts and our thinking and behaviours in them is integral to the multiple identities we hold.

'[Culture] is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another.' Hofstede ^(3:5) '... the set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors shared by a group of people, but different for each individual, communicated from one generation to the next.' Matsumoto ^(7:16)

'Culture is a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member's behaviour and his/her interpretations of the 'meaning' of other people's behaviour.' Spencer-Oatey 2008: 3 ⁽⁸⁾

'organisational culture is the emergent result of the continuing negotiations about values, meanings and proprieties between the members of that organisation and with its environment - in other words culture is the *result* of all the daily conversations and negotiations between the members of an organisation about the way we do things here'. Seel ⁽⁹⁾

Three levels of cultural manifestation

In analyzing the culture of a particular group or organization it is desirable to distinguish three fundamental levels at which culture manifests itself: (a) observable artifacts, (b) values, and (c) basic underlying assumptions (Figure 1 Schein⁽¹⁰⁾, Spencer-Oatey⁽¹⁾)

Schein^(2:3-4) describes the three levels of cultural manifestation in the following terms:

At the level of visible artifacts of analysis is tricky because the data are easy to obtain but hard to interpret. We can describe "how" a group constructs its environment and "what" behaviour patterns are discernible among the members, but we often cannot understand the underlying logic – "why" a group behaves the way it does.

To analyze why members behave the way they do, we often look for the *values* that govern behaviour, which is the second level in Figure 1. But as values are hard to observe directly, it is often necessary to infer them by interviewing key members of the organization or to content analyze artifacts such as documents and charters. However, in identifying such values, we usually note that they represent accurately only the manifest or *espoused* values of a culture. That is they focus on what people say is the reason for their behaviour, what they ideally would like those reasons to be, and what are often their rationalizations for their behaviour. Yet, the underlying reasons for their behaviour remain concealed or unconscious.

To really understand a culture and to ascertain more completely the group's values and over behaviour, it is imperative to delve into the *underlying assumptions*, which are typically unconscious but which actually determine how group members perceive, think and feel. Such assumptions are themselves learned responses that originated as espoused values.

But, as a value leads to a behaviour, and as that behaviour begins to solve the problem which prompted it in the first place, the value gradually is transformed into an underlying assumption about how things really are. As the assumption is increasingly taken for granted, it drops out of awareness.

Taken-for-granted assumptions are so powerful because they are less debatable and confrontable than espoused values. We know we are dealing with an assumption when we encounter in our informants a refusal to discuss something, or when they consider us "insane" or "ignorant" for bringing something up. For example, the notion that businesses should be profitable, that schools should educate, or that medicine should prolong life are assumptions, even though they are often considered "merely" values.

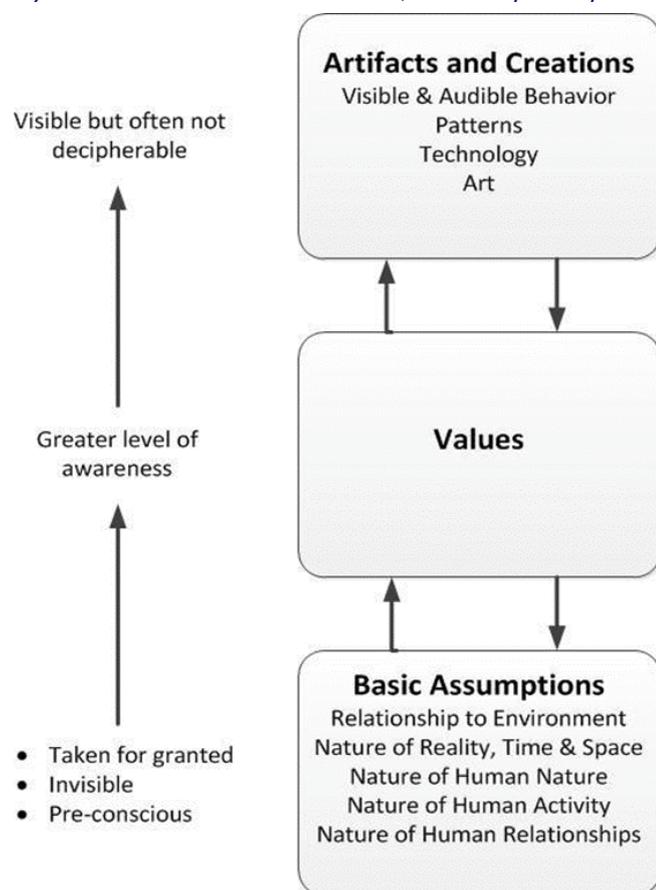


Figure 1: The Levels of Culture & their Interaction
(Minor adaptation of Schein ^{2:4})

Culture, human nature and personality

Culture is learned, not inherited. It derives from one's social environment, not from one's genes. Culture should be distinguished from human nature on one side, and from an individual's personality on the other (Figure 2), although exactly where the borders lie between human nature and culture, and between culture and personality, is a matter of discussion among social scientists.

Human nature is what all human beings have in common: it represents the universal level in one's mental software. It is inherited with one's genes; within the computer analogy it is the 'operating system' which determines one's physical and basic psychological functioning. The human ability to feel fear, anger, love, joy, sadness, the need to associate with others, to play and exercise oneself, the facility to observe the environment and talk about it with other humans all belong to this level of mental programming. However, what one does with these feelings, how one expresses fear, joy, observations, and so on, is modified by culture. Human nature is not as 'human' as the term suggests, because certain aspects of it are shared with parts of the animal world.

The *personality* of an individual, on the other hand, is her/his unique personal set of mental programs which (s)he does not share with any other human being. It is based upon traits which are partly inherited with the individual's unique set of genes and partly learned. 'Learned' means: modified by the influence of collective programming (culture) *as well as* unique personal experiences.

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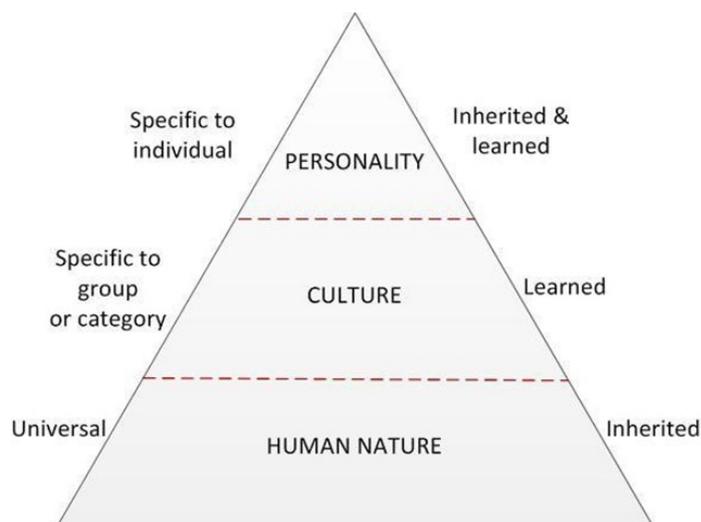


Figure 2

Three levels of uniqueness in human mental programming (Hofstede^{3,6})

Editor's comment: *The lifewide dimension of life means that we are often inhabiting and performing in several different social cultural settings simultaneously. The question for our exploration of 'crossing and connecting cultures' is what happens when we journey through cultures that are not our own? When we encounter the artifacts of another culture and the thinking and behaviours associated with using such artifacts. Or when, in order to achieve something in that culture, we try to use existing artifacts or even create new artifacts. What happens when we enter into conversations that are founded on assumptions that may seem at odds with the assumptions we make and values that are different to our own?*

The focus of this issue is on how we learn another culture? We all have to do it when we enter a new organisation but when we go to live and work or travel in another country with a language and culture that is very different to our own the challenges are much greater. And what happens to us when we assimilate new cultural understandings? Over a lifetime do we become a hybrid cultural being or do we stick to the culture of our upbringing? These are all fascinating questions to explore.

Lifewide Survey of Migrants' Experiences of Crossing Cultures

Jenny Willis



Jenny is Executive Editor of Lifewide Magazine. She has extensive experience of teaching languages in multi-ethnic Inner London and, in retirement, teaches many new migrants from such countries as Korea, the Middle East and Sri Lanka. She has had a lifelong interest in culture, living a peripatetic life since her birth in Singapore. She is married into a Tamil family which has been forced through ethnic violence into migration to all continents of the globe.

1 Background

In May 2016, we invited people to take part in a survey designed to complement this edition of Lifewide Magazine. We explained our objectives :

This is a brief survey that aims to get the views of people who have moved to a new country about the way in which culture has shaped their experience.

The survey was conducted on line through Survey Monkey. It was entirely anonymous and no-one's email contacts were recorded. This was in the hope that it would encourage participants to speak freely.

Initially, we invited personal contacts, with the request that they pass on the invitation to anyone they thought would be interested. We are very grateful to those who took part and shared the survey link with others.

The survey was due to run for a month, but the deadline was extended to maximise participation. It is still open for any interested readers to take part. The link is at: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/8JF2VD6>. Further data received will be analysed and fed in to future articles on this research.

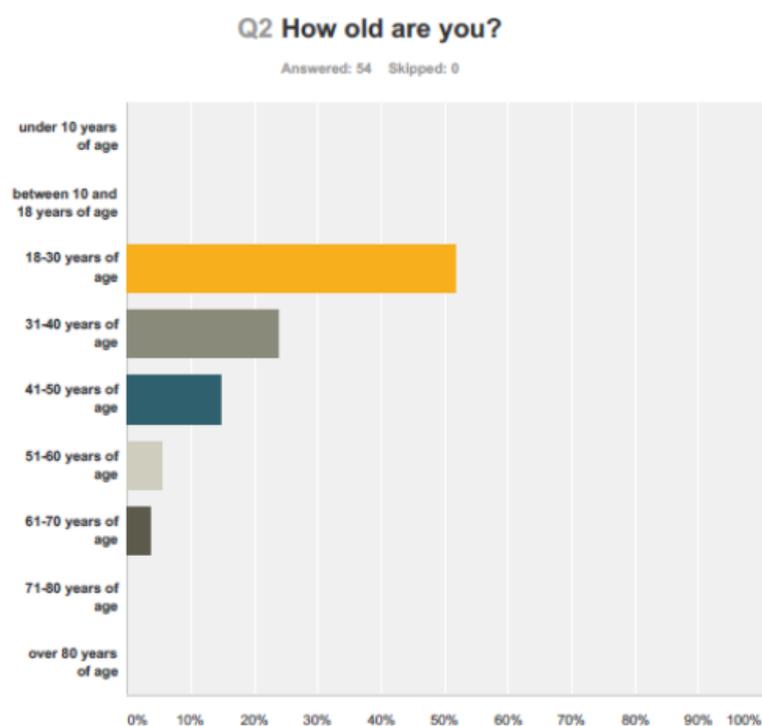
2 Respondents

At the time of writing (23 June 2016), 54 responses have been received. Women outnumber men at 35 (65%) to 19 (35%).

Age

Figure 1 disaggregates respondents by age group. The largest group represented is those aged 18 to 30 years (51.85%), followed in descending order through each age to 61 to 70 (3.7%).

Figure 1, Respondents by Age Group



Country of origin

Their countries of origin were diverse, including developed and less well developed nations, from most continents of the earth:

Australia (1)	Bulgaria (1)
Bermuda (1)	Brazil (1)
Canada (1)	Colombia (1)
German (5)	France (2)
UK (5)	Greece (1)
Hong Kong (1)	Hungary (3)
Ireland (1)	India (2)
Iran (1)	Italy (1)
Jordan (1)	Kenya (1)
Sri Lanka (1)	Mauritius (1)
Malaysia (4)	Nigeria (2)
Norway (1)	New Zealand (1)
Poland (5)	West Bank (1)
Sierra Leone (1)	Syria (1)
Trinidad & Tobago (1)	Taiwan (1)
Zimbabwe (1)	

Country migrated to

The countries to which they have migrated are also varied, but with a clear majority choosing the UK. This does not imply that the international trend would focus on the UK, but may simply be explained by the fact that the survey was conducted in the UK and known contacts were invited to participate. The results were:

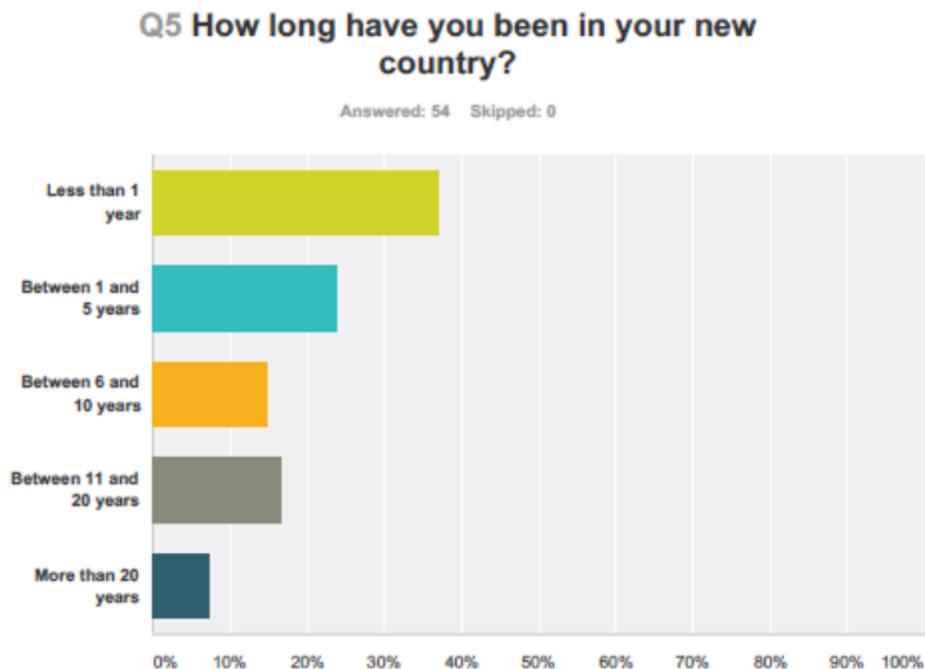
Bulgaria (1)	Canada (2)
China (1)	United Kingdom (41)
Ireland (1)	Italy (1)
Mozambique (1)	New Zealand (1)
West Bank (1)	Sierra Leone (1)
Turkey (1)	Usbekistan (1)

Time in new country

Respondents were asked how long they have been in their new country. Responses are shown in figure 2.

20 (37%) are very recent migrants, having been in their new country for less than one year. 13 (24%) migrated between 1 and 5 years ago, and 8 (15%) between 6 and 10 years ago. Together, this makes 76% of our respondents, suggesting that there may have been a great increase in migration over the last 10 ten years. This is, of course, one of the most controversial issues for the UK as we vote in the referendum on whether to remain part of the EU¹.

Figure 2



However, if we look at the remaining 2 groups, they show that there have been steady numbers of migrants in each of the periods researched.

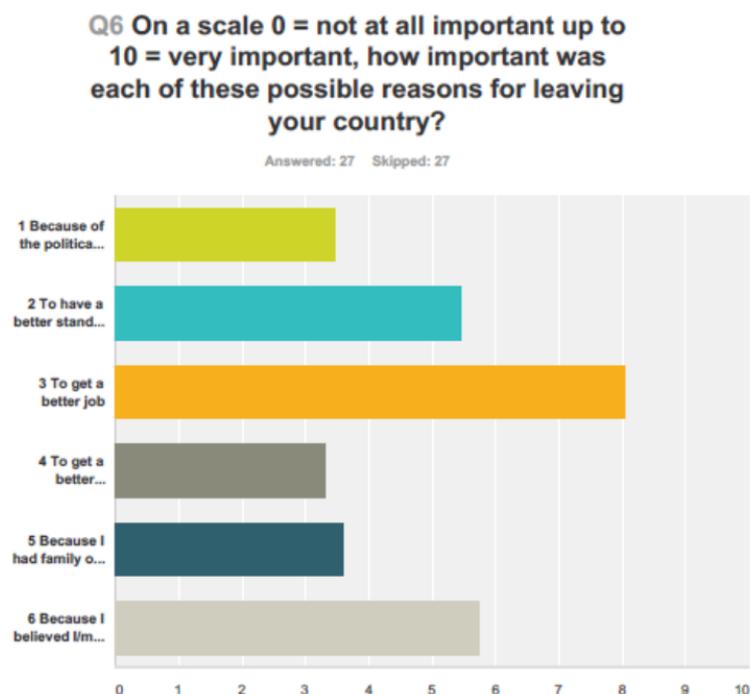
3 Respondents' views on migration

We can speculate on the possible political or personal reasons for migration. The next two questions asked respondents to say how important to them suggested factors were, using the scale 0 = not at all important to 10 = very important.

Reasons for migrating

In this question, a series of possible factors was given, and each was scored individually. This was apparently a sensitive issue, with half the respondent group choosing not to reply or feeling the need to modify potential reasons. The quantitative results are set out in figure 3.

Figure 3



For this group of people, the aspiration to get a better job was most significant, with it scoring a mean 8.04 out of 10. Next was the desire for their family to have a better future in that country (5.75) followed closely by the wish for a better quality of life (5.48), but these were considerably less important than work prospects.

The political situation in their country of origin was less significant than might have been expected, with a mean score of 3.46. Having family or friends in the new country was also less important than anticipated, mean 3.62. The wish for a better education for their children scored only 3.32, but it should be noted that 7 of these 27 respondents did not (yet) have children.

14 respondents added narrative comments, offering more detailed reasons for migrating. These are reproduced in their own words:

- ⇒ For further professional training
- ⇒ For study opportunities
- ⇒ For the challenge
- ⇒ Our plan was to live in Greece but we couldn't. My then boyfriend and now husband, had a US passport and was not allowed to stay in Greece. We had to move.
- ⇒ Studying abroad for a year
- ⇒ To be more qualified for my professional career
- ⇒ To experience a different culture and explore different work opportunities. I lived in London from 1996-1999.
- ⇒ To experience a different culture and learn from it (purposeful cultural exposure)
- ⇒ To get better university education
- ⇒ To get experience living and working overseas
- ⇒ To study (2)
- ⇒ University
- ⇒ Wanted to see the world

Some of these reasons are the same, if expressed slightly differently. With one exception, they are self-determined, with the expectation of increasing life/career prospects

Anxieties on migrating

The next question explored possible anxieties that respondents may have had on leaving their country. The same scoring system was used as before. Again, only 27 people replied to this question.

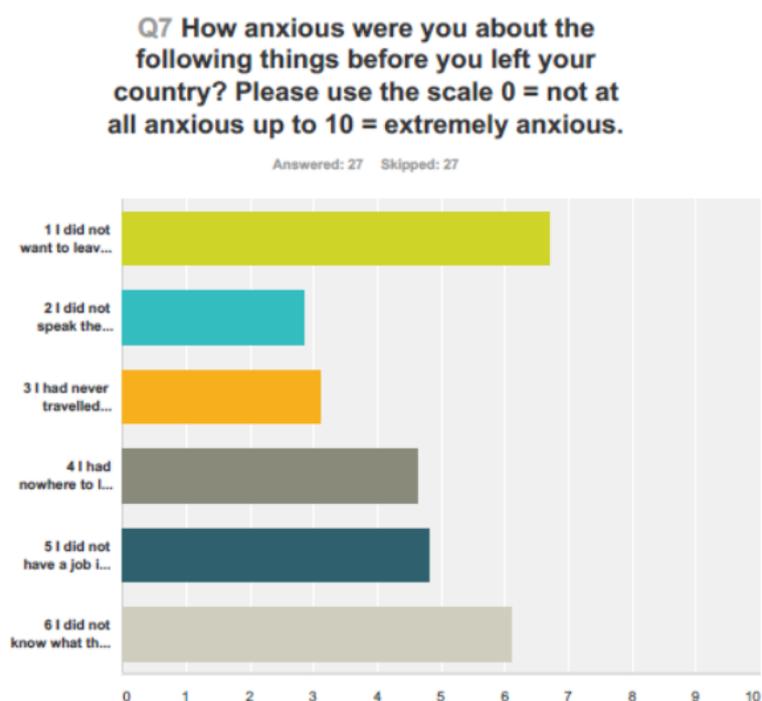
Figure 4 indicates that leaving family and friends was the greatest source of anxiety (mean score 6.7), but this was a weaker factor than the strongest

motivator (figure 3). Not knowing what was expected by the educational system or workplace was almost as important to respondents (mean, 6.12).

Practical concerns related to having a place to work or live were the next significant factors, 4.83 and 4.64 respectively.

The factor of least significance was not being able to speak the language (mean 2.85). This may be because they already spoke that language, so the finding should be treated with caution.

Figure 4



The following additional comments were made:

- ⇒ I was not very anxious as I saw it more as an adventure. I was teaching in a school in Dublin like many friends and one was losing her job, so suggested we go to London for a year. She is still there -since 1996 in the same school. We got jobs quite quickly and I was delighted that mine was a short maternity leave cover. I did some computer courses in a local authority college (Leyton) and also a 3 week course on Oxford St. I then got a few jobs - one for a day initially which turned into a year... and then got a job as a teacher in the computer college on Oxford St. I did various job interviews - some for the fun of it to challenge myself even applying. A dear friend who was a fashion designer in Dublin could not believe that I (as a Home Economics teacher who had specialised in my final year in Fashion & Textiles) had got an interview to be the fashion designer Catherine Walker's assistant...at a time when she was designing for Princess / Lady Diana. I also did an interview with LAMDA and a few universities. I reluctantly returned from London for a job in a college in Dublin in Oct 1999.
- ⇒ Since I had a sponsor and knew everything about my stay in UK, I was not anxious.
- ⇒ I was not sure about the organisation itself and the way it was organised.
- ⇒ I followed my heart!

The first, lengthy, response reveals the sense of adventure that we see in Norman Jackson's student narratives (page), and the determination to have a go at anything. The final comment implies this same sense of self-trust.

The second comment reminds us of the confidence we can derive from careful planning, whilst the third shows how anxious we may be when facing the unknown.

4 Perceptions of 'culture'

The next question was open-ended, inviting respondents to explain what the word 'culture' means to them, and how culture is expressed.

In its simplest form, the answer was 'Form of someone's life' or 'Way of life' but other respondents were more expressive, though one did reply

- ⇒ Now that's some question... How am I supposed to fit the equivalent of a PhD thesis into such a tiny box?

Most responses imply or even explicitly note the relativity of 'culture' and its group context. Typical of such comments were:

- ⇒ Culture means to me the unique way of leading a lifestyle, thinking about the world around us, traditions. It is generally shown by behaviour, reaction in a certain situation, and much more so in the relation between people, how they communicate and treat each other.
- ⇒ Culture describes all things which make a nation/ethnic group different than the others. It is shown in many ways but is most evident in the way people behave with each other and their outlook on life.

Comments go further than geographical boundaries, referring to time and tradition:

- ⇒ It is really difficult to explain this in few words. Culture is something that you feel. It is related to the principles of each region and the way they live their lives. It is also related to their past and its influence in present and future

For one person there is a distinction between Culture and culture:

- ⇒ Culture is a very broad concept which encompasses both Culture (often broad national) and many different 'small' cultures. We are immersed in culture and it provides us with 'pointers' in our lives (set of rules, beliefs, norms, behaviours) which are socially constructed, mediated and shared. I think we see the impact of culture best when we are exposed (for longer, not just short travel 'visits') to another culture - this challenges our often taken for granted assumptions and beliefs. Culture is shown in many different ways - through customs, traditions, folk beliefs, all the way through to music, poetry etc. but it is always shown in social context.

Some respondents observe that we may not be conscious of our cultural practice, but they are there. For instance:

- ⇒ I believe our culture is what we do - consciously and sometimes unconscious as a people. It is our language, customs, norms and also how we prioritise some aspects of our lives -e.g. in our social lives the influence of music, or literature; our approach to work or how we deal with lifestages e.g. death / mourning or bringing up children.

- ⇒ Culture, to me, is the intangible force that ties a group of people together, shown through acknowledgment of shared experience.

These comments have included answers to the second question, how we express culture. Essentially, it is revealed through our behaviour, beliefs and language, and informs our Culture:

- ⇒ by the way people dress, self expression, beliefs etc.
- ⇒ thinking, backgrounds, identity, art, knowledge
- ⇒ traditions, language, system
- ⇒ People's customs, rituals, faith, behaviour, reaction to things,
- ⇒ A collection of rituals, beliefs, values and practices displayed by a group of people, also manifest in art, architecture, religion, medical, legal and economic practices.

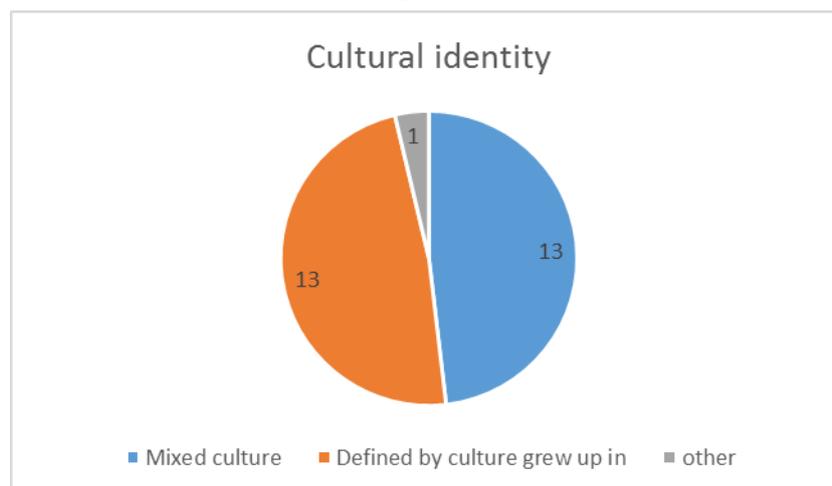
One respondent understood the question as their judgement on how they had been treated in their new culture, replying

- ⇒ Has been good so far. Very welcoming.

5 Personal cultural identity

The next research question asked respondents with which culture they most identified, their original, a mixture of that and their new culture, or other. As figure 5 shows, of the 27 people who replied to this question, there was a balance (48% each) between those who felt they were a combination of their old and new cultures and those who retained their original identity, with only one individual saying they felt 'other'. This was not explained.

Figure 5



6 Cultural experience

In an open-ended question, respondents were asked to identify the most significant differences between their original and new culture. A few recurrent themes emerged in their comments.

New culture is more relaxed

- ⇒ The mentality of Irish people is very different to the Polish mentality, where you can still see the post communist regime remnants. The migration has let me leave behind the martyrdom and jealousy, which are very common traits of Polish personality, which I haven't noticed when lived in my home country.
- ⇒ Way of communicating. My country's way of communication seems to be more aggressive and less polite than my new country. Also it seems as the people are more relaxed in my new country and less concerned about appearances.
- ⇒ People of my country struggled for their daily survival a lot, so their attitude and behaviour to others mostly depends on their current situation. To explain this deeper, family and friendship ties seem to be less important, when there is no need to maintain the relationships. This I find very unfortunate, and a huge relief that I don't experience the same in the UK, people here behave a way that seems right for them, regardless of the current situation. The culture in the UK is defined by some inner peace, compared to Hungary, where my feelings and thus my perception of the culture are more defined as alert most of the time, trying to get by, and worried for my children's right development.

For one respondent, the experience of migration had demonstrated that countries could learn from one another:

⇒ A sense of moving on by the affected parties. Northern Ireland could learn a lot from the experience of NZ.

New culture is less outgoing

- ⇒ In my country people are more helpful and friendly
- ⇒ I came from a collectivist culture to an individualistic culture. We lived like a big family in the neighbourhood I grew up in but in the new country, it can be a challenge getting to know my neighbour.
- ⇒ People in the UK (the culture I now live in) are less approachable albeit more polite. In my country it's easier to make friends whereas here it takes more time. The ways people have fun here and in my country are different. To relax most people here go shopping/partying/drinking whereas people in my country have more diverse hobbies and interests.
- ⇒ Brazilians are more open than British. They are easier to talk and to become friend. They are not afraid to show their feelings. British people are much more polite than Brazilians and they are reliable persons.
- ⇒ The sense of community. Coming from a small island where everyone knew everyone, the novel concept of neighbours that don't speak, or people making eye contact without a smile was immediately apparent and jarring to me.
- ⇒ Family values perhaps, closer family bonds, be there for each other? Visible expressions and practices that demonstrate caring for others and protecting them.

One person went so far as to suggest that there is a 'Lack of community in the UK.' Another cited Euroscepticism as an example of this tendency.

Political issues, human rights and religion

Several respondents allude to different values, especially in respect of human rights:

- ⇒ Human rights, corruption.
- ⇒ People here are more open minded and have more respect for everything in general
- ⇒ More equal opportunity rights in the UK too. Less work-life balance though.
- ⇒ The community I am in is not largely Bulgarian, however many are from across Europe and Africa. The largest difference for me is an additional emphasis on religion.

Social organisation

Two respondents comment on the different systems in their two countries, e.g.

- ⇒ Socio-economic practices and professional systems.
- ⇒ The differences are small ones. There is more begging here, and there are formal routines that can be hard to pick up.

To conclude this question, let us consider the following thoughtful comments which show how the individual successfully negotiates their blended cultural identity:

- ⇒ It's difficult to explain the nuances which are often subtle. Also I think I am more fluid - I dip in and out and kind of intuitively know how to behave in which context. Maybe broadly speaking (though difficult to generalise): Attitude to work (work ethos much stronger in Poland generally speaking). Education - broader, much more factual and in -depth education in Poland (but more theoretical) versus more narrowed to specific subjects/ pathways education in the UK (and more practically-oriented). More power distance in Poland (in Hofstede's terms) - especially in HE. Much better food in Poland ;-) (if we include food in the culture). More tolerance and social mobility in the UK (although this could also be contested, I still think that there is a lot of homophobia in the UK).

Challenges in the new culture

In the next question, respondents are asked to explain some of the greatest challenges they have faced in adapting to a new culture. Again, common themes emerge.

Language

Although this was not highly scored in question 7, language presented a number of respondents with difficulties, as illustrated by these remarks:

- ⇒ Not being able to speak to a lot of people
- ⇒ Adapting to the language and the tones used has been the hardest challenge.
- ⇒ Learning the Maori language as it is not a language that is needed every day. So remembering the grammar and the vocab.

These comments indicate that there were both cognitive difficulties in learning the new language, and that there were social implications for them as linguistic competence isolated them.

Food

Adapting to different cuisine is mentioned frequently. Sometimes it is linked to other differences such as that of the weather

Sense of 'otherness'

Some comments refer to the difficulty of fitting in to a different culture, and expand the theme from the last question, e.g.

- ⇒ Fitting in, having a sense of belonging.
- ⇒ Connecting with natives
- ⇒ Different mind structure, little bit different way of thinking about things.
- ⇒ The sense of being different and unable to penetrate a new culture, especially that of Britain, also takes up one of the themes found earlier:
- ⇒ They say the English man's home is its castle. I often feel this. Don't think I have been in many English houses. I find it hard to make real friends. All my friends are from other countries...
- ⇒ Eastern Europeans categorised under one umbrella, usually Polish. And also how Britain is not protecting its culture.
- ⇒ A sense of xenophobia is experienced here, and expounded on by this respondent:
- ⇒ Having to learn not to take anti-Europeanism personally; 2) Doubling any estimates of journey times to reflect the sorry state or even complete lack of infrastructure.

Distance from loved ones

- ⇒ Migration inevitably means leaving behind people one cares for, and is a source of regret.
- ⇒ Being away from my family and learning to be independent and not depend on other people so much. Learning how to have fun on my own and to enjoy other activities for the sake of being social.
- ⇒ To leave alone without the people that I love.

For one person, there is a combined impact of leaving loved ones and being unable to get close to the host community:

- ⇒ Having no family and adequate social support. Even though I have an English partner, I still feel there are many things that are difficult to share and I wouldn't say, that apart from him and a couple other people, I created any strong friendships with 'locals'

Existential dilemma

The following comment indicates that there can be a serious loss of self when moving to a new community, and it shows the struggle that ensues:

- ⇒ Attempting to assimilate without losing my sense of self. It's a constant battle between wanting to be accepted beyond 'the international student', and dulling down this very strong aspect of my personality.

Again, though, let us end this section on a positive note:

- ⇒ It has been a very pleasant surprise, I face more challenges in Hungary than in the UK.

Table 1 summarises the themes that have emerged in these two questions.

Table 1 Differences and challenges between old and new country

Perceived differences	Challenges of new country
More relaxed Less outgoing Political issues, human rights and religion Social organisation	Language Food Sense of 'otherness' Distance from loved ones Existential dilemma

7 Comparing the old and new cultures

Two questions focused on the differences between the old and new cultures. Firstly, respondents shared what they admire or prefer in their new culture. The themes that emerge reinforce earlier answers and are often iterative.

Politeness, respect

- ⇒ Friendliness, openness and general at ease approach, Irish people have much more distance to themselves
- ⇒ Yes, their support and respect for each other.
- ⇒ Tolerance. Everything is possible. In my new country, if I live my life the right way, I do my job, I appreciate people around me, things will go right. This feeling I admire, I don't have illusions about easy life, but manageable life is wonderful for me.
- ⇒ They are polite and reliable. There are a lot of Brazilians who has these qualities too, however only the educated. Since education is a big problem of our country as well as social inequality.
- ⇒ Maori culture is very clear about the values and principles which are important. It values respect and trust and relationships.
- ⇒ Social tolerance; better civil administration; job satisfaction through financial and emotional rewards.
- ⇒ Their sense of tolerance and acceptance of people culturally dissimilar to themselves. The very fact that I am able to come here and attempt to make a life for myself is a testament to their generosity as a country.

Structural/organisational factors

- ⇒ Everything is better organised and people are more likely to follow the rules. Also, most people do not talk behind other people's backs.
- ⇒ Punctuality
- ⇒ I really admire the culture of societies at university in the UK.
- ⇒ Transparency in the bureaucracy.

Opportunities

- ⇒ If you work hard there is a result and you can manage your life easier, it depends much more on you than external things like politicians. The company and your boss try to invest in you, help to improve and train to you.
- ⇒ Many things - I like the country itself and enjoy living here. I appreciate the employment opportunities. I like politeness (although this can appear quite superficial). Appearances seem to matter less here - I don't care that much about what I wear/ make-up etc. because there seem to be much more social freedom when it comes to it. I think that even though there are issues and people can be homophobic or intolerant, generally this is less pronounced esp. when it comes to ethnic diversity or homosexuality or religion.

Ethical and cultural values

- ⇒ I admire their respect for traditional festivals and holidays.
- ⇒ Respect for classical music, great public transport, tolerant of outsiders.
- ⇒ The culture here favours finding your own identity.

Next, respondents say what they prefer in their original culture as opposed to their new one. As we might expect, they tend to be the converse of the last set of themes.

Family and social responsibilities

- ⇒ Social ties
- ⇒ The importance of families and looking after the elderly.
- ⇒ Family and friends ties.
- ⇒ Kind and caring.
- ⇒ How culture is built around families.
- ⇒ Family values, long-term social contacts

Openness

Closely linked to this is the sense of friendliness which respondents miss from their country of origin.

- ⇒ People seem to be more open and sincere
- ⇒ Are warmer and friendlier, it's easier to strike up a conversation with a stranger. A lot of people have more broad common knowledge and interest in the world than English people.
- ⇒ The spirit of community and not questioning everything
- ⇒ People are more outgoing, food, sun
- ⇒ The way that we show our feelings and the fact that we are more open people.
- ⇒ The culture of the country I grew up in is generally more accepting of outsiders.
- ⇒ Easier to make friends and integrate, better beer!

Food

Many respondents still prefer the food they are used to.

Structural/organisational

There is a sense of regret for the 'culture' of their original country, and sometimes a wry tolerance of their new home.

- ⇒ I love the constant challenges, this is something I missed here at the beginning, before I realised, that this is something that will bring me forward, so I try to keep my entrepreneurial spirit alive, studying, thinking about new business, and most of all I try to get as many people known as possible. All of this keeps me satisfied long term.
- ⇒ This great British habit of making a complete mess of everything these days; be that infrastructure, legislation, immigration, you name it. My native country at least manages some decent infrastructure. And then there's the way in which Utility Bills in Britain seem to have greater legal power than actual ID Cards. Seriously?
- ⇒ Definitely food and weather. Health system as well. Due to the history of oppression, national identity is much more pronounced and more clearly defined - I like that. Also due to the history of oppression and difficulties people have 'can do' attitude and are able to spot opportunities and work very hard (work ethos is generally strong). I like what I term 'Slavic soul' - less rules and order than in the UK. In Poland I feel 'free' to jump the queue, start a random conversation with a stranger, etc. - I am more spontaneous there (and I perceive others to be more spontaneous as well). I feel strong ties with my family - even extended family (there seem to be more focus on family relationships in Poland)
- ⇒ I grew up in NI during the height of the Troubles. If stubbornness is a characteristic to be admired then I guess it was there in bucketfuls. Tolerance and a willingness to talk would have been more useful.
- ⇒ I grew up in a foreign country. Went to my homeland when I was 12 years old. And I am now living in another foreign country... Have been inbetween cultures all my life. We tend to romanticise our past but I do remember a very good childhood in the foreign country (this was Germany). We didn't seem to have any big worries. The only problem my parents had was that they couldn't go back to their homeland as they were political immigrants. When this changes, we moved to Greece, almost immediately.
- ⇒ Hard working (which sometimes gets to its extreme as work worshipping), punctuality.

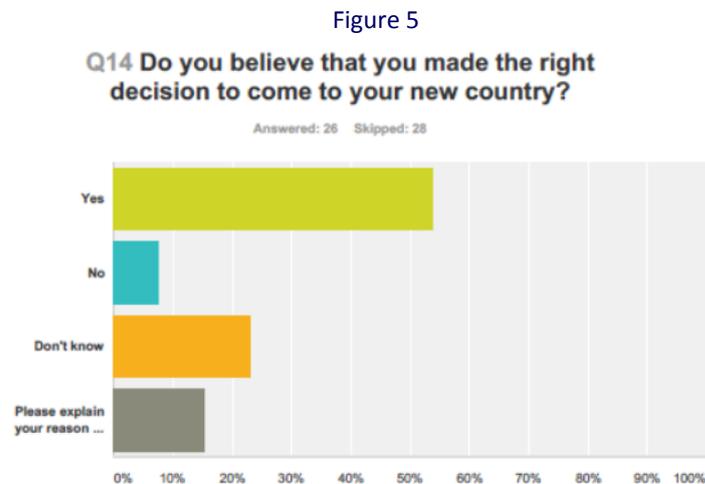
In summary, the key themes to emerge in favour of the old and new country are collated in table 2.

Table 2, Comparative advantages of old and new country

Advantages of old country	Advantages of new country
Family and social responsibilities Openness Food Structural/organisational	Politeness, respect Structural/organisational factors Opportunities Ethical and cultural values

8 Views on decision to migrate

Respondents were asked next whether they believed they had made the right decision in coming to their new country. As we see in figure 5, the majority (54%) stand by their decision, however that is only just more than half of respondents. 23% do not yet know how to answer this question, and 15% prefer to give a narrative comment. We must bear in mind, though, that this is a small total of people (only 26) so findings are not necessarily representative of all migrants.



The narrative comments offered by respondents are reproduced verbatim, to avoid researcher bias.

- ⇒ I think the culture that we grow up in defined us no matter what we do. If we adapt to a new culture, our life will be much richer also the new society that we arrive in will prosper of it. If we adapt to the new culture, we still have to remember where we came from, otherwise we lose our opportunity to learn the most of it.
- ⇒ Sometimes it is difficult to not feel like a "stranger" but I guess it is the same everywhere. Or maybe this feeling would be less in a different country?
- ⇒ I believe that it was a good decision to get more knowledge about the world, the different cultures and people. I become more and more open-minded. Now the world is little bit nicer and more palpable.
- ⇒ Severe mixed emotions.
- ⇒ No ... Happened more by chance than design. Came to studied and stayed
- ⇒ Over the past 30 years, I have seen significant changes in both cultures but more so in the country I came from.

These comments reveal the extreme emotional difficulties that can result from migration, and the ambivalence individuals may experience. When we compare these with the theoretical paradigms of Stephen Bochner, described and illustrated in Norman's article in this magazine, we find examples of each category:

'Passing' - Rejecting the culture of origin and embracing the new culture.

'Chauvinism' - Rejection of the current culture and exaggerating the individual's own culture.

'Marginal' - Hovering between the two cultures, the individual is not certain of who he/she is

'Mediating' - The individual synthesizes and integrates both cultures.

As we read the moving accounts of our contributors' experiences, we may reflect silently on which of these labels best describes their current state of integration.

Thank you again to all who contributed to our survey and for the compelling insight you have all provided into the impact of migrant on the individual – a perspective we can all too easily lose sight of as we are confronted by the anonymous masses relocating around the globe.

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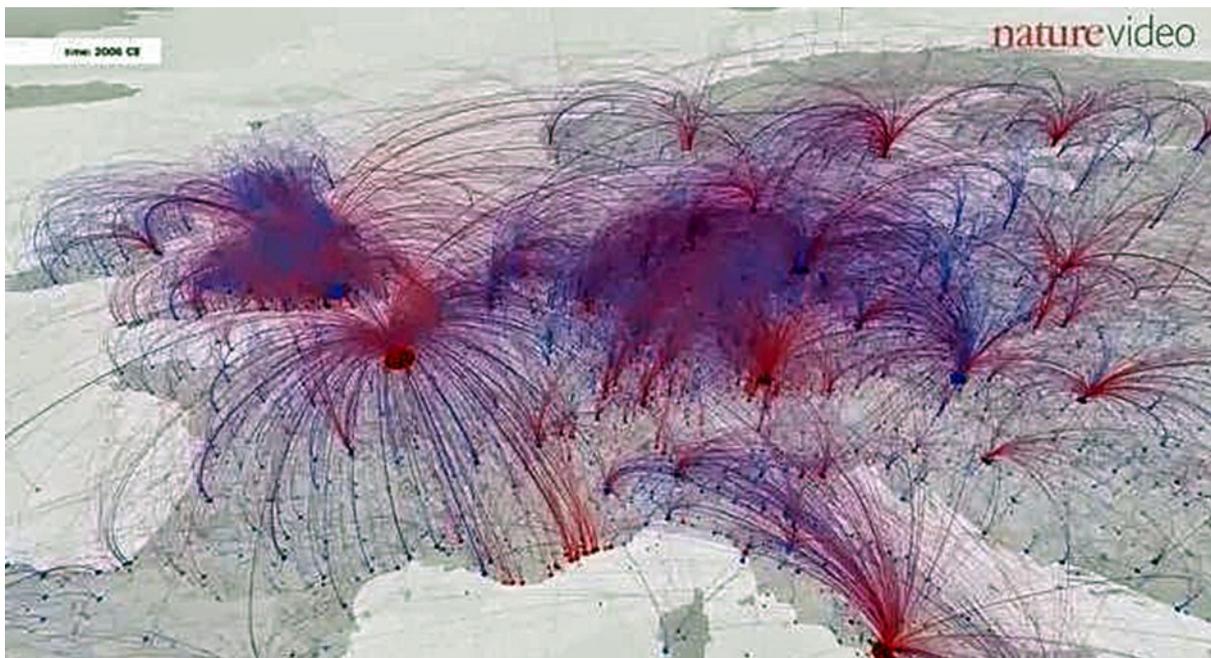
¹ June 23 2016, UK citizens vote in referendum on whether to remain a member of the European Union or to leave it.

Journey into other Cultures

Extraordinary animation of the entire human cultural history in 5 minutes

What if you can view the entire human cultural history in 5 minutes? Maximilian Schich, an art historian at the University of Texas Dallas, created a 5-minute animation using influential figures to show human migration and culture over the last 2,600 years.

The team used data from Google's Freebase, consisting of 120,000 notable individuals and 150,000 artists whose birth and death dates and locations were recorded. The result is a video from 600 BC to 2012 AD, visualizing the history of cultural hubs, along with innovation, across time. Each person's birth place appears on the map as a blue dot and their death as a red dot. This fascinating movie shows how immigration can profoundly affect a place's society, economy, and progress, as well as where the most influential people chose to migrate.



WATCH THE ANIMATION ON YOUTUBE <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4glhRkCcD4U>

Source

Posted 11th September 2014 by Marcos Hung

Location: The University of Texas at Dallas, TX, USA

<http://www.trendguardian.com/2014/09/ut-dallas-humanitys-cultural-history.html>

Reflecting on Being an Immigrant Academic

Alfredo Gaitán and Maja Jankowska



See page 6 above for biographies of the authors



Background

It was estimated that in 2014, almost a third of all academics working in Higher Education in UK were non-UK nationals⁽¹⁾. Many more are non-UK born. The presence of these academics in the UK offers both opportunities and challenges to them, their colleagues, their students and the higher education institutions they work for⁽²⁾. We are two of those academics who left their countries of birth and have worked at the same university in the UK for some time. This article is based on conversations we have had over several years and, more specifically, a recent one that started when one of the authors (MJ) shared an article with the other (AG) entitled 'Pathways through life: Development at the junctions, inflections, disruptions and transitions of life'⁽³⁾. The manuscript, which was initially part of MJ's 'personal learning ecology'⁽⁴⁾, served as the 'learning object' around which we could converse. It afforded further joint co-construction of knowledge and a new shared understanding of what it is like to be an *immigrant academic*.

Through our conversations we have come to recognise some striking similarities, as well as some differences, in our experiences prior to and during our working lives in the UK. The broad and complex range of experiences we have had in this country relate to the concept of 'cosmopolitanism', understood as 'a perspective, a state of mind, or to take a more processual view—a mode of managing meaning', which 'entails first of all an orientation, a willingness to engage with the Other'^(5: 238-239). Although we work in higher education, a sector that accepts many kinds of Others (staff and students) and prides itself on being diverse and gaining from diversity, as individuals, we have always had to work to understand *this* way of doing things (the British way) and of being academics, while at the same time being aware of *that* other way of being academic that is rooted in our backgrounds and our surviving links. We want to draw on the notions of 'articulation' and 'dislocation' to try to elucidate our experiences and relationships with people, institutions and knowledge. We use these notions to examine the extraordinary opportunities to see the world from multiple perspectives and grow personally and professionally open to immigrant academics, but also want to highlight the psychological cost for such individuals.

The immigrant academic

While it is indeed sometimes possible, as an immigrant academic, to travel light, without baggage to slow one down and with no attachment to past experiences to go back to⁽³⁾, it is also true that, as immigrants, we have not managed to shed our baggage completely. Our background is always with us. Memories pop out of nowhere and keep gate-crashing, both spoiling and enriching our present experiences. In a similar way as Hofman writes about languages, we would like to claim that our old and new experiences interact with each other, modify each other's properties and cross-bread and 'there is no turning to the point of origin...'^(6: 273). Our thoughts about education are not 'pure', as our original ideas about education have been infiltrated, permeated and inflected by the new ideas and experiences we acquired in another culture⁽⁶⁾

We agreed that we constantly swim in and out of environments (institutional, professional, disciplinary, private/public, linguistic). Sometimes, we fit in, identify with others and can connect to their learning ecologies, engaging in joint construction of meaning. This we call 'articulation'. We then learn and develop. However, other times, we don't and we may have the experience of being out of place, of being 'dis-located'. Remaining in such situations has a psychological cost and our energy has to be focused on re-articulating, fitting that joint back into its socket (which can be very painful)! Here we want to stress the anatomical connotation of a dislocated joint, where the bone has come out of the socket and is out of place. But we also want to highlight the literal meaning of the term 'dislocation', without a place or location, used by authors like Clifford⁽⁷⁾. However, both meanings refer to a painful experience.

The immigrant academic, with his/her cultural, political and professional background, is an eager story-teller ('let me tell you what it is like over there'), always in search of listeners, never sure if they are the right audience. This willingness to *articulate* his/her experiences (the term now takes on a communicational or narrative connotation) is not always matched by an audience's receptive attitude or a receptive environment, and sometimes she/he can be left with a feeling of not having been fully understood. Additionally, we have often asked ourselves if people were really interested in what we said, or were simply listened out of politeness. Conveying meaning and managing politeness in intercultural communication are two fascinating topics of research⁽⁸⁾.

Because the immigrant academic's life occurs both *here* and *there*, he/she easily adopts multiple alternative perspectives. Having experienced two different educational systems (Colombia and Poland) provides us with a unique window to view the world through more than one lens and allows us to imagine what might be possible, because we know there is nothing 'natural' or 'normal' about the current state of affairs. It appears clear to us that the educational system we are now part of is only the product of historical and socio-political processes. It only seems natural and normal because of the complex ideological processes of reification that embed it in the culture. But we do not feel tied to the status quo, or the immediate context. We can 'compare and contrast', and we do not take anything for granted. Both of us come from places where really 'things can only get better'. We were raised on hope and grew up believing things needed to change. We became adults and went to university in order to change things. Therefore, we both often engage in *critical forms of knowledge construction* (e.g. social constructionism and feminism), but are also keen to use *appreciative forms of enquiry* that give due credit to individuals and groups that have made things better. We are ready to acknowledge and celebrate opportunities for growth that did not exist where we come from.



Our insatiable desire to learn

Linked to the above, we both experience an insatiable desire to learn: *How thing came to be as they are? What other less apparent forms of social life exist out there? How are they obscured, suppressed or repressed? How can new forms of life be generated?* We therefore, feel the need to go deeper into the origins of things (developmental studies, historical analyses, biographical methods). We often want to put subjects and objects of study back into their social/personal contexts when disciplines isolate them and this is reflected in our methodological preferences (ethnography, ecological approaches, sociocultural psychology, narrative analysis). We feel the need to make connections and dealing with complexity appeals to us, not to reduce it, but to understand it and preserve it (systemic approaches, rhetorical analysis, representations of knowledge, cultural psychology).

We also share an interest in using technology to learn better. We constantly use it to seek information (databases) or reach out and learn from others (blogs, forums, and social media). We use it to communicate more quickly or effectively (Skype) or disseminate ideas (webinars), and network (Academia.com, Researchgate, etc.). We experiment with concept maps and mindmaps, as powerful ways of representing and working with knowledge. We have explored the potential of ePortfolios for personal development planning and continue to support their presence as an integral part of the curriculum, although we are acutely aware of the factors that influence their uptake by students and tutors⁽⁹⁾.

However, the most important part of our work is sharing insights through teaching. We are passionate about understanding processes of learning and construction of knowledge. We design realistic learning experiences that promote learner development. Although assessment has a key role in learning we see it as means, not an end. We continuously reflect on our practice and try to find better ways of engaging the students. We define our teaching role as one of supporting and enabling others' learning and personal development.

Otherness

We would like to suggest that an immigrant academic occupies the position of a cultural Other and that he/she can best achieve his/her purpose in a cosmopolitan environment free of prejudice and discrimination. However, the notion of cosmopolitanism goes beyond hiring foreign-born lecturers, or recruiting large numbers of international students, and focuses on a willingness to engage with the other as he/she is. If immigrant academics have a distinct contribution to make and are so keen to share their knowledge and experience, what are the conditions that prevent them from doing so, or make their work difficult?

We would like to mention a few sources of dislocation in the current culture of UK higher education. First, the challenges of collaboration, in an environment that favours individual success over collective achievement. Second, the fiercely competitive nature of academia, where everyone works for their own individual benefit. Third, the demands to perform rather than do things well. Performance to meet targets, tick boxes, to 'be seen to be doing' (rather than doing what really matters), to self-advertise and promote an image of success. This is a strong cultural theme in academia today. Fourth, an instrumental approach to work relationships rather than a desire to establish meaningful personal relationships.

Despite the above, immigrant academics like us, can use strategies for articulation in our educational practice. First, we draw on our cosmopolitan sensibility to better understand student diversity and individual student's experiences (e.g. in pastoral roles). Second, we use our own experience selectively as a pedagogical resource to flesh out concepts of acculturation, ethnic identity, multiculturalism, etc. that may be hard to grasp by our students. Here is a recent example:

AG: After I described my own experience of raising bi-cultural children in a tutorial, two students described their own experiences of growing up in Bangladeshi and Pakistani families, respectively, and going to school in Britain where they experienced a range of reactions to them wearing the hijab. They were keen to share their experiences with the group as they recognised they had a unique contribution to make to the collective learning. They also acknowledged and were keen to emphasise the differences between them, which added complexity to our learning.

A third strategy involves enriching the curriculum by creating or supporting teaching spaces where cultural difference can be explored from the perspective of relevant disciplines. Examples from our experience include the MSc Psychology and Culture (2000-2004), units on 'Cross-cultural Psychology' and, more recently, 'Culture and Individual Differences' and 'Psychology in Practice'. This also, at times, goes beyond the taught curricula, the university walls and our own discipline, as in the recent case of the multidisciplinary project 'Bilingual Creative Writing Clubs' which aimed to celebrate cultural learning and multilingualism in the community⁽¹⁰⁾. A fourth strategy, closely linked to the previous one, is the supervision of dissertation projects on topics such as ethnic identity and bi-lingualism. Finally, immigrant academics often participate in networks, including their professional bodies and cross-disciplinary associations, where their contributions are welcomed.

Conclusion

In the age of a world troubled by migration, with constant talk of 'walls' and 'bridges', we have tried to share our insights into what it means to be an immigrant academic working in UK higher education. We hope that the reader can empathise with those making difficult transitions and help them 'articulate' their experiences and engage with them in co-construction of knowledge. Immigrant academics, with their cosmopolitan sensibility, have much to offer to their students, their colleagues and their institutions and use some of the strategies we outlined above to do so. They may sometimes experience cultural barriers more acutely, but perhaps those same barriers affect all academics (and students) and they

must be highlighted and disrupted, if institutions of higher education are to succeed in preparing students to 'function in an international and inter-cultural context'^(11: 5)



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Crossing and Connecting Cultures: Student Experiences of Coping with and Adapting to Another Culture

Norman Jackson



Norman Founded the Lifewide Education network and is Commissioning Editor for the Magazine. This article relates to research that was undertaken while he was Director of the Surrey Centre for Excellence in Professional Training and Education (SCEPTRE) at the University of Surrey.

One of the most significant ways we challenge ourselves is to put ourselves into totally new and unfamiliar situations and contexts in the certain knowledge that the whole of our life will be different. We may not know the full implications of such a dramatic change but we are willing to jump in and see what happens. The creation of such inflection points⁽¹⁾, when a person deliberately changes the circumstances and perhaps the direction of their life, can be for all sorts of reasons but they all involve seeing and appreciating the affordance to learn and develop in ways that have not been experienced before. For students, the opportunities for these sorts of personal challenges often form around travelling and work experiences, moving to another country to study and engaging in work placements overseas. This article draws on three essays written by students involved in such cross-cultural adventures to explore their experiences through a learning ecology perspective.

My Gap Year Experience (Lisa)

Looking back, I don't think I ever completely grasped exactly how big a step I was taking by going to live and work in a completely unknown country... In Quito, I lived with a family [a mother and daughter - Francesca] in an apartment overlooking Parque La Carolina, in the rich district. I walked to Spanish lessons in the morning, dashing across busy roads full of aggressive drivers with little regard for traffic lights. After Spanish, I ventured out to explore the city....I walked the streets with only my Lonely Planet Guide for comfort. I visited an observatory where there were no English-speaking guides, I climbed the cathedral bell-tower and was absorbed by the enormity of the city I found myself in, and I clutched onto my bag on the city's trams on which I was the only visible foreigner. On my first weekend I went out to a club with Francesca and her friends. I hadn't brought any dancing clothes with me, I couldn't speak Spanish, and I couldn't dance the salsa and merengue that everyone was dancing. I couldn't even order anything at the bar as the barman didn't understand me, and there was a pay-by-card system that no one had told me about....This was when I realised just how out of my depth I was in a foreign country with a foreign culture, and feeling very alone.



After a month of Spanish lessons, I had two months of work. I chose to split my time between teaching English to children in a pre-school in Las Casas, a poor district of Quito, and working in Albergue La Dolorosa, a shelter for children whose families are unable to care for them. Having never done anything like this before, I didn't know exactly what I was expected to do. I was teaching with an English girl, and we tried to plan lessons as best as we could, but it was often in vain in a class of very young children with a poor attention span and little desire to learn anything. In the children's shelter.

My poor Spanish was constantly a barrier between who I was, and who I wanted to be. It didn't help that I kept being sick, which made me very miserable. Things were going on back at home that I was missing, and I think it all became too much and there were a few days when all I could do was cry. I know my host family were concerned for me and Francesca came to talk to me to see what was wrong and I tried to explain it all to her. She told me that for a job to be satisfying, all you have to do is do it with love. That really changed my outlook on being a volunteer. I needed to stop worrying about what I was supposed to be doing, and just try and put as much of myself into what I was doing. She also told me that when something's wrong, you should put your energy into changing it, rather than letting it get you down. These are really simple words, but I needed to be told and it is advice that I will always remember.

This was a turning point. In the school I picked a sea-life theme, and painted murals of sea creatures on blue walls. When the children got back from school, they helped me out, often getting more paint on their clothes and feet than on the walls. There

was paint on the carpet, huge drips on the walls, and one girl stood on a tube of paint that squirted all over the place. It really was a mess, and I had to rein in the perfectionist tendencies I sometimes have and try not to mind. It was really great working with the children, and they enjoyed it too.

Francesca's mother was a very strong woman.....She was sharp and I was quite scared of her. In my first weeks, I'd come home from Spanish lessons and she would ask me about my day, my life at home, etc. She was trying to help me, but I'd never spoken another language before and I was struggling with it. She would get frustrated whenever I didn't understand her, and attempt to say it in English in a really loud voice that always felt like she was shouting at me. I would generally let something like that wash over me, but in Ecuador I was very vulnerable and sensitive, and I was often close to tears whilst attempting to speak to her. I dealt with this by basically retreating from her, and trying not to care. I didn't see her as my friend or her apartment as my home. One day I got very upset and it all came out.... I am still ashamed about it all, but I had to learn the hard way how important it is to talk about things, as just letting thoughts build up in your head distorts them and only makes the situation.

But the air was cleared, my Spanish was at its best and the playroom was nearly finished. After nearly three months the city was beginning to feel like home. I loved my journey to work in the morning when I could buy fruit on the street, converse with people in Spanish, jump on moving buses (something that I had put off doing for many weeks), and run across the manic roads. One really memorable thing for me was buying curtains for the playroom. As I was dealing with the shop assistant in the drapery store, various customers would come over and try and help us figure out exactly what I wanted. When I had bought the material, the shop assistant took me down the street to a dressmaker, where another conversation of what exactly I was looking for ensued, again with the input of the other customers in the queue, and some pen and paper. Eventually, we worked out what I needed. It really was such a buzz being able to get by in a country in a way that I had never envisaged when I first arrived.

On the surface I don't think I've changed, but perhaps at a subconscious level I have developed the mechanisms to deal with being in a new place, in a new situation, with new people.

Ecological perspective

Lisa realises that immersing herself in a Spanish speaking culture afforded her the best opportunity for learning Spanish (her proximal goal) and developing herself to become the more independent person she wanted to be (her distal goal). She bravely put herself into an entirely new and unfamiliar cultural context with no language skills or training to enable her to fulfil her role as a teacher of English. The narrative reveals that the experience was quite stressful involving the complex interplay of contexts (new cultural context and the micro contexts of living in someone else's home, work, study, night club and city streets), processes (for learning Spanish and for getting to know the physical and cultural environment in which she lived), new relationships (with her host family and the people she worked with) and resources in order to deal with significant new learning and development needs. Her self-created process involved her in some formalised language tuition but for the most part learning the language, culture and how to fulfill a productive role at work, where accomplished through the day to day experience of interacting with the world and her relationships and situations in family, work and other social settings. She expresses well the significant psychological adjustments she had to make and how the whole of her life become an ecology for learning, developing and achieving her goals.

In the second story a graduate from a Canadian university decided to challenge herself by taking up a teaching appointment in Spain in the belief that it would *afford* her rich opportunities for personal development.

My Work Experience in Spain (Azinda)

It was my first day teaching English as a Second Language in Madrid, Spain and you need to understand exactly how terrified I was at that moment. I had just moved to Spain from my hometown in Canada. I had never lived on my own, I had never visited Spain, I moved by myself, and I didn't speak a word of Spanish. I was as overwhelmed as a person could be. On top of





that, I was beginning a new career as an English teacher in a successful architectural company – teaching lawyers, engineers, and managers. And now, after introducing myself to my first class, my students’ response – in Spanish – was ‘I don’t understand’. I was seized with panic.

Somehow, I managed to get my class through our two hours together, and when I left I knew I had to come up with a new plan – and fast. But how? There I was: unsure, afraid, and naive. By the next class, I had a new lesson plan; I was going to start at the very beginning with the alphabet. This seemed to me to be a good plan; however, I was met with icy acceptance in our second class. The students – all native Spaniards – participated minimally. I left feeling completely intimidated and defeated.

The next day I went to my boss and asked for help. I was intimidated by my students who were all much older than I was and very successful business-people. And as I found in all aspects of my life at that point, I was having trouble communicating even the simplest of concepts. What my boss told me was one of those pieces of advice I will never forget. He said, “Don’t be intimidated. Remember, you are there to teach these people something you know and they don’t.” After our talk, I left his office with a slightly renewed sense of composure.

By the next class, I had purchased a Spanish-English dictionary, which I told my students they all had to buy before our next meeting. Looking up almost every word was a slow and tedious process – but it was necessary for making any kind of headway. I was by no means very confident yet, but I was starting to feel a little more comfortable in front of the class. My students and I continued, making slow strained progress, for a couple months.

Then one day, my boss told me I was to give my students a performance evaluation. This made me very uncomfortable as I still wasn’t completely confident teaching them – and here I was to evaluate their progress. After much thought and consideration, I came to the decision that in turn for my evaluations of the students; I would ask the students to evaluate my performance. I went to class that day, evaluations in hand, and attempted to relay my comments to each student. As their grasp of English was still basic, it was challenging. What happened next though permanently changed my experience living and working in Madrid. When I asked for feedback from my students, I received performance recommendations and more. The students appeared genuinely appreciative of the reciprocal offer for evaluation. Not only did they initiate conversation, they were more attentive when I spoke as well. It was as if by opening myself up to the students, they in turn, offered more of themselves. For the first time in months we all were really hearing what each other had to say and it created a wonderfully positive atmosphere.

After that day, things in class started falling into place. My students’ attendance was up, they were asking for and completing homework and I started feeling confident and comfortable in the classroom. As their English improved, my Spanish did as well – it was as if we were teaching each other and enjoying each moment. My students had constant questions about life in Canada and were equally as enthusiastic about sharing information about the Spanish lifestyle. As they learned about me, I learned about their culture – and the benefits reached all aspects of my life in Madrid. I was gaining understanding, appreciation, and confidence in my daily life, as well as in the classroom. The end result was my students went from a level of no English to an intermediate level in the span of six months. The benefit for me – I believe – was far greater.

In hindsight, completely immersing myself in Spanish culture was a drastic and valuable decision. While those first few months in Madrid were the hardest I’ve ever survived, I realize now that I was my biggest barrier in integrating into Spanish society. I was so caught up with trying to conduct my life as I knew how to (from a Canadian perspective) I didn’t even consider those around me. What I mean to say is that I didn’t consider how my presence affected my students. Over those first two months, I learned that the Spanish people resent foreigners (especially Americans) and they associated me with those preconceptions. Second, I learned that the Spanish people appreciate foreigners who make an effort to “live life the Spanish way”. By opening myself up to the students and the way they lived, they began to trust me. It demonstrated I was willing to understand and see the world from their perspective and it opened the door for our relationship to grow.

While I wanted to give up in those first few months, I didn't want to let my parents down. I didn't want to let myself down. I had moved to a new country for a new adventure and I knew it would be hard. I had no idea it would be as hard as it was, however I became the person I am because of that experience. I learned to appreciate a new culture and to be wholly open to it. By the end of my time in Spain, I made countless friendships and was invited into the lives of my students (many of which I still keep in touch with today). Most of all, I gained confidence. I feel confident I can handle whatever obstacles may come my way because I knew I'd survived and benefitted from my past experiences. Now I look back on my time in Madrid with nothing but joy, satisfaction, and pride. I am so grateful I persevered, as it made me the confident, open, and appreciative person I am today

Ecological perspective

Azinda appreciated the affordance for developing herself (distal goal), learning a new language and becoming an English as a second language teacher (proximal goals) by taking a job in Spain. Her story again reveals the disorienting power of a new and unfamiliar cultural context without the ability to communicate, compounded by first time experience of living by herself and starting a new job that she was not prepared for.

The set of circumstances combine to create an entirely novel and disruptive ecology involving both unfamiliar contexts and unfamiliar challenges. Through her actions, drawing on her own resources and supported by a manager, she began to gain some control over her situation. By immersing herself in the local culture she began to acquire the language and cultural skills to feel comfortable and effective in her role and gradually developed the trusting and respectful relationships with her students that enabled them and her to learn. Through her experiences she gained many insights into herself and her attitudes to the cultural environment she was in. She made mistakes but was able to recognise these and adjust her thinking and behaviours. As her understanding grew she gained confidence in her own ability and identity in this new cultural environment. Her resilience paid off and she recognises the significant ways in which she developed through her experience.



Internship experience (Jake)



My university course offered me the chance to undertake a placement after my second year. I undertook the challenge of a placement at one of the leading chemical companies in Japan...With more to prove than merely a qualification, I was determined to show others that I was capable of such a feat.

Past experience of traveling did not prepare me for the wholly different lifestyle I encountered. I landed in Japan struck with awe and fascination - marveling at the staggering uniqueness of the culture I was now immersed in. Comparing, absorbing plundering the streets while using the rudiments of Japanese I picked up

before I went.

I was promptly chaperoned around the company on my arrival, having to deal with endless formalities while still in a jet-lagged, home-sick stupor. I was speedily, drilled with agreements, dressed, orientated as well as 'orientalised', disciplined, taught and made to produce results at my fingertips. The towering scale of the chemical plant made me seem like an insignificant and diminutive figure among the working machines. Japanese people work differently, the work is taken very seriously and the professionalism is concrete set centuries ago. Adaptation was imperative, and my giddy feelings had to be suppressed to make a positive impression.

The experience was quite intense since I had to acquire the cultural as well as professional customs in a short period of time. The work was challenging but my surroundings in rural Japan seemed dreary, and I tried my utmost to keep my mind occupied. The time away from western civilization and the silence provided plentiful opportunities for reflection and wishful thinking. Spare time was eagerly consumed by learning Japanese and quests for some refreshing pastimes including swimming which was incredibly therapeutic in the intolerable sticky-summer heat. As the only foreigner in the company, it was

important to keep my mind and body ticking like clockwork, to avoid a distressing despondency that I became accustomed to quite frequently. The food was not to my taste but I learned to really enjoy it, although dormitory food was an obligation, I soon felt slight infringements on my civil liberties among other things as I felt increasingly institutionalized.

In the early stages of my placement I made a number of pleas to my tutors for a transfer to another placement, due to feelings of despair and alienation I experienced in the first few months. Fortunately, I quickly realized that the atmosphere was not as sinister as it seemed, and my team was extremely friendly. I was hugely impressed by the sheer devotion of my colleagues, their long hours, their cooperation, their loyalty: two of my team having been in the same position for over 40 years. Having completed almost half the placement, and despite being embattled with the master's distance learning course-work I also had to complete, I am pleased that I was so adamant about continuing my placement in Japan. Having now overcome the challenges of the work and making unprecedented progress in the fuel cell team, it has become ever more rewarding working at the forefront of fuel cell technology.

Living in solitude is the ultimate contrast to twenty-four-seven-hustle-bustle of University life. There have been times when I thought I was going mad, chewing over my life in quiet trains, labs and offices, at times swallowed by gloom and melancholy....I had to lift my own spirits - well not entirely by myself; my girlfriend in Florida gave me immense emotional support over the phone. But anyhow, I soon found solace in this little retreat. And from time to time, I'd embark on an adventure. My travels led me to the Golden Temple in Kyoto where I experienced its splendour and its ancient glow warming my face. I ducked and dived through the torii gates dotted around the mountainous country. I climbed the hills of Nikko and breathed the arctic air which awakened my senses; saw the sunrise like an apparition from the mist as spectrum of hope. I envisioned feudal Japan; the clang of swords and the ever-present valour of the Samurai resonated through the hills. I scaled Mount Fuji ill prepared for the foreboding tempest and had to scuttle down the volcanic ash like a demented goat accursed for his foolishness. I try to relish in the good memories and they came intermittently like buckets of ecstasy from a storm. But one must sacrifice to experience anything worthwhile these days.



Ecological perspective

Jake saw the affordance to develop and challenge himself and accomplish his distal goal to become an industrial chemist by choosing to live and work for a year in an environment and culture that was radically different to anything he had experienced before. His proximal goal was not only to complete his placement year but to cope with and perform well in the particular context he chose for himself. Initial anticipation and excitement gave way to anxiety as he began to realise the level of challenge he had set himself. But he was fortunate in having good relationships and support from his colleagues. These relationships enabled him to persist and gradually grow in confidence, as he realised the progress he had made in his professional work. He also developed strategies to 'lift his own spirits'. Through his travels he immersed himself in the wonderful landscapes, history and traditions of his host country these all contributed to his growing cultural understanding, confidence and eventual success.

Discussion

These three stories show how some students are willing to disrupt their own lives and challenge themselves by putting themselves into cultural settings that are unfamiliar and challenging, in anticipation that through their experience they would achieve significant personal growth. The narratives illustrate well the physical and psychological journeys that each person made. These journeys began with an initial sense of excitement and positive expectations, perhaps tinged with anxiety about what lay ahead, but were quickly followed by deeper negative feelings of anxiety, of being overwhelmed, and sometimes, feelings of inadequacy, incompetency, loneliness or emptiness. In some cases the desire to escape the situation also emerged. This type of psychological pattern is typical of 'culture shock'^(2,3) At these psychological low points the intervention, help and support of significant others e.g. girl friend/wife, team mates, colleagues, manager or mentor were crucial in helping these students get through their experience to the point where they began to view their experience differently. Without

Learning Ecology⁽¹⁾



their help, encouragement and emotional support these students might have given up. But it's also clear that they did not only rely on the support of others, they motivated themselves 'I had to lift my own spirits', and did things. Part of what they did involved becoming more open to the culture around them, 'As they learned about me, I learned about their culture – and the benefits reached all aspects of my life in Madrid'.

Through their own efforts and the support they received they began to change their perspectives and see the situations they were in differently. Perspective change - when someone comes to see their situation differently and more positively, seems to be a crucial psychological process in adapting to the challenges of a different culture. It seems that once a new perspective has been gained the individual was able to reorient themselves towards new ways of thinking and behaving that are more compatible with the host culture until confidence, pride and a sense of achievement emerges as they realise that they have come to terms with the culture and situations they were in.

Stephen Bochner¹ classifies individuals in terms of their psychological responses to the host country. He posits that there are four main ways in which people behave when they encounter a new culture which he calls:

- 1) 'Passing' - Rejecting the culture of origin and embracing the new culture.
- 2) 'Chauvinism' - Rejection of the current culture and exaggerating the individual's own culture.
- 3) 'Marginal' - Hovering between the two cultures, the individual is not certain of who he/she is
- 4) 'Mediating' - The individual synthesizes and integrates both cultures.

It appears from these stories that the individuals did not adopt a passing, chauvinistic or marginal orientation to their new cultural setting. Rather, they developed coping strategies and tried to adapt to, and connect with, their new cultural setting.

The motivations for why these young people decided to challenge themselves through these cross cultural experiences seem to be overwhelmingly associated with the desire for change and personal growth – the personal development, intrinsic self-esteem and self-actualising dimensions of Alderfer's⁴ Existence-Relatedness-Growth (ERG) theory. This links strongly to self-determination theory^{5,6} which proposes that people have an innate psychological need for autonomy, relatedness and competence, and these influence (through satisfaction of these needs) individuals' intrinsic goal focus and motivation, and determine their sense of well-being. Individual agency, motivation to learn and novel skill (and perhaps experience) mastery are all outcomes of satisfying these needs. Intrinsic motivation emerges in these narratives in some cases, to deal with an unknown situation (survival instinct), but more generally it is revealed in the motivation to continue and not give up in spite of the challenges and difficulties experienced. Self-determination is important for persisting through a complex transition in order to attain personal goals⁷. Although all these students initially doubted whether they had the determination to stay the course, they managed to find it through the complex set of relationships and interactions they nurtured in their ecology for learning to adapt to another culture.

Perspective changes

'She told me that for a job to be satisfying, all you have to do is do it with love. That really changed my outlook on being a volunteer.' *Lisa*

'I was so caught up with trying to conduct my life as I knew how to (from a Canadian perspective) I didn't even consider those around me.' *Azinda*

'In the early stages of my placement I made a number of pleas to my tutors for a transfer to another placement, due to feelings of despair and alienation I experienced in the first few months. Fortunately, I quickly realized that the atmosphere was not as sinister as it seemed..' *Jake*

Acknowledgement

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The Never Ending Journey of Crossing and Connecting to Another Culture

Aneta Pac, Ana Gabriela Christian & Tracey Muponda
Introduced by Maja Jankowska

These reflective biographical narratives written by recent University of Bedfordshire Psychology graduates supervised by me highlight several themes, particularly pertinent to personal development through cultural learning and engagement with vibrant, diverse multicultural and multilingual communities.

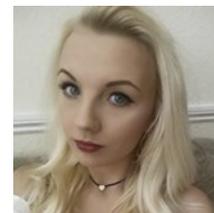
Firstly, all three authors emphasised the importance of affordances (potential or limitations for action) in particular cultural situations. Despite the fact that these recent graduates came from three very different socio-political and cultural contexts (countries/continents), they all wrote about their painful beginnings in the UK. 'Othering' and 'alienation' are the core themes in all the narratives with the narrators occupying a liminal space. They describe the initial sense of disorientation in the face of the loss of the cultural norms, values and clues that are usually available to those living in their own culture. Even Ana who was born and raised in this country felt she was required to abandon her Latina identity as her home language and culture were not welcomed/ appreciated in (an English) school. The overwhelming initial feeling of anxiety and depression – losing hope for the future, lowering of confidence and self-esteem, alienation and loneliness were marked themes at the beginning of their educational journeys in the UK. All authors felt that who they truly were was not important. Aneta explains: "No one saw me for who I was, people referred to me as 'this new, Polish girl'" and there was a pressure for them to assimilate with the host culture and be like 'others'.

The narratives reveal that feeling comfortable in another culture is not about being liked by others but finding who we are and being proud of our cultural and linguistic backgrounds that bring so much richness and creativity. Yet for us to flourish and realise our potential we need to find hospitable soil where we can be appreciated for who we are without feeling we have to conform to a standard. For these three young women entering the diverse, multicultural and multilingual environment of a university that is committed to widening participation was a turning point in their lives. This highlights the crucial role universities play in supporting a cultural diversity within our society. Not only did these students find the university environment to be more open, welcoming and hospitable but they also felt they could be themselves among the culturally diverse population of students and staff. The university opened new doors and new opportunities for them and, as a result, they started forging new identities for themselves 'as academically able, bicultural and bilingual individuals' (Aneta). Their initial desire, previously lost in the face of adversity, identity loss and process of 'otherisation', to achieve their potential has been renewed and they grasped the opportunities that studying Psychology afforded them. This rich habitus provided them with opportunities for encounters with other, often also marginalised or 'otherised' individuals, some of whom became good friends or mentors, encouraging and motivating them to continue reaching higher and higher. All three graduates are now progressing towards professional careers and preparing their dissertations for journal publications. All three are in a position to contribute even more to UK society and the economy.

Yet, let's not forget that their journeys, like my own journey as an immigrant academic¹, were not easy. There were many barriers and challenges along the way and ultimately we still occupy the liminal space – not fully "(t)here – both 'here' and 'there'"² Those of us who are immigrants often feel out of place, 'dislocated', unable to fully express our ideas and/or feeling that we are not being understood by others. There is always the possibility that we will be viewed by native inhabitants as 'Others', and may even be represented as a threat to society – something that was so evident in the 'Leave' campaign for the EU referendum. Indeed, given the results of this referendum, so many lives of non-British students and academics may yet again be turned upside-down and our hopes and aspirations for a better future in a society that welcomes cultural diversity, will be shattered.

Aneta's Story

Aneta Pac



Difficult beginnings....

Having been brought up in a different culture, my life in the UK started in a very unfortunate way. After being born in Poland and spending my whole childhood there, at the age of 15 I was told by my parents that I had one week to pack my whole world into one bag as we would be moving to the UK. I was not happy about this decision; however, my arguing did not help, and I had no other choice than to listen to my parents.

The first months in the UK were very difficult, and I spent most of the time in my room without talking to anyone. I went to a Catholic secondary school as my parents believed that people would be nicer and more understanding there. Due to the lack of spaces in year 10, I started my education in the UK in year 11 – the year of the exams that have a big impact on future opportunities. At school, I was not allowed to speak in my native language, and as I was unable to speak English, I was lonely. Other students and the teachers were not interested in helping me and they did not make me feel welcome. I was missing home, and I remember thinking that I did not want to be Polish anymore, I just wanted to fit in. No one saw me for who I was, people referred to me as ‘this new, Polish girl’. I always felt like an outsider who was different from the rest of the people around me. I did not pass any exams due to my low English proficiency, and I decided that the easiest option would be to finish my education and start work. I felt lost and hopeless. At that point, I gave up my dreams about having a good career and started working in a coffee shop.



http://st.depositphotos.com/1005979/4812/i/950/depositphotos_48126751-Feel-left-out-words-on.jpg

After a year of working and just before I was due to move back to live with my grandparents in Poland, I met my partner, who is English, and thanks to him I started learning English. We moved to a different city and I found the motivation to start college. I finished a two-year course in one year. This made me proud, and I realised that I was able to succeed. I applied for a Psychology degree course; however, I had no idea what to expect. When I was a little child, I always dreamt about being a psychologist or a lawyer. I wanted to make a difference in people's lives and achieve something great. Everyone in my family finished their education after secondary school, and I did not want life to be like that for me.

Being accepted into a university brought many questions and worries. I was not sure how I was going to manage to learn in my second language and how I would be able to afford it. Fortunately, during the first week of the course I realised that I did not have to worry; the environment was much more welcoming than in the secondary school. There were many international students, and I felt that I could be myself and use my differences and experiences as something positive. Above all, the diverse, multi-cultural university environment afforded many opportunities and I started forging my new identity as an academically able, bi-cultural and bilingual individual. I met a lecturer – Dr. Maja Jankowska - who also moved here from Poland, and together we started working on various projects, some of them involving working with bilingual children³ and Polish community. I was happy to have the opportunity to change my life and try to achieve my dreams, which were taken away from me a few years before. My psychological well-being increased, as I changed from someone who lacked motivation and was angry and sad all the time into someone with a new passion and aim in life. Furthermore, being accepted into a university increased my self-worth, as I felt that I had been given a chance to progress. Now I am proud of being Polish and achieving my dreams. I feel that I am proving to myself and to people who doubted me that everything is possible, and your background does not matter if you want to achieve something strongly enough.

The university also afforded me an opportunity to research the subject of migration, and the challenges involved into moving countries, and to reflect on my own experiences. Knowing, that many young people were in similar situation, I decided to base my dissertation on young migrant's perception of the family dynamics after moving countries. I was interested to find out how migration affects their psychological well-being and how these young adults are coping with the changes. My research uncovered a common, sad story of the lack of support and understanding for migrant young people. Most of them had no access to pastoral care, therapy or counselling and felt alone, suffering in silence. They often blamed their parents for the changes and setback in the new environment. They felt judged and too embarrassed to talk about their struggles in the new country.

Looking back at my experiences, I know that I lacked a sense of belonging. I was taken away from my 'normal' life and everything was new, and I did not know how to behave. I had no idea what was acceptable in English society, and I lost myself for a little while. Growing up in Poland means that I have strong Polish characteristics and beliefs; however, spending my teenage years in the UK shaped my views in a unique way. Sometimes, when I ask myself how much Polish or English is in me and which is stronger, I cannot decide. I often joke that I have a double life; for example, I celebrate all of the English and Polish traditions – I receive presents on 6 December and I celebrate the Polish Christmas on 24 December and the English one on 25 December, and I eat plenty of pancakes on Pancake Day. I know that I will never be 'completely English', yet I feel that I have lost a great deal of my Polish identity. Although I do not know what will happen to my Polish side after another ten years in the UK, I believe that it is important to keep the culture alive as much as possible, as this reminds me about all the good times I had as a child. It is important for me to find the right balance between the two cultures to be able to live a happy life.

My experiences taught me that it is important to understand other people's traditions and beliefs and that we should not define others by their culture. It should not matter what language someone speaks or how they look, as these are just outside characteristics. Culture for me is something more than that – it is all the beautiful traditions and the things we can learn from each other.

I have been here seven years and have been working the whole time and paying my taxes. I finished University with a first-class honours degree, a summer bursary to develop my dissertation into a publication and having made several presentations on a local, national and international level (e.g. British Psychological Annual conference, TRANSFAM). I have worked hard to become a Psychologist and gain skills to help people in the community. For the last three years I have been volunteering at British schools and other organisations to help local children with their education. This summer I will be working as a Senior Mentor for London's teenagers who show challenging behaviour. So it really saddens me to see that today – as I am finishing off writing this narrative – the country I call my home voted to leave the EU. This, I worry, will have serious consequences for people like me. Most migrants I know have said that it's time to go home. But what home? Home for me is where I live (with my British partner), where I study and work, where I contribute to the community. Home is no longer where I was born – I don't know life in Poland. I moved here when I was a child and it wasn't my decision, yet I had no say in the referendum today but will have to suffer its consequences. Will I be asked to leave and abandon everything I have built and achieved? I feel like my life went round in a circle – I had a very difficult beginning in this country but despite this adversity, managed to achieve so much and settle in, finally feeling at home. But now, this has been disrupted once again. It makes me feel lost and lonely, as once again, I am not sure what to do next and what the future will bring for me as an immigrant in the UK.



<https://cassiebonin.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/images1.jpg>

Ana's Story

Ana Gabriela Christian



Soy Latina – I am Latina

From a young age I have always had an interest in learning about other cultures and their history. Currently, I am learning Japanese and Korean. I enjoy exploring the unknown and when possible partake in sport activities such as tennis, badminton and swimming. Studying in the field of Psychology, I have developed an interest in psychology within education and wish to develop my knowledge further.

During my younger schooling years, I was labelled as an EAL (English as an Additional Language) student due to being raised in a family whose first language was not English. Despite being born and raised in England and being a native English speaker, many of my educators were under the assumption that I had difficulties with the English language because I spoke Spanish at home. Due to my appearance and home language, many confuse my ethnicity. People were more concerned with where I am from rather than who I personally am. To gain a better understanding of others' behaviours, labels are placed on them. For instance, people would use the individual's home country to explain certain behaviours such as lateness. It was not until I started my undergraduate degree that none of that mattered. No one thought that I was unable to do my work or produce high quality work just because I spoke a different language at home.

For my dissertation, I was gathering information regarding the schooling experiences of adolescent EAL learners through their perceptions of their English and academic learning. It was discovered that today in the 21st century where we have been exposed to a number of languages and cultures, EAL students are still being put through the same challenges I faced. So the question we need to ask ourselves is why? What are we missing or what is not being done?

I remember a time during my English literature lesson, my teacher set as homework to find music which has meaning to us. Before presenting my work to the class many of my class mates commented that the music should be in English so they could understand. From that moment, I began thinking “why is it OK for you to share your music and comment on your culture, but I’m not allowed to, because it is different from yours and in a language which you cannot understand? Why can you scream to the whole world about who you are and where you come from but when I do it, I’m looked at in a negative manner?”



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When encountering new cultures adapting our thinking, attitudes and behaviours are important. By doing this it decreases the idea of how one should be and it embraces the many ways a person can be. Through telling someone that they should be like the rest, their identity is lost and they begin to question why they are different. Therefore, instead of looking at the differences, emphases must be placed on the similarities to ensure there is no conflict of belongingness.

I remember a time I went shopping with my mother and grandmother, and my grandmother wanted to fix her tablet. Now my grandmother's English is not at native level but she is able to get her point across with the English she possesses. She was trying to ask the shop assistant how much it would cost to fix the screen and trying to compare prices to see if it would be cheaper to fix it in the United States. The first thing he said was “oh I don't understand you, it's England we use pounds not dollars,” while laughing and looked at me to see if I could speak on her behalf. This made me really angry because the way she was treated, in my opinion, was discriminatory. Instead of trying to understand her and help, he made fun of her. From then on, when I encounter people from different cultures, that speak a different language, instead of being dismissive and judgmental, I embrace that new culture by asking questions to understand it better. From these experiences, I have developed a habit that if I were to go to another country where they have different rules of etiquette, I would research about their common customs before going to ensure that I do not offend anyone.

Attending a Catholic school I did not have the opportunity to integrate with other cultures and religions. It was not until I started my undergraduate degree that I became friends with those that practise Islam and Sikhism. When it came to cooking a meal for them I learned that I had to be careful with the type of ingredients that I buy and use in my cooking. They began teaching me about their religious customs and I learned through my Muslim friends the reason why Muslim's do not eat pork and how often they must pray. During Ramadan, I asked my colleagues if they were looking forward to it. I was inspired by their excitement when they begin discussing the spiritual experience they gain through Ramadan. I found that having these discussions with my friends, I learned more about these cultures and I was able to understand them better compared to when I was taught about other religions in school. Exposing yourself personally to other cultures allows individuals' to gain a deeper insight on these new cultures and the people.

Growing up in a bilingual household, for me, has been very beneficial as it has enabled me to broaden my perspective. This in turn has allowed me to view the world with difference lenses and understand others from a different perspective. The benefits I have encountered through bilingualism, is the ability to adapt to different situations with ease. Attempting to define and group myself to one culture is difficult as my behaviours, values and ideologies are not typical to one culture but rather a mix. If I were to be asked where I am from, I would reply 'born and raised in England but my family line is Latin American'. In the past, when I have explained to people that my cultural roots come from Venezuela, the first thing that would come to their mind are drugs, mass murder and the president. I went to a conference in Poland and a friend of mine was very ill. This gentleman from Mexico, a person we have never met realised this, so he went out and bought her some medicine. I said to my friend “This is what it means to be Latino, not the crap the mass media shows”. Today I am proud to say “Soy Latina – I am a Latina”.

Knowing another language does not automatically allow that individual to understand that culture. Exposing oneself to different customs and being open to new experiences allows bridges to be built and barriers to be broken down. I am very pleased to say that I have contributed myself to this task of building bridges while working as a student leader on my supervisor's project Bilingual Creative Writing Clubs³ where we encouraged the children not only to explore their own identities and languages but also those of their peers'.

Tracey's Story

Tracey Muponda



Your choice matters

The society I grew up in Zimbabwe influenced my beliefs that attaining university levels of education was only for the few special and highly intelligent people. This was partly because university places were very competitive with only two universities at the time I finished my 'A' levels. Regardless of how much I wanted to go to the university, I did not get a chance. Instead, I got a place for Computer Studies at a Technical college. Back then, my dream seemed shattered.

The push-pull theory of migration states that people are pushed from their country of origin by negative factors and pulled to receiving countries by positive factors that compel them⁴. The economic deterioration in Zimbabwe along with many promising reports from family and friends who had migrated to the UK motivated us to migrate to the UK. This was in hope of securing better jobs and a better quality of life. This was also evidenced by their accomplishments such as buying good homes, as well as sending a lot of money for their relatives which convinced us that there were greater chances of attaining the quality of life we aspired to.

However, when we got to the UK, it did not take us long before realising that what people had portrayed was completely different to the reality of how they were earning their living. The very people who bragged about great opportunities in the UK informed my husband and me that we had to look for any kind of work in order to survive, particularly in residential homes as professional jobs were hard to come by. My heart sank as I was looking forward to advancing my IT career. Back then, almost every Zimbabwean I knew were doing care work with even highly educated people we knew had great jobs back in Zimbabwe. This made us believe that doing care work was one of the few options we had available. Since there were already connections, it was easy for me to get a job immediately as a care assistant and my husband got a job at a warehouse. It was very tough. It was painful to think that my husband who had just left his job as a deputy chief draughtsmen and I (who had just graduated from college) were now doing this kind of work. We felt we had no option of going back home until we had at least built a beautiful home and saved enough



<http://i.huffpost.com/gen/2186704/images/o-HOME-CARE-WORKERS-WAGES-facebook.jpg>

money to start on a business venture. However, with the little salaries we were getting as well as raising children it seemed impossible to execute our plan. I worked as a healthcare assistant for the next twelve years. Regardless of my ambitions and dreams, I had got complacent to the fact that many Zimbabweans were doing the same kind of jobs I was doing. The social comparison theory states how we tend to evaluate our social and personal self-worth based on comparison of self and others⁵. For me I was comparing myself to everyone I knew and we seemed to have been living within the same standards of life.

Working as a social care worker for all these years supporting vulnerable people within the society brought me endless questions about the value of life. I realised how important my part was in making a difference in these precious people's lives. This personally transformed the way I view people, the way I relate to people and made me appreciate our differences. Through this realisation I developed my work ethics not just based on the companies' policies and procedures that I worked for, but also on placing a high value on people. This was rewarding for me as it made me realise that I was born for this, I had the ability to inspire people be the best they could in life. However, in terms of my personal achievements, I looked back and realised that I hadn't achieved anything over the past ten years I had been in the UK. I was a mother of three most beautiful children who needed a chance for a better future, but there I was not having any promising future. I couldn't even begin



looking for a better job, my CV was disgraceful. This brought me some periods of pain, uncertainties and frustrations, and drove me to the point of questioning my life. During that time of searching, I made a discovery that everyone has a purpose in life but it was up to them to discover and fulfil it. The good news was, I had discovered my potential but I wanted to operate from a higher position of influence, where I could impact many people's lives and where I could also achieve greater success.

This revelation led me to realising that I was responsible for my decisions in life. Up until that time, I had been living and guided by other people's perceptions, beliefs and limitations. I had not given myself a chance to explore who I was and what I was capable of achieving. I had my own ambitions, my own desires and strengths, and I did not have to conform to people's expectations. I also realised that even though I came from Africa, I too, was significant. I was special and different in my own special way, with talents and gifts which no one had the power to restrain me from using but me. And it was something to be proud of and not to use as an excuse to be confined in the lowest levels of life. So with the encouragement and support from my husband, my friend who is my mentor and my Christian faith, I decided to resign from my job and start over in life. I started my cakes business in 2012 and felt compelled to write a book which was published in October 2013 called "Purpose, Provision and Power". I also applied for a Psychology degree at the University of Bedfordshire which commenced in October 2013. I must state that my university experience brought me phenomenal outcomes about raising my self-confidence as well as my self-worth. Up until then, I hadn't many opportunities of being in contact with high academic achievers from different cultural backgrounds as I did during my studies. I also received great support from my tutors who mentored and inspired me to aim for higher. The diversity at the university among the students was just incredible. It helped build my confidence in relating to people from different walks of life. This diversity made me believe that my dream was achievable even though I came from an ethnic minority group.

Being a mother of three, studying full time, owning a business and working at the same time brought challenges of its kind. However, the support I got from my family made it possible for me to balance my schedules which saw me graduating with high flying colours (First Class Honours degree). My life has totally transformed since four years ago when I made a decision to change my life. My most valuable lesson is, regardless of your cultural background, we all have something special to contribute in life. No individuals have been created more special than others, and certainly no ethnicity has been created for better things in life than the other. It is the choices we make that ultimately defines our destiny in life. Right now, I have more opportunities open to me than ever before because I chose to make a difference in my life. I now have a totally different perspective about life and enjoy a greater sense of freedom, and so can you.

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Developing My Cross-Cultural Ecology for My Own and Student's Learning

John Cowan



Professor John Cowan is Lifewide Education's first Honorary Fellow. John embodies the spirit and practice of lifelong lifewide learning. Since the birth of our ideas in 2009 he has provided encouragement, guidance and practical support during the early development of Lifewide Education and has contributed greatly to our programme of research and development. For more about John and his award, see Lifewide Magazine 9, March 2014.

I would describe my learning ecologies as the metaphorical habitats in which I self-regulate my learning and development of various types, through interaction with various individuals and experiences; and where I individually and collectively reflect on my values and my activities, as I am doing now. But fine words butter no parsnips; so what is the reality, particularly with regard to my cross-cultural learning ecology? For many years my work has taken me into different cultural settings. In these contexts, I have been able to develop the cross-cultural awareness to enable me to be as effective as if I were facilitating students' learning in my own familiar home medium. In this article I will try to illuminate how this happened over many years.

In my early teaching years in Scotland, I taught classes of civil engineers in which Norwegians were often a majority. It was a cross-cultural experience – but just for them. *They* had to adjust to *our/my* Scottish ways, accents and vocabulary. However, since I was soon developing resource-based learning for such classes, this brought me an invitation from the British Council to visit Scandinavia to share my philosophy and experiences. I was astonished to discover great differences between Norway, Sweden and Denmark – despite their common heritage and proximity. The differences went far beyond the fare offered at breakfast time. I soon discovered, by asking, that the formal Norwegians in Trondheim wanted me to speak to their given title for an audience sitting in rows, asking one or two ritualistic questions at the end, but with my material handed out for follow-up reading. In interactive Gothenburg, in contrast, they wished me to speak with my slides for a short time in response to a question which they had tabled, and which was not the starting point I would have chosen. After some ten minutes or so, they suddenly interrupted me, broke into discussion groups, and in due course announced their next question for me. In project-oriented Denmark, they expected me to set them tasks wherein they would work on a short input from me. In this, my new, real-time, cross-cultural learning ecology, I was quickly learning the value of asking advice about what was expected of me, and of earnestly trying to follow that advice.

I went to South Africa, on a similar venture. In Cape Town they arranged a busy schedule, involving four or five sessions

per day – on different faculty sites, and with very different topics which they had firmly chosen for me. I recall being driven speedily from one site to another, hastily changing my slides in the carousel magazines, and earnestly hoping I was preparing for the correct title. My learning ecology was being enriched by appreciation of the radical differences in faculty interests and concerns, and by the contrasts between the styles of interaction expected in S. Africa and Scandinavia.

Later, I spent three years in which some time was devoted to an assortment of short consultancy visits to Saudi Arabia. There I became aware, from helpful expat advice, of the need to avoid giving offence by taking care to pass anything round our groups counter-clockwise, and to ensure that we distributed our variously coloured folders so that the senior persons in the group were always given the green ones. My learning ecology was developing sensitivity to the value of finding sources to assist me to anticipate, and avoid causing, hurt or offence as well as to respond to where the participants had reached in their own developments.

Cross-cultural experiences in my learning ecology may have taught me the value of asking those with whose educational development I engage where and how they would like to begin, and to take that advice as best I am able. They have taught me the immense rewards which accrue when I develop relationships with learners, be they students or tutors, and begin from their cultural norms. They have nevertheless reinforced my conviction that people are fundamentally people everywhere – well, perhaps I must restrict that sweeping generalisation to students and teachers who share an initial interest in the aspects of student-centred learning for which I stand. So while I still learn to adjust to cultural norms, I have confidence in adhering to the basic principles and approaches which seem almost independent of culture.

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Exploring the Relationship Between Culture and Need

Ildiko Eck

Ildiko has experienced many different cultures as she has journeyed through life. She was born in Hungary and raised in a middle-class working family close to Budapest where she attended a vocational secondary school. She briefly attended the University of Economics, but left to start work as a nurse's aid. Two years later she got involved in foreign trade, which included long travels to Tanzania and Thailand and building wide range business relationships with other trading partners. At 26 she married, moved to Vienna, Austria and began to raise a family. Three years later her family relocated to New York for three years, before moving back to Hungary. The same year she started to organise and teach English language to employees of large companies. In 2004 she began a university course and graduated as an Economist, then continued her studies toward an MSc at the Corvinus University of Budapest, where she was awarded a Teacher of Economics degree in 2010. After teaching in a secondary school for two years in Hungary, she visited the UK to explore possibilities and was awarded Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) in 2012. Returning to Hungary her career took a sharp turn and she became a tax auditor at the National Tax and Customs Administration of Hungary but in 2016 she returned to a teaching position in the United Kingdom. She is well placed to describe the effects of moving through and connecting with different cultures.



How culture influences our needs

In this contribution to Lifewide Magazine I want to explore the possible relationship between culture and the sorts of needs that Abraham Maslow¹ proposed underlie what it means to be a human being, namely physiological needs, safety, belonging, being loved, self-esteem and self-actualisation (Figure 1).

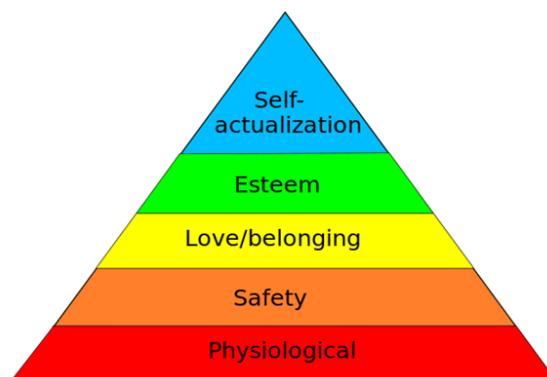


Figure 1 The hierarchy of needs proposed by Abraham Maslow²

Maslow considered that these needs were the main motivations for what we did but what happens if the culture we inhabit inhibits our ability to satisfy our needs? As I have journeyed through different cultural spaces and places in my life I have experienced this on a number of occasions. In such circumstances I have taken steps to raise my awareness of why I have felt inhibited and then sought ways of turning different cultural situations to my advantage. I have discovered that when I carry out my plans and follow my own pathway, the oppressing limitations of society and closer community suddenly melts away and I am able to satisfy higher level needs and enable me to fulfil more of the potential I know I have. I have journeyed through many different cultures and I will draw on my personal experiences to explore this relationship in the context of my own life.

Learning love and esteem by starting with the basics

I was a good student, with straight A's every single year. I enjoyed being in school, because my family life made me very unhappy: I found no meaning, no fun, no cuddles no kisses in my family. These years were spent counting down the time until I reached adulthood, when I could leave home and do whatever I wanted to. In the final year of high school, because of my exceptional grades, I got accepted to Hungary's best university, where I enrolled and started. My higher education this time lasted for three days, when I reached 18, and said goodbye to everything I had ever tried until that time. I became a nurses' aid in a small town, I moved into a temporary accommodation and met my boyfriend. Remembering how happy I was still gives me the chills, and the enthusiasm I had for starting something new, learning anything I had the chance for. I started to think about the problems I'd experienced with my higher education and realised that I was not ready for it yet. First I had to learn more basic things that I couldn't learn as a child and adolescent, such things as love, family, compassion and happiness.

In my role as a nurse's aid going to work was a wonderful experience every day. Old ladies with severe dementia greeting me with the brightest smile ever, young adults in a wheelchair waiting for me to take them outside, my colleagues thrilled by the new member of the team who never tires, is always content and loved doing overtime. My boss was satisfied and really cared what I thought about the care, that was provided at the hospital. This was not a working environment, but truly a learning environment for me, I consider the decision I made to become a nurse's aid one the best I ever made.

If we are unhappy with our life, and if we are lucky enough to have a chance to do so, we look for a different place, society and way of life that we can internalize. Or we think we will be able to achieve this better life at the beginning, and when realizing the difficulties we can start working on ourselves to make it really happen. This period of my life taught me this lesson well, beside getting love, my self-esteem developed to a level, where I felt confident to take the next step.

Tanzania - learning of values of work, appreciation of a simple lifestyle

When I felt comfortable enough in my skin, I started to wonder about long term career plans. Both me and my partner were poorly paid. We hardly made enough money to live very frugally, so when one of his friends offered him a second job, selling small decorations in the street in the Christmas Bazaar, he was happy to take this opportunity. We both were amazed at the amount of goods that could be sold there. This was my first experience with merchandising. Being very young and naïve, nothing was impossible, we thought this must work for us, too. We just have to go to Africa and buy some goods to sell ourselves. Neither one of us spoke a foreign language, my school required Russian language studies, which was merely formal, there was no communication value of the knowledge, so I decided to learn English. I started an intensive language course, finished some language books, filled many tests for examination but did not have more time than six months, because we took a loan to start our business, and had to leave in order to get back with the goods before the next Christmas Bazaar. Obviously, I didn't speak English yet when we had to leave, but luckily nobody else did in our circles in Africa. So I communicated by hands, signs, smiles, numbers and calendars, accompanied by my fresh English expertise. Under the hot African sunshine, my existential fears diminished. This was my first experience of living in a completely different culture. In this diverse environment I was amazed at how little people needed to live a happy life. I am not talking about an ideal life, but as we were dancing to the drums in the evenings and eating bananas from a banana tree, my anxiety and stress departed. It was also time for a little prosperity I guess, because we were successful at negotiating, purchasing, selling and marketing, influencing the customers, doing business planning and the accounts for the business. This step was not only progress in financial terms, but our self – esteem and confidence became higher because we had discovered something that we were good at and enjoyed doing. While we felt our other needs were being satisfied, for the first time we felt that we were achieving what we both wanted to achieve.



Thailand – English language miracles

My foreign language knowledge didn't improve much, until the following year when I had the idea of including some silver jewellery in our selection of goods. We sourced these in Thailand so away we went to buy them. By now I had gotten used to communicating with people regardless of language, but in Thailand the merchants spoke English quite well, and they did not understand why I didn't use the vocabulary I apparently had. This situation forced me to try: one day I could put only 2-3 words together, the next week I spoke in full sentences. In the Thai culture I noticed, that they really paid attention to me. *They expected me to speak*, so I did. I consider this the next important lesson in my lifelong learning journey. Namely, that the main task of the teacher is to believe that the learner is capable of achievement, they have to expect it in the right way, and the students will learn anything almost by themselves.



Another pathway to self-actualisation

In Hungary, life was great but I started to feel that something was missing from life. In Hungarian society one often hears people saying, 'You have everything, good food, beautiful house, enough money, what is your problem? You should be satisfied.' These words always make me feel uncomfortable, because in fact, I was often dissatisfied and happy at the same time. I had made progress in my life - I was safe and economically my everyday needs were being met but I clearly felt that I could do more. My basic physical needs were taken care of so it was time to achieve more of my potential in more spiritual, aesthetic and academic fields. I started to listen to presentations about psychology, I read philosophical books one after another, I became more and more interested in economics but I had nobody to talk to about these things, so I applied to a college again, but still wasn't quite ready for it yet. I finished a semester and unexplainably couldn't continue it any more. So I reframed my goals and decided to begin my developmental process by undertaking some simple, skill-based courses. Inspired by my interests, I liked pottery and painting so I embarked on a 2 year part time course and become a certified ceramist. While this achievement did not turn into a job it gave me the feeling of satisfaction that I needed. Everything was beautiful, the shapes, the new colours when I took the objects out of the kiln, the functionality, it all served a purpose. The real goal was not only making something aesthetically satisfying, but it felt, as if I worked for something more majestic. It gave my life more meaning. I still wanted to grow professionally, but the time for my higher education adventure had not yet arrived.

Experiencing another culture

By this time I was married to an American man with five children, and I moved to the USA with them. Immersing myself in the American culture was not a shock for me. I just silently observed that life is just like the movies, which I don't enjoy too much anyway. On this occasion I have learnt, *what I should not do*, if I want to progress in life. It was an invaluable experience, I became more aware of the reality of life versus the idea of reality spread by the media. I felt sorry for the children, who were addicted to TV and video games, unable to enjoy the simple joys of life. The contrast was so vivid between how I wanted to raise my children and what I had seen there, that gave me enough confidence to move on. When we have the right mixture of the cultural components in our lives, we are generally more satisfied with less, but for the right selection we must know what our choices, preferences and principles are.



Learning to teach

Luckily English language was not a problem for me while living in America, but three years later I was living in Hungary again, my two sons were born shortly, and with these great events the next stage of my development started. My little ones needed me all the time, so I chose a job that was flexible and could be done from home, I started to teach English. I always remembered how I learnt it during my travels, what helped me to pronounce a difficult word, how I practised a grammar rule. I could recall the confidence I felt when I was talking to people in Thailand, and the dismay if I had to talk to my Hungarian teacher. In my head, I listed the mistakes that I wanted to avoid when teaching others. I held one language course for employees of IBM and Samsung in Hungary, soon I had 4, then 8 courses and made a good living from it. I started every lesson with slight excitement, looking forward to it, and finished with enormous energies and enthusiasm for my class, I never got tired. I found the career I should be in, and – five years after started teaching - again, I applied for university. This time I was ready, I didn't even consider leaving it. I was working, raising two little children, I was building a house and still managed to graduate four years later. Then without hesitation, I immediately started my masters' studies, this time with an Economist Teacher specification, and at the age of 38, I was awarded my MSc. I could only do it, because that was the right time for me somehow, despite the million other obligations I had. I became the educated person I wanted to be.



After graduating, I got a job as a teacher in a high school in Budapest but something did not feel right. Although ESL (teaching English as a second language) was not my specification, I held classes in it, strictly with the defined direction of the school. The pupils had 12 hours of English each week, with three different teachers and at the end of the school year, still couldn't hold a light conversation. I was deeply disappointed, because my students at the company courses needed only six months to become conversational, now after one year we still struggle. Reforms, new ideas, different methods, all of these were rejected. I felt small and insignificant, that I saw these bright and smart kids wasting their time. What I learnt here is not the most pleasant experience. I had to learn, how to function in a system, make the most out of the situation, comply with the rules and yet do my best for the students. I underestimated the power of educational and political system, at that time I could not believe that I won't be able to make significant changes, then I learnt that also, better late than never. I felt betrayed by my own society, having seen too much of the world, I was convinced that there are places where I could fit in more easily.

Belonging in a culture of acceptance

I draw on one more cultural experience namely my experience of living in the UK. This society makes me feel like finally I found the missing link in the chain of my life. Culture is about belonging, in order to grow, we need each other to a greater or lesser degree, and growing is absolutely necessary. The components of a culture are like a tickle for our mind, human soul and physically our brain cherishes the things they recognise, know from long ago or understand. The exterior, included the decorations, clothes, environment and the human interior, such as thinking, behaviour, habits, customs become familiar to us very quickly, which creates that sense of joy.

Crossing and connecting with cultures means that, we already have a setting where we – like it or not – feel we belong, and getting to know the settings we are in gradually we become aware of the values and faults and within some limitations, can actively select the component that we prefer and omit the ones we don't like. In this way we create a more satisfying life for ourselves.

Since I have lived in the UK, I feel more proud to be Hungarian also, because this environment has taught me that diversity and the tolerance of diversity has great value. Through my story I have revealed how I have been able to satisfy different needs with the help of different cultures - some of which are very different to the culture I was born into. For me - no single culture provided me with the affordances to satisfy all the needs I have to achieve more of my potential. Rather, the different cultures I have encountered through my life have provided me with the context and affordance to enable me to satisfy the continually unfolding needs I have for my own development. Each cultural context I was fortunate to get to know has taught me valuable lessons relating to my happiness, the truth about real needs, why are we stuck at a particular point of life and what we can do to help ourselves, reach out to others and never be afraid to put ourselves into unfamiliar situations where we can learn.

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Cultural Influences on Needs¹

Through examining cultures in which large numbers of people live in poverty (such as India) it is clear that people are still capable of higher order needs such as love and belongingness. However, this should not occur, as according to Maslow, people who have difficulty achieving very basic physiological needs (such as food, shelter etc.) are not capable of meeting higher growth needs.

Also, many creative people, such as authors and artists (e.g. Rembrandt and Van Gough) lived in poverty throughout their lifetime, yet it could be argued that they achieved self-actualization.

Contemporary research by Tay & Diener (2011) has tested Maslow's theory by analyzing the data of 60,865 participants from 123 countries, representing every major region of the world. The survey was conducted from 2005 to 2010.

Respondents answered questions about six needs that closely resemble those in Maslow's model: basic needs (food, shelter); safety; social needs (love, support); respect; mastery; and autonomy. They also rated their well-being across three discrete measures: life evaluation (a person's view of his or her life as a whole), positive feelings (day-to-day instances of joy or pleasure), and negative feelings (everyday experiences of sorrow, anger, or stress).

The results of the study support the view that universal human needs appear to exist regardless of cultural differences. However, the ordering of the needs within the hierarchy was not correct.

"Although the most basic needs might get the most attention when you don't have them," Diener explains, "you don't need to fulfil them in order to get benefits [from the others]." Even when we are hungry, for instance, we can be happy with our friends. "They're like vitamins," Diener says about how the needs work independently. "We need them all."

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Journey into Another Culture : My Sabbatical Experience

Lorraine Stefani



Lorraine is Professor of Higher Education Strategic Engagement at the University Of Auckland (UOA), New Zealand. She is well travelled, her expertise in organizational change and development has led to consultancy roles in many countries including Switzerland, Hungary, Hong Kong, Australia, South Africa and most recently, Saudi Arabia.

A sabbatical is a time for renewal and rejuvenation and an opportunity for new experiences. Used well, it is an opportunity for mental and physical renewal and exploration of creative pursuits. In applying for my Research and Study Leave in 2013, my university required quite detailed information on the purpose and goals, expected tangible outcomes and benefits to the university, and to my personal and professional development. My overarching goal at the outset was to carry out research on leadership in higher education with the longer term aim of publishing a single authored book on this topic. This was a new research focus for me. Leadership in higher education is an under-researched topic. As universities are constantly being challenged to change and almost re-invent themselves to align with shifting conceptions of the purpose of higher education, it is time to explore leadership in higher education, to take our role as role models seriously and to understand how to build leadership capability and capacity, as a critical aspect of our social responsibility.

Being liberated from the routine while on sabbatical, increases the potential for learning. The opportunities are lifewide as we look outside of the relatively safe haven of academia and our everyday professional or discipline based experiences, knowledge and learning. It is akin to seeing life in the raw! A sabbatical affords us the opportunity to see and experience the world through different eyes and lenses and to challenge our normal mindsets and assumptions.

Just occasionally in life, an opportunity comes along that could not have been predicted but opens up new and exciting possibilities for learning and personal development. Late in 2013 I received an invitation to spend a period of time as a Consultant to the Deanship of Development and Skills Enhancement (DDSE) at PNU. I was seconded from my position at the University of Auckland, as part of our higher education strategic engagement agenda. The overarching purpose of the consultancy was to support the development of a Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching within the PNU Deanship of Development and Skills Enhancement and to support the University in developing strategies to build leadership capacity and capability in learning and teaching.



The Cultural Challenge

Prior to receiving this invitation I had been to Saudi Arabia several times and had supported learning and teaching development initiatives in many universities in the Kingdom, and with the Saudi Arabia Ministry of Higher Education. I had gained professional credibility and insights into the challenges of change in culturally different universities, but I had not previously had a long-stay academic engagement in a university in Saudi Arabia.

In taking on the role of consultant to the Deanship of Skills Development and Enhancement, a context that was culturally very different to anything I had experienced before, I wondered if tried and tested approaches to academic development would necessarily be transferable. Would expectations within a different cultural terrain, a place with very different power and politics be radically different? Would my philosophy, beliefs and practices be applicable in this different culture? To what extent were networks of activities a reality in Princess Nora University?

It is fair to say that as a woman travelling alone, nothing can quite prepare you for the culture shock of arriving in Saudi Arabia. You are one amongst the very many, conspicuous by your presence. Wearing the Abayah is mandatory at all times for women outside of the home. This issue is non-negotiable, a fact of life in Saudi Arabia and for many Western women this raises the issue of why one would choose to spend time in Saudi Arabia. For me it was about expanding my global perspective on the importance of education, my sense of myself as a global academic citizen, my enthusiasm for challenge and developing and growing my sense of self and my world view. The world is messy and complex and cross-cultural and cross-boundary collaborations are educational and developmental. If we can understand each other better whatever our culture we might be able to build a better future.

Leadership Challenges for Saudi Arabian Women

The most challenging aspect of working in Saudi Arabia as an educational developer is not in sharing academic development practices, but rather in understanding culturally different conceptions of leadership. This issue was even more prominent in Princess Nora University which cannot be considered to be the norm. While it is a women-only university, there are significant issues regarding the status of women in Saudi Arabia. Women must wear the Abayah at all times; they are not permitted to drive; they must be accompanied at all times outside of the home and they must gain permission from a male relative to travel, and of course be accompanied. These societal restrictions on women have meant that women are not generally accustomed to being afforded or taking on leadership roles in the workplace. On the other hand the women working in higher education are extraordinary in their commitment and their passion for success. Many of them have been educated in universities around the world, in the USA, Canada and the UK for example.



In my experience of working in universities in Saudi Arabia, there is no question that there is an enthusiasm, a 'hunger' to learn as much as possible about learning and teaching, to adopt and modify strategies that consultants like myself bring to their universities.

It was not too problematic therefore to introduce across faculties initiatives such as Peer Observation of Teaching, writing a Statement of Philosophy of Learning and Teaching, exploring the notion of developing a portfolio for the purposes of initiating Teaching Excellence Awards. It was interesting that in comparison to their male

colleagues in other 'mixed gender' universities, women faculty in PNU did not have a problem about sharing teaching expertise, about introducing peer observation and feedback. In another university, the idea of peer observation was not welcomed because of a fear of reprisals if a 'bad report' was written about their teaching. It was not possible in that instance to re-assure some faculty members that 'bad reports' was not the point or purpose of the enhancement strategy. The faculty in PNU welcomed the idea wholeheartedly!

What was much more challenging was engaging in conversations and initiatives to build leadership capability within PNU and in this respect, cultural conceptions of leadership were at the forefront of the challenge. Perhaps this is not surprising. Absolute monarchy and autocracy are not compatible with distributed leadership and empowerment and, in addition it would be very surprising if there were not significant gender differences in thinking about leadership, given women's traditional role in Saudi Arabian society. In the next section I outline some of the cultural mismatch between Western conceptions of leadership and those I experienced at PNU.

The leadership inputs that have impacted on me most include, a Leadership at the Peak programme facilitated by the Centre for Creative Leadership (CCL) and the work of Jim P Kouzes and Barry Posner in their book⁽¹⁾. The learning from these inputs are what I carry with me and endeavour to live up to in my work building leadership capacity and capability. I work towards blending together my leadership and pedagogical knowledge in my academic practice.

Cultural Comparisons

One means of articulating ways in which our approaches to leadership differ from those of such a culturally different environment as a women's university in the Middle East is to take Kouzes' and Posner's 5 Leadership Challenges and give what may be considered simplistic comparisons but which hopefully give a sense of the cultural nuances that we can't ignore in sharing our expertise across cultures. I make some cultural comparisons below using Kouzes and Posner's⁽¹⁾ 5 Leadership Challenges as a framework.

1 Model the Way

The first leadership challenge is to 'model the way'. What is meant by this is that as leaders we need to be conscious of ourselves as role models; we must promote engagement by being engaged ourselves, show commitment, respect and dignity for all regardless of status. We should also be influencers and advocates – and engage in taken for granted democratic processes.

The key to successful leadership is influence, not authority
K.H.Blanchard

In Saudi Arabia however, there are few role models for women in leadership positions and there is a strong tendency to equate leadership with power. Leaders are not necessarily chosen for their skills and expertise but rather through patronage – status, class, culture. It is however quite wrong to consider that Western countries are models of democracy and this was a comment I heard frequently from colleagues in Saudi Arabia. There is a depth of hierarchy, power and authority in universities in Saudi Arabia that is extremely difficult to navigate and thus, it is not always the case that modeling the way is easy to do.

2 Inspire a Shared Vision

The second of the five leadership challenges calls upon leaders to engage in a collaborative effort to determine a vision for the organization which is clearly aligned with organizational goals. In this respect most of us can participate in a democratic process. While we are by no means perfect, we do enjoy freedom of engagement and dialogue and different voices can be heard. In contrast, my experience particularly in PNU was that there is a societal divide between traditionalists and modernizers. There are two views expressed about PNU. One is that by educating women they will make better wives and the other is that by educating many more women than has traditionally been the case, women will have a voice in the political, social and economic future of Saudi Arabia. But right now, women do not have that 'power' and it appeared to me that PNU is struggling to set out a clear vision, strategic plans, operational plans etc. It is an institution still in its infancy and as such is not yet in control of its own destiny and therefore it is difficult to inspire a shared vision, and the levels of engagement across institutions that we recognize are not visible in PNU.

Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality
Warren Bennis

3 Challenge the Process

Most leadership literature whether it comes from the business or the education sectors would suggest that leadership is not about maintaining the status quo. In higher education there is an expectation that leaders will lead innovation and experimentation; a research-led approach to change underpinned by scholarship; strategies to enhancing organizational performance. As a member of an academic development community with leadership responsibilities, the notion of challenging the process often requires courage, much advocacy and persuasion at different levels, but my belief is that I am not really expected to keep things ticking over, but rather to effect meaningful change through many different strategies.

Leadership is the willingness to put oneself at risk
Maxwell, J.C.

In Saudi Arabia culture and tradition make it very difficult for women to 'challenge the process'. The university is merely a microcosm of cultural norms of high power distance in the hierarchy and many layers of bureaucracy, resulting in a long process of decision making. It is not in the powers of faculty or management in PNU to challenge the process.

4 Enable Others to Act

My interpretation of the fourth leadership challenge is that as an individual with leadership responsibilities it is critical to my role to create a climate of *trust and lift people up*. There are many examples of leaders believing that 'it is all about them'. In fact a recent blog post from Henry Mintzberg, an outstanding leader in leadership and management is entitled *The Epidemic of Managing Without a Soul*. In this posting, Mintzberg⁽²⁾ 'talks' about managers who specialize in killing cultures at the expense of human engagement! Enabling others to act means being generous with leadership roles to build capacity and capability, mentoring and coaching explicitly for leadership and creating transparency in career progression and the reward processes.

A leader is best when people barely know he exists, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: we did it ourselves Lao Tzu

I could not claim that in our universities all is well, in fact we are less than perfect in many of our institutional processes.

However in an autocratic society, it is clearly much more difficult to enable others to act. The points below give an indication of some of the issues I discerned from working with faculty in PNU:

- Lack of continuity of practice, with many different consultants not necessarily all giving the same messages.
- Systemic changes are required to enhance motivation amongst staff given that there is no transparency or embedded processes for recruitment and career progression.
- Faculty members are doing a heroic job in challenging circumstances.
- Faculty members are willing to engage, and seek appropriate development opportunities aligned with their roles, but individual women and the institution itself are not in control of their own destiny.

5 Encourage the Heart

The last but not least of the five leadership challenges espoused by Posner and Kouzes⁽¹⁾ encourages us to:

- Recognize achievement, reward high performance, show generosity of spirit
- Live your values, be a role model for values based leadership
- Show the best, encourage the best
- Engage, lift, enthuse, inspire

These points are not so very different from those espoused by other experts in the field of leadership and would seem to be applicable in all leadership situations. As leaders we need to work at living up to the challenges and the complexities of leadership within our higher education institutions, and in reality there are few barriers to us being the best we can be.

The people who are lifting the world onward and upward are those who encourage more than they criticize Elizabeth Harrison

In the cultural context being considered there are many obstacles and barriers, not least of all the top down and top heavy leadership which stems from the cultural environment. Women in Saudi Arabia have to work immensely hard to 'prove' their leadership in an environment where there is a distinct lack of recognition. My experience at PNU was one of watching extremely courageous women doing a difficult job in very difficult circumstances.

To my mind it was not a case of women not wanting to be or become the best leaders they could be, it was not necessarily a case of Western assumptions being transposed into a very different culture. Rather it was the case that democratic processes as we understand them are not much in evidence. While women are making advances in society, in the workplace, in the politic of Saudi Arabia, the notion of leadership equating with power is deeply entrenched, and the idea of empowering people, women in particular, is more of an uphill struggle in this cultural environment.

Given that many of us will be invited to engage in consultancy contracts in countries very different from our own, it may be helpful to explore the cultural challenges and glean information from those who have gone before!



What difference did this experience make to me?

Living and working in Saudi Arabia gave me incredible insights into the status and the challenges for universities in Saudi Arabia. I learned so much more about Islam and the Islamic culture. I also learned that much of what we take to be and assume to be repression of women, is seen very differently by highly educated Saudi Arabian women, but I also did learn much about the dissatisfaction of women regarding the right to vote, the right to drive and freedom of movement.

http://www.saudibrit.com/images2011/2007_12_17m250.jpg

I learned a great deal about intercultural competence, what it really means – and I question whether or not we do a good enough job of supporting students and indeed staff in developing this complex skill or attribute.

Personally and professionally I am not in any doubt that I have grown as a person. In returning to my university I hoped that my learning, my publications, my tangible impact will be of value not only to my university, but also much more widely than that. In the less tangible and measurable aspects of sabbatical leave, I hoped that I would add value to the university, bring my enhanced sense of mindfulness and being mindful, and my global knowledge and understanding to bear on my work on leadership in higher education.

I am grateful to the University of Auckland for the support provided for my sabbatical Research and Study Leave. I wholeheartedly recommend sabbatical time and fully believe that the added value for the institution is significant with measurable and immeasurable components. From my viewpoint the opportunity to embrace my own lifelong and lifewide learning in this way, was a treat, a challenge and a privilege. The personal and professional development and new relationships and opportunities that have emerged through disrupting my life, to me is worth its weight in gold.

Acknowledgements

This article was adapted from two previous articles:

Stefani L (2014) Disrupting Your Life Can Help You Grow Lifewide Magazine December 2014 <http://www.lifewideeducation.uk/magazine.html>

Stefani, L. (2015) Is Our Academic Practice Transferable Across Cultural Boundaries?

SEDA Educational Developments 16 (3) pp 14-17

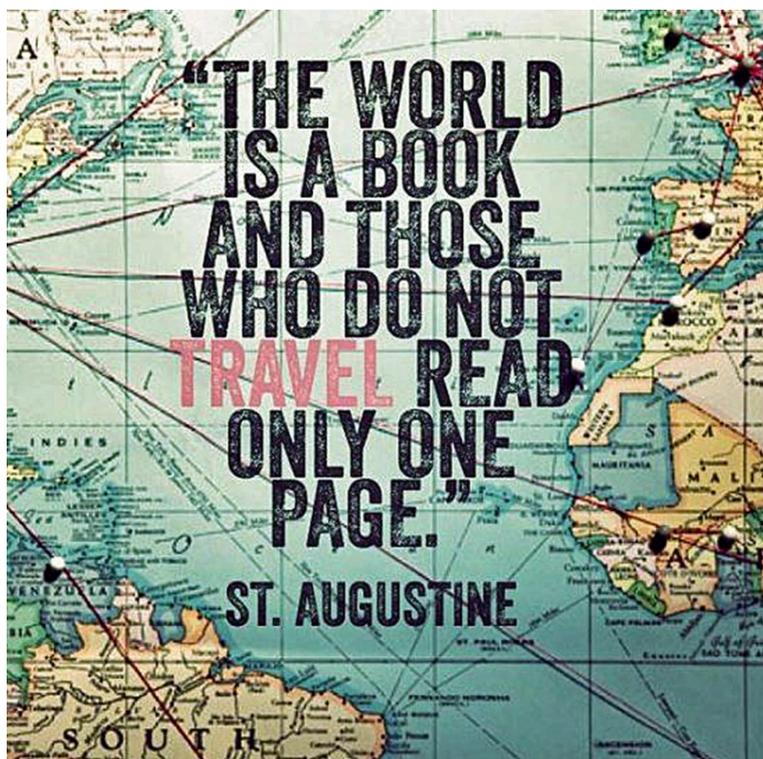
Stefani L (2015) Is Our Academic Practice Transferable Across Cultural Boundaries?: A leadership case from Saudi Arabia SEDA

Lifewide Education is grateful to SEDA for allowing us to repurpose significant parts of their article.

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1) Kouzes, J. and Posner, B. (2012) *The Leadership Challenge* 5th Edition Jossey-Bass, San Francisco

2) Mintzberg, H. (2015) The Epidemic of Managing Without Soul <http://www.mintzberg.org/blog/managing-without-soul>



Actually living in another country remind you how incredible life is. Though you get used to a new routine and enjoy a new comfort, something about it give you an appreciation for everything—things that you wouldn't usually notice or pay attention to.

Alanna Harvey

<https://medium.com/human-output/why-you-should-live-in-another-country-at-some-point-in-your-life-or-as-soon-as-possible-c0fd319237b2#.2du1xnpz8>

Valuing Differences and Similarities

Melissa Hahn

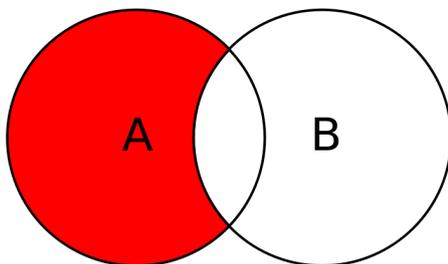
Melissa was born and raised in Arizona but has also lived in Poland, married into a Korean American family, and visited more than 40 states and 20 countries in North America, Europe, and Asia. These experiences have shown her the beauty – and the challenge – of crossing cultures with competence and confidence, and have motivated her to help others with their journey. Her passion is to help people navigate cultural differences in relocation, education, and family life. She is the author of several articles for the *Harvard Business Review* and an intercultural children's book *Luminarias Light the Way* (2014). Follow her on Twitter [@SonoranHanbok](#).



Culture is a marvellous thing

But it can also be perplexing and frustrating when we don't understand how to read the hidden codes and perform the required scripts. It can also be hard to know what to do when expectations clash with our own ethics and norms. Even people who consider themselves flexible, open-minded, and sensitive can struggle with feelings of confusion, discomfort, and uncertainty! I help people connect across cultures and manage themselves during cultural change and transition. Different situations call for different approaches; I engage people in a variety of ways, including as a writer, coach, consultant, mentor, researcher, and photographer. Throughout my intercultural work, one question frequently emerges: Is it better to focus on similarities or differences when thinking about cultures that are different to our own?

When I was a student in elementary school back in the 1980s, I became very familiar with the *Venn Diagram*. In a paper and pencil era, teachers couldn't get enough of "compare and contrast" activities in which we would identify how two things – like a novel and its film adaptation – were the same in some ways and different in others. Neither half of the activity was the end goal; rather, the point was to discover the dynamic relationship of separateness and connectedness between the two items.



This old-fashioned diagram has resurfaced in my mind lately as I read articles about whether it's more important to focus on similarities or differences when crossing cultures. In my view, and in keeping with the Venn Diagram, it's not *either-or* but *both-and*.

The Power of Similarities

Milton Bennett⁽¹⁾, one of the leading scholars in the intercultural field, observed that a common reaction toward cultural differences is defensiveness. Instead of experiencing curiosity or opening their arms in tolerance, people can twist differences into evidence that their own culture is either under threat or is inherently superior. The most obvious example of this is in the political vitriol that surrounds immigration debates, but it also plays out in workplaces and communities. Consider how some people see a woman in a headscarf and assume that she is just too foreign (or dangerous) to relate to, or how tempting it is to blame team members from other countries for every problem.

In these situations, focusing on similarities is abundantly helpful. Wouldn't it be nice to know that the woman in the scarf also enjoys cooking, photography, and dancing – just like you? That the team members share your passion for football/soccer, are also doting parents, or possess credentials that you respect? Similarities reduce our vulnerability and put us at ease. By focusing on them, we can downgrade our internal threat level and bridge differences that might have made us want to stay away.

The Power of Differences

Similarities inspire us to plant those first seeds of a new relationship. Their limitation is that we may become perplexed when people we've identified as being "like us" subsequently do things that make us angry, insult us, or let us down. If we are so similar, then why do our global team members miss deadlines, give vague answers to our questions, or defer to their own bosses rather than exhibit the individual responsibility, direct communication, and sense of initiative we (in the U.S.) expect as hallmarks of professionalism? Why does our neighbor appear to have perspectives on family life, modesty, and feminism that diverge from our own?

If we have negated cultural differences, the answer can't be cultural, so all that's left is to make it personal. We may come away with a viewpoint like this: I am open minded when it comes to other cultures – there is just something wrong with those individuals. Individual personalities do play a part, but when we frame cultural differences as personal flaws, we may errantly think the other party is upsetting us on purpose, may put all of the responsibility on them to fix the situation, or may believe that no resolution is possible. Either way, it is a dead-end that leaves us feeling disempowered and disenchanting.

By contrast, when we consider differences, we can recognize that many cross-cultural challenges are well-intended clashes where no party is necessarily to blame. Expanding on this realization, we may be open-minded enough to consider that we are inadvertently and ignorantly causing *others'* frustrations because of our own cultural assumptions. For example, perhaps our expectations that team members prioritize linear calendar/clock time, engage in personal risk by speaking up, and approach their work in an egalitarian manner causes a lot of stress for those who come from cultures where time is fluid, relationships take precedence over task completion, group coherence matters more than individual success, and teams are sensitive to hierarchies and power dynamics. Rather than be tyrannical or defeatist in the face of unexpected differences, we can engage our curiosity, learn about the other's culture, develop empathy and move toward a more productive resolution.

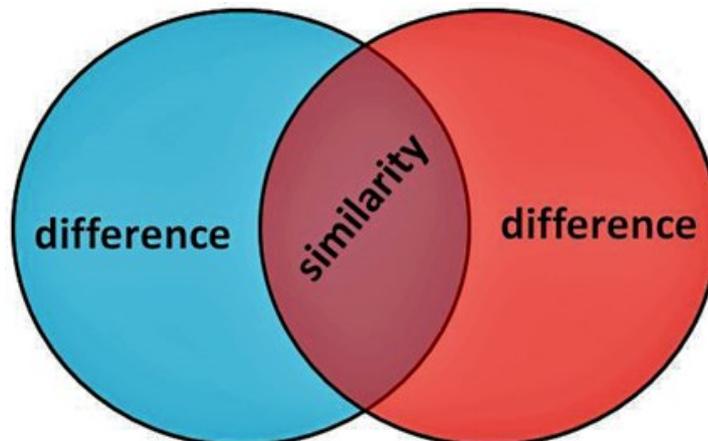
Identifying differences won't automatically lead to a solution, but it's pretty hard to overcome differences when you don't see them. For example Canada (right) felt so much like the U.S. that it was easy to forget that we are different countries with different cultures.



Putting it Together

Bennett said that focusing on cultural similarities and minimizing differences is a great place to start but a terrible place to stop. I agree, and this is where the Venn Diagram comes in. It is a helpful reminder that you can't understand the relationship between two cultures without considering how they are similar and different. To do one and not the other would be incomplete: looking at only similarities may give us a comforting but false sense of how alike we really are, while looking only at differences may make us feel alienated or threatened before we give the cross-cultural encounter a real chance.

The diagram has its limitations: for one thing, it is based on a Western preference for approaching problems logically through categorization and classification; for another, it doesn't provide solutions. That said, it is a manageable starting place: a straightforward way to organize and clarify your thoughts and visually consider what you know, what you have to work with, and what issues you might overcome. And best of all, it is free and completely portable.



Acknowledgements

I originally published this article as a post on my blog <https://interculturalmelissa.com/2016/02/22/differences-and-similarities/>

I retain the rights to the article and photographs. You can find out more about my work on my website <https://interculturalmelissa.com/>

References

1) Milton Bennett was my professor during my Master's in Intercultural Relations, and the information included here is taken from the lectures he delivered. You can also find his ideas in the book *Basic Concepts of Intercultural Communication: Selected Readings*.

Image source previous page: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/2/21/Menge_Venn-Diagramm_006.svg/800px-Menge_Venn-Diagramm_006.svg.png

Finding Sanctuary in Another Culture: The Ecology of Survival

Editor's Comment: Most of the stories in this issue of *Lifewide Magazine* are concerned with experiences of encountering or crossing other cultures that, although they might be challenging at the time are undertaken by people with their own will and agency in situations where risk and security are not significant factors. But there are situations where people have to escape their own cultural context because their lives are at risk and they make perilous journeys through a multitude of cultures to find a life that is safe and secure for themselves and their families. Their stories reflect extreme physical and emotional disruption, disorientation and hardship that is impossible for most of us to imagine. Their ecologies for learning are geared to survival and learning how to survive the immediate danger and threat to their life until they find safety. Even then their learning is geared to finding the knowledge and resources necessary to sustain their lives in an environment that is unknown and a culture that is very different to their own and may well be hostile. In conducting research for this issue I came across many harrowing but uplifting stories of refugee journeys but this by Gulwali Passarlay seemed especially remarkable for the clarity with which he describes his experience and the wisdom he draws from it so that we might learn.

Journey of a Refugee: What 'Crossing Cultures' means to me

Gulwali Passarlay



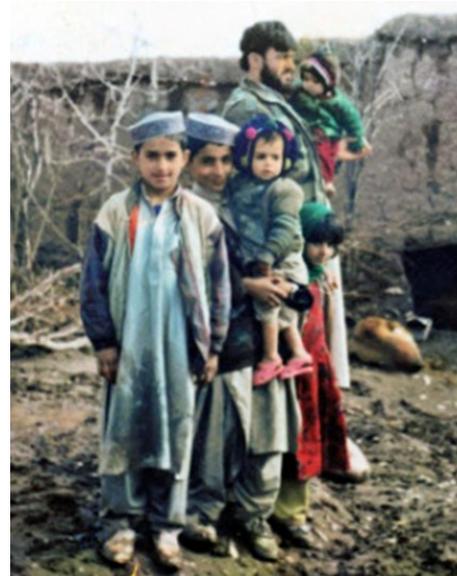
Gulwali is a remarkable young man whose passions and identity have been forged through a remarkable life story that includes fleeing Afghanistan at the age of 13 and spending 12 months on the road, half-starved and filthy, covered over 20,000 kilometres and travelling through 8 different countries. The journey nearly killed him, leaving him with mental, physical and emotional scars, but also enormous resilience and ambition to make a positive difference to the world. Since arriving in the UK in 2007 as a political refugee Gulwali learnt English, studied hard and became a student at the University of Manchester, a youth politician and the author of a book recounting the tale of his journey across the world. In this article he reveals something of what crossing cultures means to him.

Some childhood memories

For the first years of my life I lived with my grandparents, who were shepherds in the hills. Then after 9/11 everything changed. From October 2002, the oppression we suffered at the hands of the US military was constant – there wasn't a day that went by without bombings, death, destruction. I appreciate the Taliban ruled with an iron rod, and were brutal in their own way, but for us they had taken our country from the civil war and created some semblance of stability and peace.

I was seven years old. I remember running between the kitchen and the guesthouse, my mother handing me pots of tea to take to the tribal elders and Taliban fighters who had amassed in our home. A Saudi man called Bin Laden, who my Uncle Lala told me was a great freedom fighter, had attacked America. Now, just days afterwards, the US was angry with Afghanistan, blaming us for it. This was because the Taliban was refusing to bow to American pressure and hand over Bin Laden, who was said to be sheltering in Tora Bora, a couple of hours' drive from where we lived. When the US began to bomb Tora Bora, we could hear the sound, but it was far enough away for us not to be at direct risk. Shortly afterwards, however, bombs rained from the sky directly overhead.

It was only later that I learned that the area around our home had been the last front line; Uncle Lala had been one of the last local commanders of the Taliban to hold his position against the US-led coalition forces. Soon after that final battle, he fled the country himself, and we didn't know where he had gone.



Gulwali Passarlay, second from left, with members of his extended family in Afghanistan in 2002

Three years after the US occupation began, my father, a doctor, was shot by US troops. Taliban representatives began to visit our home. They wanted my brother and me to become fighters or even suicide bombers – martyrs – to avenge our father’s death. I wanted to do it. But my mother was influenced by a different set of thinking – her deep and abiding faith. She had a genuine and strong understanding of true Islamic law, and it is a religion that prohibits the taking of life.

My mother was also doubly scared for me and my elder brother Hazrat, because the US forces were urging us to become informants. She feared that if we got involved with NATO forces, we would be seen as traitors and killed – so she hatched a plan to get us out. Never did I imagine that her plan would involve paying people smugglers thousands of dollars to take us to Europe.

My journey across cultures

First, when I was ten, she sent us to stay with my aunt in Waziristan [northern Pakistan]. Then, one night she arrived and told us that we were to be taken ‘to safety. To Europe’. I will never forget her parting words: ‘You must hold on to each other’s hands. Never let go of each other. This is for your own good. However bad it gets, don’t come back.’

The man who took us from her made light of our grief at parting. ‘They will be there in a few weeks,’ he assured my mother. ‘It will be like a holiday, an adventure.’ His words couldn’t have been further from the truth. The next morning we were handed over to a man and a woman. The woman explained that they would fly with us to Iran. At the airport, we were to make no noise and not attract the attention of security guards. From there we would go to Europe.



Map of Gulwali's Journey taken from his book and produced by Jamie Whyte
<http://jamiwhyte.co.uk/portfolio/the-lightless-sky-an-afghan-refugee-boys-journey-of-escape-to-a-new-life-in-britain/>

On arrival at Peshawar’s international airport, over the border in Pakistan, the man we were with picked up Hazrat’s bag and led him through the gate. I went to follow, but the woman held me back. I wanted to yell his name but the woman’s earlier warnings about not attracting attention still loomed large in my mind. ‘I want to go with him,’ I whispered.

I started to cry and she looked around nervously. ‘Later. You will see him on the plane.’ I stopped crying because I believed her. But when we boarded the plane, my brother was nowhere to be seen. I would not see him again for more than a year.

I flew to the city of Mashhad in Iran and so began the rough and terrifying 12-month odyssey. It led me near death, jumping from a moving train in Bulgaria, and to torture at the hands of the police in Istanbul. I escaped from a prison bus in Iran, was shot at by the police, and drifted for days on a stricken boat in the Mediterranean.

The hardship began in Iran: travelling hidden in lorries, buses, cars, walking long distances and even riding a horse. It was especially hard at borders. I was scared and couldn't trust anyone. The agents were heartless, sometimes there was no food for days and it was very cold. I knew I had to leave Afghanistan, but I was worried for my family. It took a month to get to Turkey.

In Turkey we were packed into trucks – there were just three trucks that met us for hundreds of people. We travelled that way for hours over mountains and then we were left. I couldn't understand what was happening to me, but I knew I had to go on. I tried not looking like a child. I pretended to shave, but there was nothing to shave. We stayed in dirty, over-crowded rooms, sometimes they were underground. There were times I was kidnapped by agents – I was a commodity for them. I boarded a boat for Athens and was scared as I knew that boats like this sometimes sink. It was very crowded. It was only for 50 people, but we were over 100. We ran out of food and water – this was the only time I felt afraid of what could happen. We were treated like animals. Everything hurt. Water started to come in the boat, some people jumped out but I stayed on. Police came to arrest us. I didn't want to die there, in the water. If I did, my body would be lost and my family would never know what happened to me or where I was.



The police rescued them and gave them food and water, "at least we were safe. This is the most scared I ever was". On my arrival in Greece, sentenced to three months in jail, where I woke the cell block at night with my screaming.

Gulwali eventually managed to get to Italy and met up with other Afghan asylum seekers and they made their way to France – it took months to get there – and then Calais. "I wanted to get to the UK because my uncle was there. But I would have gone anywhere safe that would let me stay."

Hustled roughly by smugglers from buses to pick-up trucks and cattle wagons, without questioning or really even thinking, I put my life into the hands of strangers again and again. I often travelled on foot for days and nights on end, walking through the dark in remote, dangerous mountainous regions to avoid detection. Accommodation was at best crowded, and at worst vile: at one stop in Turkey I was herded into a hen coop crowded with migrants and told: 'Welcome to hell.'

My journey nearly killed me, and it left mental, physical and emotional scars that I will bear for the rest of my life. When I think back to that extraordinary time, I am reminded time and again how lucky I am to have made it out alive.

Your life is taken out of your hands. You spend all your time being taken from place to place. You are a shell. You no longer feel human. It is like you are a dead person already.

At times along the way I would tearfully question why my mother had forced me to go away. But I would remind myself that she had done it for me, for my safety, and that would drive me on. Besides, Hazrat was still out there somewhere, and I had to find him. I clung on to that thought with grim determination.

Since we had been separated in Peshawar, I had heard no news of him, but had never given up hope. Finally, in Greece I met a smuggler's agent who had come across him. Hazrat, I was told, was on his way to England, so that's where I must go. But first I had to negotiate the hell on Earth known as the 'Jungle' in Calais. *Where after many attempts to get to England where his uncle lived he managed to stow away on a refrigerated banana lorry.*



To survive, and whether I actually wanted to, was increasingly on my mind. And I suppose that's why...standing in front of a refrigerated lorry full of bananas, I didn't hesitate. The six other guys I was with weren't so sure. 'We'll freeze to death in there,' one said. I just kicked the mud off my worn-out boots and climbed up. 'Gulwali,' they asked. 'Are you sure?' I shrugged. What difference did it make? Freeze in a banana truck or freeze in the Jungle during this cold November? They climbed in too.

We knew the distance from the lorry park to the port entrance, we knew the sensation of going over the speed bumps that led to the port check-in area. This was the closest I had ever come after a month of trying – a month that had felt like three times as long.

The lorry wobbled forwards. A hollow, metallic clank-clank-clank as each axle passed over a ramp sent a chorus of excitement through the trailer. 'We're getting on the ferry.'

Then the lorry went quiet as the driver turned off the engine, and for the next 45 minutes the seven of us sat in absolute silence. 'Are we moving?' someone hissed. I held my breath and concentrated. It was there – a discernible sway, a gentle rocking motion. We were on our way to England."

"When I arrived in Britain in the back of a banana lorry, I hardly spoke any English at all," the 22-year-old says. "But I was determined to work on my education every moment of every day once I was here, because I knew that this would be the only way I would be able to communicate to the world about what was happening to my people."

Gulwali was discovered when the lorry arrived at the factory and sent to prison for 24 hours. He was 13. The police asked where he was from and his age. He was taken to an immigration removal centre in Dover, but because he was still a child, he wasn't deported. Instead he was taken to a hotel, where he stayed for a few of days. He was given an immigration registration card and began to look for his uncle.

When social services interviewed him they didn't believe his age because he came across as more mature and self-confident. They decided he was 16½ — though a doctor assessed him as being between 14 and 16. They didn't accept his birth date nor where he was from. However, he was asked if wanted to seek asylum and he said he did.

He was kept in a hostel for newly arrived asylum seekers until they could find him a reasonable place to live. He was there for three months. Because he was assessed as 16½, he was given a one year visa, with no right of appeal, meaning he would be sent back to Afghanistan when he was 17 or 18.

Because his age was disputed, college wouldn't accept him because he said he was 13. School wouldn't accept him because social services said he was nearly 17.

He found his uncle in Bolton, but the authorities wouldn't allow him to stay with him. Instead he was put in a 'bed space' – a room that he shared with another asylum seeker: a man aged about 20.

Thanks to Starting Point, which helped newly arrived asylum-seeking children become ready for mainstream school, Gulwali was able to attend a UK school once his age dispute was resolved. The head teacher understood his case, believed his age and helped him get a school uniform and other things he needed.

I was at this school for a year. I was in despair, no one believed my age, the Home Office threatened to send me back to Afghanistan. But in the end, I managed to prove my age. So, from being thought to be 18 by this time, they recognised I was only 14. As a result, I could go to a mainstream school.

I wanted an education. It was very hard to get used to the school and to my classmates. But I soon realised that I needed to do more than just study for my exams. I needed to change students' attitudes so they would appreciate school, what they have and their opportunities. I did this through telling my story. I became part of the student council and a student leader at the academy. Later I became a prefect and a representative for international arrivals. I helped set up a system that would help them understand the life in Britain and in school.

When Gulwali was 16 he had to go into care as both his uncle and brother returned to Afghanistan to help his mother. He was put with a foster family for two years. They supported him through his education, providing the stable and supportive environment he needed to get five A levels.



At the age of 17, more than six years after I had tearfully said goodbye to my mother in Waziristan in N Pakistan, I stood in Burnley Town Hall. I, the once-scrawny refugee who had left Afghanistan to avoid becoming a Taliban suicide bomber, had been selected to help carry the 2012 Olympic torch through Britain ahead of the London Olympic Games. The streets were lined with people cheering and waving flags. At that moment, I don't think I could have loved my adopted country more. I kissed the torch and beamed with pride.

At so many times on my journey to freedom I had felt hopeless, despondent and afraid: when I was shot at in Iran, tortured in a Turkish police station, nearly drowned crossing the Mediterranean, and living in squalor in migrant camps near Calais.

Many times I considered giving up and going home. But at those moments of weakness one thought kept me going: my mother sent me away to save my life. As I ran through the streets of my adopted home, the torch burning brightly and with people cheering, I thought only of one thing – her. At that moment I knew, beyond all doubt, that I hadn't failed her. I had made it.

The UK gave me safety and protection, which means everything.

Gulwali's visa ran out when he turned 17½, but thanks to numerous letters of support from the groups he was involved with and from his MP, Julie Hillings, to the Home Office, he was given refugee status.

Olympic glory: Gulwali carrying the Olympic torch in 2012

His efforts at school paid off and by 2015, aged 21, he was a student of politics and international relations at the University of Manchester. But being a student was not enough: driven by his mission to improve people's lives he has involved himself in many organisations and projects including - 2020 Education Youth Ambassador, Member of National Scrutiny Group, Commissioner on the Children's Commission on Poverty (supported by The Children's Society), Youthforia Youth Employment Commission, Youth member of UN Association UK, Children Champion – UNICEF, Young Labour Representative, Member of Equality & Diversity Committee / Peace Activist, NHS – Youth Forum Member, BASS, student rep at University of Manchester, Young Ambassador for Refugees & Asylum Seekers, Bolton Youth International New Arrivals Representative, Vice President of United Afghan Peace Movement, Member of Children in Care Council.

Gulwali visits the school he attended Essa Academy to share his experiences with students.



The Lightless Sky - a refugee's journey to a new life & culture

*One of the great motivations driving Gulwali's life was the desire to communicate his experiences and the plight of fellow refugees to the world. In 2016 he achieved a goal when his first book, **The Lightless Sky: An Afghan Refugee Boy's Journey of Escape to A New Life in Britain**, was published.*

I feel a sense of duty to raise awareness of the plight of refugees, and the on-going struggles of my people back in Afghanistan. That's the reason why I wrote the book.

My book depicts the refugee struggle, but for me the journey has also been of another kind. That of leaving one culture – religious, deeply conservative, Islamic, tribal – and then to be thrust into another – alien, secular, modern.

GATHERING THE VOICES

www.gatheringthevoices.com

Jenny Willis

Whilst researching and compiling articles for issue 17 of Lifewide Magazine, we received a new contact request: it was from a senior lecturer at Glasgow Caledonian University, Angela Shapiro. She told us that she was just completing a PhD on citizenship and that she is a founding member of www.gatheringthevoices.com. From this simple email there emerged a wonderful array of stories that speak movingly of the impact of forced migration, in their cases, as Jews fleeing the Holocaust.

With Angela's permission, I reproduce some of her material and would encourage readers to visit the website where there are images and oral testimonies that cannot fail to touch you. Thank you to all who have

What is Gathering the Voices?

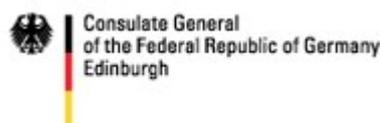
The project website introduces us to the scope of its work:

This project has gathered and made available online oral testimony from men and women who sought sanctuary in Scotland to escape the racism of Nazi-dominated Europe. Some came on the Kindertransport, others survived concentration camps.

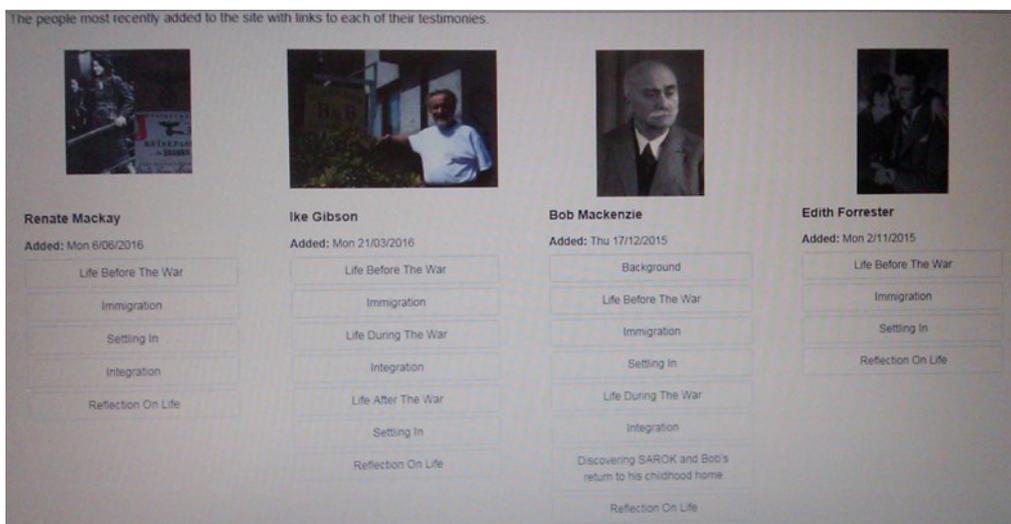
Many made remarkable journeys to get to safety in Scotland.

There is much for you to see and hear on this site. Listen to the voices of the survivors – their accents will tell you a lot about their journeys. There are Scottish accents, continental lilt and sometimes a mixture of both.

The idea was conceived by The Gathering the Voices Association, founded by Hilary and Steven Anson, Angela and David Shapiro and Claire and Howard Singerman (pictured, right). They are supported and sponsored by numerous bodies, including those shown below.



The website collates the stories of Jewish people who made their way to Scotland in order to escape Nazi oppression. It brings them to life through sound and video, still images and transcripts of survivors' words. Each story is structured around a common, interactive template, as illustrated overleaf, allowing visitors to dip in to events or periods of the individual's life.



The project provides information for educational and personal uses, and has a mobile exhibition that can be hired. One item that I found particularly interesting was a glossary of words, ranging from technical terms associated with Judaism to individuals who played a significant part in politics of the Nazi era. The library of newspaper articles offers many hours of sombre yet inspiring reading. Together, this has created a living archive that reminds us of the atrocities perpetrated by a few and the resilience of those who have survived to tell their stories.

To illustrate the project, and see the impact of migration in the individual, let us look at the account of one survivor, Marion Camrass, pictured here with her husband Henry on their 40th wedding anniversary.

Marion's story

Marion tells us:

I was born in Krakow in Poland on the 14th of January 1932. I was born at home not in hospital.

My father was a lawyer and I was an only child. They never had any more children because my father was in the next room when I was being born and he said to my mother I'll never put you through that again.



She laughs, revealing her wicked character, before adding

I had a very privileged upbringing as I realise now, of course you don't realise it at the time.

It seems that from her very beginnings, Marion's identity was in conflict, with her parents disagreeing over what to call her. Her steely nature shows through as she explains how she came to be known as Marion:

It was in Poland when you have a name like Maria you are called Marisza, Marilla, Marina, I mean there are variations of the name and so I was used to being called all sorts of things and I didn't want any of them. I said I'd like to be called Marion so I [have been] Marion ever since.

Knowing that language is an important part of our cultural identity, the interviewer asks Marion about the languages she spoke as a child. She replies:

Well at home until 1939, we only spoke Polish at home but I had a governess, well my mother was in a very fortunate position, there was a cook, there was a maid and for me a governess and the stipulation for the governess was that she had to know Hebrew because I learnt Hebrew before I went to school. In Poland, you go to school when you're seven, well I was not quite seven because September you started school and I was seven in January.

I was only one year at school in Poland and it was a Jewish school, a little private school just three or four classes. But I had a governess who taught me Hebrew so that I could read and write Hebrew and I learned little Hebrew songs about aviron [aeroplanes] and eh you know all sorts of little Hebrew words, and of course all the bible stories. And for all the Yomtovim [festivals], we always went to my grandparents, my father's parents because my mother's

parents were long gone, and yes, so that I was you know very familiar with all this but it was only Polish we spoke at home.

I only learned Russian when we were taken to Siberia. I was three years in the first class.

Her words reflect the privileged life she enjoyed as a young child, and the importance of family and religion. Her identity was clearly rooted in her Jewishness. From her youngest days

When Hitler invaded Poland in 1939, like many Jews, Marion and her family fled. They crossed into the Soviet zone but were sent to Siberia, suspected of being enemy aliens. They were kept for two years in a logging camp, before the Nazis invaded Russia and the Poles became allies, enabling Marion's family to leave. This they did on log rafts by river to Bukhara in what is today called Uzbekistan. Her father died of typhoid, and her mother was ill with typhoid, dysentery and malaria (though she would survive), so Marion was sent to an orphanage. She returned to Poland after the war, before moving to Glasgow to live with an aunt.



14 year-old Marion's passport

When she resumes her story, she focuses on her children and grandchildren. She had two children and would have liked a third, but her husband Henry said "absolutely not". Before long, her daughter Nina was leaving home to become an Au Pair in France. Her son, Peter, was still at school, so Marion decided it was time to study:

I went to Langside College to do a secretarial course and thought I could maybe do that sort of on and off to fit in with my life. And I was doing very well with shorthand typing, accountancy, everything and then I began to feel very unwell and I couldn't bear the smell of the dining room. And I got thinner and thinner and it turned out I was pregnant.

She continues

And that's when I had Alice. I had to give up my studies because my blood pressure dropped down, I just was sick three times a day, not just morning sickness. (...) I was really, really bad, well I was 38.

Fortunately, Alice was delivered safely. Marion felt it was perfect, "because you have the time and you have the experience."

She remembers fondly

my mother came from Israel to help me and my mother was wonderful, she really was wonderful. And so that was the end of my studies as a secretary but it did help me to do the books for Henry.

Again, family is central to her life, and her third child was proud to follow the family traditions, especially her Jewish faith. She proudly recalls Alice's graduation from university:

it was on a Saturday and by this time she had become very orthodox and she wouldn't graduate on a Saturday.

When Marion's aunt died, the family each received equal proportions of her money. It is Alice who features most in her mother's narrative:

Alice used the money to go to She'arim in Har Nof. (...) To study Jewish religion. And my goodness she certainly studied that and that's where she met her husband. (...) And he came over (from a non orthodox family) and he had finished university, I think in Denver, Colorado where he comes from, and was going to do law. But he went to Israel meantime for a few months and decided to become religious and went to Or Somayach Yeshiva.

The family's identity as Jews is strong. Alice and her husband would have four boys:

Two boys were born in Jerusalem until he finished his studies and then he got a job in Leeds as a student chaplain to Yorkshire Universities. And she had another boy in Leeds, that was Shlomi, and then he got a job in JFS in London teaching religion. So they moved to Edgware and she had little Moishe in London.

Marion's son Peter had a son and three daughters, the elder of whom have all attended university and the youngest is finishing her 'A' levels. Her own elder daughter, Nina, has been the child who continued the peripatetic life often associated with Jewish migrants:

When she went to France, after she finished, she finished Norland's (...) she got a job with a family, I think they had a 6 year old girl and a baby. And they had lived in Kensington and they had some estate in the Borders in Scotland. So she thought she would take that job. But by the time she actually came to take the job they had sold up in this country and bought a châteaux in the south of France, in Bar-sur-Loup or Tourettes-sur-Loup which is not far from Grasse and it's the perfume industry there. (...)



Marion's route to Glasgow

So she worked there for about 9 months and then she came back to Glasgow, got a job in Battlefield [nursery] which was slightly different, but she decided she wanted to go to Canada. Henry's two younger brothers lived in Canada, one in Manitoba, one in Ottawa. So she wanted to emigrate to Canada, and having French as well as English, she did the applications and so on and she emigrated. So she lived in Canada for about 8 years. And then she decided to go back-packing around Europe. And then she returned to the south of France to visit and she got this job in the perfume industry, a secretarial job. (...) So she's been working there now for over 20 years.

Now aged 84, Marion is asked to reflect on how her life has changed since her childhood in Poland. She replies:

I've been very lucky.
Well, if Hitler had his way there would be nothing, so we were very lucky that they took us to Siberia. Yes.

It is perhaps this stoicism and ability to accept change, whilst retaining strong family and religious values and identity that underpins Marion's story of not only survival but triumph. It is this spirit of defiance in the face of adversity and determination to succeed that permeates the narratives in this moving archive. They are an inspiration to us all and show that adaptation and integration can co-exist with retention of our core values.

Marion's story lives on

And Marion's story does not end here. For a creative team of students at Glasgow Caledonian University have devised a way of using her experiences to inform the youth of today, speaking to them in a language they will relate to: interactive gaming.

The newspaper cuttings can be expanded to show how these students joined with The Gathering the Voices team to produce a compelling, 'serious' game which takes players along the route followed by Marion to escape persecution. At each stage, they are involved in decision-making tasks which require them to immerse themselves in the events that took place so long ago. This is an ingenious way of teaching the younger generation what history felt like in its making, and cannot fail to make an indelible impression on them.

If you would like to play the game yourself, www.gatheringthevoices.com/games.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to amazing work.



just go to <http://www.gatheringthevoices.com/games>

this truly

The Enormous Value of Cross-Cultural Conversations: A Cultural Perspective on BREXIT

Michael Tomlinson

Michael is a member of the Lifewide Education Team.

There will be much written by many more qualified than me on the topic of the impact of Brexit and whether it is a good or a bad thing. However, it seems only fitting in this edition of Lifewide Magazine that is exploring what culture means to our learning and development, that we examine the potential impact Brexit will have on cross-cultural experiences within the UK.

These experiences are all around us if we are open to the possibilities and I had the clearest example of how our cultural experiences in the UK might change as a result of Brexit during a lovely enjoyable conversation I had with three Romanian students the night after the referendum in a pub - one of my favourite places for cultural exchanges.

One of the students had just finished an Architecture course in Leicester, one was completing her Masters in Media & Communication at LSE and the other was a manager at an IT start-up. Over the course of the evening our conversation flowed (in flawless English I should add) from topics as diverse as Romanian and Bulgarian folk music, the differences between the various ethnic groups of eastern Europe, eastern European politics, Romanian dance and of course, the importance of Tuica and Rakia!

These conversations may seem innocuous, and yet, if we look at the definitions of culture emerging from Lifewide Education's survey¹, it seems that many of us agree that it is the unique peculiarities of each country and the way people behave in that country, that we value as that nation's culture. Over the course of our conversation, I felt I understood their culture and valued them as people, and perhaps most importantly, appreciated the world and my place in it, just that little bit better. By learning about the cultures of others we learn about ourselves and what being a culture being means. People are complex and by understanding others' complexities we can better understand our own. Perhaps I valued our conversation so much because by learning about someone else and their culture enabled me to cast light on myself and my own culture.



Sadly, in the wake of the referendum, these three people who had so much to give our society, said they felt they would now leave the UK following the vote, not because they feared they would be forced out, but because they did not want to remain in a country that they did not feel wanted them. How many others, in similar positions up and down

the country would be saying similar things? How many of these hardworking, well educated people will we lose because we are afraid of the idea of the free movement of people within Europe? And as a result, how many of these conversations, which enable us to gain new insights and perspectives on the world, ourselves and our own place in the world will now never get to happen?

It is my view that conversations that facilitate cultural exchange help us understand ourselves, as well as others and the world, better. They make us more tolerant and better able to empathise with the views and experiences of other people who are not from our own culture. They help us connect our lives to the lives and cultures of other people.

The vote to leave the Union of 28 European countries will undoubtedly limit the opportunities British people have for such exchange, maybe not for those of us fortunate enough to travel and explore, but certainly for the majority of people in the country. I cannot believe that such limitations will be beneficial to the health and prosperity of our society. When we learn about others we learn about ourselves, and I am fearful that our unwillingness to open ourselves to others will result in a greater ignorance of ourselves, greater intolerance of others, and limit the possibilities of our society. The BREXIT vote is more than a vote to leave the EU — it's a vote that will, in the long term, have profound impact on the cultural learning and understanding of our society.

Reference

1) Willis, J. (2016) Crossing & Connecting Cultures Survey Lifewide Magazine#17

Is Hybrid Cultural Identity the Natural Response to a Multicultural World?

Kamila Sobiesiak



Kamila is a teacher with expertise in Special Educational Needs and Child Behaviour. She is also Primary School Parents Association Member and National Parents Association Representative. She is Co-Creator of Living Respect, a not for profit organization developing educational projects on authenticity, compassion, respect and anti-bullying campaigns. Kamila holds a Doctorate in Education from National University of Ireland in Maynooth, MA in Teacher Education and BA in Social Work and Teacher Training from the Marie Curie Skłodowska University in Poland. Her doctoral thesis was on non-traditional students experiences in Irish higher education and their struggles for recognition. Kamila specializes in psychology of development, critical theories and transformative pedagogies. The special importance she puts into the developmental potential of human beings and the factors both strengthening and inhibiting it.

People are on the Move

International migration is as old as the history of humanity. Population movements have always accompanied demographic growth, political conflicts and economic changes. People have always moved in pursuit of a better life or have been forced to do so by circumstances. But a combination of poverty, disruption and political encouragement for 'free movement', means that migration has never been as pervasive as it is today. It has never been so politically and socio-economically important for its linkages with complex processes affecting the entire world^{1:260} as society becomes more and more the melting pot, the ethnicity blend and 'the mosaic of diasporas'²

My doctoral study at National University of Maynooth, Ireland, focused on the experiences of young Polish people entering higher education in Ireland and their life transitions²³. The stories they told me resonated deeply with my own life history and although our life trajectories differed I could add my own voice to the broader discussion about changes in human identity in a globalised, multicultural, fluid and unpredictable world. My research explored questions like - How much are we all rooted in one place, how much are we settled? I was asking people about where their place is, and if they are feeling settled. What is the identity of the immigrant? Is he feeling different? Is he perceived as different? Going further, the article sets questions about the condition of modern capitalistic Europe and about the condition of an individual immersed in its liquid – neoliberal reality, the individual drifting, searching for his or her identity and their place in the world offering a mosaic of possibilities.

The students involved in my study have undertaken journeys which were not just about entering HE and gaining a degree, they were stories about being immersed in a complex, rich world of meanings and experiences of individuals and their lives, which created a unique context for each student's *learning identity*. The leading theme of my research was transition processes perceived from different angles: the transition from one university to another, from one country to another, the re-negotiation of the self and learning identity. These journeys of transition took place in the context of liquid modernity, as described by Bauman³: the transition from communism to democracy, neoliberalism and globalisation, the transition from welfare state, with its security, to freedom and a deep sense of insecurity, unpredictability and the fear of freedom in this sense. One of the most interesting findings of the study approaches the question of what happens with human identity in the globalized world.

I have placed my findings in the context of postmodern theories, like i.e. aforementioned liquid modernity by Bauman³, which does not mean they are best for explaining the phenomenon but surely interesting enough to start the conversation. I hope my readers find the article valid for drawing their own conclusions and reflexions. Liquid modernity is Bauman's conception³ of how the world today denies the so-called solidity it once struggled with persistence to create and maintain. We live in the world of shape-shifting capital and labour, which best defines modernity as amorphous, or liquid.



My own story of being an immigrant

My story began in Poland, where both me and my husband had decent jobs, which we enjoyed a great deal. After a couple years of marriage we decide to leave our beautiful country. Why? Because we wanted a better life, because in spite of working fulltime we were merely making ends meet.

We knew very little about Ireland at the time of our decision to emigrate, besides the fact it was more economically advanced than Poland. To us it seemed like the 'Promised Land', even though our language competency left a lot to be desired at the time. I would say it was a struggle, with work, with language, a new culture and our own fears and doubts. What has changed since that time? What has immigration given me? How did it affect me on emotional, mental, physical, economic levels? It influenced me immensely. Although I still miss my country of origin, I consider all those years in Ireland as a blessing. Blessing in disguise. It was a harsh time, a struggle sometimes, but having survived it gave me a great sense of achievement, a greater sense of self-trust and personal empowerment. My sense of belonging has changed. No longer am I homesick. Rather, the way I feel is something that is hard to define. Some call it uprooting. It is like the feeling of detachment from all the problems you have shared with your native comrades not long ago. Maxine Greene⁴ captured this feeling as a sense of being a stranger in both countries.

We live through emotions and through emotions we perceive our world. So the reality is not as it is, but as we see and feel it. And we can see it only through the lenses we have. Travelling and migration gives us new perspective, changes our cognition. We have to adapt and we need to change the point of reference. It is sometimes a painful process but it is necessary in order to see with more clarity, to understand more, to be more flexible, it stretches our mental and emotional capabilities. As a result we not only survive but also develop and thrive as better human beings. Migration changes the worldview, everything that was taken for granted is now being perceived in a new light. And this refers not only to our old habits and mentality. It also gives us a new perspective on everything, expansion on cognition and fresh horizons of understanding.

What happens with human identity in the globalised world? Bauman, the Polish sociologist and an emeritus professor of Leeds University remarks, that people are not building their identity gradually any more. It is also not imposed on them culturally and locally. The task of solid identity-building seems to be rather a hampering and unwelcome task. The question of identity is closely connected with the collapse of the welfare state institutions and globalisation with its multiculturalism, technological development and growing sense of uncertainty, caused by the threat of job loss and the demands of being flexible for employment.

Much like that global order which collectively underwrote individual life-efforts, the orderly (comprehensive, cohesive, consistent and continuous) identity of the individual was cast as a project, the life project. Identity was to be erected systematically, level by level and brick by brick, following a blueprint completed before the work started. The construction called for a clear vision of the final shape, careful calculation of the steps leading towards it, long-term planning and seeing through the consequences of every move. And so there was a tight and irrevocable bond between social order as a project and the individual life as a project; the latter was unthinkable without the former. Were it not for the collective efforts to secure a reliable, lasting, stable, predictable setting for individual actions and choices – constructing a clear and lasting identity and living one's life towards such an identity would be all but impossible^{5:20}



Life has become episodic

In the pre-industrial era life was cyclical tied to the seasons. In the modern era, time is linear. Each point is pregnant with the promise of the better tomorrow, but no one knows which point, which promise, which possibility to choose in order not to lose the chance.

Pointillist time is broken up, or even pulverized, into a multitude of 'eternal instants' - events, incidents, accidents, adventures, episodes – self-enclosed monads, separate morsels, each morsel reduced to a point ever more closely approximating its geometric ideal of non-dimensionality. As we may remember from school lessons in Euclidean geometry, points have no length, width or depth: they exist, one is tempted to say, before space and time^{6:32}

Life, whether individual or social, is but a succession of presents, a collection of instants experienced with varying intensity.

Transition-experience, perception

The effort and determination visible in students' approaches to learning is one of the key characteristics among the respondents in my research. It is strongly noticeable in their stories. Being in transition stimulates and motivates people to change and learn. The more aware and open to new challenges they are, the more they want to expand their knowledge about a new culture and the more eager they are to participate in its community, artistic, academic or professional life.

Ewa Hoffman, went through such transition, what Bron calls 'floating'⁷ This description can be given to all immigrants and not only those who became students abroad. Floating is the transition which involves a basic uncertainty about oneself, identity, place and belonging (Bron in West & Alheit ^{7:216}). One of the major characteristics of floating is the feeling of being fragmented, of not having the past, and not yet being able to create and know the future. Only two respondents admitted to feeling a similar way, but all of them had experienced this feeling it at the beginning. It could be for a very short period of time or much longer. To be able to cope with 'floating', Bron concludes that:

We need to move on and reconstruct biographically; we need to become more of a self while interacting with others. From such fragments, illusions and disillusion, a new whole is reorganised and created. Missing pieces, lack of any sense of authorship in life and continuous ambivalence do not make us happy. We need to react to find ourselves again fitting to social reality ^{7:216}

Individuals are constantly engaged in constructing and reconstructing selves. They do it through interaction and language learning, as the language shapes the identity. People are thinking in a particular language. Making and remaking selves includes also all the processes of adjustment and readjustment to culture. The stories respondents tell change with time. They can be called the temporal products, evolving along with the changed social position or different perspectives. They show that each life trajectory evolves and individual life, identity and social role is always open to new experiences and changes, regardless of the person's intentions. Each story is unique but the experiences of immigrants and non-traditional students have similarities, which can be grasped in the process of analysis. The findings enable others to understand each other better and to empathise with the people in transition, whether they are immigrants, adult students or people changing their life career. Capturing the processes of life transitions is valid in understanding human conduct but also in understanding the intersubjectivity of human learning ^{7:218}



One of the identity types in this fast-changing world is the *transparent global identity* ^{8:48}. This global identity emerged in response to the needs of big corporations and international institutions. They need the experts who cope well with the rapidity and frequency of changes in their lives. Such people have to change their place and culture along with their job requirements. Such a personality does not feel strongly connected to any place or any cultural basis. One can experience fondness occasionally. Melosik characterises this identity as well integrated and career-focused ^{8:49}.

To keep the game short means to beware long-term commitments. To refuse to be 'fixed' one way or the other. Not to get tied to one place, however pleasurable the present stopover may feel. Not to wed one's life to one vocation only. Not to swear consistency and loyalty to anything or anybody. Not to control the future, but refuse to mortgage it: to take care that the consequences of the game do not outlive the game itself, and to renounce responsibility for such consequences as do. To forbid the past to bear on the present. In short, to cut the present off at both ends, to sever the present from history. To abolish time in any other form but of a loose assembly, or an arbitrary sequence, of present moments; to flatten the flow of time into a continuous present ^{5:89}

Self-image of Polish people in contact with another culture: The sense of identity and Polishness

In my research I was interested in finding out how easy it was to assimilate another culture? Has the sense of being Polish lessened? Is there something like a new Polish- Irish hybrid identity? Is it possible to understand another culture? To melt into it, get involved and drift into it, so one can feel like you are at home. Maybe it is the language which creates the border, behind which the mentality, emotions and historical experience become inconceivable. Tubylewicz ⁹ (2005) states that even when we try and struggle to understand, to become close, make friends, there is always something that makes us different. It

is the language, the conscious, the biographical dissimilarity, which precludes us from deeper and fuller communication. It is possible however to learn new ways of living, to adjust and even laugh at the same jokes, but it is the only way around it. To be the emigrant, means you have lost your own place, that you cannot go back, or even stay stronger - there is no way to get back.

Moving into another culture can trigger a cultural shock. An individual can feel overwhelmed by different cultural and social values and habits. It can subdue as the time goes on, however at the first moment people are developing different kinds of coping strategies. Such circumstances can engender a bigger appreciation of one's own culture or the opposite – criticising, denying or rejecting one's own culture. In many cases the person experiencing a change of culture is making continuous comparisons between new and old, looking for familiarity in food, music, symbols and choices. Sometimes the best choice seems to be deciding to learn the language and cultural codes in order to integrate and assimilate the new culture and society ^{7: 206}



The phenomenon of not noticing to be Polish when living in Poland seems interesting. Nobody living in Poland thinks in these cultural terms rather, they think of themselves as being male, female, student, mother, daughter, worker or whatever social role the person is playing. After the crossing the border into another culture, the cultural distinction is felt very explicitly, especially at the beginning. The longing for Poland becomes tangible as well - however these feelings are not always well defined. Most people do not wish to go back to Poland, and their homesickness articulates rather the longing for their childhood and the feelings of security related to that time. Some people in my research study mentioned the romantic vision of their home country, resembling summer camps, the stories about the fertile lands and the old woods. It is the yearning for the affinity, esprit de corps, accompanying all the emigrants. There were the voices of Chopin music, the summer trips to the mountains, about the beauty of nature, sunny summer days and carefree school days. The memories and longings revolve around the parts of Poland and Polishness which can be found in books, poems and songs rather than in the reality of everyday life:

The next question which comes to mind in this context is the change in identity. My respondents are moving away from Polishness, in the sense of feeling more detached from the culture of their home country. They are much less interested in Polish politics and getting more interested in the politics and economy of Ireland. Talking to some interviewees you may get the subjective impression that they are still in prolonged suspension, somewhere in between two worlds – not any more in Poland but not yet in Ireland. They are not sure either if their future will be bound to the country they are living in. They seem to be always in growth and progress and making up new aims.

Formation of a hybrid identity

Another issue, very clearly noticeable in the interviews, is the division in the Polish population itself. Poles living in Ireland cannot be treated as a monolithic, uniformed group of people. There are differences in the mentality and life priorities among them. One of the conclusions of this research is that the group of people who have agreed to take part in my study consist of an elite component of Polish people. They are people aspiring to constant development, having high standards of education and personal culture, who are respectful to their cultural affiliation and grateful to the opportunities other cultures are offering them. The same can be said about their companionship. It consists of people sharing very similar life priorities. They feel offended by the obscene behaviour and vulgarism expressed by their countrymen. They do not wish to be identified with this part of Polishness. On the contrary, they repeatedly deplore the bad example shown by some Polish immigrants, stressing that the latter have a strong tendency to generalize, stereotype and form opinions on the basis of personal and subjective experiences.

Their open-mindedness and commitment to their own development results in them extracting the what is best from both cultures to create a hybrid identity. How did it happen? Their sense of being Polish has changed in some important ways. It has been influenced by the sense of being European and not bound to the particular place called Poland. The attitude towards Poland is different. One of the interviewees makes the comment about Polish inferiority complexes, which are common among the Polish community, which results in attempts to belittle other nationalities. After staying in Ireland, those, who have taken the opportunities for development and progress, are noticing how their mentality has transformed, how their roughness has decreased and how their appreciation for a different culture has increased.

It seems that in today's world we are less certain about who we really are. Identity is no longer a given, but an open question. Our memory and the spaces we inhabit are two fundamental pillars for identity creation, but they are becoming more problematic in the modern world, and conditions of postmodernity. Our sense of rootlessness, where the artificial supplements are replacing memory and recollections, and the places fundamental for shaping the sense of individuality and uniqueness are becoming detached from the physical spaces we inhabit. This is a time of profound change, instability and liquidity, where the issue of identity receives more attention and meaning.

Being a global, borderless 'nomadic' personality

The postmodern reality consists of plurality of diverse and heterogenous worlds, ways of living and local expressions of symbolic representations. The very versatility of social contexts is due to global transmissions of new ideas, symbols and values. The individual living in such a world needs to define himself anew, constantly asking himself – who am I and who do I want to be? If the person happens to be an immigrant, his choices are based on a broader spectrum of cultural reference. Budakowska¹⁰ uses the expression of modern *nomadism* to migration flows that are not necessarily caused by economic reasons alone, and which can be characterized by regular movement of individuals as a way of living. The conditions of postmodernity provide the conditions for decentered multiplicity. It means and creates the possibility for drawing from the factually unlimited sources and possibilities of a variety of choices to construct the identity. It is the identity in the continuous process of becoming; the *borderless identity*.

During the period of the last few decades, there has been an observable increase in the international population movements flow in the modern world. The modern migration flows can be placed among the main factors of the social and cultural changes and transformations in the world. There is a need for a public discourse over the scientific research on the identity in the conditions of time and space compression along with the excavated trans-nationalism.

The increase in “transnationality” and the emergent modern nomadism are producing new and transient subjects, whose degree of reproduction of cultural values may depend on the subjective attributes of the migrating person, and on her preferences as to how to broaden her identity's contextual referents. I am using the *trans-nationalism* expression in the meaning of the free border crossing and population movements on both economic and cultural levels.

Nomadism is based on the free movement, and more or less frequent place and/or work changes, and specific characteristics for the individual's inclination to constant changes in their life. The changes concern many variables. For example there can be the global elite of people from financial professions, who are constantly travelling. The phenomena is being expressed also by the growing number of voluntary migrants, wanting to work and submerge themselves in new cultures for periods of time, to visit many places and societies¹⁰ Melucci¹¹ writes about the need to reshape the identity, and teases the issue in this way:

The pace of social change, the plurality of memberships, and the abundance of possibilities and messages thrust upon the individual all serve to weaken the traditional points of reference on which identity is based. The possibility that an individual will say with conviction and continuity 'I am x, y, or z' becomes increasingly uncertain. The need to re-establish continuity of my biography becomes stronger. A 'homelessness' of personal identity is created, such that the individual must build and rebuild constantly his or her 'home' in the face of changing situations and events^{11:109}



The increase of personal rights importance in democratising societies has led to the rise in human subjectivity and his growing creative values awareness. The immigrant has, to a much bigger extent, the opportunity for becoming the co-creator of the social reality in their host country.

The identity concept has been for a long time perceived within the framework of the nationality and within the national identity context. Whereas the very characteristic for modern times is the social mobility and the international nets of relationships, which violate and break the established order of duplicity of the cultural and national models of individual identity. The human being intersects throughout her entire life with many more new structures and sets of relations than previous generations. Postmodern society generates more opportunities for plurality and ways of living in multiple worlds of choice, many social contexts, ideas, symbols, and values. It creates the space for the reflexive 'self'. The immigrant can notice that differences do not have to mean barriers but rather complexity. However it reduces the opportunity for rooting and rather demands flexibility in identity creation, which becomes renegotiated, adaptable and adjustable to the new perpetually changing circumstances.

Discussion

As higher education institutions begin to engage with a greater range of students, it is increasingly important that they take account of the learning biographies, narratives and attitudes of non-traditional students or students coming from different backgrounds, different nationalities and cultures. Universities need to notice and respect the voices of these learners, to embrace their perspectives, their learning experiences, motivations and needs. They need to listen to these voices in order to adjust (culturally and structurally) to a more diverse population. What drives and motivates students in higher education, what they want from universities, are important questions in the development of institutions that are more responsive to cultural diversity^{12:ix}.

Education should not be perceived in terms of a simple linear progression towards particular goals, e.g. material security or personal agency, as many learners show their experience is fragmentary, in which self is divided between privacy (private life) and public sphere (the world of academia), between 'experiential ways of knowing', which is personal, subjective and between 'academic knowledge'¹² These ways of thinking strongly connect with the work of such philosophers as Fromm or

Bauman, who write about fragmentation of human life and experience. Education can offer a supportive space during periods of change and uncertainty as revealed in students' stories.

Firstly globalisation and neo-liberal ideology, as Lynch¹³ noticed, accurately permeates into hearts and minds of people, changing their perspectives and creating consumers out of them. This is the hidden agenda of capitalist free market ideology, which the contemporary generation is being bombarded with on every level of their lives mostly through the media. The change in perception and worldview takes place on some unconscious level. People treat education and the world around them in terms of a commodity to purchase. There is no place for national sentiments in neo-liberal capitalism. What matters is measurable progress and effectiveness at work. Although neoliberalism plays an important role in human life, it remains in the background of my analysis and is not fully explored in terms of its relationship to these migrant experienc-

es. It gives place to Bauman's theories as the main lenses through which those experiences are being assessed. However as has been stressed the in conceptual framework, there are limitations to Bauman's theory, as it lacks applicable solutions to cope with our ever-changing, fast moving, liquid world.

One of the important issues is the above mentioned neo-liberal capitalism and its free market economy, which permeates the whole of contemporary life as we become both consumer and commodity¹⁴ This approach pervades identity, as survival in the fast changing and highly unpredictable surroundings depends on our ability to avoid being fixed and connected, and instead becoming someone on the move and, someone drifting with no obligations. Another issue is the influence of globalising tendencies and multiplicity of cultures, symbols, languages and meanings bombarding individuals through the media and information technology. Globalisation is connected with the compression of time and space. The disembedding and interconnectedness as certain characteristics of globalisation seem to affect the human being and his renegotiation of



himself. Limiting oneself only to the immediate locality is a disadvantage; openness means survival and development. The increased interconnectedness results in cultural hybridity and cosmopolitanism¹⁵ The access to knowledge and variety of codes, symbols and cultural modes with information technology as a driving force offers unlimited possibilities of choice to the individual. The choices concern the living style, home, job, education and even identity. Multiplicity of choices offered does not make people eternally happy. On the contrary, it leads to confusion, anxiety and fragmentation, or using Fromm's expression to the 'fear of freedom'. People are becoming partly everything, and indeed nothing in particular. Surprise and the unexpected are inevitable aspects of a realm of freedom, where preconditions have little part to play. People's lives are parts of a 'story-in-the-making', of discovering who they might become^{16:501}.

However, to follow the thoughts of Capra, we are all living in the global net of interconnectedness; are creating the one big organism as the whole. 'The new paradigm may be called a holistic worldview, seeing the world as an integral whole rather than a dissociated collection of parts'^{17:3}

The universe is no longer seen as a machine, made up of multitude of objects but has to be pictured as one indivisible, dynamic whole whose parts are essentially interrelated and can be understood only as patterns of cosmic process^{18:66}

People cannot close themselves in their nationalities and localities, because it limits their personal and economic potential and growth. In this sense interviewees feel less Polish but rather more globally interconnected. To be a whole means also the unity and indissolubility of the past, present and future. In this meaning it is true, what one of my students Peter said, that one cannot forget his national history and cultural roots. There is a big collective memory^{19,20,21} and it has its traces in each individual. This memory is an inherent part of people and is imprinted in their identity. What was interesting, during the later interviews, the older students were more often mentioning the need for stabilization and cultivating some Polish traditions. Maybe then, the global or borderless identity is only one of many facets of fragmented identity of the postmodern person. As the whole identity is fragmented and difficult to grasp, almost liquid, as liquid is the postmodern reality.



A great amount of work has been done about emigration and its correlation with the process of identity building. There is also a lot more to be done on changing perspectives, new forms of higher education and growing numbers of non-traditional and migrant students in Ireland. There is always the possibility to see more, when 'seeking the kind of repleteness of interpretation that is only achieved when works are read from multiple perspectives'²². The society is changing and progress in many areas of life accelerates. The work presented above was not meant to give ready and simple answers but to present diverse perspectives. While engaging with the world of diverse voices, the same phenomena may look different and seems to be always fluid, always in process, as life itself. As Greene captured it:

'I make this a tale of a search for meaning while walking the tightrope, trying – in a world without benchmarks – to keep moving, to keep asking, to keep trying to create identity'¹⁶

Acknowledgement

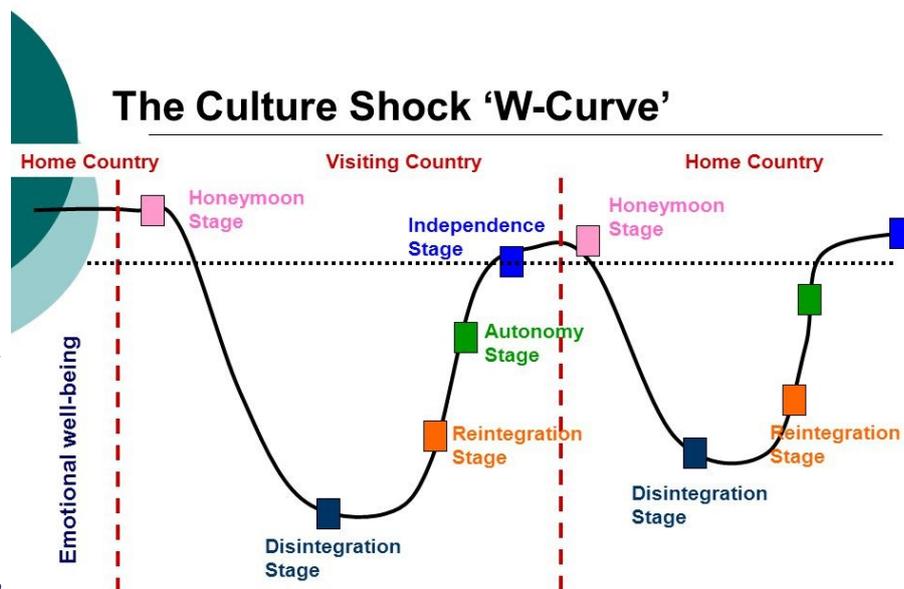
This article is based on my doctoral study 'Drifting identity in the global era? Polish students in Irish Higher Education' I would like to thank all the students who contributed to my study.

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Adapted from Adler, N. (1992)

Education and Preparation Practices

Pisa Tests to Include 'Global Skills' and Cultural Awareness

Andreas Schleicher



Pisa tests, an international standard for comparing education systems around the world, could include a new measurement of global skills in the next round of tests in 2018. The OECD, which runs the tests in maths, reading and science, is considering adding another test which would look at how well pupils can navigate an increasingly diverse world, with an awareness of different cultures and beliefs. The OECD's education director Andreas Schleicher explains why there is such a need for new rankings to show young people's competence in a world where globalisation is a powerful economic, political and cultural force.

Education leaders around the world are increasingly talking about the need to teach "global competences" as a way of addressing the challenges of globalisation. It was one of the key topics at a recent meeting of education ministers from the G7 group of leading industrial countries, held in Japan. Globalisation can mean different things to different people. It can mean innovation and higher living standards for some - but it can also contribute to social division and economic inequality. Automation and the digital economy could be seen as an entrepreneurial opportunity - or a weakening of job security.

For some "cross border migration" means being able to travel for work between different countries, while for others it means escaping from poverty and war. Educators have been struggling with how to prepare students for the culturally diverse and digitally-connected communities in which they work and socialise.

In the past, education was about teaching people something. Now, it is also about making sure that children develop a reliable compass, the navigation skills and the character qualities that will help them find their own way through an uncertain, volatile and ambiguous world. Schools need to prepare students for a world where many will need to collaborate with people of diverse cultural origins.

They will need to appreciate different ideas, perspectives and values. It's a world in which people need to decide how to trust and collaborate across differences. Schools can provide opportunities for young people to learn about global development, equip them with the means of accessing and analysing different cultures, help them engage in international and intercultural relations, and foster the value of diversity.

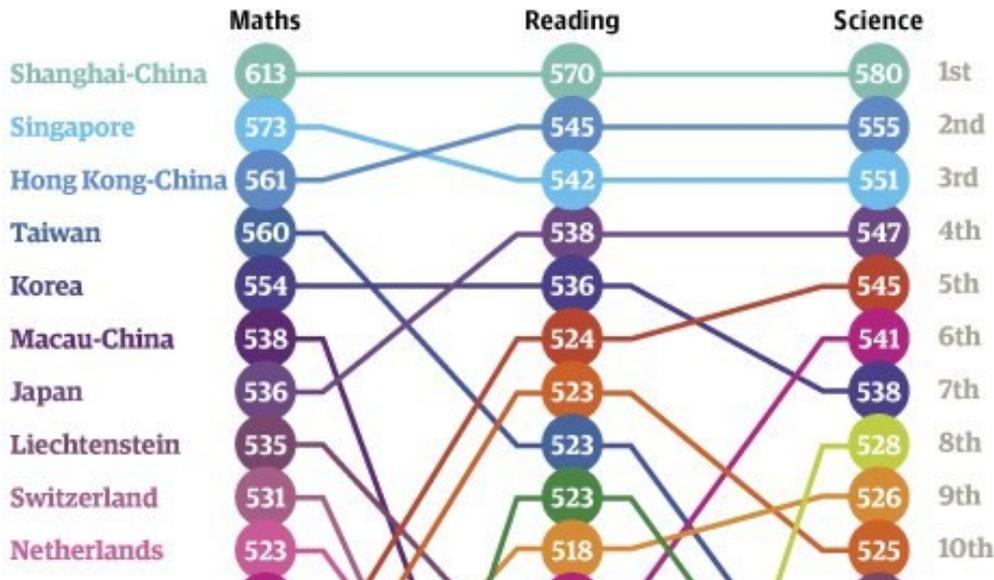
These objectives already feature in many countries' curriculums. But nowhere do policymakers or educators have ready answers about how to embed global competence in schools and learning. A big part of the problem is that there is no clear definition of what global competence should embrace, and how to make it measurable for educational policy and practice.

The OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (Pisa) has now put that on its agenda. It defines "global competence" as:

"the capacity to analyse global and intercultural issues critically and from multiple perspectives, to understand how differences affect perceptions, judgements, and ideas of self and others, and to engage in open, appropriate and effective interactions with others from different backgrounds on the basis of a shared respect for human dignity".

The idea is to provide an internationally comparative Pisa assessment that would offer the first comprehensive overview of education systems' success in preparing young people to have such global competence. It could assess the knowledge and understanding of 15-year-olds of global issues and interactions with other cultures.





<http://static.guim.co.uk/sys-images/Guardian/Pix/pictures/2013/12/5/1386247835419/Pisa-full-results->

The proposal also includes asking students questions about communicating appropriately and effectively with people from other cultures or countries. How well can they comprehend other people's thoughts, beliefs and feelings, and see the world from their perspectives? How can they adjust their own thoughts, feelings or behaviours to fit new contexts and situations? Can they analyse and think critically in order to scrutinise information given to them?

There is also a discussion about looking at more general attitudes, such as the openness of students towards people from other cultures. What is their sensitivity towards, curiosity about and willingness to engage with other people and other perspectives on the world?

Pisa is just at the beginning of exploring how to measure these dimensions. But comparative evidence from tests could help countries to study how well their students are prepared for life and employment in a globalised world. It could find out how much their students are exposed to global news and how they understand and critically analyse global issues. What are the different approaches to multicultural and global education used in different countries? How are culturally diverse groups of students being taught? How well are schools challenging cultural and gender biases and stereotypes?

The OECD sees global competence as being shaped by three principles - "equity", "cohesion" and "sustainability".

- **Equity:** The increased inequality of income and opportunities, along with the fact that poor children receive poor education, puts the issue of equity and inclusive growth high on the global agenda. The digital economy is hollowing out jobs consisting of routine tasks and radically altering the nature of employment. For many, this is liberating and exciting. It's a great moment to be a twentysomething entrepreneur with a disruptive internet business model. But for others, it means the end of a livelihood.
- **Cohesion:** In all parts of the world, we are seeing unprecedented movements of people, with the most dramatic flows coming from countries mired in poverty and war. How can receiving countries integrate diverse groups of people and avoid rising extremism and fundamentalism?
- **Sustainability:** Delivering on the UN Sustainable Development Goals is a priority in the international community. Development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, is more relevant than ever before, in the face of environmental degradation, climate change, over-consumption and population growth.

Today, all three principles are at risk. But the OECD sees global competence as the centrepiece of a broader vision for 21st-Century education.

Source: BBC News 27 May 2016

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-36343602>

Cultural Academy - a collaborative learning space sharing & developing cultural understanding in a university

Novie Johan and Norman Jackson



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Norman Founded the Lifewide Education network and is Commissioning Editor for Lifewide Magazine. This article relates to the Cultural Academy he developed, with colleagues, while Director of the Surrey Centre for Excellence in Professional Training and Education (SCEPTRE).

Background

International students who put themselves into an English university environment are required to make a significant transition that requires all sorts of adaptive learning, personal change and development. For many students the process is an immersive experience which they encounter and learn to cope with by themselves. A lifewide concept of learning and education¹ embraces and recognise the personal development students gain through all of a person's experiences and therefore holds significant potential for valuing and recognising learning and development gained through experiencing another culture. This article describes a strategy employed at the University of Surrey, which we called Cultural Academy². It was created to help students develop their cultural understandings by sharing their knowledge, cultural traditions and experiences and to gain recognition for their transformative learning.

Cultural Academy

Cultural diversity is one of the things that make this world a very complicated place and we cannot claim that we educate people for a lifetime of working and learning without engaging with the issue of how we prepare them, or how they prepare themselves, for the culturally diverse worlds they will inhabit. Cultural awareness is something that we all need in order to be able to operate effectively in multicultural organisations and societies, and multicultural universities provide considerable opportunity for these forms of learning and personal development.

In the UK, cultural diversity is a fact of life in most universities. In 2007-10 when we developed Cultural Academy, nearly 27 per cent of our students originated from over 130 different countries. Not to mention the high proportion of teaching and support staff drawn from many different cultural backgrounds. For students and staff, simply living and participating in the multicultural campus society and experiencing the many cultural events organised by students themselves, was an education in itself.

But the university can also provide opportunity for learning and development that makes use of the valuable resources of students' cultural knowledge and experiences. At the University of Surrey our attention was drawn to the possibility of space afforded by the co-curriculum: opportunities for learning and personal development that are organised and designed by members of the university in the space outside the formal academic curriculum and which are not credit bearing. Cultural Academy was created in 2007 and between 2007 and 2010 four Academies were organised, each attracting 15- 20 students from all cultures, levels (level 1 to doctoral) and disciplines and each involving 3 to 5 members of staff who were as much co-learners in the process as they were facilitators.





Educational design

The main intention was to create a process that would not be too onerous for students in terms of their time commitment but would sustain their interest and involvement and permit relationship development over several months. Underlying the design was the commitment to foster conversations that enabled students to share their cultural knowledge and experiences. We also wanted participants to enjoy their experience and to work together to achieve something that they would value and that they believed would enrich the life of their campus community. Examples of these enterprises include:

- making a film of what it was like to live on a multicultural campus
- organising a conference and workshops to share their cultural knowledge and experiences with other students
- undertaking surveys into what it was like to be part of a multicultural campus community
- creating a radio show on the theme of multicultural campus
- organising a multicultural event which included many cultural activities



The design was modified for each Academy but the core principle remained the same to provide a space in which students could talk to each other and exchange their understandings about culture and their own cultural traditions. In the first Cultural Academy, students participated in three workshops, plus a conference planning meeting and an end of process student-led conference. Within the workshops students shared aspects of their language (learning to count to 10 in their language) and culture. Examples included Japanese calligraphy (right) and a lunch in which participants brought examples of traditional dishes from their own country.



In 2008–9 students participated in three workshops but this



time they worked together to organise, market and deliver a musical and dancing event (Big Cultural Bash) complete with traditional costume show, henna painting, African drum music.

To maintain a sense of continuity from one year to the next a wiki was established and each year resources were added so that students could see that they were part of a tradition and the resources they created would be passed on to other students. Our intention was that the Academies would help students develop friendships and good working relationships and this was certainly the case. Students' feedback was overwhelmingly positive with some claiming it was one of the most significant experiences for them while they were at university.

Four important pedagogic ideas underpin Cultural Academy:

- *an ethos of collaborative social learning* – learning through sharing cultural knowledge and experiences, staff facilitators were co-learners in the process.
- *productive inquiry* – purposeful goals that were co-constructed by participants
- *learning through the experience* of doing and achieving something and through *reflection* on the experience.
- *the desire to curate what was learnt and make it available to the wider community*: we tried to record and curate the resources we gained through the sharing, discussions, activities and reflective processes and make these assets available through a wiki.

Specific pedagogic practices that have been used in different Academies include:

- concept mapping – to facilitate personal enquiry into understandings of culture
- cultural enquiry using simple question-based tools
- use of voting systems to reveal patterns of beliefs in response to propositions about culture
- story telling – descriptions of personal experiences and online blogs, creation of digital stories and use of 'Sensemaker' narrative software¹
- mentoring to encourage conversation and reflection
- film making – enquiry into our multicultural campus, the recording of the Cultural Academy process and the evaluation of the process
- peer 'teaching' – the facilitation of conversation
- questionnaire surveys – online and paper-based surveys of staff and students to gain their perspectives on our multicultural campus
- reflective personal accounts and conversations to consolidate learning using a set of prompts.



Immersive Cultural Experience Certificate

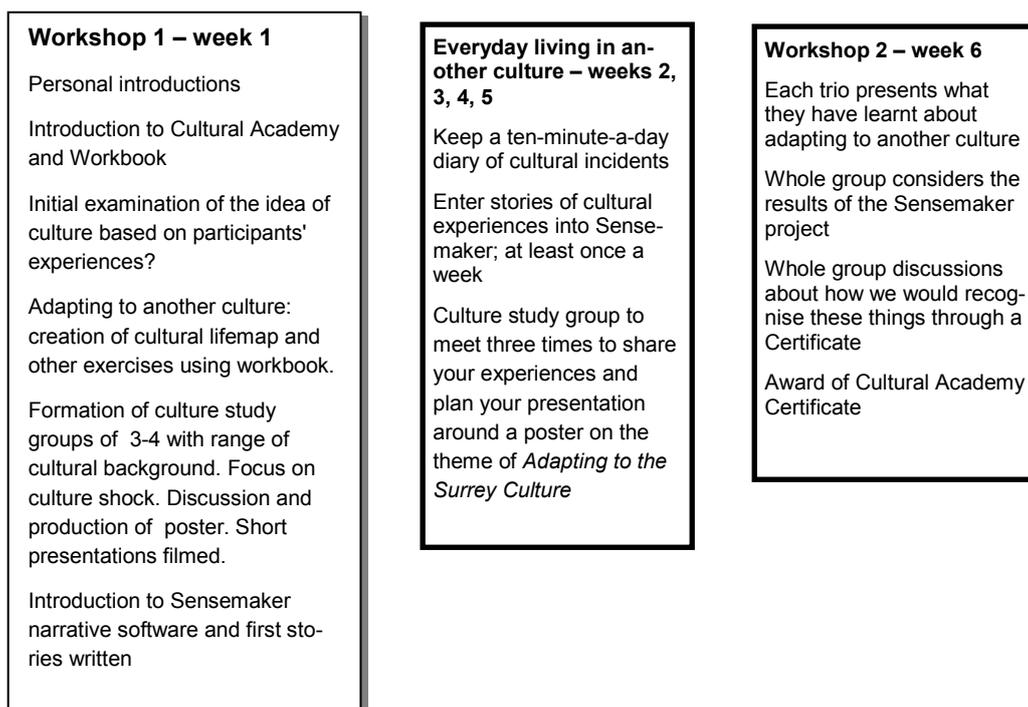
From the beginning, students who completed Cultural Academy and demonstrated their learning through a reflective account were awarded a SCEPTRe Experiential Learning Certificate. With the advent of the Lifewide Learning Award³ in May 2010 the opportunity arose for the Certificate to be included in the award framework. The idea of an Immersive Cultural Experience Certificate was born and it became the developmental focus for a SCEPTRe Fellowship by Novie. The intention was for the Immersive Cultural Experience Certificate to provide university recognition for informal learning and personal development gained when students are immersed in a culture other than their own. The Certificate is intended for three sorts of situations:

- when international students make the transition into the university and they have to assimilate our culture and adapt their behaviours and communications
- when home or international students go on exchange programmes to other universities or on work placements in another country and have to assimilate a new culture
- when home or international students engage in significant travel experiences during vacation periods when they are exposed to and have to adapt to the cultures of other countries.

Cultural Academy provided the vehicle for developing and piloting the Certificate in the first of these contexts with a small group of international student volunteers. The Certificate was developed and piloted in two stages:

- The first stage involved developing and trialling a tool kit and pedagogic strategies to enable participants to think and talk about their transition to another culture and to encourage them to record their understandings (make their personal knowledge explicit).
- The second stage involved a smaller number of volunteer participants in creating a synthesis account of their transition experience, drawing on the personal knowledge they had recorded and drawing out deeper understandings of their learning and development. This process was aided by a one-to-one interview with the facilitator.

Figure 1 Design of Autumn 2010 Cultural Academy



Cultural Academy, autumn 2010

Over the years of running Cultural Academy, we realised through the stories told by participants, that many had found it difficult to adjust to coming to the UK and starting their university course. We decided to explore this issue and the autumn 2010 Academy was dedicated to this objective. It differed from previous Academies in that recruitment was aimed exclusively at international students who had only recently started at the university. The Academy involved two afternoon workshops six weeks apart with encouragement for participants to meet weekly in small groups to carry on the conversations and relationship building between the workshops.

The process was underpinned by two workbooks containing tools and frameworks for stimulating thinking and conversation about the transitional experience and recording incidents, thoughts and feelings about the experiences

Cultural Academy Reflective Learning Book
<http://culturalacademy.pbworks.com>



Adapting to another culture through
an immersive experience

NAME

Table1 summarises the content of the workbook and shows the reflection, conversational and recording activities it supports.

Aids to knowledge development	Activity
Cultural biography (500 words)	Describe where you were born and brought up, your family, the origin of your name, the language(s) spoken in your family, the main cultural influences in your life, the countries you have lived in, your cultural identity.
Culture shock! (500 words)	Describe your experiences, impressions and feelings in the first week after arriving in the England.
Concept map	What does culture mean to you?
Cultural life map	Where in your everyday life do you have experiences through which you gain insights into the influence of culture in the situations you encounter?
Journey of cultural adaptation	Annotate the timeline explaining the emotional journey you are making and the reasons that you feel this way.
Stories of adapting to the English/ University culture using Sensemaker narrative software	Every Friday you will be sent an email inviting you to write a short story about something significant that has happened in the week that has caused you to think about the influence of culture in that situation. You will also be invited to draw meaning from the story and your wider experiences by positioning an X in a triangle that asks you to evaluate the significance of the situation from a variety of perspectives.
Daily diary – ten minute daily reflections	Briefly describe an incident or situation you have found yourself in today that caused you to reflect on culture. What was it that made you reflect on the role of culture in such situations?

The first workshop enabled participants to get to know each other and the facilitators to introduce the process. Using the exercises in the workbook, individual reflections and small and whole group conversations explored the meaning of culture. In particular, participants shared their experiences of culture shock and their initial day-to-day experiences of adapting to the new culture. These impressions were visualised in a poster which was presented to the whole group. Presentations were filmed and the films archived on a wiki. By pooling and capturing experience-based knowledge in this way more perspectives and insights could be gained about the adaptive process.



Participants were encouraged to develop relationships that would lead to a weekly meeting of their group to continue the conversations and the sharing of cultural experiences. Contact details were exchanged during the workshop to encourage this. Many of the participants agreed to keep in touch through Facebook.

Between the first and second workshop, participants were encouraged to meet their Cultural Academy team informally each week. Not all participants took the opportunity to meet, but those who did reported that they benefited greatly from the experience.

Participants were encouraged to complete the exercises in the workbook. Three methods were used to encourage systematic reflection on and the recording of experiences.

The annotation of a timeline (see below) segmented into weekly blocks of time, to reveal how participants felt and why they felt that way.

The maintenance of a daily diary (ten minutes per day) recording incidents that caused participants to think about cultural dimensions of a situation.

The contribution of an anonymised short story each week describing a situation that caused the participant to think about the significance of culture. This story was sent by email to a database for processing using SenseMaker¹ narrative software (the story above is an example of the types of story told). Students' stories were shared through a booklet prepared for the second workshop.

Here is an example of a student who honoured the process by recording and reflecting on his experiences. He made good use of his team to discuss things that disturbed him about the cultural differences he was encountering.

I met a British elderly man who was looking for his way to Wates House on the campus. Some distance behind him was his elderly wife looking exhausted from walking around campus trying to locate their destination. The man was carrying a big brief case. He walked up to me and asked for the direction to Wates House and I offered to take him there. As we walked together I felt an urge to help with carrying the brief case for him which is culturally acceptable and expected of young ones in my country as a sign of respect, even for strangers. But not knowing what is acceptable culturally in the UK to this regard I discarded the thought and just took him to his destination. I didn't feel satisfied for not trying and find out along the line what the outcome would be if I offered to help with the luggage; what will be his response ... where the fears that went down my spine as I discarded the choice to help. ... I'm yet to find out if my decision was right or wrong and general tips as to how respect is shown to the elderly in situations like this in the UK. I'll discuss with my group tomorrow to find out what they know. (Weekly story collected by Sensemaker)

A traditional English 'cream tea' was organised at the midpoint of the process to encourage participants to come together to share their experiences and aspects of their culture.

The second workshop gave an opportunity for each group to present what they had learned about adapting to another culture. The workshop was essentially a facilitated reflective process and a few important parts of the first workshop were revisited in order to investi-

gate further the process that participants had gone through in the six weeks between the workshops using a second workbook as an aid. This workshop ended with the award of SCEPTRe's Cultural Academy Certificate for those participants who had attended both workshops and submitted their workbooks.



Evaluation of the CA process

The feedback received from participants indicated that the Cultural Academy helped them develop and share their knowledge about adapting to another culture (scores of 8–10 on 10-point scale in agreement with achieving this aim). Participants believed that it benefited them largely by facilitating their thoughts and reflections about the adaptive process they were going through and enabling them to share their experiences and gain more perspectives on the transition through interaction with other students who were sharing the experience. They felt that meeting and speaking about their concerns with others who were involved in a similar transitional experience and were thus able to understand and empathise with their situation was an uplifting experience.

All participants felt that Cultural Academy provided a good opportunity to meet other students to share their experiences about living in another culture (rating of 8–10 on a 10-point scale of achievement). One participant commented that: "it was the vital aspect in the whole Culture[al] Academy workshop. We built a strong friendship with my team mates." From this positive and trusting set of relationships, they could converse freely and be exposed to different languages, traditions and beliefs. They were able to share their own culture, listen to others talk about their culture and discuss each other's cultural experiences, which they deemed to be a valuable experience. Another participant believed that as a result, "if I meet other [people] from their country I can easily talk to them." They appreciated the opportunity to meet other students from various cultural backgrounds, and appreciated the co-operations and understandings of others.

When commenting on the usefulness of the workbooks, participants indicated that the exercises helped them to reflect on and appreciate the learning gained through the process of adapting to another culture (ratings of 7–9 on a 10-point achievement scale). The additional comments provided by participants were all positive, for example:

- The reflecting process was very effective.
- I reflected a lot and Cultural Academy helped me to share my ideas, my experience, my goal regarding my future adaptation to the U.K. system.
- It made me notice things I was not noticing about myself before.

Besides reflection, the participants also found that the workbook was helpful in guiding their understanding through cultural exercises.

One important outcome of students' learning through the Cultural Academy process is that it gives them an opportunity to learn about other cultures that they were not previously aware of. One participant commented, "through the process, I have learnt [the] other people[']s culture and their life. It means that I can have the chance to share a wide variety of culture and their thinking." While learning about other cultures is an important part of their learning, the main areas of learning suggested by the participants is in the area of their personal view about another culture or their cultural experiences, e.g. how to be positive, optimistic and open-minded; to take responsibility; to take initiative; to not fear asking and seeking support; to be open and willing; to motivate oneself; to take initiative, etc. One participant said that she learnt "to be honest with one's self and express your views openly, frankly", while another said, "I've learned more about myself and what I can be."

Throughout the feedback, students indicate positive aspects of their learning experience during Cultural Academy. Participants felt that taking part was useful in improving both their reflection and their ability to adapt to the campus culture. The words of one participant summed up the general feeling: "The experience helped a lot and had an enormous amount of improvement. Things started to be better and better." Similarly, another participant said: "Things get better and better. I have a lot of new friends, easily get a lot of help and support and take part in many activities. That all enrich my life, I enjoy my life here." One participant explained that by sharing ideas through discussion and presentation, an understanding of one's own culture compared to others' could be more deeply understood. As another participant commented, "Now I know what other people feel, do and act in other cultures."

Piloting the Immersive Cultural Experience Certificate

Having gained experience of using the tools and techniques to facilitate individual learning gained through the process of adapting to another culture, the nine participants who completed Cultural Academy were invited to submit a 2,000-word integrating reflective essay describing the learning they had gained while adapting to another culture in order to complete the requirements for the new Immersive Experience Certificate (Table 2). As the workbooks included items 1 to 4, the only additional requirement was the one-to-one meeting to discuss their transition experience. Four students submitted essays for the Certificate in March 2011 and all were successful. The next section describes the nature of the learning revealed in student essays and interviews.

Table 2 Certificate requirements

<p>programme you will be making a commitment through a learning agreement to evaluate and make explicit the learning and personal development you gain through a minimum of three months' immersion in another culture.</p> <p>In order to receive university recognition for your learning and personal development you will need to document your experiences and your evaluation of the learning and personal development you have gained in a Reflective Diary (handwritten or word document) or online blog.</p> <p>Five techniques are used to help you understand, evaluate and reveal how you have changed your understanding and how you have changed as a person:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) creation of a life map showing where in your life you encounter different sorts of cultural experiences 2) construction of an ongoing reflective diary or blog to record and make sense of your experiences and the learning and personal development you are gaining from them 3) creation of a timeline map showing the journey you have made over the period of time you are involved in the certificate 4) creation of a concept map formed around the idea of adapting to another culture 5) production of a 2,000-word reflective account – to connect, synthesise and integrate the learning you have gained from your experience. <p>You may include other methods of recording your experiences and demonstrating your learning such as digital images or audio or video recordings. The Certificate encourages you to focus on key aspects of personal development that are generic to all informal learning situations. These are incorporated into a capability statement.</p>

Learning gained through adapting to another culture

Adapting to another culture requires people to move from a world of familiar contexts and challenges into a world where the contexts and challenges are unknown, and where the ability to communicate and understand the contexts and challenges might be hampered by language and perceptual barriers. The norms of behaviour learnt and developed in one culture may no longer be valid and people become uncertain about how to behave. Adapting to another culture involves learning new things and also unlearning some things (at least temporarily). The reflective account provided participants with an opportunity to try to make sense of their transitional experience of adapting to another culture over about six months. By using the tools

contained in the workbook to help them reflect on their experiences and their diaries which provided a record of their experiences, they had a wealth of material to draw on in their synthesising accounts.



We used the framework developed by Campbell and Jackson⁴ to evaluate participants' accounts of their immersive experiences. The overarching theme of any immersive experience is the sense of journey and this was also apparent in participants' accounts.

Dealing with culture shock

The process of adapting to a new culture often involves the phenomenon of 'culture shock': the transition from a familiar to an unfamiliar environment where old behaviour patterns become ineffective. Culture shock is a transitional process involving a journey in which four stages can be recognised⁴ (a) honeymoon, (b) disenchantment, (c) beginning resolution and (d) effective functioning. Cultural change is a stressful process as students' cope with their concerns, anxieties and uncertainties associated with where they live, what they will eat, sleep, health, safety, money, weather, academic challenges and communication. Students who study abroad are unique in that they must not only adapt to a new host culture but also function quickly and effectively in a new academic cultural setting.

In recording their transitional stories through Cultural Academy participants revealed their particular concerns and how they coped with the confusion, anxiety and uncertainty of the situations they found themselves in. Culture shock was expected and had to be dealt with and developing coping strategies was part of coping with and mastering the transition, as described by some participants:

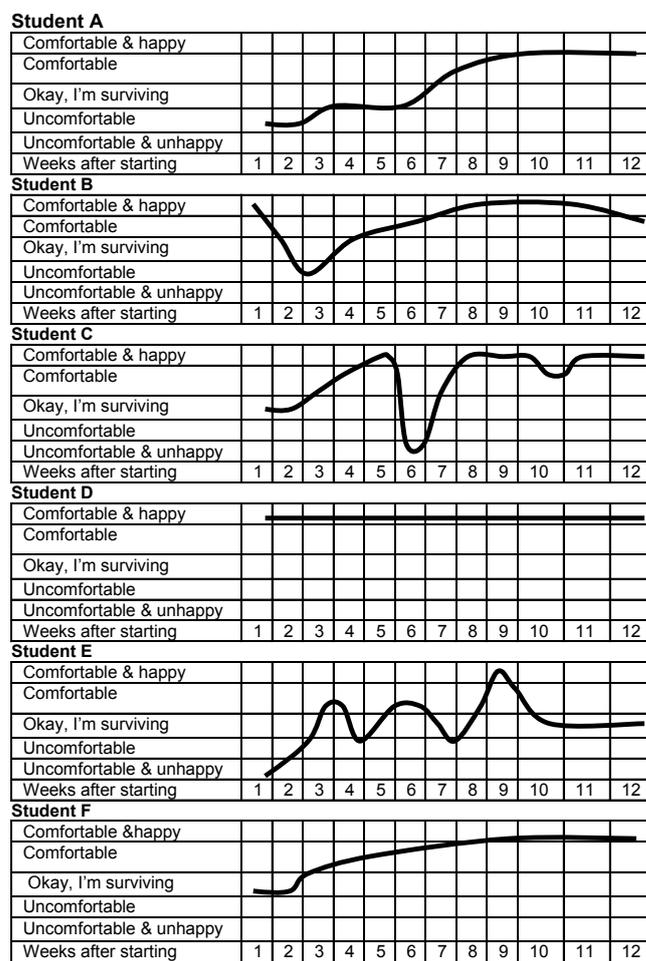
In the event that you experience culture shock in it's [*sic*] fullest with chronic depression and longing for home, my advice is to meet friends for emotional support. I have not experienced this but I have helped people who were foreign get through downs due to culture shock. Hang out with some people from your country and heal yourself with the culture you missed but don't be scared to return back to the foreign culture, embrace it! You are never alone, and there is always someone there like you who is willing to help.

It has been a wide experience that most of the International students face problems like boredom, monotony during their course, homesick, isolation and loneliness, difficulties socializing due to cultural, history and language barriers etc. Therefore, life and study have not been easy and smooth as I thought at the beginning. ... I also felt a little bit worried and scared, because I have been far away from the support of family and longstanding friends. When I came to UK first week, I terribly missed my parents. My two luggages [*sic*] were missing after getting off plane, I could not describe this issue very clearly to staff and felt anxious. There were other problems for me at the beginning, such as how to open bank account, how to sign mobile [contract]. Overcooked food and changeable weather also made me negative. In addition, I was afraid to make mistakes when I communicated with someone in English, especially [because] I felt so nervous on the phone. After making some Chinese friends in campus, things were getting better. We cooked together, studied together and went to town together. We can learn and know many things quickly through our activities and chats, such as cooking skills and local news. I was not too shy to talk, and shared my views.

Out of all these challenges, the behaviour and attitude of the people around me [was] my greatest hurdle. I constantly found myself in awkward situations due to me not understanding or being understood properly. ... Another thing which was sort of a culture shock and made me quite unhappy ... is that people didn't touch me much... I'm used to getting a hug or at least a handshake from my friends every time I see them, whereas here people mostly said 'hi' and walked past leaving me in some awkward 'hand stretched out but not shaken' situations. I felt like people didn't want to touch me or

... I'm used to getting a hug or at least a handshake from my friends every time I see them, whereas here people mostly said 'hi' and walked past leaving me in some awkward 'hand stretched out but not shaken' situations. I felt like people didn't want to touch me or were just 'inhuman' by my standards, after all, who doesn't like a hug? But one day I spoke with a friend from Argentina who experienced the same thing ... and he felt the same feeling of 'not getting enough love'. But he explained to me that it is just the culture of the people, everywhere is different. One thing that really made me glad and gave me a very positive impression of the English culture was that when I and my friend told our housemates about this, they always hugged us when we met from then on.

Figure 2 Timelines showing how students felt about their experiences of adapting to another culture during the first 12 weeks



Ward and Kennedy (1993, 1999) drew a distinction between psychological (emotional/affective) adaption and socio-cultural (behavioural) adaption. Psychological adaption can be understood within a stress and coping model and refers to feelings of well-being or satisfaction with transition. Learning to manage emotions is another intangible but essential dimension of the learning that comes from cultural adaptation. The psychological/emotional journeys of several Cultural Academy participants are depicted schematically in Figure 2 above.

Except for student D who felt confident, comfortable and happy throughout the three months of this study, all the students were able to recognise changes in their emotional states, but the journey is different for each participant. Emotional stresses are associated with many aspects of their experience. Homesickness, felt by all participants, is compounded by what many students see as a lack of friendliness of the home culture, but when they experience kindness and generosity this has a significant positive effect on their well-being. Here are some examples.

Another challenge for me was the perceived 'coldness' of the English people. [People from my country] are generally friendly and trusting in the public domain. It is not unusual to strike [up] a conversation with the person behind you in the queue at the bank. In my new country I found that on a bus, everyone stared firmly out the window or into their newspapers, and striking [up] a conversation with a stranger was considered close to bizarre ... The English are

big on privacy and do not take nosiness lightly. An innocuous question such as whether the expected baby has arrived yet can be found intrusive. In [my country], it is taken for granted that family units will not only stay up to date with each others' affairs, but they have right by default to offer advice, remedies, and in instances step in and take action during any form of crisis. The rule in England seems to be wait until you are told, then you can ask questions. This adjustment has been trying, since I am used to 'intruding', and being intruded upon. I lost a few friends at first because I was accustomed to discussing my problems in painstaking details, then asking for advice.

The first thing I noticed was the courtesy and friendliness of the people at Heathrow Airport as a security official helped me get to the correct terminal and a shop assistant helped me get a sim card to call a taxi. The taxi driver who transported me to the campus was very friendly and even offered to carry my bags to my room. This left a lasting impression in me.

The HOST scheme links British families with international students. I greatly appreciate Host UK that gives me some opportunities to visit this beautiful and affluent country. It is an excellent way to experience the British culture. The other good thing is the University will pay the cost for you to apply for the visit. I was lucky to be a guest of Mrs..... in this Christmas holiday. I have been to the seaside town of Looe in South West Cornwall. I roamed a long and beautiful coastline of Looe, it is quiet, beautiful and unspoiled, which made me relaxed and happy. I love the boundless sea and blue sky. I also had a big Christmas dinner with [her] daughters and grandchildren in the countryside. They treated me as a member of family, I felt like I was in my home. I am deeply impressed with their hospitality and affability. The weather was cold, but I was warm in my heart. It is really an unforgettable experience for me. In addition, the Friends International Society in Surrey also provides the opportunity to enjoy fun social events, explore life outside of studies and learn more about the Christian faith.

I was shopping at Tesco and I was impressed by the service at the checkouts when I was finished with my shopping. The lady at the checkout was friendly and helpful when she helped me pack my items. Later that day I was also impressed by the customer service at Natwest Bank on campus when the teller was helpful in explaining things to me.

Coping with prejudice and disrespect is another source of emotional stress.

A further challenge I experienced when adapting to English culture [was] the stereotypes that came with my darker skin and my very obvious [foreign] looks. While before I had been one in millions of others like me, now I stood out. There were instances when I was unfairly labelled with the stereotypes given to my countrymen and women. I was referred to as being lazy, a drunk, and good for nothing. I was expected to be loud, callous and uncultured. I was once asked if any member of my family owned a shipping line. These accusations were not necessarily true, but ... I had to bear the brunt for the traits most commonly associated with people from my country or origin.

Developing a positive and optimistic disposition seems to have been one way to overcome feeling homesick, lonely and dependent. Indeed, being able to turn negative emotional states into more positive and optimistic states was considered important in order to cope with the transitional experience.

There were numerous ... challenges in my path to settling with the culture. All these differences, language, food, weather, behaviour and attitude towards situations, these all affected me and my emotions daily, and not always for the best. I'm a very optimistic and happy-go-lucky person who would require a lot to keep my mood down for long so I usually recovered quickly from negative emotions. I was also always willing to adapt because the English from my experience are very accommodating to people of other cultures and that really boosted my confidence as a person. Because of this mindset I had there weren't any particularly terrible or horrible times I've had as a result of a different culture. However there were times where I felt quite depressed and/or disappointed when I received a different result than what I expected just because of a difference in culture or two. Times where my self esteem hung really low because the people around me weren't reacting as they should. And some times, just plainly being fed up with the way everything seemed different and inhuman.



Adapting to a new culture is a long journey and there are many unforeseen things that could cause a culture shock for people. However, having an optimistic and open minded attitude to anything and anyone of the strange culture is the best thing to do in order to fully adapt and even soak up the new culture. I am optimistic and positive about all experiences and embrace the opportunity to learn as much as I can, thus I believe all of these benefits will enhance my employment prospects and make my life meaningful in the future.

There was recognition that adapting to another culture involved learning new things and also unlearning things that were known through their own culture (at least temporarily).

Culture ranges from more noticeable behaviours like music to even more subtle and unnoticeable behaviours like how to put your cutlery down after eating (yes it really is complex and different between cultures!). And to the uninformed man, could result in some very awkward and/or embarrassing situations. I am a citizen of [African country], born and raised there with traditional values and grew up learning the way of doing things. With that being said, it is no doubt I had to do a lot of 'unlearning' to do when I came over here to study. I shall talk about the differences in my culture and the English culture and how I started to understand the people here and what I experienced in my journey of adapting to the English culture. To be more specific about the latter of the afore mentioned two, the challenges and experiences I faced when adapting; coming to an understanding and being understood by the people of this culture; and finally advice for people who want to adapt to a culture peculiar to them.

There was also recognition that changing one's perspectives was an important way of coming to terms with living in another culture.

My culture is largely family based. The family image and values are the most important thing to a man and everything else like fame, money, pleasure etc comes later. Children learn the importance of family and are usually guided by the parents' wisdom in order to excel in life even when the children are adults. This is quite a contrast to the English culture I've observed which promotes a more 'individual' upbringing for children which promotes children to do more of what they want to do while growing and figure out decisions for themselves with a lot less parental guidance [than our] parents. This came as quite a shock to me at first because I felt that so many children were unruly and lacked respect towards elders and this was clearly because they are given too much room to do what they please while growing. However, there was a situation that altered my view on this. One day out in town, I saw an old lady in the street carrying not too heavy bags and I thought "Oh my God! Where are her children!? They should be carrying that for her", the same scenario in [my country] would be somewhat of an insult to the children that they are not good children to let their parent do such. Imagining the same scenario with my mom, I'd feel like a terrible child for letting her go out at that age. I then went over to her to help her carry the things and she said "I might be old but I'm very capable of taking care of myself" and even more peculiar response! I went home pondering on that response and then asked my teacher who was English why I got that reaction and funny enough she told me that my actions could be seen as insulting in a way, VERY contrary to my original idea of an insult being her children not helping her. And then it hit me, perhaps what I thought was completely wrong ... perhaps they weren't the ones being unruly and ill mannered but 'I' the ill mannered one for insulting her strength and competence. This was a true eye opener for me, it was the first time I ever thought in a different sense and seen the world from a different perspective.

While at first I was very conscious of myself in the midst of English men, because I was certain everything about me screamed 'foreigner', I came to learn that the reason why I stood out was because I thought so much about it. Gradually, I came to relax and mingle freely, and you would think now that I was born and bred in Buckingham Palace. Initially I had concerns about blending in; with my accent and my colour, it was made doubly obvious that I did not belong. I have overcome this awkwardness now. For me to blend in, I do not have to be the epitome of the perfect English gentleman, I just have to understand that I carve my own place, that what is of greater importance is that I be comfortable in my own skin.

Life in the UK has been really exciting and challenging as well. However all the way it has made me reflect on my approach to life. It offers a good opportunity to accelerate my growth and also brings a lot of changes to me, which include the self understanding, handling problems, showcase self talent and etc. Generally, I feel it easy and positive to adapt to life in the UK.

And as the unfamiliar situations become more familiar and better understood, confidence grows and there comes with it a sense of achievement, pride and comfort in making a successful transition into a totally different world to what was previously known.

The differences in culture between people is an amazing thing, and to have adapted to one different than mine is something that I will cherish for the rest of my life. Although it may seem unnerving at first, the learning, the growth, the memories and the feeling of triumph are all worth the journey to understanding this magnificent thing we call culture.

Living in England gets easier by the day; I have become to read the nonverbal language that is to be found in any given cultural or societal setting and can only be learned by familiarizing oneself with the culture. While before there were nonverbal cues that puzzled me, or which I missed out on all together, I can now easily pick up on the subtle nuances of nonverbal communications. ... My confidence has greatly gone up. When I was new to England, I second guessed myself at every turn. I had suffered a complex that arose from years of being drilled with the mantra that England and all things English were superior to what I had in my own country. While initially I so badly wanted to fit in that I tried to ape English mannerisms, from speech to dress and a penchant for the races, now I am confident enough of my place that I opt to watch basketball over a game of cricket. I have decided to work with aspects of the English culture that work for me – like the strict observance of time and unerring politeness, while not trying to turn myself into the clone of an Englishman.

Formative experience

Cultural Academy proved to be a powerful learning partnership for everyone involved both students and educators. The structured inquiry-rich process, the building of a trusting partnership which encouraged disclosure of feelings and experiences engaged everyone in thinking and talking about the epistemological, interpersonal and intrapersonal complexity associated with living in a multicultural society and the challenges of adapting to a new cultural context. The feedback we have received suggests that for some students it has been one of the most formative experiences they encountered while at university - this goes for us as well.

Acknowledgement

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Blending Cultures of Education, Teaching, Learning & Achievement

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In this article, I want to explore some educational aspects of culture, and focus on my current experience of working in the UK for a small, private school owned by Chinese and Korean migrants, where cultures blend to produce a unique, albeit often challenging, learning environment.

To contextualise my experience, readers should know that I am retired from a lifelong career in education which took me from teaching in secondary, tertiary and higher education, through senior management, university administration and research. Most of my teaching was in multi-ethnic Inner London areas of social deprivation, where I celebrated the cultural and linguistic mix of our children and their families.

Having retired from educational consultancy five years ago, I was not looking for work, but a chance encounter led, two and a half years ago, to my taking on a few hours of teaching a week. I live in what is the largest Korean community outside South Korea, and found myself employed now in a totally novel environment where I had to cross into numerous new sub-cultures: I was employed by a Korean, who respectfully calls me Dr Willis whilst she is known by her first name even to the pupils; I was teaching highly motivated children; I had moved sideways into teaching English and ESL, from being a modern and classical linguist and last, but not least, I was teaching in a private enterprise. Any one of these factors was a 'culture shock' for me, and in combination, proved to be a fascinating new departure.

I quickly had to acclimatise to an establishment where education was paramount to the point where even I, a dedicated academic, had to question the harshness of a regime in which children come straight from school to several 1-hour lessons every afternoon/evening and on Saturdays and Sundays. The pace is relentless, as I see within the owners' own family, where their son returns from his prestigious prep school to endless private lessons. Nothing less than near perfect results is acceptable: this week I was greeted with the news that he had achieved a 'disgusting' mark for his Latin (a subject I tutor him in): 60%. When I tried to put this in the context of the top mark of 71%, I was dismissed as if I knew nothing about education! And here is a lesson I very soon learned: hold my tongue. I don't need to prove anything, and will defend the children but not enter into argument with Kim (as I shall call her).

Then there is the matter of discipline. I consider my standards high, and I confess to enjoying the way in which our pupils are expected to thank us at the end of a lesson. However, there are many occasions when I have to remind myself that I am being employed by Kim, so must accept her expectations. A not infrequent occurrence is when the classroom door bursts open (my pupils may have been talking too loudly or even laughing...), Kim's mere appearance turns the children to stone, as she bellows some instruction to them. I understand what it must feel like to be a novice teacher.

Pedagogy is another contentious area, and I do occasionally bite back here. My carefully bespoke teaching material may come into question, or I do not meet the assumption that the extent of paper covered during a lesson reflects the level of learning achieved, and I succumb to reminding Kim that I have been teaching since 1975! And, of course, deep down we both know that we respect each other's skills, however different our practices may be, and it is perhaps the combination of such diverse methods that works: we have admitted to playing 'good cop, bad cop'.



So, for instance, I can be peacefully teaching a group when suddenly the sound of a raised voice soars to hysteria, followed sometimes by the sobs of the child who has failed to learn adequately. On such occasions, my pupils and I are like co-conspirators, we joke together or commiserate, all of us understanding that this is just Kim's style of teaching. It achieves results, and has forced me to examine my own style. Did I really stretch my children sufficiently, as I had believed at the time, when teaching so long ago?

Our pupils come from many different cultures: at the moment, I teach Tamils from Sri Lanka, Chinese Koreans, South and North Koreans, Iranians, Spanish, N African Arabs, Vietnamese, Filipino and even English! They follow a vast range of religions and speak different languages at home. Nevertheless, Kim's school offers something which transcends these differences and which is shared by all: the value of education. For these communities still perceive education to be the pathway to success in life, a value that is all too frequently lost in the West, where money, fame through performance in the media or sport, are the aspirations of many. Perhaps this is the invisible bond that ties me to Kim: my own passionate, if out-moded, belief in the value of education. Our only difference is that I relate this to self-fulfilment rather than career and tangible rewards.

Aspiration is clearly illustrated by the then 7-year old Tamil girl who planned (and still plans) to become a doctor. Whose ambition is this, you may ask? The answer becomes blurred, as parental and individual values are shared from birth. I see this personally in my own extended Tamil family: although the younger generation switch easily between their new nationality as Australian, Canadian or British, they are rooted in their family values and adhere to traditional expectations of career and marriage. Accordingly, my young pupil was encouraged to take, and in fact passed, her 7+ entrance examination to a



renowned girls' school. Sadly, despite my letter of appeal on her behalf, her family was not sufficiently needy to warrant a grant, so she was unable to take up her place there. Her disappointment was inevitably reflected in a drop of motivation for some months, but she has stoically accepted her parents' decisions.

Returning to Kim and our Korean children, I frequently recall the horrors from which many of their

parents have escaped, and empathise with their ambitions for their children. I can appreciate Kim's drive for perfection when I remember that her home country has a problem with over-qualification: too many graduates unable to find commensurate levels of employment.

But I should also point out another end of the spectrum: a few of our children have learning and/or behavioural difficulties. For their parents, this is a serious stigma, and they deny the limitations their child has. It is such children as these that I hear sobbing when Kim delivers her 'tough love'. Highly qualified and westernised as she is, she implicitly believes she can squeeze something more from the child. Paradoxically, though, she will challenge their parents and support them in the process of having their child assessed and statemented¹.

For all these reasons, the school is an intoxicating environment and I love it. Despite – and arguably because of - our differences, we have worked together for the last two and a half years through our common values of respect and the desire to ensure we give these young children what we consider to be the greatest gift in life: a sound education. On the surface, as this is a private school, I may appear to be deserting my egalitarian principles, but when I see such children, migrants themselves or born of recent migrants, passing entrance exams to leading schools, I am proud and feel we are making a real difference to their lives through our blended teaching.

1 A *statement* of special needs is a formal document detailing a child's learning difficulties and the help that will be given.

Image sources

<https://static01.nyt.com/images/2014/08/02/opinion/02koo/02koo-blog427.jpg>
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Bilingual Creative Writing Clubs: An ecology for cross-cultural learning

Maja Jankowska, Sarah Coleman, Jon Rainford, Ioana Stoica, Aneta Pac, Ana Christian, Maria Syngouna, Andromachi Tsoukala, Adebola Adewuyi and Denielle Baker,
University of Bedfordshire

This article focuses on the Bilingual Creative Writing Clubs project as an ecology for cross-cultural learning, creativity and community engagement. We use the metaphor of an organic living ecology, in which the components interact and from which entirely new products and learning emerge (Jackson, 2016). As the project was a pilot (to the best of our knowledge the first of its kind in the UK) and quite a complex one, one could say that indeed we were in the crucible – ‘the situation of a severe trial’¹. At various points our skills, knowledge, team work and creativity were tested. But we believe that the outcomes are fantastic (not only in terms of the stories written but also the gains for all the groups involved) and we are proud of our hard work and results and looking forward to scaling up beyond the pilot. We present the project through an interview (question-answer) format below.

What is the project about?

Bilingual Creative Writing Club project is a case study for *cultural learning* exchange² between *the schools*, in particular bi/multi-lingual pupils and their teachers, *the university* (University of Bedfordshire, UK), in particular students from four departments: Psychology, English Language and Communication, Advertising Design and Teacher Training/ Education Studies (working in inter-disciplinary teams) and staff (the Department of Psychology and the Access and Outreach Team) and *the community*, in particular bi/multi-lingual parents and wider community (libraries, immigrant community groups).

The project emphasised the importance of public engagement based on the principles of mutual cultural learning exchange. Although the idea came from the university lecturer in the first instance, the schools, the university students and staff and the community have been consulted and engaged in a partnership in the spirit of action research inquiry.

This project emphasises partnerships and *engagement* of all participants as a key factor in the facilitation of cultural (and inter-cultural) learning as well as cross-disciplinary learning to look at the ways in which individuals and groups learn both about and through culture and within and across communities³

Who took part?

The Bilingual Creative Writing project took the form of after school clubs in which young, diverse learners (aged 7-10) of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds created bi-lingual/ tri-lingual stories. 32 children were involved and they wrote in languages such as Arabic, Bengali, Bulgarian, Italian, Latvian, Ndebele, Polish, Russian and Spanish.

We also tried to replicate this diversity in terms of the university students involved in the day-to-day delivery of the project – they worked in two inter-disciplinary and multicultural teams, bringing together their different skills and expertise. They also spoke a range of languages: French, Greek, Polish, Romanian, Spanish, Ibo and English. The project leader (also bilingual/bicultural) has a keen interest in bilingualism and intercultural and interdisciplinary learning and she drew upon the expertise of the Access and Outreach Team and their invaluable experience of outreach work with schools in the local area. Having such a diverse team was a great advantage as we could draw on each other’s knowledge, skills, experiences and particular strengths.



When and how?

The actual delivery of the clubs happened in winter/spring 2015/2016 (for 1 hour on a weekly basis, for a period of 11 weeks). However, the preparation, organisation and follow-up work (converting the stories into e-format in preparation for

publishing) as well as official launch took just over a full calendar year. The research attached to this project is still on-going.

Two teams consisting of four students plus a project lead and a member of the Access and Outreach Team prepared, delivered and refined the project on a weekly basis in each of the schools. The two schools were different in many respects and the working and group dynamics required differentiation of our approach in each of the two schools.

Each team had a student leader (a psychology final year undergraduate student) who co-ordinated the work of the team and communicated with all involved. Each team reflected after each session and communicated with the project lead and the Access and Outreach Team in order to refine our approach and prepare for the next session (action research approach).



Parents were also invited to encourage and support their children at home (writing in the children's home languages) as well as to send us their views/ comments/ requests. One of the parents (picture on the left) asked to join the team and supported a small group of Spanish speaking children in a school where we did not have a Spanish speaking university student in the team.

Head teachers gave their permission to run the clubs and were very supportive of the project. We also had some teachers and teaching assistants involved (helping within the club as well as motivating and reminding the children to bring their work to the following week's club).

So was it all about writing bilingual/ dual language stories?

No, it was all about learning from each other (cultural learning exchange) and having fun along the way. It was also about providing students from four different departments with an opportunity to work together in inter-disciplinary teams and to gain a real life experience in a real life setting (schools) hence increasing their employability. Moreover, it was all about increasing the visibility of bilingual and bicultural learners within the schooling system and showcasing their unique talents. Finally, we also aimed to create bilingual resources for schools and libraries.

The sessions were highly enjoyable as apart from writing stories we played a lot of (often linguistic) games and children expressed their creativity and linguistic abilities in many different ways. For example, a group of Polish children in one of the schools spontaneously created a short song – 'a Polish gang song' which they sang in each of the following sessions, while children in the other school decided to bring their own cultural food to one of the last sessions and celebrate their work while sharing some lovely food. We received a multitude of positive comments from children, parents and schools and we ourselves feel we have both enjoyed the clubs and have learned a lot about ourselves, the cultures and the disciplines we all represented in this project.

OK, but what was your rationale for doing this?

The project aimed to address some pressing educational and social issues – issues, which we believe require the engagement of all stakeholders and require both more and different solutions than the usual problem-focused approaches.

Although children who use a language other than English are not a minority population (especially in urban areas) in the UK, it can be argued that English classrooms remain largely monolingual and (perhaps to a lesser extent) also monocultural. Monolingualism is still perceived as a norm and there seems to be an expectation that children who are not native English speakers acquire English as fast as possible so they can assimilate into the English system of education. As Dakin⁴ explains this English dominance is driven by a high-stakes testing regime. Hence children who speak other languages are often left outside of the school gates, positioned



as separate from school education and the responsibility of parents and the community.

Within the packed curriculum of primary and secondary schools there is little space for acknowledgement and appreciation of languages other than English and although schools try to showcase that they 'celebrate' diversity their efforts are often *ad hoc* and superficial.

Moreover, children for whom English is not their first/only language are often seen as 'problematic' (requiring additional support) and at risk of underachieving – therefore the focus tends to be on remedial work, focused on improving their English.

In this project we wanted to move away from the traditional focus on English and instead focus on bilingual children's abilities, strengths and talents. Following Dakin⁴ we wanted to provide children with a safe forum to showcase their language skills as we believe that validating their home languages may lead to an increased sense of inclusion and self-worth.

In a similar way we also wanted to validate the languages, cultures and disciplinary backgrounds of our university students and staff. As part of the university's widening participation mission, we also wanted to help these students realise that Higher education would be a future possibility for them and that the skills they have through being bilingual are highly beneficial at university and that they will find many students like them there.

So what happened? What did we learn?

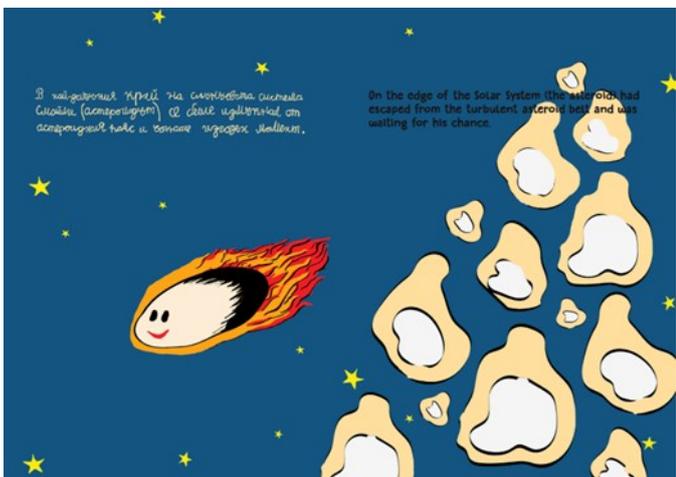
It was a steep learning curve and a fantastic learning opportunity for all the people involved. It provided the children as well as the students and staff involved with a great sense of enjoyment and achievement.



32 children were involved in the project and most of them finished their bilingual books. We are in the process of converting the books into an e-format and once all of them are completed we will publish them. The launch event took place on 22 June 2016 and it brought us all together – we showcased the children's work and some children read/presented their stories. Some stories are also being recorded as audio books. The outputs will be placed on the website Creative Bilingual (in preparation) – this means anyone will be able to access the published stories.

There were many challenges and practical obstacles on the way – many of them we had not foreseen. Some children could speak their languages very well and they could also write – still their spelling was not always correct and we needed to support them. Some other children could speak their home languages but were unable to write (or their writing was limited) – we had to assist them (if one of us could speak the language) or find someone else to help translate or correct. Some children lost their work or have not finished within the allocated 11 weeks for the project. We needed to chase the schools up so that we could get the finished stories in time for publication – this was not possible in a few cases and so we needed to fill in some gaps or provide illustrations for some books. We were lucky as both Maria Syngouna and Ioana Stoica are greatly

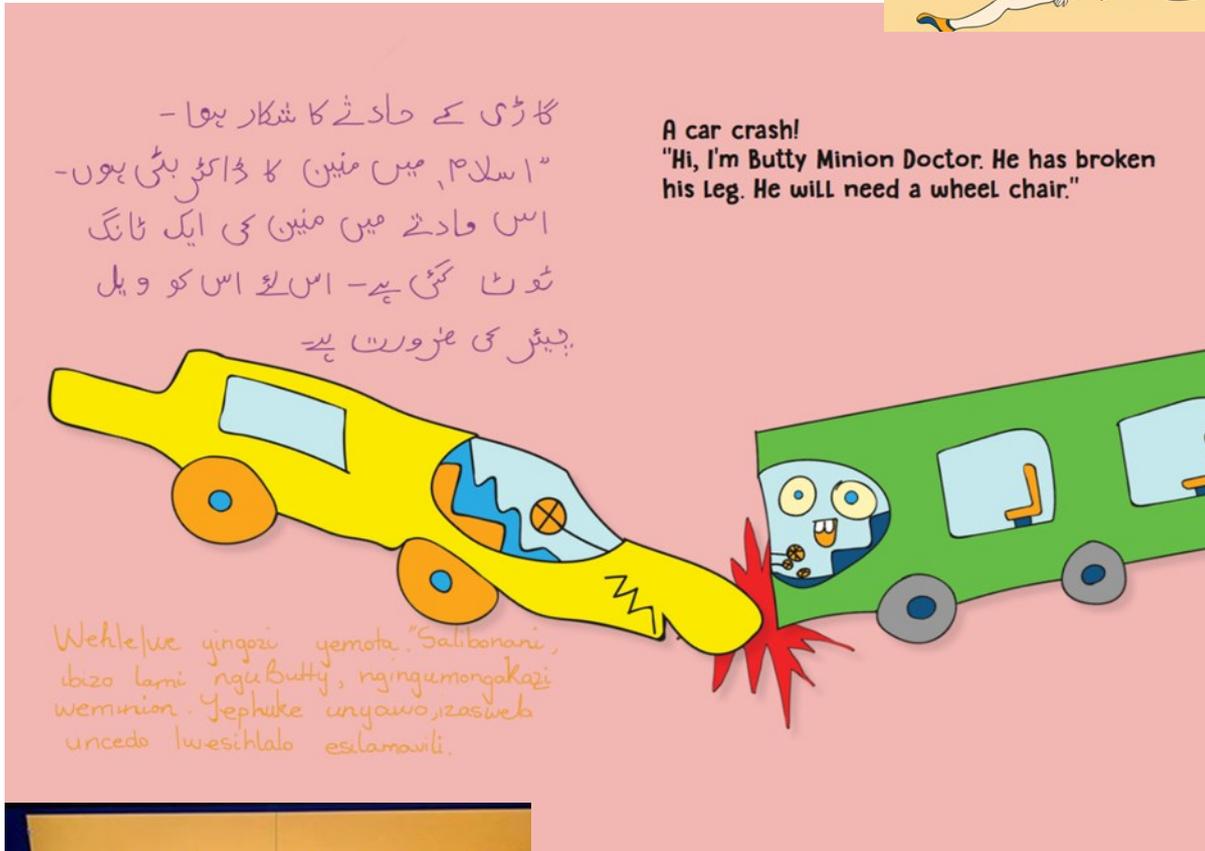
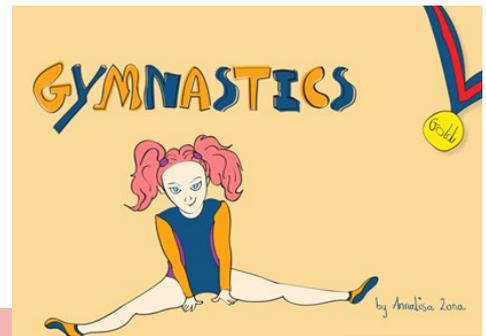
skilled at drawing (see an example of Maria's drawing on the cover of the book, left) and they not only assisted the children during the sessions but also helped us to polish or finish off the illustrations for publications.



Some children had additional educational needs and we needed to be mindful of them so in order to accommodate these, we audio recorded or typed their stories.

Converting the stories into a digital format and preparing them for publication was by far the biggest challenge. We had one truly amazing and fully dedicated Advertising Design student in the project – Ioana Stoica. She participated in the sessions of

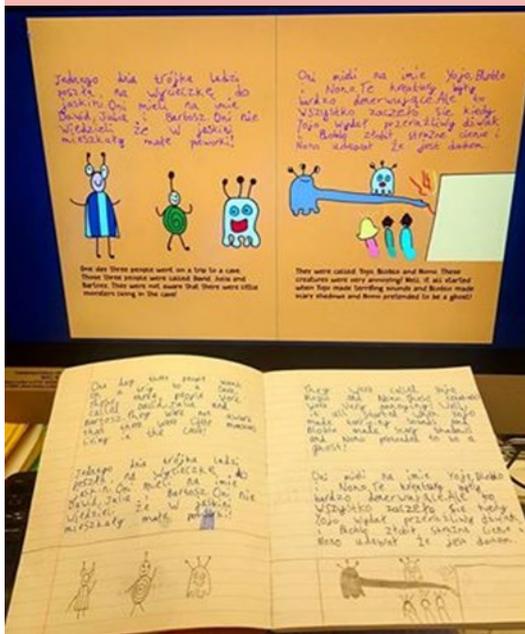
the clubs in both schools and after the stories were completed she spent days and nights scrupulously tracing the outline of each word and also tracing the images made by children and transforming them in vector in order to place them in a book available for print and online version. All of this to preserve children’s handwriting in their home languages (as well as their drawings). As Ioana speaks English and Romanian it was incredibly difficult for her to deal with all the complicated letters in all different alphabets (see the picture below) and inevitably there were mistakes as children’s handwriting was often difficult to read – especially in the languages we are unfamiliar with.



گاڑی کے حادثے کا شکار ہوا۔
 ”اسلام، میں مینین کا ڈاکٹر بنی ہوں۔
 اس حادثے میں مینین کی ایک ٹانگ
 ٹوٹ گئی ہے۔ اس لئے اس کو ویل
 چیئر کی ضرورت ہے۔

A car crash!
 "Hi, I'm Butty Minion Doctor. He has broken his leg. He will need a wheel chair."

Weklelje yingqzi yemota "Salibonari,
 lbizo lami ngie Butty, ngingumongakazi
 weminion. Yephuke unyawo, zasweweb
 uncedo lwesihlalo eslamawili.



We nominated Ioana for the Bedfordshire Student Union’s outstanding contribution to the community award and we were incredibly proud when she won it.

Ioana reported gaining invaluable employability skills. She experimented with different pieces of software in order to find the best possible, yet least time-consuming, option in order to keep the essence of the children’s work and, at the same time, make the stories suitable for publishing.

Ioana felt strongly that her work on this project has been one of her biggest achievements so far. She said that it was even more useful than an internship she had in graphic design (publishing house) as within our project she had to make all the design decisions herself and manage own time in order to finish the books on time (and within a very tight schedule).

Our student leaders – Aneta and Ana reported different learning points.

For Aneta, who has never worked with children or in an educational setting, the first experience of entering a classroom was scary. During the first session she was not sure how to behave and she needed support from her colleague. In the following weeks she quickly learned the importance of discipline and having a divided attention. This allowed her to manage the class

well, and by the end of the project she reported increased confidence and self-esteem. Working at school also helped Aneta with public speaking, and now she feels more confident and composed when she has to speak to a big crowd. From the cultural side, Aneta was happy that she was able to speak Polish to children, as due to living with a British partner she does not use her home language as often as she would like to (see her narrative in this issue).



Ana, on the other hand, has been working with children (as a tutor) for a number of years. For her learning to lead and manage other students was therefore more important. She learned more about herself and her own identity as a Latina (see her narrative in this issue).

Maria and Andromachi who were unable to use their home languages in this project (Greek and French) utilised their other skills. They both learned immensely from having a first-hand experience of working in schools and with children.

Andromachi was impressed by the children's creativity and motivation. It was fascinating to see them develop novel stories and translate them in their mother tongue. They were welcoming, open to work with us, asking us for help/advice (if needed) and enjoying themselves in the process. It would be beneficial for any similar projects carried out in the future to ensure that the children are having fun and associating this cultural-linguistic interaction with an activity that is enjoyable and educative.

As a linguistics student, Maria was given a unique opportunity to observe how bilingual and multilingual children make use of both their home languages and English and what are their language needs. She found particularly interesting the case of bilingual children who were not born in the UK but migrated at an early age having been exposed to only one language at the beginning of their lives. Maria was impressed by how quickly they had adapted to both the writing and phonetic system of English as well as how comfortably they switched between two languages when interacting with other classmates of the same linguistic background. Apart from that, she was happy to discover that the project was beneficial not only for the children but also for the bilingual students involved as it celebrated bilingualism and by extent their diverse identity in a monolingual society and culture. Thus, the project worked as a confidence booster for both the children and the students.

Danni and Bola – who both come from Education, have had previous experiences of working with schools. For them, working with students and staff from other departments (inter-disciplinary learning) was more important.

For Maja, this was her first experience working on a complex and administratively challenging project. She learned immensely about project management and the importance of collaboration and drawing on experiences of others, especially the

Access and Outreach Team. Maja, Sarah and Jon worked together very closely to ensure all the loose ends were tied and things happened ‘behind the stage’.

Sarah graduated from Psychology (Maja’s department) only a year before. She had already experience of working with kids and doing research and hence she was an invaluable asset to the team. Collaboration within this project has given her even more experience – so important and relevant in terms of her future career aspirations (Professional Doctorate in Educational Psychology). Sarah had the added advantage of working with both teams of students and children across the two schools involved in the project. Although she has experience working with children from many diverse backgrounds, this was her first experience working specifically with bilingual children. Sarah not only enjoyed learning new words and phrases in other languages but also learned a lot about other cultures along the way. The enjoyment was further enhanced by seeing the children’s delight of teaching adults new things. Working on this project and seeing the children develop week on week was great. Sarah was also impressed with how well the University students delivered each session and was amazed with the confidence and overall development of these students after the 11 weeks. Recently, Maja was awarded a small pot of funds to continue with the research on Bilingual Creative Writing Clubs and Sarah is now employed as Maja’s research assistant. This showcases the importance of networks and human relationships within our learning ecologies (Jackson, 2016).

Jon – our fabulous and very experienced colleague from Access and Outreach Team – helped immensely with all the ‘backstage’ practical arrangements. Both him and Sarah helped recruit, train (safeguarding) and manage the team of the students and they both were present in many of the clubs’ sessions, supporting the students and the children. Jon who himself was one of a few English only speaking individual in the project found observing the way that bilingual children worked in two languages parallel both fascinating and inspiring. He commented on this being an eye-opening experience. Having previously been a teacher and having worked with children who have English as an additional language, he realised how some of the ingrained assumptions of these children as being in deficit were simply not true and felt that this sort of project was essential to change the assumptions of many monolingual teachers.



So what lessons have we learned and can share with others who may be considering doing collaborative, community-based projects?

We learned the importance of planning and scheduling but at the same time being open, flexible and spontaneous – in essence having to think on our feet all the time. Our action research approach worked very well – we planned and trialled things but observed and listened to the children, students and other stakeholders and refined our approach. Although the same sessions were scheduled for both schools, given the unique composition of the children and students in each school in practice the sessions were quite different and required different approaches, skills, techniques, games, etc. We also learned that good communication between all parties was very important – it had to be timely, accurate and with quick responses.

Inevitably, there were some blips but overall, having two student leaders responsible for the flow of communication within the teams helped immensely and minimised distortions.

We learned that 11 weeks is definitely not enough (we had funding only for that amount of time) and that 1-hour long sessions were too short. If we were to run the clubs again we would aim for around 20 weeks and for 2-hour long sessions so that we could have time for more games and even more fun and so we would not have to rush things. Perhaps had we more time, we could have built deeper rapport with the children, which could have enabled us to get to know their abilities, strengths and weaknesses even better and all the children would have sufficient time to finish their stories and drawings to the level they wished and we would have had more time to help them with writing, spelling, illustrating and translating.

Recruitment of the students and then matching the clubs' sessions (days and times) to the students' university and other work timetables/ schedules was a particular challenge. Furthermore, we did not know what cultural/ linguistic backgrounds the children would be until the very last minute – when the project was advertised in schools and kids signed up for it. This meant we could not target the students' recruitment to match the children languages. This aspect has to be well thought-through and organised.

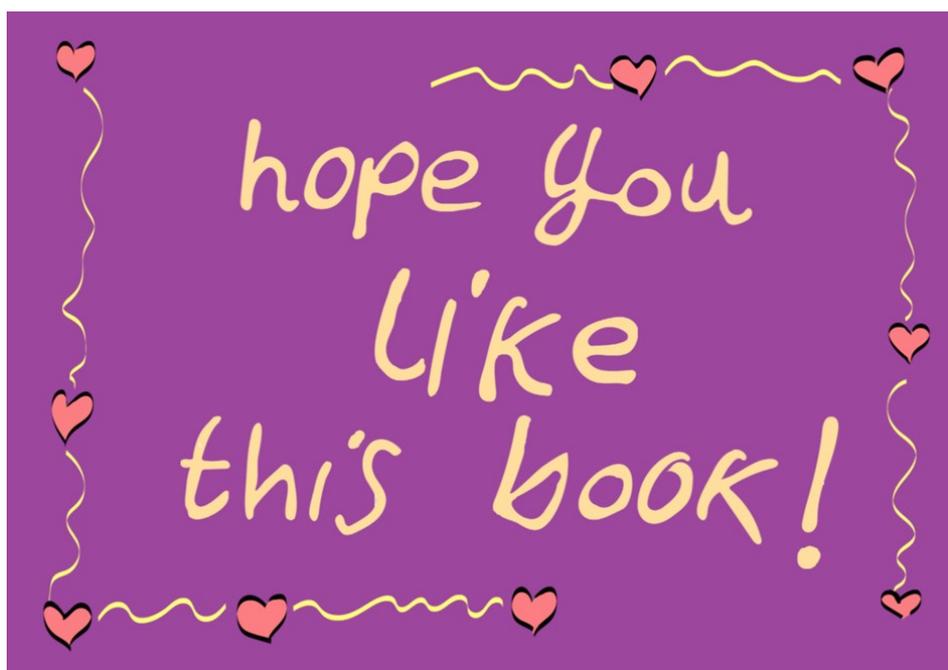
There are many ethical and practical considerations while working with the children. We had to recruit the students early enough to be able to provide them with the safeguarding training and take them through enhanced criminal checks (DBS). We had to adhere to the schools' rules and regulations and expectations and these were the two schools we worked in. Overall, it has a steep learning curve and a fantastic learning opportunity for all people involved. We learned about ourselves (our own cultural identity), about other cultures and languages, about the importance of serving our community and making a difference to children's lives. But each of us also gained a variety of skills and insights that we would not be able to access otherwise. All in all, we would say - a great success.

Our project has been noticed locally (we have a waiting list of schools that wanted to take part but, due to the funding limitations, we were unable to offer the project to more schools), nationally and internationally (at the conferences). It was included as one of the case studies for the 'Cultural Learning, Identity and the European Project' (European Educational Research Association funded project which aimed at an exploration of the interplay between two concepts being promoted within the European educational policy discourse, that of *Engaged University* and *Cultural Learning*).

Finally, the project was also noted by colleagues who work in the field of mental health. They suggested that our approach could be translated into supporting the recovery of mentally ill adults who also happen to be bi/multi-lingual and -cultural. We are currently in conversations with local organisation which supports mental health recovery and expressed an interest in taking this project further.

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Pritchatts House Global Community : Developing Cross-cultural Skills in an HE Residential Setting

Ellen O'Brien



Ellen is International Careers Consultant, Careers Network at Birmingham University.

The Global Community is housed in Pritchatts House: a 163-bed residence located just 10 minutes from the University of Birmingham in Edgbaston. It is a unique accommodation complex that has an intentionally culturally diverse makeup of students.

The project was launched in 2015 as a direct result of feedback from international students who wanted to integrate with home students whilst living on campus, experience “real life language learning” and advance their knowledge of British culture and the many nationalities the University attracts. UK students also recognised the value of such an experience.

“Coming from a small rural town, I hope to widen my horizons...My family have never been able to afford for me to travel abroad and so I look forward to meeting people from all over the world.” Eve, UK

The key objective of the Global Community is that by offering all aspects of a multi-cultural living arrangement, the student experience will be improved by providing residents with a living environment which supports integration and cross-cultural learning. The project directly feeds into the University’s five year strategy to commit to enhancing long term personal and commercial relations in the Midlands and internationally. Through the Global Community we are able to do this from the moment students enrol. It also addresses some of the recurrent areas of dissatisfaction international students experience by facilitating integration and enabling students to meet people from different cultures. It offers UK and International students the opportunity to build friendships, develop cross-cultural skills and share their experiences of University life.

At registration, all applicants are asked to submit a personal statement along with their accommodation application outlining their reason and the positive impact they could make in the community. Understanding the students reasons for being part of this living arrangement, assisted the allocation team in creating an environment conducive to integration.

As expected, most applications came from students who enjoy travelling and learning about a diversity of perspectives and ways of living. Additional applicants were those studying internationally-focused courses such as Political Science, International Business or Foreign Languages. There were applicants who were wary of living only within their language groups and wanted to gain the cultural maximum from the university experience.

“Not only will I benefit from this residence, but also contribute to its multi-cultural mission... I have mastered many languages and through using and studying those languages, I learned about the cultures behind them... I can play a good role as a bridge between western and eastern cultures.”

Linyu, China

Once in residence students living in the Global Community worked in conjunction with the University accommodation team and additional partners to arrange social activities. Initial events provided an overview of the UK and world cultures in fun and interactive ways. Individual flags, world maps and welcome packs were provided to aid with the settling in process.

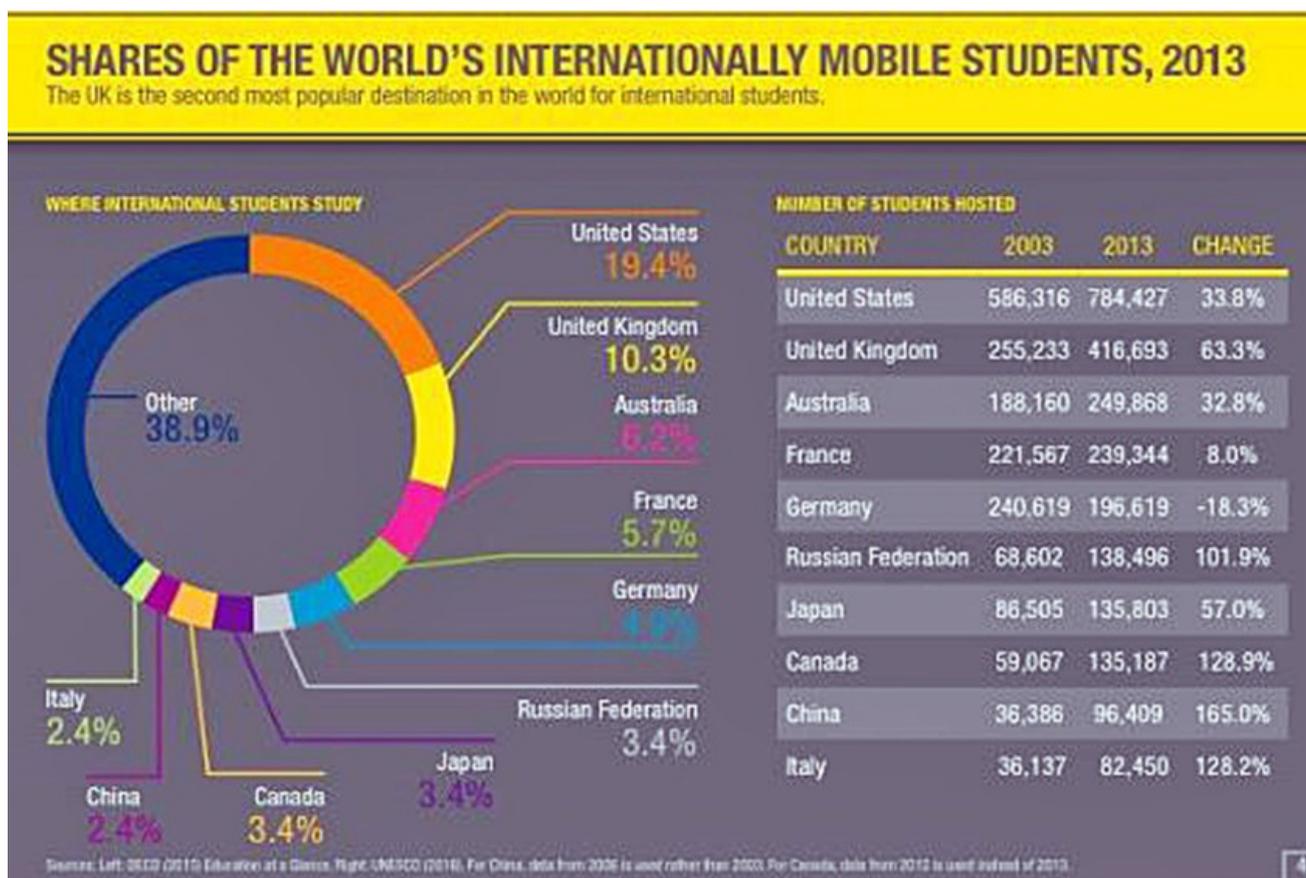
UK and International students who live in the Global Community experience different, languages, food and music on a daily basis,



"Next time I would come prepared with traditional food and candy from my own country, both to share and use myself" Jesus, Mexico

The Global Village was shortlisted in the College and University Business Officers (CUBO) award for "Best Student Housing" 2016.

Post script: In 2016 the Global Corner is being introduced, a communal social space complementing the Global Community in Pritchatts House, that celebrates international students and their home countries, and is a space to access support. Extending the ethos of the Global Community, it will feature an area where each of the nationalities of current residents will be visually showcased. Students will be encouraged to contribute, collaborate and decorate! This area will also be decorated to celebrate British events and holidays, encouraging awareness of British culture and aiding integration. The Global Corner will also offer a selection of support literature relevant to international students – giving them access to University of Birmingham support services.



Source: <http://international.ac.uk/media/3769821/IU-Facts-and-Figures-2016.pdf>

Influence of Family on Culture and Learning for Widening Participation Students

Lynne Crook

Lynne is an Academic Skills Consultant at the University of Salford. She has worked in various roles in the Higher Education sector since 2002, working with a wide range of students to support them both pastorally and academically



There has been an increasing emphasis and focus on diversity within UK Higher Education in the last few years, with the twin goals of Internationalisation in many institutions, as well as a requirement for universities to be more transparent with regards to Widening Participation (WP) strategies. But cultural diversity does not only mean students entering higher education with a different cultural background in the sense of their country of birth, or coming from an ethnic minority. It also applies to students any background that is not the norm in UK HE.

I've been doing some research recently into Widening Participation (WP) students and their relative success rates, especially those who have alternative entry qualifications such as BTECs (another type of educational 'culture', if you like). Almost regardless of the reason why a student may be considered a WP student, the very fact that they are likely to be the first (or one of the first) of their family to come to university means that they come from a different cultural background than that which is possibly expected in HE.

WP students' experience and background have often been theorised using Pierre Bourdieu's theory of 'cultural capital'. Bourdieu, in this theory, extends the term 'capital' from the simply economic to the capital of the dominating 'culture' of Western society, including education. Such 'capitals' function together to keep the dominant class in power and this link, 'represents the immanent structure of the social world, which govern its functioning in a durable way'¹⁻²⁴². The use of the word 'culture' is sometimes controversial in this case, as Bourdieu is often speaking about a 'lack' of cultural capital which these students have. The reason why diversity is such an important ideal in HE is because of the wider variety of experience, of 'cultures' that it brings. The term 'cultural capital', and certainly a lack of it, is definitely more loaded than Bourdieu gives it credit for. However, it is important to note that he is concentrating on 'capital' as a measure of the ease of access to education and power, rather than student having a 'culture' in the sense of being 'civilised' as some, often older, definitions of culture may indicate (see box below).

'It was only in 18th-century France that the single term *culture* began to be used and to acquire the sense of training or refinement of the mind or taste. It was rapidly extended to refer to the qualities of an educated person, and has retained that meaning until today.'²

Experience and reviews of our internal data shows that some WP students may not have the same relative ease of transition to HE as those who come from a background in which degree level study is the norm. This is where the study of the culture of the 'family' becomes most relevant. Of course, there are economic aspects to this. Students from wealthier families are likely to have more support from their parents, may not need to work as much (in terms of a part-time job) and consequently have more time to spend on their academic work. Equally, WP students may be forced by economic circumstances to stay at home, thus cutting down their choice of institution.

However, not all of these choices are purely economic. An important part of this is both how the role of the family is viewed within that culture, and the culture of each family itself. Every person's upbringing clearly can affect the choices that they have and they make, and this can work in both positive and negative ways. Bourdieu covers this in his idea of *habitus*, the set of values and possibilities which guides the decisions that individuals make, 'systems of durable, transposable dispositions [...] principles which generate and organize practices and representations'¹⁻⁵². *Habitus* can make a group unconsciously limit their own behaviour, 'the dispositions durably inculcated by the possibilities and impossibilities [...] generate dispositions objectively compatible with these conditions [...] The most improbable practices are therefore excluded, as unthinkable'³⁻⁵⁴. These can be inculcated by a wider society, and also within the family.

Certainly, many of the studies I read noted that the involvement of family can be a double-edged sword. Of course, a supportive family is crucial to many students' success, 'personal and social advantages of reliable and functioning family support networks were widely recognized'⁴⁻³⁵⁰.

That said, there are all kinds of issues for students that centre on family. A desire to maintain proximity to family can cut down student's choices of institution even further, and potential added caring responsibilities for other family members (especially for female students) could impact on time spent on academic work in order not to appear 'selfish'⁴. Sadly, although a very rare occurrence, I have even known some students who have had family members actively sabotage their education. Alternatively, there may simply be a sense that HE is 'not for us' within a family. Richard Seel's⁵ concept of culture (box right) shows how such a sense may be experienced.

There can also be all the lesser problems of families who just don't quite 'get' university themselves, and don't quite know how to support a student in independent learning, despite their best intentions. This type of situation seems to most clearly link to Bourdieu's idea of cultural capital. Dumais and Ward⁶ for example, separate out 'cultural capital' in terms of an appreciation of high culture in first-generation students versus familial support in their education. They ask, 'how cultural capital affects the educational transitions of first- and non-first-generation students and whether cultural capital can compensate for first-generation students' lack of a "feel for the game"⁶⁻²⁴⁶ This might seem a simplistic interpretation of Bourdieu's theories, as this 'feel for the game' is part of the overall action of cultural capital. It can come from heightened academic knowledge, familial and peer ties, as well as experiences with school or HE staff. It is not possible to simply reduce this to family knowledge versus cultural experiences for WP students. It is notable that one of the most important findings from this study was that family seemed to play a bigger role than any other 'cultural' experience in a student's successful entry into HE.



In my role as Academic Skills Consultant I am often trying to inculcate these students with a 'feel for the game' which is so difficult. While our team can use workshops and one-to-one sessions to try and explain skills and expectations, changing a student's *habitus*, their engrained beliefs and ways of working, can be much harder. Not only are they trying to get to grips with unfamiliar assessment and academic structures, but they are having to get to grips with the idea of being at university at all! Timing such support can be crucial, and perhaps even more important for us than a dissection of a student's particular background. As Bloomer and Hodkinson⁷⁻⁵⁹⁵ note, prior cultural capital and even attitudes to learning are not 'crudely deterministic'. Students in their study of A Level and WP GNVQ student may have dropped out of university, but equally some of them exceeded any expectations of them, given the right circumstances at 'critical turning points in which learners had to confront the harsh realities of life'⁷⁻⁵⁹⁵ Supporting students appropriately at these 'turning points' seems crucial for catching our less engaged students, and inducting them into this new and unfamiliar culture.

Finding out what these turning points can be, however, is easier said than done. While we, as in many institutions, concentrate on points such as induction and first exams, when these students may experience stress, or a sense of culture shock, such crucial 'turning points' may be different for all students. As well as the obvious academic turning points that we may be able to define, all students may experience personal circumstances which may cause them to reassess their relationship with education. While we make every effort to time group academic support for students as a whole, there is no doubt that the one-to-one situation can be the most important point of human contact to support a student, although balancing this with a sustainable workload can be difficult!

In conclusion, it is important for those of us working in higher education to appreciate the influences of culture and background on our students, but also that these influences can be highly individualised and assumptions about students can be wrong. Our students may come from many different cultural backgrounds, but their family culture cannot be underestimated. As support staff, we are searching for the holy grail of when to support students, and how best to support them. We must not assume that the culture they inherit from their family, and the emotional responses this can elicit, is in some way deficient. Rather we should view their involvement in higher education as an opportunity to help them develop the skills and behaviours, their *habitus*, which they will need for success in higher education and beyond.

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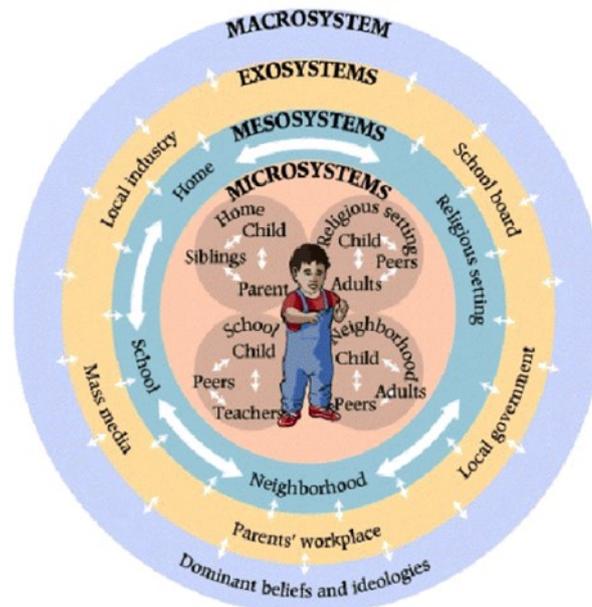
An Ecological Systems Perspective on Culture

Norman Jackson



Urie Bronfenbrenner founded the **Ecological Systems Theory** to understand the complex relationship between a child, their family, and the society and institutions that impacted on the development of a child. The model is relevant when we consider how a young person acquires and develops the behaviours and habits of their culture.

Figure 1 Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory³



Bronfenbrenner identified four systems that each contains rules, norms, and roles that powerfully shape development. He called these the *microsystem*, the *mesosystem*, the *exosystem*, and the *macrosystem*¹

The **Microsystem** contains the immediate environments that the child is a part of (family, school, peer group, neighborhood, and childcare environments). It is the layer closest to the child and contains the structures, relationships and cultures with which the child has direct contact. It is the day to day environment in which activities are performed and learning takes place.

Sociocultural values, beliefs, and traditions significantly affect family life. They dictate roles and responsibilities of the family members toward one another, how they relate to one another, how decisions are made within the family, how resources are distributed, and how problems are defined and solved. Parents also uniquely possess the authority and responsibility to direct the upbringing of their children. They control the way they want their children to behave or respond to behaviour (encourage, discourage, or imitate); direct their attention toward certain things and away from other ideas, perceptions and emotions; and control the kinds and intensity of emotion that they wish their children to develop.³

The microsystem is the place in which parents transmit their cultural understandings and expectations to the child and where the child learns behaviours that are consistent with parental cultural beliefs. The microsystem is also the environment within which children interact with their peers inside and outside school and also where they encounter and practise their religion.

The microsystem contains the biggest influences on the development of a child including their cultural development.

The microsystem is nested within the **Mesosystem** which comprises the

connections between the child's immediate environments (i.e. a child's home and school) which sit within the **Exosystem** - the external environmental settings and other social systems that do not contain the developing child but indirectly affect development (e.g. a parent's workplace, neighbourhood institutions, the media, the government, the economy etc.).

Religion and belief systems are powerful shapers of cultures and many habits, customs, folktales, stereotypes, hopes and fears of a community arise from the religious beliefs of that community. In some societies, religion is separated from secular matters and considered as something private. In other societies, religion transcends cultural institutions, such as education, family, marriage, and law, shaping the operational structure of these institutions. The fusion of religion and culture can sometimes be so strong that some researchers emphasize they are one and the same.³

Every culture has its own formal learning system. The social and cultural needs and requirements in societies are addressed by means of educational policies and plans.....Every culture also has its own view of the nature of knowledge which tends to be linked to the key values of the culture. Beliefs about knowledge are revealed in the way the curriculum is organized, instruction is conducted, and assessment occurs. These values influence the way knowledge is derived, validated, transmitted and used.³

Finally, the **Macrosystem** contains all of the various subsystems and the general beliefs and values of the culture, and is made up of written and unwritten principles that regulate everybody's behaviour. These principles- whether legal, economic, political, religious, or educational- endow individual life with meaning and value and control the nature and scope of the interactions between the various levels of the total social system.

Cultural complexity emerges where a child is reared in one macrosystem, while the child's parents may have developed in an entirely different macrosystem with very different cultural norms. In such

cases the family culture may be very different to the normative culture in which it is located.

Cultural diversity also occurs where, even though the child's parents have grown up in the same macrosystem as their child, parental development has been different to that prevailing in the normative culture. For example, if the normative culture is that most adults have experienced a tertiary education and the child's parents have not experienced a tertiary education, they will be culturally different, and their expectations and ambitions for their child might not value higher education to the same extent as it is valued in the normative culture of the macrosystem.

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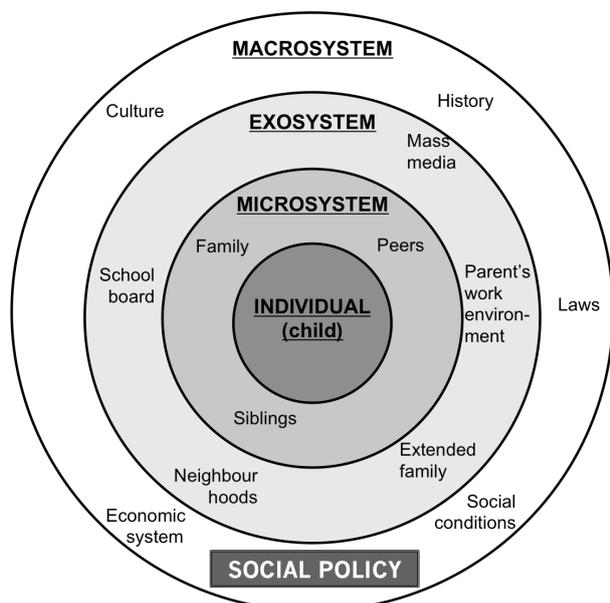
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Conversational rules and patterns, and rules and conventions for displaying respect, questioning, and other patterns of social interaction vary widely across cultures. In some cultures, children are treated by adults as conversational partners; in others, children adopt the role of observer, and still in other societies information is communicated through directive and didactic methods in which children are required to play a passive role and cooperate with what they are told. Questioning behaviour appears to be heavily imbued with cultural meaning and related to patterns of respect and authority which, in turn, vary across cultures. In some cultures, children are hesitant to ask and question their parents or teachers; other cultures tend to value their willingness to engage in verbal exchanges.³



<https://voices.no/index.php/voices/article/viewFile/829/685/3559>

Encountering Māori Culture as a European Immigrant to Aotearoa NZ

Dory Reeves



Dory is Professor of Planning, School of Architecture and Planning in the Faculty of Creative Arts and Industries, The University of Auckland. She is a chartered member of the Royal Town Planning Institute and an Associate of the New Zealand Planning Institute. She is the co-focal point for the UNI-Habitat Partnership and is leading an eSocSci network group to produce a State of New Zealand Report for Habitat III. She is also leading an Ako Aotearoa 2 year project 'Whaihanga' to better prepare planners, architects, engineers and landscape architects when engaging with Maori.

My Cultural Context

This issue of Lifewide Magazine on the 'Ecology of Developing Cultural Understanding' has given me the opportunity, as an Irish - European to reflect on living and working in Aotearoa New Zealand since 2008.

The dominant 'culture' in Aotearoa New Zealand is the Pakeha culture and this is reflected in its main institutions. Literally meaning 'the place of pale faces', it is more commonly referred to as the culture of the New Zealander of European decent. The Treaty of Waitangi, or Te Tiriti o Waitangi, between Māori and the Crown obligates the dominant culture to respect the articles of the Treaty. In 1840, Māori chiefs and representatives of the British Crown signed Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the Treaty of Waitangi, the foundational documents of Aotearoa New Zealand. These treaties set out rights, obligations and responsibilities between Māori and the Crown that, in part, have been incorporated into New Zealand's statutory planning framework⁽¹⁾

Professional bodies, such as the New Zealand Planning Institute, to which I am affiliated, state in their educational accreditation policy that the objectives of planning education are to:

'Promote an understanding of the Treaty of Waitangi and how its settlements may be implemented through the planning system and encourage a sensitivity and commitment to working in multi-cultural, multidisciplinary and multi - ethnic contexts' ⁽²⁾



Now a New Zealand citizen, I do not identify as Pakeha (New Zealander of European decent) as I have not been born here. However, I will often be identified by Māori as a Pakeha, because as a European immigrant I am seen as part of the dominant culture and in a privileged position. We know from research, many of those in a majority do not appreciate the responsibility of learning about the minority culture. Those from the minority culture are usually the ones that have to learn about the majority culture in order to survive and progress.

It has taken me time to appreciate the role I can play and the responsibilities which this carries. Although my job application and interview process in New Zealand, involved demonstrating an awareness of the Treaty of Waitangi, this was superficial to say the least. Having taken up my post, a key challenge, as a new comer, was to work out how best to 'materialise' the Treaty obligations in my day to day work. I started by enrolling on an introduction to Māori language course and I participated in Treaty seminars. Not being a natural linguist, I struggled to keep up with the language course and have been a serial beginner since.

My first deep learning came when Lena Henry took up a post as lecturer in the School of Architecture and Planning. Lena is from the iwis (tribes) Ngāti Hineamaru, Ngāpuhi and Te Rarawa. On the day Lena started work, I was Programme Head, and her parents came with her to hand her over to the care of the School. There was an informal welcome outside the School Office, led by Dr. Bruce Hucker, the only member of staff at that time capable of giving the welcome in Māori. Her parents thanked us for the welcome and for giving Lena this opportunity; and said that if we didn't look after her they would take her away again. Just like that. I felt for the first time the sense of responsibility an employer, and existing staff, should have when a new colleague starts. This ceremony has been one of many instances over the last eight years when I have been challenged personally and professionally to demonstrate what it means to live and work in New Zealand.

Bridging cultures that co-exist side by side

When a colleague gave me a copy of Jen Margaret's 'Working as Allies'⁽³⁾, I could relate to the notion of the bridging role - bridging the gap between the dominant and non-dominant cultures. Jen Margaret has called this working with allies. The book documents a series of interviews undertaken by the author and the last section provides an appendix entitled 'allies' resources'. Distilling the meaning, it stresses that being an ally is a process not an identity. It means walking the talk and learning and developing through experience and being prepared for the long haul. In working with what Jen Margaret called 'our own' as well as indigenous people; in my context this means working with professional planners and those training to become professional planners. At the same time it means enabling indigenous voices to be heard; being useful in a practical way.

In terms of learning ecology it means being open and confident to ask for feedback and critique my own practice.

In learning to behave in very different cultural settings I put together a programme of self-study, going to classes and learning the language and the protocols. I watch Māori TV and attend events on Waitangi Day and during Mataraki or Māori New year where I can observe and appreciate Māori customs and culture.



When is the Maori New Year?

- There are 2 signs.
- The pre-dawn rise of Matariki is seen in late May.
- At the next new moon, usually in June, the new year begins.

Source: <http://image.slidesharecdn.com/matariki-ppt2-090703235234>

What I have learnt to practice is the art of not knowing⁽⁴⁾. Jen Margaret called this 'letting go of knowing'. Understanding different world view: tools and resources. One of the tools I discovered when researching for my book Management Skills for Planners⁽⁵⁾ is used in the US and is called Content Process and Relationships (CPR). This conceptual tool prompts professionals to assess the balance being given in their work. Is too much emphasis being put on substance and process that relationships are not being nurtured?



Creating ecologies for others to develop their cultural understanding

One of my current action research projects involves students who are training to become planners, architects, engineers and landscape architects. The project will create materials to ensure that teachers and students can be better prepared to work with Māori. The core project group are Māori and the project involves co-ordinating a collaboration between the education providers, a number of tertiary institutions as well as the professional institutes and employers who have recognised the need to better prepare the next generation of professionals. The project is part funded by AKO Aotearoa⁽⁶⁾ with matched funding from the academics in the partners' institutions.

Higher education generally has a responsibility to play a role in creating, through the educational practices and processes, bridges to enable people to cross cultures. In the AKO project the main principle on which this cultural boundary spanning is based comes from the Māori tradition of aroha ki te tangata, respect for people.

The learning ecology developed for this project has involved me slowing down; watching and listening and asking; following, copying, walking in the footsteps of; and developing and nurturing relationships. It has involved acknowledging and putting into practice, as best I can, key Māori practices such as looking, listening and speaking (titiro, whakarongo.kōrero). Being cautious (kia tupato) is an important Maori principle and I have regularly checked things out with colleagues before progressing. The principle of 'face to face (kanohi kitea)' means that the first contact and key meetings or hui with project partners needed to be in person. This enables potential partners to explore, ask questions, and to see me in person and gauge how genuine and committed I am to the project. The principle of 'a respect for people (aroha ki te tangata)' is embedded in the research ethics for the project. When participants are interviewed or involved in focus groups their contributions are acknowledged in the way they want. It is crucial not to trample on mana (prestige, status, authority, influence, integrity; honour, respect) (kaua e takahia te mana o Te tangata). 'Sharing and hosting (manaaki ki te tangata) mean that I ensure project meetings are organised and designed using Māori protocols.

Developing the cultural understanding needed to work effectively in Aotearoa New Zealand, involves sustained commitment. It involves starting by acknowledging a lack of knowledge and continuing to practise the art of not knowing. This period of my career has generated a deep sense of satisfaction I would say it has fundamentally changed the way I view the world in that I can now appreciate what it means for there to be multiple world views.

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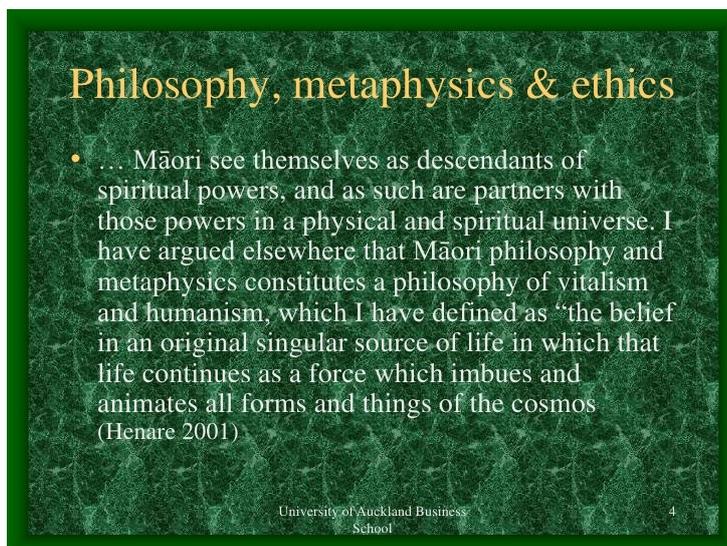
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Cross-cultural dimensions of the #creativeHE on-line course

Nikos Mouratoglou



Nikos is a Greek Language Teacher. After completing his Bachelor studies "Philosophy and Education" at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, he continued his studies by entering the Master's Programme titled "I.C.T. in Education". This year he attends his second Master's Programme "Adult Education and Lifelong Learning" at the University of Macedonia of Thessaloniki, while at the same time he is a Ph.D. candidate at Aristotle University. His main interests include I.C.T., Higher Education, Writing Research, Lifelong Learning and Intercultural Theory.

Introduction

One of the important characteristics of modern society is the way in which Information Communication Technologies (I.C.T.) have encouraged and facilitated intrapersonal interactions in our everyday lives. These technological advances have undoubtedly differentiated the ways in which communication and interaction take place, not only in the spatial and temporal level, but also in the level of context formulation. In other words, I.C.T. have diminished the spatial cultural– boundaries that limit us to particular physical and temporal spaces and created a new virtual context that has been described as the "Global Village" by Marshall McLuhan¹, where technology has connected people in different cultural spaces around the globe and enabled an intense flow of information. Reasonably, the aforementioned framework provides a perfect opportunity for the dimensions of emerging glocalisation², in which the local sphere meets and interferes with the global.

In October-November last year I experienced the phenomenon of glocalisation first hand when I participated in the [#creativeHE online course](#), an open networked learning 'course' and related discursive spaces and processes designed, organised and led by Chrissi Nerantzi at Manchester Metropolitan University and supported by a team of facilitators.

The features and dynamics of this course have been described elsewhere³ The open learning course provided two different learning environments - the first is *institution-based* and face to face. Three of the facilitators Chrissi Nerantzi, Sandra Sinfield and Professor Nikos Fachantidis, provided opportunities for face to face learning events in their own universities: the Manchester Metropolitan University, London Metropolitan University and the University of Macedonia in Thessaloniki, respectively.

The second learning environment was *virtual* using the framework of activities, resources and social interactions afforded by a Google+ on-line community space and the P2PU platform for curated resources.

#creativeHE is also an openly licensed course that extends opportunities for creative engagement beyond the physical classroom into more distributed spaces and places across the globe to connect individuals and groups to explore the concepts of creativity in cross-disciplinary, cross-institutional and cross-cultural settings

#creativeHE INFOGRAPHICS



- 330 posts
- 609 likes
- 43 active members
- 988 comments



- 58 posts
- 59 likes
- 11 active members
- 138 comments



- 35 posts
- 37 likes
- 10 active members
- 42 comments



I was one of 13 postgraduate students enrolled on the 'Adult Education and Lifelong Learning' masters course at the University of Macedonia in Thessaloniki, Greece who participated in the #creativeHE course. We also met face to face in the classroom in a series of weekly sessions run by Professor Nikos Fachantidis that paralleled the online course. This article offers my perspective on this experience of cross-cultural social learning.

#creativeHE ecology for learning

The #creativeHE course and the social interactions it supported created an ecology for learning³ A learning ecology can be defined as “*the space in which learning occurs*”⁴. The #creativeHE space could be perceived as chaotic, self-organising, living, diverse and emergent environment supporting multiple perspectives in the learning process⁴ These characteristics were identified by the postgraduate students in a short survey that was conducted during the course by the author^{4:72}:

“...[the students’] presence in the Google+ community was undoubtedly high, while their interactions with the rest of the participants could be described as direct. The nature of these interactions was mainly directed at the course content and activities and many sought accreditation through badges. In addition many students participated in more general discussions, exchanging opinions and ideas on a wide variety of other topics. The safe and supportive environment promoted the practice of sharing personal experiences in order to support their point of view, but also it must be noted that this was an intention of the instructional design of the course and the modeled behaviour of the facilitators. The diversity of views expressed about the value of the experience reflected the particular needs and interests of participants and the success of the course in fulfilling their particular goals”.

The #CreativeHE online course can be characterised as a learning ecology through which participants shared their knowledge and perspectives and gained new experiences, knowledge, skills and some of them even modified their attitudes.

Cultural dimensions of #creativeHE course

The involvement of people from different cultural backgrounds meant that it was inevitable that perspectives shared during on-line postings reflected different cultural perspectives on the themes discussed. Perhaps the most significant interactions were between the Greek postgraduate students and team of facilitators which were mostly from the UK. The medium for communication was English and for some Greek students the fact that English was the preferred medium, combined with the very public sharing of knowledge and experiences through the on-line platform, was inhibiting. But gradually, these inhibitions diminished as a culture was established whereby participants could see that their efforts were valued by the facilitation team.

Every course is underlain by a learning culture that is created by the teachers who design, teach and facilitate the course and the learning environment. The culture is communicated by teachers through the structure and content, the expectations for participation and engagement, the learning goals, the behaviours and actions and pedagogy of teachers and the way participants themselves engage.

A Collective (8)

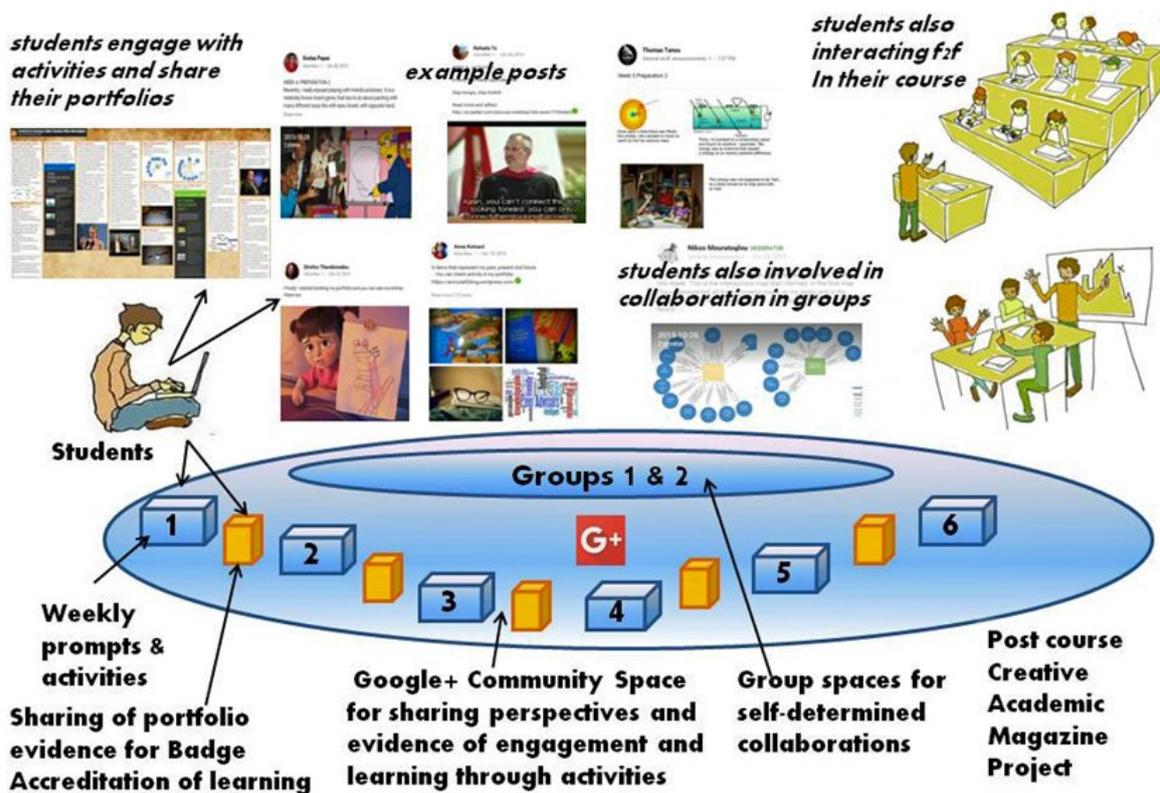
In the new culture of learning, people learn through their interaction and participation with one another in fluid relationships that are the result of shared interests and opportunity. In this environment the participants all stand on equal ground - no one is assigned to the traditional role of teacher or student. Instead, anyone who has particular knowledge of, or experience with, a given subject may take on the role of mentor at any time.

A collective is very different from an ordinary community. Where communities can be passive, collectives cannot. In communities people learn in order to belong. In a collective, people belong in order to learn. Communities derive their strength from creating a sense of belonging, while collectives derive theirs from participation.

The new culture of learning, is a culture of collective inquiry that harnesses the resources of the network and transforms them into nutrients within the learning environment, turning it into a space of play and experimentation.

The #creativeHE course created its own learning culture. Actually, two different cultures were encouraged through the design. The first was a culture of 'compliance', engage in these activities and produce these artifacts and you will achieve the course requirements and be able to claim a badge. Most of the postgraduate students adopted this culture. The second culture was one of collaboration in which self-selected groups formed around projects that were self-determined by the members of the group. These groups operated as collectives⁸ (see box to left) in which the culture was co-created by the members of the group, not the teachers or course designers. A small number of postgraduate students participated in these groups.

In addition to these two different learning cultures within the on-line learning environment, the Greek postgraduate students were also participating in their own educational and learning culture at the University of Macedonia in Thessaloniki.

Figure 1 Important features of the #creativeHE on-line/off-line course³

We can now see why #creativeHE provided a vehicle for mixing people from different cultural backgrounds and also for enabling participants to experience several different cultures of education and learning. For Rodriguez⁶, people are “*cultural beings which are constantly culturing*” and “*culturing*” itself describes “*the constant construction and deconstruction of new and different meanings, understandings and practices in order people to reckon with the world’s infinite ambiguity and quantum nature that constantly destabilise extant meanings, understandings and practices*”.

#creativeHE required participants to share their perceptions of what creativity meant and their creative responses to questions or activities. Through their interactions around the topics, activities and conversations of the course, these cultural beings were continually culturing - continually exploring and interpreting ideas, and co-creating new meanings. In this way #creativeHE was not only an ecology for learning about creativity (the main focus) it was also an ecology for experiencing, learning about and co-creating culture. With the benefit of hindsight we can suggest that #creativeHE provided an ecology that enabled people to experience and connect with people from other cultures and encounter ideas and perspectives that had been grown in other cultural settings.

Small scale study

In order to trace the cross-cultural dimensions of #creativeHE a post-course focus group was convened involving five post-graduate students⁵. They were invited to discuss some predetermined topics which derived from the three levels of cultural manifestation suggested by Schein⁷ namely: observable artifacts, values and basic underlying assumptions (Figure 2).

According to this framework, the most obvious and visible manifestations of culture—*artifacts and creations*, refers to the visible and audible behavior that can be detected by someone while entering an “organisation” or other cultural situation like the #creativeHE course. Questions at this level include: How did the participants engage themselves with the activities and content of the course? What behaviors did participants exhibit? What sort of artifacts were used or created? and how were they used or created? What technologies were used and how were they used?

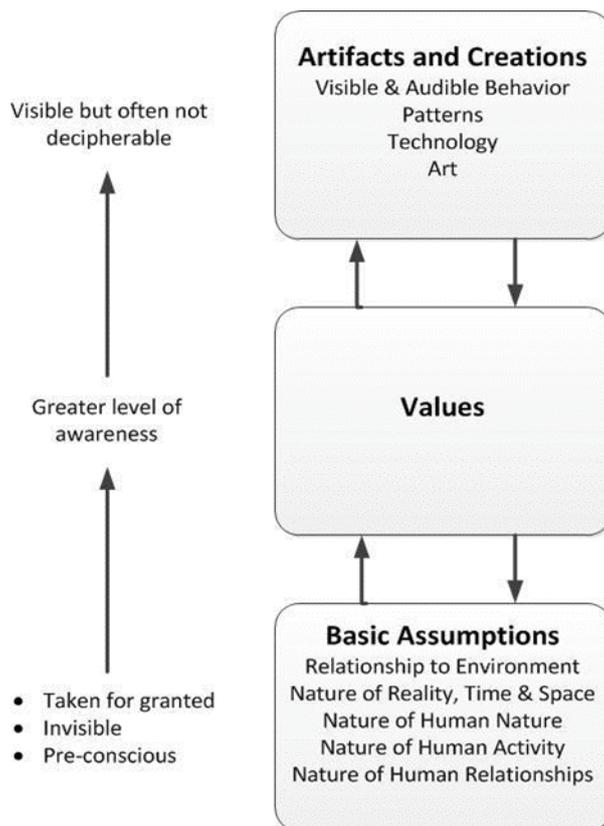
Unfortunately, this level does not provide evidence relating to the reasons for why behaviours was present or why certain artifacts or technologies were used? If we want answers for these questions we have to understand the values that underlie these phenomenon. In order to so, we have to interview some members of the course and/or undertake content analysis

of artifacts such as text, images, infographics etc. We also have to pay attention that the represented values are the espoused values of the culture. This means that the values which are identified in the artifacts most of the times are interconnected with norms and common accepted “attitudes” of the whole group or community. Sometimes the real reasons are not revealed. They remain deeply buried within the assumptions that underlie behaviours: assumptions that can only be known if you inhabit the culture. This level is the most difficult cultural level to look into, as it is “invisible”, but the most crucial, as it determines the ways in which group members perceive, think and feel. These assumptions are usually taken for granted and people may not even be aware of them.

Results

Data collected from the focus group were categorized and analyzed according to the three levels of culture framework described above. Table 1 presents the data for each level and provides information on the ways in which cultural manifestation took place in the #CreativeHE online course.

Figure 2: Three Levels of Culture & their Interaction
(Minor adaptation of Schein).



SUBJECTS	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3
	HOW? / WHAT?	WHY?	REALLY WHY?
1	Texts, infographics, images, videos and songs/ informing, commenting, answering questions/ learning.	Creative thinking, acquire knowledge obtain skills and present ideas.	Context of the course ^(a) , language adequacy, innovative learning experience.
2	Texts, e-portfolio, drawings, webpage/ interacting with others, commenting and responding.	Use I.C.T. tools, learn new things and meet new people.	Context of the course.
3	Texts, storytelling, Web quest, images and videos/ answering to questions, discussing, exchanging views.	Be efficient and effective, exercise the English language and curiosity.	Context of the course.
4	Texts, personal stories, e-portfolio, pictures/ discussing and commenting, sharing and exchanging experiences.	Exchange views, broaden cognitive horizons and find similarities-differences.	Context of the course, interesting and challenging experience.
5	Texts, creations, photographs, conceptual maps/ creating, illustrating, answering to questions, leaning.	Learn new things, alternative ways of presenting information and having an artistic style.	Context of the course, language inadequacy, shyness, fear of exposure.

Table 1: Cultural manifestations in the #CreativeHE online course

Note a) The context of the course included the course syllabus, the nature of the course (online) and the designed activities. Another basic underlying assumption that all participants reported was the feeling of obligation. Due to the fact that the #CreativeHE online course was part of the postgraduate course at the university, students felt that they had to take part in this course and therefore do their best. Because all of the participants agreed with these assumptions, there will be only some extra additions that were stated per student.

The data collected from the focus group provide information that lead to a deeper understanding not only in relation to the ways of students' engagement, but also in relation to the reasons that justify the type of engagement. However, the main interest should be focused on the third level of the framework and the basic underlying assumptions that the postgraduate students had, even after the completion of the course.

While there were expectations and requirements designed into the course, participants could choose how to engage with it. The ways in which students chose to engage with the course content, artifacts, activities and processes appears to be similar (column 1 Table 5). We might conclude that the ways in which culture is manifested in the first level depends not only on the nature of the context, but also on the potentials and limitations that derive from it. The on-line setting and the possibilities provided [use of digital resources, publishing text, comments and discussion (interactivity), e-portfolios] provided a framework in which the participants took part. As far as the behavioural patterns are concerned, we can see that similar answers were given and included mainly aspects of interpersonal interaction. As a consequence, behavioural patterns are associated with the modes of personal expression, in a sense that the accomplishment of a goal prerequisites the proportional actions.

When we examine the values of participants by asking why did the postgraduate students take part in this online course? We observed that level two (the level of values) consists of a dual structure in which a common ground exists (norms), but also a second layer of personal values is being added. This second layer may reflect an individual's needs, motives and expectations while entering a context following a linear trajectory with the common ground. They are oriented towards commonly accepted "elements" and obviously, this is the reason why the term "espoused values" is more appropriate.

When we examine the basic underlying assumptions for behaviours, there were also similarities relevant to the context of the course, while at the same time some personal expressions were also recorded. The data reveal that the actual reason for students' behavioural patterns (engagement with the course and the ways of engaging in the course) was the obligatory nature of the online course for them.

This finding is reinforced by the high levels of participation in the online course. Specifically, 93.3% of the students participated in the activities and discussions of the course, while at the same time 93.3% of them spent at least two to six hours per week fulfilling requirements for the course^{5 65-66}

Despite the fact that members of the focus group claimed that they participated in the course for its intrinsic value eg they wanted to acquire knowledge, obtain skills, use web tools, meet new people etc., ultimately the main reason for participation was the extrinsic motivation of completing the course syllabus and demands because it had been required by their Professor. Given that the students already had a full programme of work, it's highly unlikely that they would have participated in #creativeHE if they had been given a choice. In other words the culture of education and learning that related to their course in Greece had determined their involvement in the #creativeHE open learning opportunity. Of course, it must be acknowledged that the small focus group did not necessarily represent the views of the whole student but my own view is that the views are probably representative.

There is however no doubt that the #creativeHE course designers, facilitators and participants co-created an educational cultural context within which a community of learners from different cultural backgrounds could flourish.

You can join the #creativeHE community at this link <https://plus.google.com/communities/110898703741307769041>



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Helping People Appreciate, Live and Work in Other Cultures

Melissa Hahn



Melissa was born and raised in Arizona but has also lived in Poland and married into a Korean American family. Her passion is to help people navigate cultural differences in relocation, education, and family life. She is the author of several articles for the Harvard Business Review. Follow her on Twitter @SonoranHanbok or visit her website <https://interculturalmelissa.com/>

I have always been interested in the world, so it seems natural that I have become an intercultural specialist. This means I spend my life trying to understand other cultures and the phenomenon of crossing cultures in order to help people who are going to be in a new cultural setting to prepare themselves for their experience, so that they can understand and interpret the behaviour of people and gain more from their experience. My work takes place on two levels. One is a transactional level, where I provide factual information about a culture so that a person can become familiar with a particular place's patterns. The second level I find even more interesting and worthwhile, and that is the transformational level of helping people see their cross-cultural journey as a real opportunity for personal development. Through my work I help 'light the way' and facilitate the development of other people's awareness and understandings, not just of the culture in question, but also of themselves.

But how did I come to be the person I am doing the things I am doing? In this article I reflect on the circuitous path I have taken containing some painful learning curves. Ultimately these helped me discern my purpose: to support others in their own culture-crossing journeys. But more important, they taught me how to do this with compassion and humility.

My First Experience of Culture Shock

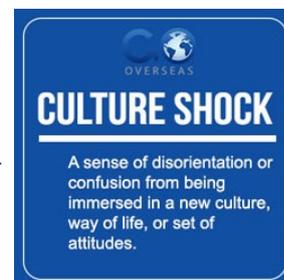
You don't have to move to another country to experience culture shock. My first experience of crossing cultures occurred when I moved from Arizona to Minnesota for college. I knew it would be a change to move from a sprawling metropolitan area to a small town. I also knew that I'd have to adjust to the weather, like going from Saudi Arabia to Finland. However, I was unprepared for the reality of living day in and day out in a different regional culture, especially within my own country.

I come from a place where people showcase their accomplishments, openly share their opinions and perspectives, and often have a sarcastic and ironic sense of humor. Unfortunately, this clashed with the style I found in Minnesota. From my perspective, people seemed cagey and uncommunicative and I had a hard time reading them or feeling connected to them. It was easier to make friends with students who weren't from the region, and once we'd banded together it was tempting to complain about the locals who seemed so different to us.

Acting like an alienated expat provided temporary relief but it didn't help me grow. Things finally shifted when a friend (who was actually a Minnesotan) asked me why I was struggling. After listening appreciatively, she shared insights into her state and introduced me to the idea of culture shock. By meeting me where I was without judgment, she helped me to feel heard, cared for, and validated. Moreover, by providing a new vocabulary and introducing me to a novel concept, she helped me depersonalize my situation and see it as an opportunity for growth.

Gradually, I reoriented myself. My anger gave way to curiosity and I moved beyond the binary options of either rejecting or embracing Minnesotan culture. Instead, I saw that I could selectively adapt in ways that fit the local context but still felt like me. And it worked: by the time I left Minnesota years later, I had built a small community of local friends, had succeeded at jobs that required public relations (on Minnesotan terms) and had a rich scrapbook of meaningful memories.

Looking back, this learning curve was essential for my development as an intercultural specialist. It introduced me to culture both as a phenomenon that could be studied and as a lived experience that could be practiced and reflected upon. I realized that willingness and capability to reflect on the way culture features in our social experiences is critical to learning and transforming our beliefs and attitudes. While we might be comfortable approaching culture as something outside of ourselves, as long as it does not really affect us, we find that when it does affect us, it can create a distressing messiness. In my experience, the only way to tidy up the room, so to speak, and become an integrated person who can



navigate different cultures effectively is for the individual to own the process. And in this process, the first step is to reflect on an experience and our own behaviours and feelings, and in this way we gradually decide, realize, or create meaning for oneself out of the experience. My Minnesotan experiences also planted the seeds of awareness, empathy, discernment, and self-understanding that I would rely on later when I decided to guide others going through cultural change. Finally, it served as a touchstone, reminding me that I had been a stranger once myself (probably a difficult one) and that my course had been altered not through rejection or lecture, but through love.

Other Cross-cultural Encounters

One of my favorite Korean sayings is, “After this mountain, more mountains.” After my Minnesota experience I returned to Arizona, underwent a long stint living with my Korean American in-laws, had an expat sojourn in Poland, and experienced an unexpected repatriation to the U.S. (first to Atlanta and then back to Arizona). Collectively, these experiences added new dimensions and forced me to ask uncomfortable questions.

In the case of Arizona: If I was home at last, why did I feel too big for my own skin, like I had outgrown the place I had dearly missed? Now finally back in the land of more direct communicators, why did I crave solace from the barrage of everyone’s opinions? With my in-laws: How did I know what was real and what was right when so much of what I had assumed about family dynamics, expectations, and communication didn’t seem to apply here? In Poland: How could humanity ever get along and reach an understanding when we were clearly all so different? And if I didn’t enjoy daily life there, was I failing as an expat? Upon returning to the US: Why was everyone so intrusively but superficially friendly? How could I have deep, sincere relationships when nobody had time for conversations and people hid their innermost selves? If I wasn’t an expat anymore, what was my identity? And how could I deal with the fact that I *really, really* didn’t want to be back?

There were no easy answers. Especially in the case of my return from abroad, the learning curve felt more like a fog of grief than a delightful opportunity for growth. But as in Minnesota, I gave it time, found an outlet for my experience, and reflected and reprocessed until I uncovered some useful nuggets. I also sought further learning by starting an MA in intercultural relations. Finally, I tried to put my own struggle to good use by helping others who were themselves experiencing cross-cultural transition.

Symptoms of Culture Shock




- ✚ Loneliness, melancholy
- ✚ Loss of Identity
- ✚ Lack of confidence
- ✚ Longing for family
- ✚ Anger, irritability
- ✚ Unwillingness to interact with others
- ✚ Feeling depressed and powerless
- ✚ Insomnia
- ✚ Hostility

My Way of Lighting the Way

Taken together, these learning experiences in different cultural contexts changed me. They enabled me to recognize and *really see* others on their own journeys and gave me the capacity, desire, and a feeling of duty to help others. Helping others seemed to fulfill a need: I found that I enjoyed helping others by sharing my experiences and insights and offering cross-cultural guidance on a casual, informal basis. After receiving positive feedback, I decided to take it seriously as a professional calling.

So, what is my work as a cross-cultural guide and mentor like? I certainly do not “save” anyone from cultural challenges because people’s growth cannot be forced or rushed, and their learning cannot be done for them. Rather,

I see myself as a coach, a resource, a sounding board, and sometimes a reality check.

I work with a range of people from different backgrounds, ages, and professions. The main categories are international students in the U.S. (international could mean study abroad, immigrants, or refugees), U.S. teachers who are “dealing with” cultural difference in their classroom, and business professionals who are crossing cultures for relocations, expat assignments, and global team projects. There are also occasional one-off clients who want to quickly know something (like a business person or tourist who is leaving for a trip abroad in two days, or a person who just got back from an international experience and wants to debrief to make sense of it).

I tend to work with clients in two capacities: either as an advisor on the specific culture, or as a guide on the experience of navigating general cultural difference. In the case of the former, I usually only provide advice on cultures I know well, so beyond basic research I will connect clients to a culture-specific expert. For example, one client was in Peru, and I have no experience with that country or South America. She and I worked together on the bigger questions of living abroad, and I referred her to Peru experts for specific tips.

When I work with a client I start by framing cross-cultural situations as a setting where personal development is possible and probable, and I ask my clients what they want to get out of their experience – both in terms of what they need to know and where they want to be in a few weeks, months, or years. This way of framing the future also introduces them to the idea that they are making a journey and it's their journey not mine.

I approach each case as a unique individual and their unique circumstances, but I don't create a program at the beginning as it is hard to know in advance what the specific learning pathway for a client will be. I have a rough idea of my client's journey and what milestones would be useful to achieve, but I'm never sure if they will take a plane, train, or a bus to get there. In this sense, my approach is very much directed by the learner, although I have a ready supply of "assignments" for them to use to help them develop their understanding.

Next, I help them acquire new vocabulary and provide them with basic models so that they can develop a nascent ability to talk about and make sense of their encounters. For example, I explain to them that when we talk about "culture" we are not only speaking of differences in food, religion, etc., but are really talking about the often invisible system of expectations, behaviors, communication norms, and beliefs which are outgrowths of deep and sometimes contradictory values. I also present strategies and suggest ways to cope, so that they can make sense of their situation, develop new responses, and create meaning from it. And, I give them the space to not be on stage – to not be perfect, to be vulnerable, and to be open to growth. Sometimes it's important to give a nudge, but I never judge.

In my work I use a variety of theories and models (see adjacent box). I was introduced to these models in my Master's degree and through my continuing education, through conferences and webinars and through my own reading.

How I use these the models varies. Sometimes, especially among people with a more robust academic background, there is a desire to really delve into the model and explore and critique it for themselves, but most people are content to simply have the insights gained from the model at a surface level. Depending on the hunger and on the comfort level with abstract ideas, as well as on each model's relevance for a given situation and how long a client and I work together, I may provide more or fewer resources. Each person is at their own stage of learning and development, and as someone with expertise in this area, I have to restrain myself and not try to force too much information before it's necessary, wanted, or helpful. Although I am in a teaching-type role, I keep in mind that I am not trying to turn clients into experts on intercultural relations. Rather, my objective is to provide them with the tools they need to manage themselves effectively and confidently in the cross-cultural situations they experience.

Conversations to explore & reflect

When someone has had an experience, we talk about what has happened – there is usually some kind of critical moment that bothers them, which they can't understand. Or, if they are about to go abroad, then we talk about that looming change. The most typical point of departure is "what is on your mind right now?" From there, we look ahead, and I help them anticipate the kinds of scenarios and situations they might face.

Cultural Models I draw upon in my work

[Milton Bennett's](#) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (which suggests that people can grow from a point of rejecting cultural difference to evaluating it in a more relativistic way)
[Larke Nahme Huang's](#) Identity Formation Model (which suggests how bicultural identity is developed)
[William Bridges'](#) model of dealing with change and transition (which views change and transition as a kind of grief, with gray areas between the black and white of what once was and what will be)
[Richard Lewis's](#) Model of Cultural Types (which presents cultures' perception of time and communication along a colorful continuum)
[Personal Leadership](#) (which reminds us that how we engage with cultural difference is more about us than it is the culture we are encountering)
[Geert Hofstede's](#) Cultural Dimensions (which illustrate how country cultures differ from each other)
[Andy Molinsky's](#) work on Cultural Dexterity (which argues that we don't need to copy or mimic the target culture exactly, but rather we should look for the "zone of appropriateness" where our behavior can be both effective and appropriate in the new culture while still feeling authentic to us). (As a side note, it was through my use of Andy's model that I became acquainted with him, and I now collaborate with him on HBR articles).
[L. Robert Kohls's](#) outline of the "Values Americans Live By" (which identifies core U.S. values like individualism, hard work, etc.)
[Edward Hall's](#) Iceberg Model (which illustrates culture as an iceberg - with the most obvious cultural elements floating above the surface and the deeper values hidden below. Some in my field say it should be discontinued, but it is often the only model a client has heard of, and if they know about it, it is worth discussing, despite any potential flaws).

In working with clients I use a varied assortment of resources. Sometimes I present books, films, case studies, articles, diagrams, models, theories, stories, worksheets (with activities for them to do during moments of reflection), and even songs that I think might help bring clarity, understanding, and insight. These are tools that I have amassed over the past many years both through my own research and through the MA program I studied.

In working with clients I have learnt that, while knowledge about specific cultures is important, for many people it is much more valuable to learn broadly-applicable cross-cultural skills, like self awareness and mindfulness, the ability to manage oneself and conduct real-time assessments and corrections, dealing with ambiguity, becoming flexible and resilient, etc. The reason is that for many people, especially expats and teachers, no sooner will they have mastered one culture than they'll be forced to learn another. This is a well established principle for people working in this field.

A Flavour of My Work

I have worked with many clients. Here are a few examples to illustrate the sorts of work I do:

I helped a Korean student develop cultural competence in the class-room, meaning that she understood and was able to meet the expectations of her teachers and peers to the extent that she could pass her courses and make friends. Throughout she wrestled with being Korean vs. being American, and whether she liked the changes she had to make (In this case, Huang's identity formation model, the Iceberg Model, and Molinsky's model were especially helpful).

I helped a consultant from Central Europe understand U.S. office dynamics and practice his presentation skills so that his interactions with his own clients were more effective. (Here I relied more on Lewis's and Kohls's model).

I helped a Brazilian scientist frame his research findings in a way that resonated more with his target U.S. audience. (Here I again used Kohls but also added in the Hofstede Model so he could compare it to his home country).

I worked with teachers and schools who were torn between wanting to help their immigrant students succeed and feeling resentful that they were having to do so with little training, resources, and support. (Here the Personal Leadership Model was most useful in guiding their response, but Bennett's DMIS, the Lewis Model, and Hofstede were key in helping them see that cultural differences were real and not just something happening to them. I also relied on Kohls' work to help them clearly see their own cultural expectations with fresh eyes).

I worked with a small team from Hollywood that was going to the Cannes film festival, and had experienced frustrations there during previous years. I used Hofstede and Kohls to illustrate the gap between what they were used to and what they were experiencing in France, and then used Molinsky's work to help them see that they didn't need to become French in order to be more effective - they just needed to nudge their behaviour in the right direction. I used their own past experiences as a starting point, and encouraged them to make a commitment to what kind of experience they wanted to have on this occasion. In this regard, Personal Leadership was also helpful.

I have also helped people who are moving to a new culture or country, whether abroad or domestically. I previously referenced my client who went to Peru, but have also coached people moving from the U.S. South to the Southwest, the Northeast to the Pacific Coast, and the Pacific Northwest to the Midwest, as well as returning expats. This involves some amount of cultural knowledge, so Hofstede and Lewis are helpful, but because I am typically dealing with adults who feel lost in the "in-between" space between the old life and the new, I also rely on Bridges. Finally, because people in a new cultural environment are constantly dealing with ambiguity, judgment, emotions, etc., the Personal Leadership model (which comes in a short book) is very helpful as a self-guided approach between sessions.

I try to stay in touch with clients and the relationships I develop feed back into my own understanding of how cultural encounters, difference, and change are interrelated with personal development. My clients, and their learning, are an important element of my own ecology for learning.



My Ecological Perspective

This issue of Lifewide Magazine is exploring the idea of how culture features in our learning ecologies. From my own perspective as someone who is helping other people to learn about and understand how culture works in everyday situations, the idea and practice of culture lies at the heart of my own ecology for learning, developing and achieving the things I value. My learning ecology enables me to sustain myself economically through my work. In addition to the formal



studies I undertook to develop my knowledge about culture, I am continually open to new ways of seeing and appreciating culture. On a daily basis I seek out new information on cultures and culture-crossing and use this knowledge to inform my work and create new resources for my clients. I challenge myself to expand my own capacities and understandings by putting myself in cross-cultural situations and adopting a habit of continuous learning. By juxtaposing my own experiences with the research, I achieve a greater understanding of intercultural realities, which I then use as a springboard for teaching and supporting others.

But I also see myself as playing an important role in the learning ecologies of the people I am working with to help them understand and adapt to new cultural contexts and situations. When someone comes to me seeking professional help they have usually reached the limit of what they perceive themselves being able to do to change themselves. I believe that they are looking for an ecological-type of approach in which they want me to help them address specific contexts, situations and circumstances of their lives.

Through my work and the relationships I develop with my clients, I try to help them see their lives in a more connected and holistic way so that they can put the pieces together in perhaps a different way. Through conversations and discussions we uncover what kind of person they think they are. We talk about the spaces and places they inhabited and relationships they had in the past; who they are right now and who they would like to be and become.

I try to help them see the affordances in their current and future life, the opportunities and possibilities through which they might grow in the future as they encounter new and unfamiliar cultural contexts. I try to help them appreciate the resources, relationships, and possibilities for action that are available to them to enable them to grow into the people they want to be. I help them identify the particular contexts that are the most salient, sticky, or limiting for them in their current life and then we embark on processes, activities and experiences to help them bring everything together. My goal is to advance their learning while also helping them to integrate their learning into the whole person they want to be.

It seems that what I learned from my friend in Minnesota is indeed true: when our ability to involve ourselves in an unfamiliar cultural setting is frustrated, if we are met with empathy, love, wisdom, patience, and presence, transformation is possible. Empathy enables connections to be made that lead to relationships of trust through which conversations can explore understandings and challenge deeply held beliefs and assumptions. These are the necessary conditions for ecologies that can reshape our understandings of what culture means and enable us to work more effectively in another culture or with people whose cultural backgrounds are different to our own.

Image sources

<https://www.gooverseas.com/sites/default/files/article-images/dec-15-2014/culture-shock-81189.jpg>

<http://image.slidesharecdn.com/cultureshockoflivingabroad-150115095657-conversion-gate02/95/the-culture-shock-of-living-abroad-5-638.jpg?cb=1421337460>

http://3.bp.blogspot.com/-cfUDfG9Fhoo/UsFT18eyCbl/AAAAAAAAAEM/i3wEw9_NiAw/s1600/expo_promote_600-300x266.png

News and Events

Lifewide Education & Creative Academic TEAM NEWS

We are delighted to welcome two new team members .

Orla Hanratty

Orla Hanratty is Learning Development Officer at Dublin Institute of Technology. She is the CPD Co-ordinator in DIT's LTTC. She teaches on many of the programmes and modules including the Postgraduate Diploma in Third Level Learning and Teaching, the MA in Higher Education and the MSc in Applied eLearning. She also supervises postgraduate projects and thesis associated with these programmes. She co-ordinates and teaches on the CPD 'Learning, She holds a B.Ed and MSc in IT and Education from Trinity College Dublin and is currently pursuing a doctorate in Education with Maynooth University.



Her research interests include: Reflective practice, Supporting staff new to teaching and Professional learning within and beyond accredited programmes with a specific interest in informal, professional learning. She is passionate about learning and interested in lifewide learning and learning ecologies and she welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the work of Lifewide Education. See Orla's publications at: <http://www.dit.ie/lttc/about/lttcstaff/#ohanratty>

Simon Rae

We are also delighted to welcome Simon Rae as the illustrator of Creative Academic Magazine and to our #creativeHE conversations. As the illustration shows he has a unique style that brings the written word to life with insight and humour. Simon is retired after a lifetime of working in education including many years as a Lecturer in Professional Development at the Open University. He was recently awarded the prestigious #LTHEchat Golden Tweeter badge for his contributions to the weekly twitter chats. On receiving the award he said - "I've spent my working life giving to and taking part in education and #LTHEchats have afforded me the opportunity, now I'm retired, for continuing contact and a sense of involvement with HE – plus I like to think that sometimes I can contribute helpfully to the discussions. Plus I enjoy doing the cartoons and seeing them retweeted!" Simon we hope that you will find that Lifewide Education and Creative Academic provide you with similar affordance in your life.



WELL DONE CHARLIE

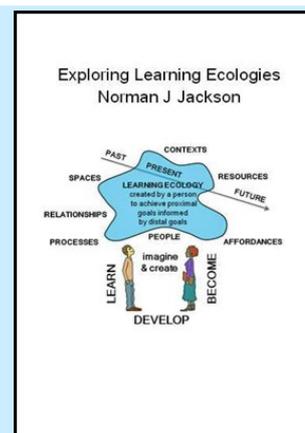
We would like to congratulate Lifewide Team member Charlotte Betts on the birth of her beautiful daughter Isabella born in April. We feel sure she will be brought up as a lifewide learner!



Exploring Learning Ecologies

Norman J Jackson

This book explores the idea of learning ecologies: an idea that has grown from the author's interest in and support for lifewide learning. In nature an ecosystem comprises the complex set of relationships and interactions among the resources, habitats, and residents of an area for the purpose of living: this applies equally to human ecosocial systems where learning is an essential purpose of interaction.



Our self-created learning ecologies grow from the circumstances and contexts of our life. They are established for a purpose that is directed to accomplishing immediate goals connected to more distant goals. A learning ecology comprises ourselves, our environment and the things we use in our environment, our interactions with our environment and the learning, development and achievement that emerges from these interactions. A learning ecology provides us with affordances, information, knowledge and other resources for learning, developing and achieving something

"there are large implications of this book for formal educational institutions. The idea of learning ecologies, as worked out here by Norman Jackson, turns out to be a radical concept. If taken seriously, it would call for a fundamental reappraisal of the curriculum so that it promotes an ecology for learning"

*Professor Ronald Barnett
UCL Institute of Education*

we value. It includes the spaces we create to think and our processes, activities and practices for acting. It includes our relationships, networks, tools and mediating artefacts and the technologies we use. A learning ecology enables us to connect and integrate our past and current experiences and learning and provides the foundation for our future learning.

The idea of learning ecologies developed through this book, provides a more comprehensive and holistic view of learning and personal development than is normally considered in education. The book will be of value to anyone who is interested in developing their understandings of the way we learn, develop and achieve. The book will be of value to teachers and other education professionals who are helping learners prepare for the complexities, uncertainties and disruptions of their future lives.

Content

Foreword: *Professor Ronald Barnett*

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10 The Future of Learning is Lifelong, Lifewide, Open and Ecological 11 Ecology of Developing an Idea

Published March 15th 2016 available from <https://www.lulu.com/>

LIFEWIDE EDUCATION'S NEW GOOGLE+ FORUM

Following the success of Our Creative Life, and #creativeHE Google+ forums we have established a new online forum to enable members of our community and readers of our magazine to share their views, ideas and practices on any topic relating lifewide learning, education and personal development. The forum is free to join and we welcome anyone who is interested in participating in an ongoing conversation. To join the community you will need a gmail account before registering at:

<https://plus.google.com/communities/100364215733010324333>

We will encourage the contributors of our magazine to join the Google+ community so that any matters or issues arising from their contributions can be discussed. Our inaugural conversation will follow publication of Lifewide Magazine#17 in July 2016

Google+ Communities Search

Norman Jackson Owner Notices 3d

One of the reasons we have established this conversational space is so that readers of Lifewide Magazine can interact with the authors who have contributed articles. Our hope is that readers will take the opportunity to explore with authors their ideas and in this way ideas and issues raised can be further developed.

lifewide magazine
Issue Seventeen | July 2016

CROSSING & CONNECTING CULTURES

The Ecology of Developing Cultural Understanding

Lifewide Magazine #18 January 2017

Exploring Exploration

'an explorer can never know what he is exploring until it has been explored'

(Gregory Bateson 1972)

We explore to find out, to examine and or experience something we don't know in order to learn and understand it. There are many contexts for exploration. It can be a psychological process of examining ourselves and our own thinking and actions. Or a cognitive process of inquiry involving the investigation of ideas or problems in any subject or any context or circumstance. Or it can involve travelling through physical spaces and landscapes that are new to us for example when we explore a new place. In geology we explore in order to look for new mineral resources, in medicine we explore when we search for new cures to a disease. In business we explore to find new solutions to problems or opportunities, and the artist will explore his imaginations and visions through the medium of his art.

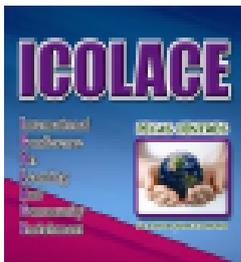
We explore when we innovate and we explore when we are not sure where to go next. Exploration underlies research and it underlies, what John Dewey called 'productive inquiry', 'finding out what we need to know in order to do the things we need to do'. Exploring is an attitude or orientation requiring the willingness to engage with things that are not known or are poorly understood. It may involve overcoming fear and anxiety and dealing with uncertainty but also unimagined affordance. Exploration involves a physical and mental journey as we venture into the unknown and it requires courage, confidence and self-belief that we will be able to cope with whatever emerges. Being willing to explore, to put ourselves into unfamiliar contexts to deal with unfamiliar situations and problems is an important orientation that we need in life - especially when life is disrupted or when we need to break away from existing routines in order to develop.

Exploration in order to develop something like an idea is a necessary part of creation. Being willing to explore, and the act of exploration are important features of a self-determined ecology for learning or achieving something new. In this issue of Lifewide Magazine we will explore the idea and practice of exploring to develop a better understanding of the way it features in our ecologies for learning, development and achievement. We will also consider the ways in which our education system encourages and develops learners' willingness and capability to explore in different disciplinary contexts and explore the pedagogy of exploration.

INVITATION: This is an exciting topic and if you would like to contribute an article of 1000-1500 words on this theme please contact the Commissioning Editor Professor Norman Jackson

normanjackson@btinternet.com or the Executive Editor Dr Jenny Willis jjenny@blueyonder.co.uk

Articles may be formed around a personal experience of exploration in any context, pedagogic research, or an example of an educational practice.



ICOLACE 4, 2016

International Conference On Learning And Community Enrichment

Organized by International Association For Lifewide Learning (IAFL), incorporated in Australia on 2 June 2013. (Certificate of Incorporation Number IA11716 from Department of Justice, Tasmania.)

Head Office: 7 Frederick Street, Hobart 7000, Tasmania, Australia

Website: www.iafl.org

Email: admin@iafl.org

Phone: (063) 649 7921

Conference background:

ICOLACE 4 is the fourth International Conference On Learning And Community Enrichment. It is a follow up to the three previous ICOLACE events also held in Singapore in 2014, 2012 and 2010. At these conferences, educators from various countries and continents meet to share research, experiences and ideas regarding student lifewide learning and Education for Sustainable Development. The proceedings from ICOLACE 2014 may be viewed at <http://www.iafl.org/icolace-2014-proceedings/>

2016 Conference theme: "Frameworks to encourage, support and recognise the lifewide formation of students."

When:

Sunday 23 Oct 2016:	Registration
Mon 24 and Tues 25 Oct:	Formal conference activities
Wednesday 26 Oct:	Optional visit to local Singapore school to see student project work relating to lifewide learning and sustainable development.

Conference location: Hotel Jen Tanglin (formerly Traders Hotel), 1A Cuscaden Road, Singapore

Conference website: <http://www.iafl.org>

Call for papers:

Preference will be given to abstracts (around 250 words) submitted before 31 May 2016 to admin@iafl.org. Notification regarding acceptance will be communicated within 15 days of abstract receipt. Conference presentations (PowerPoint) are required by 16 September 2016. Final papers are not required until 31 December 2016 to allow for additions after conference. Format requirements regarding presentations and papers will be notified to presenters at the time of acceptance. **The proceedings from the conference will be published online, ISBN 978-0-9872206-3-9.**

Registration:

Registration is Sing\$500 (approx. Euro315 or US\$360) due on 31 August 2016. (Discount of Sing\$150 if paid by 31 May 2016; Sing\$100 if paid by 30 June 2016, or Sing\$50 if paid by 31 July 2016.) Fulltime student registration Sing\$250. Consideration will be given towards a concessional rate for participants from developing countries upon application before 31 August 2016. Single day registration available for Singapore residents of Sing\$125 per day.

Contact for registration: Online registration available at <http://www.iafl.org/online-registration-and-payment/>

For further information email Chris Picone via chris.picone@iafl.org

Conference program:

23 Oct, Sun:	4pm-7pm	Registration at Hotel Jen Tanglin (formerly Traders Hotel) conference centre.
24 Oct, Mon:	10am	Official opening. (Late registration available from 9am to 10am at venue).
	10.30am	Presentations regarding existing frameworks that encourage, support and recognise lifewide formation of students.
	1pm-3pm	Lunch is provided to encourage use of this time for networking.
	3pm-5pm	Workshops to discuss morning sessions and share ideas/experiences.
25 Oct, Tue:	10am	Presentations relating to unmet needs and proposed programs to nurture students towards lifewide goal setting and review.
	1pm-3pm	Lunch is provided for networking.
	3pm-5pm	Workshops to discuss morning sessions and share ideas/experiences.
26 Oct, Wed:	10am-1pm	Visit local Singapore school to view student project work regarding lifewide learning.

Accommodation:

A special package rate is available at the Hotel Jen Tanglin (formerly Traders Hotel) for conference participants. For further information contact Emilda Said, Assistant Director Events Management at Hotel Jen Tanglin, via emilda.said@hoteljen.com or phone 65 6831 4317.

4. Creative University Conference 2016

18/19th of August at Aalborg University, Denmark

"Knowledge cultures, critical creative thinking and innovative learning processes"

Professor Norman Jackson will be presenting the idea of Creative Ecologies which brings together Lifewide Education's work on Learning Ecologies and Creative Academic's work on Creativity.

The 4. Creative University Conference engages with the ideas of "Critical thinking, engaging learning processes, and stimulating collaboration – utopia or reality?" It addresses the development of knowledge economies, discourses of creativity and new conceptualizations of the University as place of education and research. Learning is becoming a key concept and phenomenon concerning creativity and physical as well as psychological learning environments that facilitate movement in body and mind, individual and organisation, institution and society.

The conference organisers invite contributions that investigate philosophical, cultural, social and pedagogical aspects of 'The Creative University', to extend the dialogues between playful, creative learning processes and the contemporary concerns in society and the wider world.

Further information can be found on the conference website

<http://www.creativeuniversity.aau.dk/conference-theme/>

Norman Jackson

Founder Lifewide Education <http://www.lifewideeducation.uk/>

Founder Creative Academic <http://www.creativeacademic.uk/>

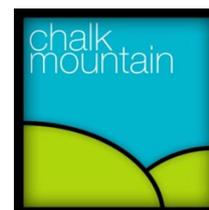
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Based on a work at <http://www.lifewidemagazine.co.uk/>.

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LIFEWIDE MAGAZINE #18

January 2017

Exploring Exploration

We invite contributions from people who are willing to share a story of an ecology they created through which they learnt, developed and achieved in the context of their work.

See page 116 above for details

<http://www.lifewidemagazine.co.uk/>

Submission deadline: 1 January 2017