

SCHOOL OF MISSION AND THEOLOGY (MHS)

RESEARCH TITLE:

MULTICULTURAL ENCOUNTERS AT AN ACADEMIC INSTITUTION

DEGREE: MASTER OF GLOBAL STUDIES

MASTER THESIS

SUBMITTED BY CANDIDATE:

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STAVANGER

MAY 2012

“To God, be the glory!”

...and thank you to everyone who supported this project. Tusen Takk!

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

Is cultural diversity visible in our societies today? How does the coexistence of multiple cultures within one community affect its people and their development as a community over time? In other words, what does the long term interaction between and among these diverse individuals yield? The reality of cultural diversity is that you do not have to go abroad to meet someone with a cultural background different from your own. With increasing immigration, a growing number of people working abroad, and with the presence of indigenous people and ethnic communities in our own countries, one does not have to leave home to experience a multicultural encounter. Countries such as South Africa, Australia, United States of America and Canada have developed historically as havens for immigrants from around the world. Most of us are familiar with typical food of major ethnic groups, but do not really know their origin: we do not think that spaghetti is Russian, tortillas are Chinese, or that sushi is Senegalese. Many of us are unaware of how extensively other cultures' lifestyle differs from our own. Even if we consider ourselves internationally sophisticated, many of us fail to recognise the culturally distinct attitudes and behaviour our fellow citizens bring to the societies (Adler 2008:130).

In contemporary society, multiculturalism or cultural diversity can be viewed differently from two inconsistent yet complementary strategies. Firstly, multiculturalism may be viewed as focusing on interaction and communication between different cultures and secondly, multiculturalism may also be seen as centring on cultural diversity and uniqueness (Burgess 2005). Globalization has made multicultural interactions more possible than ever before. It has joined different cultures and made it into something different, but this does not mean that cultural differences are going away, but becoming more entrenched. This makes it more critical than ever to try to understand different cultures and their influence on the way people view the world, because the cost of not understanding is greater and greater (Nynäs 1999:27). There are two elements in multiculturalism that are always on the forefront of any discussion: culture and communication. In my master thesis, I aim to explore these two elements more closely in relation to how people interact with each other. The aim of my thesis is to understand what happens when people from different cultures meet and interact with one another. I intend on focusing on the impact of multiculturalism on the individuals encountering it. Are lives altered, identities challenged or worldview transformed?

If so; through what processes? What influential power is embedded in multicultural encounters; and how can we understand multicultural interactions and utilize our understanding to develop and empower each other?

Research Question

What happens when multi-culturally diverse students interact and work with each other within a university environment?

Defining Key Terms

Culture

Culture refers to a community or population sufficiently large enough to be self-sustaining. It is the totality of that group's thought, experiences; and patterns of behaviour, concepts, values, and assumptions. Culture also refers to the process of transmission of these thoughts and behaviours. The members who consciously identify themselves with that group are also part of that culture (Jandt 2006:7).

Intercultural Communication

It is often said that we cannot study culture without communication or communication without culture because the one informs the other. Here we look at communication within a multicultural context and our discussion is guided by Jandt (2007:36), Samovar and Porter's (2004:15) below definition:

Intercultural Communication is about observation, perception, understanding, interpretation and context. It involves interaction between people whose cultural perceptions and symbols systems are distinct enough to alter the communication event. Samovar & Porter

Intercultural communication refers to face-to-face interactions among people of diverse cultures. Fred Jandt

Multiculturalism

The term 'multiculturalism' emerged in the 1960s in Anglophone countries in relation to the cultural needs of non-European migrants. It now means the political accommodation by the state and/or a dominant group of all minority cultures defined first and foremost by reference to race or ethnicity; and more controversially, by reference to nationality, aboriginality, or religion (McLean & McMillan 2009).

Liberal multiculturalism focuses on cultural diversity, celebrating ethnic variety, and teaching tolerance. It assumes the existence of pre-existing cultures, which relate to, and interact with each other, but does not examine the hierarchies of power underpinning these interactions. Critical multiculturalism sees multiculturalism as concerning ‘majorities’ as much as ‘minorities’, and is concerned with the institutions and practices forming the whole society. It sees inequalities of power and racism as central, emphasizes recognition of rights, and advocates the ‘multiculturalisation’ of society (Mayhew 2009). Multiculturalism can also be referred to as: cultural diversity or cross-culturalism.

School of Mission and Theology Background

My research question points towards a multicultural university as my research field. I have selected a multicultural university with a multinational student population as the location for collecting my research data: Misjonshøgskolen. From here on, I refer to Misjonshøgskolen as MHS. MHS is a private and specialised university owned by the Norwegian Mission Society. The official English name for the university is: School of Mission and Theology. Located in the Kingdom of Norway - Scandinavia Europe, MHS was founded in 1843 and is the third oldest institution of higher learning in the country (MHS 2011:7). The School of Mission and Theology aims to train men and women for service in church and society, locally and globally. Their slogan is: “from all nations to all nations. This means that MHS trains men and women in theological studies and/or in cultural studies. During its early years, MHS primarily trained Norwegian missionaries and pastors preparing them for mission work in Africa and Asia. In the 1960’s MHS begun accepting African students, training them for church service in Africa and Asia too. It was only in 1994 when MHS become international owing to the introduction of an English offered degree in Philosophy. Before then, all degrees were offered only in Norwegian. Currently, MHS offers one year programs, bachelor degree, master degree and PHD program. There is one central perspective in the entire study program at MHS and that is teaching and learning to understand and communicate across cultural and religious boarders. The university is also recognised as a pioneer in enabling students from underprivileged international societies to study theology and become pastors through the university’s scholarships provision. MHS was accredited as a specialised university in 2008 from a tertiary education status (MHS 2011:7).

Today, the university has about 350 students including about 80 master students and 25 PhD students. The body of international students is significant here at MHS, with multicultural students from 15-20 countries. The school has 40 employees, including 24 in academic positions. All masters and PhD programmes are taught in English (MHS Website 2011). MHS is situated in Stavanger, the fourth largest city in Norway which services as the oil sector capital city. According to Wikipedia (2011), Stavanger has a population of 126,469 and approximately 150 nationalities represented in this region. There are currently over 12 000 international students in Norway today (MHS 2011:6). The student population in universities found in this region are a reflection of international and multicultural city that Stavanger has become over the years. The Norwegian education system is independent (student centred learning) and students are accustomed to this academic freedom and responsibility. Class attendance is not always compulsory even for full time students; students can study at home and prepare for exams independently (MHS 2011:10). MHS carries this independent academic culture as well, and believes in an informal study environment because the Norwegian culture has an informal and equality hierarchy both socially and professionally. It is typical to address one another by first name alone, which is unusual for most internationals. I discuss more about MHS in chapter two under field work location.

Chapter Two RESEARCH DESIGN AND ETHICS

Qualitative Research

There are two types of scientific research methods namely: Quantitative Research and Qualitative Research. Both are investigative methods that seek answers to specific questions by using systematically predefined set of procedures to answer the questions, collect evidence, produce findings that were not determined in advance and produce findings that are applicable beyond the immediate boundaries of the study (Mack et al 2005:1). However, the two methods use different approaches with different perspective of social phenomena. Each approach answers different types of questions, so the research question and methodology determines which of the two methods is suitable for a particular research study (Hammersley 2007). My research question seeks to discover and understand social processes and interaction and the meaning that lies within these interactions for those encountering the interface. I aim to achieve this by using interpretative methods, relational explanations, cultural analysis and theoretical approaches. Therefore, qualitative research method is suitable for my research quest because I am not looking to or interested in quantifying the extend or the spread of students' interaction at a multicultural university and neither is my main interest in making systematic comparison in order to account for the variance in a phenomena like academic failure rate (Silverman 2005:7).

Owing to my research question and the methods available to me, I decided to follow a qualitative research method for this thesis. I will therefore proceed with a detailed definition for Qualitative Research Method. According to Golafshani (2003), Qualitative research broadly defined, means "any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (Strauss and Corbin 1990:17 cited in Golafshani 2003), instead, it is the kind of research that produces findings arrived from real-world settings where the "phenomenon of interest unfolds naturally" (Patton 2001:39 cited in Golafshani 2003). Mack and his co-authors (2005:1) defines Qualitative research as the type of research that seeks to understand a given research problem or topic from the perspectives of the local population it involves. Qualitative research is especially effective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviours, and social contexts of particular populations. The strength of qualitative research is in its ability to provide complex textual descriptions of how people experience a given research issue.

It provides information about the “human” side of an issue – that is, the often contradictory behaviours, beliefs, opinions, emotions, and relationships of individuals. Qualitative methods are also effective in identifying intangible factors, such as social norms, socioeconomic status, gender roles, ethnicity, and religion, whose role in the research issue may not be readily apparent (Mack et al 2005:1). I am not seeking representativity in this research, but meaning, character and quality as well as variety of personal experiences.

Data collection

Method

The data for this study will be gathered through a one-on-one in-depth interview with students. Interviews draw on every day practices of asking and answering questions and everyday identities of questioner/answerer and interviewer/interviewee. The resource collected from an interview is seen here as more or less reflecting the interviewee’s reality outside the interview (Rapley 2007:16). Guided by the qualitative research method, I prepared a set of questions to guide the interview process, yet acknowledged and utilized the flexibility to rephrase or exclude certain questions where necessary during the interview (see Appendix A for a copy of the interview guide questions). The interview guide questions were neutral in order to avoid influencing the interviewee’s responses, which would contaminate the research data. Throughout the interview, I geared at establishing and maintaining a relaxed rapport with the interviewees by easing into the interview through conversational interviewing style. The aim was to communicate trust and reassurance.

Strong (1980 cited in Rapley 2007:29) said “No form of interview, no matter how devious or informal can stand as an adequate substitute for observational data”. In agreeing with Strong, Rapley said an interview study that only uses interviews to understand people’s lives, situations and practices seemed problematic. Based on this view and many other views that advocate for multiple data collection sources, I have opted to use two primary sources, namely participant observation in addition to interviews. What people say they believe and what they say they practise is often contradicted by their behaviour. A large body of scientific literature documenting this disparity exists and given the frequency of this very human inconsistency, observation can be a powerful check against what people report about themselves during interviews (Mack et al 2005:13). Participant observation is also useful for gaining an understanding of the physical, social, cultural, and economic contexts in which study participants live; the relationships among and between people, contexts, ideas, norms,

and events; and people's behaviours and activities – what they do, how frequently, and with whom. Participant observation is a qualitative method with roots in traditional ethnographic research, whose objective is to learn the multiple perspectives held by studied populations to understand the interplay among them (Mack et al 2005:14). In addition to interviews and participant observation, written resources such as notes from previous studies on similar topics, theories that relate to the study, field conversations and field diary will serve as supplementary data source.

Fieldwork Location

MHS is an excellent research location for my research because it is a multicultural university consisting of the required sample of international and local students. At MHS, students have the opportunity to interact with one another within a culturally diverse environment, both on an academic and social perspective. In addition, I am assured of knowledgeable informants because the research question centres on their everyday life, their interaction and encounter on university campus. I received a range of views through the data collection; I was able to test emerging themes with new interviewees as the interviews proceeded and I was also able to interview more informants to extend my results (Rapley 2007:17). Another element that made MHS a suitable location was that the university is within my immediate reach which minimized the data collection time and cost implications.

Research Demographics

MHS is situated in Stavanger Norway and majority of its student population are Norwegians. The rest of the student population is made up of international students from five continents with a majority being from African. The research participants were therefore selected based on MHS' population size and nationality demographics. Qualitative research method utilises relatively small numbers or groups, hence I decided to interview less than 30 informants, sacrificing the scope for details in certain aspects for the correlation between variables such as people's understanding and interaction (Silverman 2005:9). A total of twenty-seven students from sixteen nationalities and five continents were interviewed. Twelve students are from Africa, nine from Europe, three from Asia, two from North America and one from South America. Out of the nine European students, five are Norwegian students. In terms of the gender, of the twenty-seven research participants, fifteen are male students.

The majority of the multicultural interaction in the class room is among postgraduates because the undergraduate degree classes have less culturally diverse student population, hence I only interviewed two undergraduate students and twenty-five postgraduate students. See figure.1 for demographics graph.

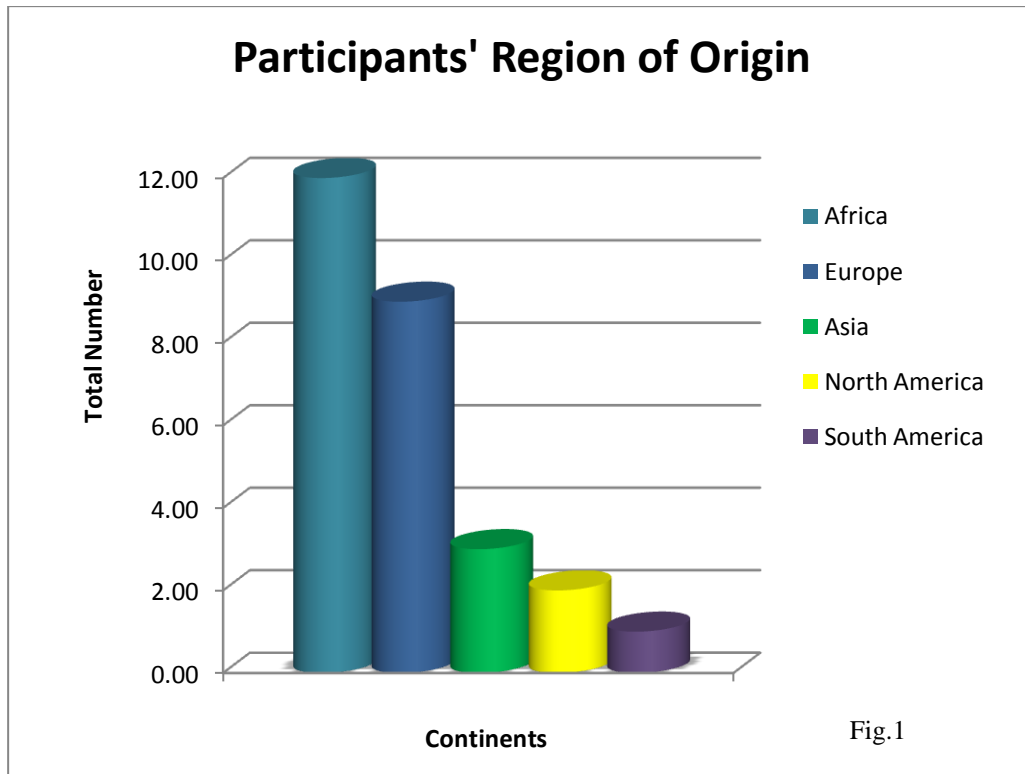


Fig.1

Data analysis

For analysing my research data, I followed Robert K. Yin's 5 analytical phases as mentioned in his book *Qualitative Research from start to finish* (2001:176-220) as well as other expert advice from seasoned researchers and authors experienced in qualitative research. *Phase 1- Compiling Data:* I began the process by transcribing the audio recorded interviews. The transcribing required listening to the audio several times to transcribe the conversation. I sorted each answer or discussion under a relevant question or category listed on my interview guide. The categories included: perception and background, interactions, intercultural communication and general evaluations (see Appendix A). I read through the data several times looking for distinct features, examining how the data relates to the research question and searching for new insights. *Phase 2 – Disassembling:* I assigned a second level code to large pieces of data as the first four categories mentioned in phase one were too broad, using multi-coloured highlighters to coordinate and sort data into categories.

Phase 3 – Reassembling Data: I read through the data again querying the established codes, ideas and patterns. I constantly made comparison (similarities and dissimilarities among the data) and interpretations (searching for alternative explanations and meaning from initial observation and interpretation). Throughout the analysis process, I went back and forth between phases to rethink, alter or add ideas. *Phase 4 – Interpretation:* I developed a comprehensive interpretation encompassing of specific data whose main themes will become the basis for understanding the entire study. My goal is to arrive at an interpretation that has the following attributes: completeness, fairness, empirical accuracy, added value and credibility. *Phase 5 – Conclusion:* In my conclusion, I aim to capture the broad significance of the study, discuss theoretical and practical implication of the research study.

The quality and credibility of qualitative research has been often questioned within research and academic circles. Generally speaking, quality refers to the transparency of the whole research process and credulity pertains to the validation of the findings and results. For a long time these issues have also been associated with discussions of reliability of methods and validity of data (Seale 2007:379). The use of reliability and validity are common in quantitative research and now it is reconsidered in the qualitative research paradigm (Golafshani 2003:597). Reliability and validity are conceptualized as trustworthiness, rigor and quality in qualitative paradigm. It is also through this association that the way to achieve validity and reliability of a research get affected from the qualitative researchers' perspectives which are to eliminate bias and increase the researcher's truthfulness of a proposition about the studied social phenomenon (Denzin 1978 cited in Golafshani 2003:604) using triangulation. Triangulation is defined to be "a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study" (Creswell & Miller 2000:126 cited in Golafshani 2003:604). To ensure reliability and validity of my research, I used *Theoretical triangulation*- two theoretical positions in interpreting data and *Methodological triangulation* - multiple data gathering method (Bryman 2011).

Ethics

What is ethics? When answering this question some years ago, a sociologist Raymond Baumhart (1987 cited in Velasquez et al 2010:1) said: “ethical is not a matter of following one's feelings because feelings frequently deviate from what is ethical. Nor should one identify ethics with religion because if ethics were confined to religion, then ethics would apply only to religious people. Being ethical is also not the same as following the law because the laws, like feelings, can deviate from what is ethical. Finally, being ethical is not the same as doing whatever society accepts because standards of behaviour in society can deviate from what is ethical. Ethics is two things. First, ethics refers to well-founded standards of right and wrong that prescribe what humans ought to do, usually in terms of rights, obligations, benefits to society, fairness, or specific virtues. Secondly, ethics refers to the study and development of one's ethical standards. So it is necessary to constantly examine one's standards to ensure that they are reasonable and well-founded. Ethics also means, then, the continuous effort of studying our own moral beliefs and our moral conduct, and striving to ensure that we, and the institutions we help to shape, live up to standards that are reasonable and solidly-based” (Velasquez et al 2010:1). There are ethical issues surrounding social research, just as there are in any other form of human activity (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007:209). Intentionally or not, research has an impact on society. Research can help provide information needed to make informed decisions in the public and private sectors. In addition, research can uncover circumstances worthy of criticism, and can help clarify alternative choices of action and their potential consequences. It can also provide correctives, for example, by shedding light on the situation of vulnerable groups. Research into our own and other cultures can help us explore values and standards that characterise current ways of thinking, and can disclose underlying power structures. Lastly, research on cultural heritage can help substantiate, disprove and review values, standards and institutions that we trust and want to pass on to posterity (NESH 2006:8). Therefore, if such research is conducted unethically, the impact will be devastating and the consequences will have long effects on our communities. Primarily, research ethics is concerned with the researcher's behaviour and the consequences of that behaviour for the people studied, or for others belonging to the same or similar groups and organization. Ethical regulation and its impact on decision making and the barriers it may pose towards the research progress (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007:209).

In an increasingly globalised world, opportunities and possibilities seem to multiply and grow at an ever-accelerated pace. The dynamic change in modern societies produces many new ethical challenges. On a cultural frame, anthropologists are confronted with new and surprising problems like globalisation and its resulting effect like interculturality (the practical experience of understanding or not understanding) (Norgaard 2004:193-194). As a result, the need to look at intercultural ethics when dealing with intercultural research and intercultural research participants becomes highly significant. This is due to the fact that what one culture considers ethical may be an unethical or a grey area in another cultural context. As a researcher working with an international group, it is vital for me to remember that humans are culture bound creatures and they draw significance from the cultural webs that they themselves have spun (Geertz 1973). Fernando Savater (2002 cited in Norgaard 2004:193) states, ethics is concerned with the question of how to use freedom. In his article on *Intercultural Ethics*, Norgaard looks at Savater's statement from an intercultural perspective and paraphrased it into: how should we use freedom in the light of the other in a global context? Jens Norgaard continues this line of thought by looking at the ethical concept from a hermeneutics approach in intercultural communication. Following Gadamer, the father of hermeneutics, she states that what is ethically right or wrong can be judged from a hermeneutics praxis standpoint. Praxis according to Gadamer always involves the concern for the other person's perspective or horizon. In addition the praxis also combines the moral dimension of individual action so that in relational purposes, a researcher for example can always think about the consequence that his action might have on other - those from a different cultural background (Norgaard 2004:195-209). It can be urged, as Norgaard discuss in this article that morals are also culture curved making it difficult to discern what is or is not moral in an intercultural concept. In consideration of my research question, research participants and location as well as my integrity as a researcher, I took into account both the ethical guidelines offered nationally as well as the "global intercultural ethics" informed by praxis during my research.

As a researcher, I have an obligation to respect research ethics as part of my respect towards research in general. Each country has a body that guides research within its geographical restriction. As an MHS student, my research is ethically guided by the NESH, a National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences, Law and the Humanities. NESH was appointed by the Norwegian Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs, to ensure that Norwegian research ethic-standard are upheld and has been in operation since 1990. As a result, NESH Guidelines for Research Ethics have been compiled to help

researchers and the research community be cognisant of their ethical views and attitudes, raise their awareness of conflicting standards, promote good judgement and enhance their ability to make well-founded decisions in the face of conflicting considerations. In this case, guidelines refer to different types of standards, ranging from absolute requirements to important considerations (NESH 2006:4).

In terms of research observation, it is said that a researcher should always alert relevant gatekeepers as to her presence and purpose; never be secretive or deliberately misleading about the research project or my role in it (Mack et al 2005:16-17). I therefore alerted MHS through appropriate channels. I made it my personal commitment to protect the identities of the people I observed or with whom I interact with. Maintaining confidentiality meant ensuring that particular individuals can never be linked to the data they provide. This means that I did not record identifying information such as names and addresses (Mack et al 2005:16-17). I contacted each research informant individually to request their participation and schedule interview time. Before the interview, each research informant was given a consent letter agreement which was signed by each participant before the interviews commenced to ensure that I am able to use data collected from all participants.

My role as a researcher

The role of a researcher and the researcher's impact on the research cannot be denied particularly in a qualitative research study. As a researcher, I am already part of the research context by simply being at the research field. People at the fieldwork respond to the research and the researcher in various ways. For many research participants, the impact that the researcher has on them can be seen in the way they choose to answer the researcher's questions. For example, if the researcher is formal in presenting the questions, then the participants will likely be formal too in their presentation of the answers. The researcher can therefore not exclude herself from the context, but can still be as objective as possible.

I collected my research data at MHS University and I am also registered as one of their master program students. To date, I have been at MHS for two year. As one of the students, I am an "insider". I had the privilege and opportunity to observe and take part in the daily activities in my university a year before deciding to use MHS as my field work location. The university students and staff members continued to relate to me as one of them even during my data collection period. Being an insider as described, can be both an advantage and a disadvantage for a researcher. To select participants from a group of students whom many are familiar faces can be a challenge and a blessing. A challenge because, selecting people

whose line of thinking on given subject is already known can influence the research results negatively; but a blessing because I know how to approach them. As well as being an insider, I was also an “outside” because I am a foreigner in Norway and at MHS. As an international student, I was able to come into my field work with fresh eyes, a critical yet open mind-set, willingness to learn and keenness to understand my new environment, the culture and most importantly the people. The people within my research field interacted with me differently partly because their perception of me as a researcher or student also differed. Most of the African students are at MHS through a scholarship and are placed in a common university accommodation building-block. Very early on the African students develop a sense of “we” because they share the living space, interact more frequently and share some cultural behavioural norms and cuisine. Although I do not live among them, I believe that being a black student from Africa positioned me as an insider among them. They readily accepted me and were spontaneously open and freely discussed their experiences of Norway and MHS, as a result they often spoke with an unsaid expectation that I would represent their unheard views (gratitude and suggested area of improvement) to the MHS scholarship representatives even through my research questions was not directed at this topic.

On the other hand, for the same reason they spontaneously accepted me, I believe some of the African students who I interviewed were extra cautious with how they presented their answers being careful not to say anything negative least it came across as being ungrateful for the scholarship opportunity and encase I was secretly doing the research as an MHS representative. So I constantly encouraged those who spoke cautiously by reminding them of the confidentiality agreement signed prior the interview and reiterated the fact that I am an independent researcher, which often eased their mind. Among Norwegian students, the only challenge I encountered while interviewing them was that they sometimes spoke cautiously about the ‘other’ (foreign students) when answering questions related to multicultural dislikes or challenges with an effort to give polite and multi-culturally appropriate feedback because I represent the international students by virtue of being a foreign student.

I am a South African and the history of my country includes the apartheid era. The apartheid was a time when South Africa was torn apart by racial discrimination and separation, where black people were oppressed by the white government because they believed in inequality among races. One of the research participant mentioned that he had studied the South African history and was well informed about apartheid history. The research participant suggested that I should not view the interaction challenges at MHS from

a racial apartheid spectacle when we spoke about the language policy at MHS. I must admit that my South African background has had an influence on how I conducted the research, but I am assured that the influence is positive. My background makes me aware of differences and this awareness has helped me to understand, appreciate and embrace the differences because such is the epitome of the current South African mindset towards multiculturalism. I have seen the burden of misunderstood differences, the danger of false assumptions and inaccurate interpretation of the other; but I have also experienced the beauty and humility that lies in understanding the foreign other, so I go into my research with this thought in mind.

Chapter Three

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

There is a vast amount of written sources available on multiculturalism in an academic institution and higher education. It is my impression that many of resources under this topic are produced by or in relation to the United States or that the literature from this particular part of the world is easily accessible. I have found that many scholars who have conducted research on this topic focused on various aspects of multicultural such as its social, political, psychological and cultural impact. Majority of the researchers I found dedicated their attention on: diversity that is driven by policies such as affirmative action; or dominant culture vs. minority culture; or specifically racial diversity and interaction; and multiculturalism in terms of educator competence. I found few studies that focused on students, their experience, perspective of multiculturalism and its impact on their personal life. To illustrate the variety of resources available, I have selected two articles and one master thesis for our discussion on previous research:

Diversity and Higher Education

In the current context of legal challenges to affirmative action and race-based considerations in college admissions, educators have been challenged to articulate clearly the educational purposes and benefits of diversity. In this article, the authors explore the relationship between students' experiences with diverse peers in the college or university setting and their educational outcomes. Rooted in theories of cognitive development and social psychology, the authors present a framework for understanding how diversity introduces the relational discontinuities critical to identity construction and its subsequent role in fostering cognitive growth. Using both single- and multi-institutional data from the University of Michigan and the Cooperative Institutional Research Program, the authors go on to examine the effects of classroom diversity and informal interaction among African American, Asian American, Latino/a, and White students on learning and democratic outcomes. The results of their analyses underscore the educational and civic importance of informal interaction among different racial and ethnic groups during the college years. The authors offer their findings as evidence of the continuing importance of affirmative action and diversity efforts by colleges and universities, not only as a means of increasing access to higher education for greater numbers of students, but also as a means of fostering students' academic and social growth

(Guri et al 2002:330). The purpose of this article is both to provide a theory of how diversity can be linked to educational outcomes in higher education and to test this theory using national data and data from students at the University of Michigan - an institution that has faced affirmative action and legal challenges. In the 1978 case *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Lewis Powell wrote the pivotal opinion, arguing that the "atmosphere of 'speculation, experiment and creation' — so essential to the quality of higher education. "It is not too much to say that the nation's future depends upon leaders trained through wide exposure to the ideas and mores of students as diverse as this Nation of many peoples" (Guri et al 2002:331).

It is important to explain how higher education might expose students to racial and ethnic diversity, since they may experience it in several ways. (1) Students attend colleges with different levels of racial/ethnic diversity in their student bodies. This has been termed structural diversity, or the numerical representation of diverse groups. Simply attending, an ethnically diverse college does not guarantee that students will have the meaningful intergroup interactions that are important for the reduction of racial prejudice. (2) For this reason, a second definition of racial/ethnic diversity is important, one that involves both the frequency and the quality of intergroup interaction as keys to meaningful diversity experiences during college - informal interactional diversity. Although these informal interactions with racially diverse peers can occur in many campus contexts, the majority of them occur outside of the classroom. Such interactions may include informal discussions, daily interactions in residence halls, campus events, and social activities (3) forms of diversity experiences include learning about diverse people (content knowledge) and gaining experience with diverse peers in the classroom. Structural diversity is a necessary but insufficient condition for maximal educational benefits. The impact of racial/ethnic diversity on educational outcomes comes primarily from engagement with diverse peers in the informal campus environment and in college classrooms. This theory that guides our study is based on students' actual engagement with diverse peers (Guri et al 2002:333). Based on their theoretical foundation, learning outcomes is defined as active thinking skills, intellectual engagement and motivation, and a variety of academic skills; while democracy outcomes include perspective-taking, citizenship engagement, racial and cultural understanding, and judgment of the compatibility among different groups in a democracy . The impact of diversity on learning and democracy outcomes is believed to be especially important during the college years because students are at a critical developmental stage, which takes place in institutions explicitly constituted to promote late adolescent development.

Psychologist Erik Erikson (1946-1956 cited in Guri et al 2002) introduced the concept of identity and argued that late adolescence and early adulthood are the unique times when a sense of personal and social identity is formed. Identity involves two important elements: a persistent sameness within oneself and a persistent sharing with others. Adolescence and early adulthood is a time when young people can experiment with new ideas, new relationships and new roles before making a permanent decision from an occupation, to intimate relationships, to social and political groups and ideas and to a philosophy of life. Based on psychologist Erik Erikson, the authors of this article argue that such a stage as formation of identity in young people's life should ideally involve a confrontation with diversity and complexity, lest young people passively make commitments based on their past experience, rather than thinking or making decisions informed by new and more complex perspectives and relationships that consider multicultural diversity. Institution of higher education can provide an opportunity for such a psychosocial development, thus supporting young adults through this identity development stage. Higher education is especially influential when its social milieu is different from students' home and community background and when it is diverse and complex enough to encourage intellectual experimentation and recognition of varied future possibilities. Newcomb's classic study of students at Bennington College supported Erikson's assertion that late adolescence is a time to determine one's relationship to the socio-political world and affirmed the developmental impact of the college experience. Follow-ups with these students showed that the attitudes formed during the college experience were quite stable, even twenty and fifty years later (Guri et al 2002:334-335). The above cases provide a strong rationale for the importance of bringing students from varied backgrounds together to create a diverse and complex yet complete learning environment. However, Genuine interaction goes far beyond mere contact and includes learning about difference in background, experience, and perspectives, as well as getting to know one another individually in an intimate enough way to discern common goals and personal qualities (Guri et al 2002:336).

What are the conditions that encourage effortful, mindful, and conscious modes of thought? Langer (1978 cited in Guri et al 2002:337) contends that people will engage in such modes of thought when they encounter a situation for which they have no script or when the environment demands more than their current scripts provide, such as an encounter discrepant with their past experience.

These conditions are similar to what sociologist Rose Coser (1975 cited in Guri et al 2002:337) calls complex social structures — situations where we encounter people who are unfamiliar to us, when these people challenge us to think or act in new ways, when people and relationships change and thus produce unpredictability, and when people we encounter hold different expectations of us. Coser shows that people who function within complex social structures develop a clearer and stronger sense of individuality and a deeper understanding of the social world. These theories suggest that racial and ethnic diversity in the student body and university efforts to foster opportunities for diverse students to interact and learn from each other in and out of the classroom offer college students who have grown up in the racially segregated United States the very features that these theories suggest will foster active thinking and personal development (Guri et al 2002:338). The results of these longitudinal analyses show, as our theory predicts, that the actual experiences students have with diversity consistently and meaningfully affect important learning and democracy outcomes of a college education. Diversity experiences explain an important amount of variance in these outcomes (Guri et al 2002:359). These effects are quite consistent across the various outcomes, across the national and single institutional studies and across the different groups of students. Some opponents of affirmative action advance the view that the educational benefits of diversity can be achieved without the presence of racially/ethnically diverse peers (Hopwood 1996 cited in Guri et al 2002). Since content about race/ethnicity can be introduced into courses even at institutions with minimal student diversity. Authors of these article found that informal interaction with diverse peers was consistently influential on all educational outcomes for all four groups of students and, with one exception, that the effect of informal interaction was larger than that of classroom diversity (Guri et al 2002:359). Diversity enables students to perceive differences both within groups and between groups and is the primary reason why significant numbers of students of various groups are needed in the classroom. The worst consequence of the lack of diversity arises when a minority student is a token in a classroom. In such situations, the solo or token minority individual is often given undue attention, visibility, and distinctiveness, which can lead to greater stereotyping by majority group members. Diversity in academic institutions is essential to teaching students the human relations and analytic skills they need to thrive and lead in the work environments of the twenty-first century. These skills include the abilities to work well with colleagues and subordinates from diverse backgrounds ; to view issues from multiple perspectives ; and to anticipate and respond with sensitivity to the needs and cultural differences of highly diverse customers, colleagues, employees, and global business partners.

The significant features of this research can be summarised in four points, namely: (1) a theoretical rationale for the impact of diversity; (2) both a national study of multiple institutions and a single institution provides significant support for our theoretical rationale; (3) having both a national and a single institutional study protects against inappropriate generalizations that might have been made had only one study been available for this research; and (4) it was possible to control students' scores on the outcome measures when they entered college (Guri et al 2002:360-361). This type of sample and data collection allowed the authors to conclude that diversity experiences had an impact on active thinking and intellectual engagement and on the orientations and sentiments that students will need to become leaders in a diverse democracy.

Multicultural Experience Enhances Creativity – The When and How

The writers of this article identify with two countries, the one where they were born and the one in which they live in. They brought with them into this research a variety of intercultural personal experiences as researchers, although the focus of the research was not on them. From their research analysis, they discovered that: Many practices aimed at cultivating multicultural competence in educational and organizational settings (e.g. exchange programs, diversity education in college, diversity management at work) assume that multicultural experience fosters creativity. In line with this assumption, the research reported in this article is the first to empirically demonstrate that exposure to multiple cultures in and of itself can enhance creativity. Overall, the authors found that extensiveness of multicultural experiences was positively related to both creative performance (insight learning, remote association, and idea generation) and creativity-supporting cognitive processes (retrieval of unconventional knowledge, recruitment of ideas from unfamiliar cultures for creative idea expansion). Furthermore, their studies showed that the unanticipated creative benefits resulting from multicultural experiences may depend on the extent to which individuals open themselves to foreign cultures, and that creativity is facilitated in contexts that deemphasize the need for firm answers or existential concerns (Leung et al 2008:169).

The authors (Leung et al 2008:169) discuss the implications of their findings for promoting creativity in increasingly global learning and work environments. Although discussions on multiculturalism primarily focus on ethnic diversity, the authors went beyond this description because they believe that multiculturalism concerns all aspects of human behaviour that occurs when people from two or more cultural background encounter each other. Aside from the empirical justification which supports that multicultural experiences

indeed confer distinct beneficial effects on creative performances, research on the relationship between multicultural experiences and creativity is expected to answer the following questions: What types of multicultural experiences are needed to enhance creative performance? How do multicultural experiences benefit creativity? Who is most likely to realise the creative potential of having a multicultural experience? And when are the creative benefits of multicultural experiences likely to surface?

Multicultural experiences is measured by the amount of time living abroad, extensiveness of interaction with foreign cultures and reviews of cases such as family immigration history, bilingualism, interaction with people from different background (Leung et al 2008:170). Creativity is the process of bringing into being something that is both novel and useful; it is often springs forth ideas far removed from the domain for which the idea is appropriate for. Based on this research analysis, it was evident to the authors that culture is a double edged sword, one consisting of a set of conventionalised learned routines that help individual in a society to coordinate their social behaviours; on another hand, when an individual is immersed in and exposed to only one culture, the learned routine and conventional knowledge of the culture may limit his/her creative conceptual expansion. Whereas culture may constrain creativity, multicultural experience may foster creative expansion of ideas. For example: history is ripe with examples of artist who at some point in their careers lived abroad or created their master works in a foreign country. People learn new ideas and concepts from multicultural experiences which impact creative process.

Multicultural living experience may allow people to recognise that some form of behaviour has different function and implications. Exposure to multiple environment leads to excess exposure of unconventional knowledge, and incongruent concepts provoke exploration into their interrelations, the process of resolving incongruent ideas may lead to greater cognitive complexity (Leung et al 2008:172). The experience of combining non-overlapping concepts may foster a tendency to engage in creative conceptual expansion when resolving a problem, as a result people may have a better performance in subsequent creativity task that are unrelated to the conceptual combination task. In short, multicultural experience may foster creativity by: (a) providing direct access to novel ideas and concepts from other cultures; (b) creating the ability to see multiple underlying functions behind the same form; (c) destabilizing routinized knowledge structures, thereby increasing the accessibility of normally inaccessible knowledge; (d) creating a psychological readiness to recruit ideas from unfamiliar sources and places; (e) and fostering synthesis of seemingly incompatible ideas from diverse cultures (Leung et al 2008:173).

Creative people or individuals with certain personality characteristics are more creative and tend to voluntarily seek multicultural experiences. Holding seemingly incomparable ideas from two cultures in a cognitive juxtaposition invites engagement in creative conceptual expansion. Foreign living and not foreign travelling afforded an enduring creative benefit because the experience of living abroad is qualitatively and quantitatively different from a cursory foreign or domestic experience (Leung et al 2008:174-175).

International Students at a Norwegian University- Their experiences.

This book was written by Martine Umutesi Vanderheyden, a French and religion teacher from Belgian. At the time of writing this book, Vanderheyden was a student at the University of Stavanger in Norway and this book was submitted as a thesis for a master in Spesialpedagogikk (translated Special Needs Education). Vanderheyden's research is based on the question: How do international students experience their studies in a Norwegian academic system? Through her research, she aimed to establish whether or not the international students have had a feeling of belonging to the Norwegian University - how have they participated in university life and the worth of their participation. Vanderheyden's research question was inspired by her own experience of being a foreign student in the Norwegian university. As a French native speaker who knew very little Norwegian, the author had to take one year of Norwegian language course at the university of Stavanger before attempting to study any degree in the same university as is common for all foreign students who are not fluent in Norwegian and are taking a degree taught in Norwegian (Vanderheyden 2011:25). After succeeding with the one year language course, she was admitted in the master program but found it socially and academically challenging. "My lack of Norwegian obviously made me unable to understand the subject matter and to interact with other students who were not keen to speak English with me. I was the only international student in my master class and was quickly left on my own. I was unable to participate in workshops or answer questions because the curriculum taught was completely unfamiliar to me. ... I lost my self-esteem and experienced major change in my identity, became withdrawn and silent and I was angry and sad" (Vanderheyden 2011:25). As a result of the challenges experienced, Vanderheyden was eager to find out if other foreign students (who completed the Norwegian language course and were currently studying a bachelor or master degree) were experiencing similar challenges and if they had experienced any change in their identity and how they dealt with it when and if they experienced such integration challenges (Vanderheyden 2011:26).

This research was carried out using a qualitative research method. For data collection, Vanderheyden contacted four English speaking international students from varied countries who studied at the University of Stavanger and had taken a year of Norwegian language classes before enrolling into a master/bachelor degree program at the same university. The professor in charge of the Norwegian language and culture program for beginners at the University of Stavanger provided contact to these four research participants. Research participants were asked via email prior to the interview to write and submit a minimum of one page memory in which they describe their experiences as an international student at a Norwegian university. This was followed by a one on one semi-structured interview to obtain additional information (Vanderheyden 2011:21-22). To analyse her data, Vanderheyden used Wenger's schema of Social Theory of learning (Wenger 2008:5 cited in Vanderheyden 2011:23) as her main frame of reference. This schema underlines four important components of learning as an active participant: (1) the meaning- did the students find their experience meaningful and valuable, (2) the practice – did the students get to share their background and new learning activity with their Norwegian peers, (3) the community – did the students feel like they were seen and integrated as valuable members, and (4) the identity – did the experience impact on the identity/did their experience change their previous student identity and how?

The following are some of the accounts made by the students (not their real names) about community and learning as belonging. Julie thought that “maybe I didn't put much effort into this, maybe it's normal in the Norwegian universities, but communication between me and the other students was about zero”. Lucie questioned if “it is just me who has a ‘K’ [unfriendly] face or maybe it is just Norwegian people who are too conservative and too spoiled.... I don't like to take ... their proud attitude.” Based on the researcher's analysis, the different accounts given by the four students such as the above noted, showed that language skills was a challenge. As a third language for the research participants, the Norwegian language was a barrier to their human achievement disabling them from making friends with Norwegians and discouraging Norwegian from making contact. This means that the one year Norwegian course offered to foreign students to prepare them to study at the university in Norwegian is not sufficient although a good start. For example, in class the students are taught Bokmål Norwegian, but no teacher spoke this dialect in class making it difficult for the research participants like Paul to follow their teacher's unique Norwegian dialect (Vanderheyden 2011:51-55).

These students were certainly brilliant back home [previous studies] according to Vanderheyden (2011:59), but she wondered how it felt for these students not to be able to show how brilliant they can be because of the language barrier? The author suggests that a lot can be done during the Norwegian year course to effectively prepare students for their additional years of study in Norwegian language. Her suggestions include: (a) organising Norwegian student tutors to assist the new students at bachelor/master level in settling in better, (b) collaboration between teachers offering the one year Norwegian course and those offering bachelor/master degrees to help integrate students better, (c) students could be evaluated on their capacity to integrate newcomers (international students included) to encourage them to work together (d) providing student compendium in English as well as Norwegian (Vanderheyden 2011:60-62).

In terms of expectations, delusions, failure and success, the analysis report showed that all four research participants had either high or low expectations of the new environment, but were unable to deal with the reality of the new environment. None of them have decided to continue their Norwegian taught curriculum, choosing to rather attend programs taught in English (Vanderheyden 2011:57). The suggestion from the author is that the university should play an active role in painting a real picture for students, and not paint a perfect picture in the prospectus because to succeed here, being brilliant academically is not enough; the ability to adjust is highly required (Vanderheyden 2011:63). To conclude her research Martine Umutesi Vanderheyden said: “even if they put it in different words and perspective, the international students who took part in this research have been changed by their experiences at a Norwegian university. And even though they have been through challenging times, I believe that this has made them even more interesting human beings than they were before they came here” (Vanderheyden 2011:64).

Identity as a concept is fully as elusive as everyone’s sense of his personal identity, but whatever else it may be, identity is connected with the fateful appraisals made of oneself and by others. Everyone presents himself to the others and himself in the mirrors of their judgement. The mask he then and thereafter presents to the world and its citizens are fashioned upon his anticipation of their judgement. The others present themselves too; they wear their own brand of mask and they get appraised in turn. Strauss (cited in Vanderheyden 2011:64)

Chapter Four

THEORIES

“There are truth on this side of the Pyrenees which are falsehood on the other” Blaise Pascal

My research mission has been to understand what happens when students from different cultures meet and interact with one another at MHS; and comprehend the nature and significance that multicultural environment has had on them personally. This thesis is about culture - it's about the coming together of all these diverse cultures that each student brings into the university environment and the output of that diversity. I have therefore selected *Culture* as my main research focus for this master thesis. There are numerous theories on culture that offer valuable insight on the matter, many of which offer varied perspective to the subject. In pursuit to find the most suitable theory for understanding the dynamics of multicultural encounters, I have established that one theory or theorist will not suffice. One theory will limit the opportunity to analyse the data from various angles and ability to present a holistic picture of the subject matter. I believe that the two selected theories provide good perspectives of culture which will help me to illuminate significant elements from the data collection as well as assist me in separating the big themes from smaller themes.

In this chapter, I firstly, discuss what is culture. Defining culture is complex due to its mosaic nature (patterns, compositions and forms of a variety of small, visible and invisible elements) and dynamic nature (active and ever-changing). There is a large variety of definitions available, but we will focus on and study four definitions building on the definition already given in chapter one. These definitions reveal two-sided outlooks of what culture is. On left side, we see culture in well defined categories achieved through generalizations. Ways of categorizing culture has evolved over the years when researchers discover new information and as authors seek a more simplified and compact method of defining culture. Authors such as Geert Hofstede have sought dimensions to cover all cultures. His four dimensions included power distance, collectivism versus individualism, femininity versus masculinity and uncertainty avoidance. Later he added long term versus short-term orientation. Edward T. Hall classified groups as monochronic or polychronic, high or low context and past- or future-oriented. Florence Kluckhohn saw five dimensions/attitudes to problems: time, nature of man, form of activity and relation to one's cultural compatriots (Lewis 2006:28). And Richard Lewis' LMR cultures: linear-active

cultures, multi-active cultures and reactive cultures – which we study here. This approach of defining culture using forms of categorization that organizes our experiences and guides our behavior toward various groups within society has insufficiencies because it perceives culture as more static than dynamic. This thinking is important and adds some value in helping us recognize that whatever the future holds, countries and people differ in their approach to life, their ways of living and thinking, yet there are elements that are common and less fluid. Ignoring cultural differences is unproductive and limits our ability to benefit from cultural diversity and its advantages. However, categorization must be used with great caution, comprehending that categorization is never an accurate description of an individual behavior, but rather, describes the behavioral norm for members of a particular group. Stereotypes like other forms of categorization become helpful if they are consciously held, descriptive rather than evaluative, taken as first best guess and modified based on continuing observation and experiences with the actual people and within their context (Adler 2008:69,77 and 103). Richard Lewis' (2006) theory points at something we can use, but his theory cannot stand alone as a definition of culture, hence the second theory.

On the right hand, we see culture in terms of symbols, systems and science. This approach uses abstract words such as truth and justice; it is philosophical and theoretical. Such concepts are indistinct, open to obscure interpretation, difficult to comprehend and a challenge to apply to everyday life. Yet this approach sees culture clearer; dynamic in nature and character and reveals the art of interpreting culture in context. Authors such Hans-George Gadamer (which we study here), Clifford Geertz and Hylland Eriksen have developed this approach through their various work. Unlike the categorization view of culture which is limited but essential for initial comprehension of culture, the semiotic approach (once its abstractness is made tangible through in-depth study) broadens our view of what culture encompasses of and expands our ability to understand and interpret it as we encounter it and not according to the category it might fit or be molded into.

Secondly, I present in this chapter two theories which will help us in the interpretation of cultures. I start with presenting Richard D Lewis' theory named LMR Culture Active (2006). His theory enables us to predict culture's behavior which provides us with a good starting point for discussing multicultural understanding. Lewis is a British linguist and cross-cultural communication consultant, his theory is influenced by the work of legendary anthropologist such as Edward T. Hall's Proxemics theory and Geert Hofstede's Cultural Dimension theory. Hall is generally acknowledged to be the founder of the field of intercultural communication with a heavy emphasis on nonverbal communication through his

book: *The silent language* (Rogers, Hart and Miike 2002:10). Hofstede on the other hand remains a well-known pioneer in his research of cross-cultural groups and organizations through the international IBM research presented in his book: *Culture's Consequences – Comparing Values, Behavior, Institutions and Organizations across Nations*. I will end with a presentation of Hans-Georg Gadamer's Hermeneutic Theory of Interpretation which (1997) focuses on interpretation and understanding in a quest to find meaning. Gadamer was a German Philosopher who is widely recognized as the leading exponent of philosophical hermeneutics and has shaped new modes of interpretation in both humanities and social sciences addressing large and central philosophical issues in the attempt to find a way between or beyond objectivism and relativism, and scientism and irrationalism. He accomplishes this by developing an account of what he takes to be the universal hermeneutic experience of understanding through his book: *Truth and Method*. Understanding, for Gadamer, is always a matter of interpretation and understanding is also always a matter of language. Gadamer relies importantly on Martin Heidegger's treatment of these concepts in *Being and Time* (Dostal et al 2002:1). To conclude the presentation of the two theories, I added summary comments after each theory reemphasizing key elements.

Defining Culture

Culture according to Fred Jandt, is a totality of a group's (community sufficiently large enough to be self-sustaining) thoughts, experiences and patterns of behaviour, concepts, values and assumptions. Culture refers to the process of transmitting (through communication) these thoughts and behaviours among members who consciously identify themselves with that group (Jandt 2007:1). Culture is a way of life for the group; new group members are taught this way of life allowing them to belong. Culture is an integrated system characterised by continuous change. Every new member of the group adds something to culture/way of life. New developments within the environment such as colonialism, enlightenment thinking, modernity or globalisation and multiculturalism influence the direction, nature and form of culture changes over the years. From Jandt's definition, we see the dynamics, fluidity and development of culture taking place within a self-sustained group.

Øyvind Dahl says culture is dynamic in nature; the changes are not simultaneous among members of a society. Culture change is a process that takes place in the phase of understanding and meaning production, and manifests itself in the post-understanding phase in different ways, in different periods among different individuals depending on their situation, context and purpose (Dahl 2008:11). People interpret their role in society and attach

meaning to their lives and thereby creating culture. They communicate with each other using symbols and language, both verbal language and body language. Therefore communication is the key to culture, and culture is the key to communication. Meetings between two cultures is not a meeting of abstract concepts of cultures but a meeting of individuals with different frames of interpretation or frames of reference with different cultural abstract in their mind (Dahl 2008:4). In a nutshell, Dahl says that culture is not static and its meaning is derived from our interpretation based on our individual frame of reference.

Hofstede sees culture as a collective programming of the mind, manifested values, symbols, heroes and rituals and issues of preferences programmed early in life. Mental programming of our behavior, words and deeds allows us to expect certain behavior or action in relations to people assuming they have a similar mental program, although each persons' mental program is unique. There are three human programming levels. Firstly, individual level which is unique even in identical twins reared together. Mental programs can be transferred through genes and can be learned after birth. Secondly, the collective level which is entirely inherent because it is common human genetic information availed in all human species. Lastly, the universal level which is mostly learned cause it's shared with people who have gone through the same learning process. The collaborative mental program is uploaded socially through society, organization, family, groups (Hofstede 2001:1). Therefore people who have gone through similar mental programming or learning process share a culture and will exhibit similar cultural patterns. In summary, through his definition which is based on research with IBM employees around the world, Hofstede was able to make general conclusion such as: Norway is a feminine society, Thai people prefer avoiding uncertainty during communication and Brazilians are long-term oriented people adjusting well to change.

Clifford Geertz, espouse the concept of culture to be essentially a semiotic one. Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning (Geertz 1973:5). Culture is not a power – it is a context. A context where semiotic symbols (verbal and non verbal communication signs such as words, images, sounds, gestures and objects) as interworked systems of construable signs can be intelligibly described (Geertz 1973). For Clifford Geertz, understanding culture requires in-depth study of a specific culture in its context and analytical distinction between the superficial cultural webs (thin descriptions – a blink: to close and open an eye rapidly);

And deep cultural webs (thick description – wink: to close and open the eyelid deliberately, as to convey a message, signal, or suggestion) which we have created over time; yet observing the differences, that a wink between brothers may carry a different message in different relations, interactions and contexts.

LMR Culture-active by Richard D. Lewis

Lewis' vision on categorising of cultures stems from the premise that misunderstandings arise principally when there is a clash of category rather than nationality. Through his vision of simplified categorisation of cultures, Richard Lewis' theory LMR Culture Active was born. LMR Culture Active Theory aims at solving the problem of too many cultural types and division by providing a simplified category that is easier to familiarize oneself with and can be used as an eye opener into multicultural encounters. Lewis refers to these basic culture categories as: Linear-active cultures, Multi-active cultures and Reactive cultures (Lewis 2006:28).

Linear-active people are task-oriented and highly organized planners, who do one thing at a time, concentrate hard on it within a scheduled time period. A linear-active person think that in this way they are more efficient and get more done since they attach great importance to analyzing a project, compartmentalizing it, tackling each problem one at a time in a linear fashion, concentrating on each segment and thereby achieving a near-perfect result. They are uneasy with people who do not work in this manner. Linear-active people also adherence at least in theory to schedules, production deadlines and budgets enabled them to clarify their goals and check on performances and efficiency. People such as Swedes, Swiss, Brits, the Dutch and the Germans are likely to be more linear-active because their national cultures display such character traits (Lewis 2006:29-32).

Multi-active individuals are people-oriented, talkative and interrelators (they like to be placed in or come into mutual relationships). Multi-active people think they get more done their way and are not very interested in schedules or punctuality. They consider reality to be more important than man-made appointments (Lewis 2006:30). Multi-active individuals are more flexible and have multi-active attitude which allows them to modify their timetable in reaction to unexpected developments within their environment. They are also able to spot deficiencies in the planning that had not been evident earlier, and to make vital last-minute improvements with the extra time. People from Portugal, Greece, and Italy and Mediterranean countries are likely to display a multi-active culture trait which is influenced by their national culture trait (Lewis 2006:30-32).

Reactive-active people are introverted and oriented listeners. Many individual who display a reactive-active culture which rarely initiate action or discussion, preferring to listen to and establish the other's position first, then react to it and formulate their own view. Listen before they leap! They can be the world's best listeners in as much as they concentrate on what the speaker is saying, do not let their minds wander and rarely, if ever, interrupt a speaker while the discourse or presentation is on-going. When the presentation ends, they do not reply immediately. A decent period of silence after the speaker has stopped shows respect for the weight of the remarks, which must be considered unhurriedly and with due deference. For example, the American, having delivered a sales pitch in Helsinki, leans forward and asks, "Well, Pekka, what do you think?" If you ask Finns what they think, they begin to *think*. Finns, like Asians, think in silence. An American asked the same question might well pipe up and exclaim, "I'll tell you what I think!"—allowing no pause to punctuate the proceedings or interfere with Western momentum (Lewis 2006:33-38).

Both personality and context will make us hybrid to some extent because none of us is an island unto ourselves. As well as the personal or psychological traits of an individual, the *context* within which he or she operates is an important factor in fine-tuning categorization. Situational context is infinite in its variations, but three ingredients stand out: *age*, *profession* and *field of study*. Personal traits can occasionally contradict the national norm. In the majority of cases, the LMR Personal Cultural Profile assessment points the respondent toward a sympathetic relationship with a particular cultural group (Lewis 2006:43). *Age* is, of course, a well-recognized "layer of culture"—attitudes about society, authority, law and freedom are often generational. Younger people test strongly linear-active or multi-active according to their culture, but both groups become more reactive as they get older. A person's *profession* is also an influential factor. Linear-active people often wind up as engineers, accountants and technologists, and the exercise of their profession reinforces their linearity. Teachers, artists and sales and marketing staff lean toward multi-active options, where flexibility and feelings before facts fit their chosen type of work. Doctors and lawyers either need to be reactive by nature or develop reactive skills in order to listen carefully to their clients' plights (Lewis 2006:43). Human resource managers tend to be more hybrid, as they seek and promote diversity in a firm's human and cultural capital. Successful managers are also generally hybrid, with evenly balanced LMR scores. Skilled senior managers are usually more multi-active than the norm, especially in cultures where linearity is the norm (Lewis 2006:43).

Individuals from certain nationalities sharing characteristics from two categories may find areas of cooperation or common conduct. Figure.2 is an LRM Triangle designed by Richard Lewis (2006) demonstrating the sharing of two culture traits. People close to the *linear-active/reactive* axis on the LRM Triangle, are likely to be strong, silent types who can work together calmly and tend to shun multi-active extroversion and loquacity. People close to the multi-active/reactive axis will, in spite of visible differences, attach great importance to relationships and circumvent official channels by using personal contacts or networks. People close to the *linear-active/multi-active axis*, though opposites in many ways are inevitably broad-minded on account of their range of traits and are likely to be forceful and persistent in their actions. United States, Norway and the Netherlands display a linear-active/multi-active cultural trait because among many other things they plan their lives along agenda-like lines. Individuals whose cultural profiles wander away from the axes occupying a central location inside the triangle may possess qualities that enable them to be efficient mediators or international team leaders (Lewis 2006:46-47).

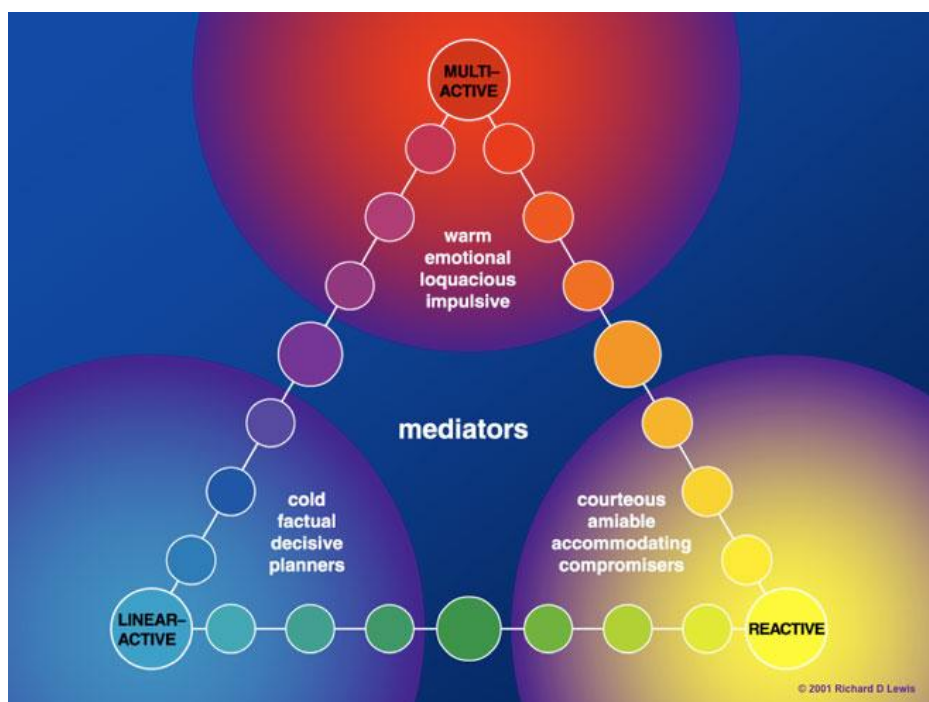


Fig.2

Lewis also developed the LMR (linear/multi/reactive) method of testing so that individuals can determine their own cultural profiles (2006:42). In the below table is an example of a cultural profile test result based on Diane Rosseau (Lewis 2006). On the table in figure.3, we see that Diane’s active culture traits are highlighted in blue, red and yellow and can see that she has culture traits resembling a linear-active and multi-active culture because she has less reactive traits. Therefore based on the LRM Triangle (figure.2), Diane will fall under the *linear-active/multi-active on the triangular axis*.

Comparisons		
Diane Rosseau, France		
Linear-active	Multi-active	Reactive
talks half the time	talks most of the time	listens most of the time
plans ahead step by step	plans grand outline only	plans with general principles
polite but direct	emotional	polite and indirect
uses official channels	seeks out top or key person	uses connections
partly hides feelings	shows feelings	hides feelings
does one thing at a time	does several things at once	reacts to partners actions
dislikes losing face	has good excuses	must not lose face
job-oriented	people-oriented	relationship oriented
confronts logically	confronts emotionally	never confronts
rarely interrupts	often interrupts	does not interrupt
puts truth before diplomacy	has a flexible truth	puts diplomacy before truth
sometimes impatient	impatient	patient
limited body language	unlimited body language	subtle body language
uses mainly facts	puts feelings before facts	statements are promises
separates the social and professional	mixes the social and professional	connects the social and professional

L-M-R Rating

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Fig.3

In comparing the three active cultures to each other, you can see that commonalities exist between all types, but tend to be thin on the ground between linear-actives and multi-actives. There are naturally underlying similarities between members belonging to the same cultural category (Lewis 2006:38). When it comes to communication and the level of difficulty in interacting across-cultures, based on Lewis LMR method, when a Linear-active cultured person/people and Reactive cultured person/people interact, the communication is considered satisfactory. Satisfactory interaction mean the interaction between/among the communicating parties is sufficient to meet the demand or requirement. When a Reactive cultured person/people and Multi-active cultured person/people interact, the communication is time

consuming because both parties need to invest time at working on the relationship and require commitment to the interaction in order for the relationship between/among such an interaction to reach satisfactory point. When Linear-active person/people interact with a Multi-active person/people, the communication is difficult. This kind interaction is hard to do, to endure, to comprehend or solve and hard to persuade or convince; this type of interaction demanding considerable effort or skill, but it is possible for such an interaction to become satisfactory with hard work (Lewis 2006:39).

Comments on Lewis' theory:

David Lewis' theory is one of the best simplified and compact method of categorising culture and its user friendly. In terms of understanding culture (our own and foreign), the LMR active-culture theory serves as a good eye opener and a good basic description of the cultural behavioural norms. The essentialist argument in intercultural communication dismisses stereotypes as being problematic, but on the other hand sees cultural generalisation as legitimate because culture is not totally fluid and has prominent traits that can be used for scientific comparison (Illman 2006:104). I believe Lewis' categorisation method is legitimate in that sense. For example, when travelling to Norway, it is good to establish a basic and general understanding of Norwegian culture by studying the generalised culture trait. Once in Norway, a foreigner has to establish an understanding of Norwegian culture through personal observations and encounters within context; and eliminating the inaccurate generalizations by distinguishing between correct and incorrect stereotypes. It is essential to warn against using Lewis' theory or any other forms of categorisation as a static description of individual culture or a culture evaluation tool, because culture is dynamic, contextual and each intercultural experience is unique. When entering another culture it is important to be aware of stereotypes least they can function as self-fulfilling prophecies whereby presentation of facts is ineffective in changing our stereotyped view because our perception of what counts as facts is guided by our attitudes and interpretation (Illman 2006:103). Beyond an eye-opener stage of introduction to culture, Lewis' LMR active-culture theory is inefficient; hence I will use Lewis' theory as a sub-theory to Hans-George Gadamer's Theory of Interpretation (1997) in the initial phase. Categorisation, like stereotypes are not limitations to our communicative capacity but indispensable tools in creating a meaningful reality.

Theory of Interpretation by Hans-George Gadamer

“What is understanding?” According to Gadamer (1997), all understanding is interpretive or *hermeneutical*. To understand is, in general, to grasp something (“I get it”), to see things more clearly (say, when an obscure or ambiguous act becomes clear), to be able to integrate a particular meaning (part –single act) into a larger frame (whole - context). One who “understands” something is not so much someone endowed with a specific knowledge, but someone who can exercise a practical skill. To understand adds Gadamer, always implies an element of self-understanding, self-implication, in the sense that it is always a possibility of my own self that is played out in understanding (Grondin 2002:36-38). Understanding a particular human act, for instance, putting a piece of paper in a box (part-single act) might be considered a meaningless action unless put in the context of democratic elections, and the action of putting a ballot paper in a box (whole-context). This process of studying different single acts (parts) in order to understand the context (whole) is called Hermeneutic Circle. Martin Heidegger developed the concept of the Hermeneutic Circle and Gadamer (1997) re-conceptualized the hermeneutic circle as an interactive process through which a new understanding of a whole reality is developed by means of exploring the detail of existence. Gadamer viewed understanding as linguistically mediated, through conversations with others in which reality is explored and an agreement is reached that represents a new understanding (Dostal et al 2002:1-2).

Traditional hermeneutics is the study of the interpretation of written texts, especially texts in the areas of literature, religion and law. Modern hermeneutics encompasses everything in the interpretative process including verbal and non-verbal forms of communication as well as prior aspects that affect communication, such as presuppositions, pre-understandings, the meaning and philosophy of language and semiotics (Sinclair, Wright and Packer 1988). Many anthropologists have used the modern hermeneutics approach to develop models that will assist us in interpreting and understanding various aspects of human behavior using Gadamer’s (1997) premise of hermeneutic circle of interpretation. Norwegian anthropologists Øyvind Dahl and Danish anthropologist Marita Svane are among those who have used Gadamer’s hermeneutic circle of understanding as a dialectic approach to communication. Their presentation of Gadamer’s theory simplifies its abstractness into a tangible and applicable theory, allowing me to understand the original text with great ease.

In his article, *Dynamics of Communication*, Dahl present hermeneutics as a tool to study intercultural communication by adopting Marta Svane's three phases division (2008 cited in Dahl 2008): (1) Thesis – reference frame before intercultural interaction, (2) Anti-thesis- consist of the parts exposed during intercultural interaction and (3) Synthesis- development of a new reference frame (Dahl 2008:3).

Phase 1: Thesis – Pre-understanding. Each individual bring with them into a intercultural interaction a reservoir of basic pre-understanding on elements such as: space, body, time, worldview, social relations and language as well as basic understanding of self, other, life, values, norms and the world (Dahl 2008:8). In simple terms, to understand the world, people, events or project relates to how you view these things separately or in relation to other things and the meaning you associate with what you see. In intercultural terms, pre-understanding relates to the fore-meanings that an individual has about people, culture, social relations or system and so forth before they personally experience or encounter them. According to Cristoffanini (2004:84), we give meaning to events, people and objects by means of interpretative maps in which we place ourselves; hence our evaluation of the same event, people and objects may differ from individual to individual although they are referring to the same reality. We also give meaning to events, people and objects through the manner in which we represent them, the feeling that we associate with them, the image that we use and the stories that we tell. In order to represent these people, events and objects, we make use of signs such as words, sounds, images that replace a concept or something in reality with something else. Our representation of all these, are tied to believes and attitudes and the way in which we categorise the world and the significance we give to things influences our behaviour. Culture deals precisely with such production and exchange of meanings and that is why we can say that members of one culture tend to see the world in a similar manner which does not mean that a culture must necessarily be unitary.

Our pre-understanding about other cultures and people may be based on categories, stereotypes or prejudices. What is prejudice, stereotypes and categorisation? According to Gadamer (1997:270-271), “the history of ideas shows that not until the Enlightenment does the concept prejudice acquire the negative connotation familiar today. Actually, “prejudice” means a judgement that is rendered before all the elements that determine a situation have been finally examined... thus prejudice certainly does not necessarily mean a false judgement, but part of the idea is that it can have either a positive or a negative value.

This is clearly due to the influence of the Latin *praejudicium*” (Gadamer 1997:299), Gadamer sees prejudice as a non conclusive view of another culture; a view that renders a starting point to discovering the truth about the given culture in question and an opportunity to test our prejudices of that culture based on information sourced from open and self-experienced encounter with the specific culture before making the final judgement. “Prejudice clearly requires suspending its validity and as long as our mind is influenced by a prejudice, we do not consider it judgment for what leads to understanding must be something that is already asserted itself in its own validity (Gadamer 1997:299).

Other authors such as Gordon W. Allport and Pablo R. Cristoffanini challenges Gadamer’s thinking about using fore-meaning derived from prejudice, stereotypes and categorisation as an initial point of view when entering a new culture or meeting people from a different culture to ours. Allport (1954 cited in Cristoffanini 2004:83) distinguishes between prior judgement with a sound basis and prejudice. Having a negative representation and feelings of rejection toward another culture does not constitute prejudice if one has solid knowledge of the theory and practice of that culture. Prejudice according to Allport, is “hostile attitude and shunning of a person because he belongs to a group with criticisable characteristics...thinking ill (feelings of rejection or hostile behaviour) of others without sufficient warrant.” Categories are a necessary tool to understand reality, to create order; but they are flexible and they change. Categories might suffice to simply remember which categories are used to recognise social groups in a determined society today compared to fifty or three hundred years ago. On the other hand, stereotypes apparently give us a feeling of order and security, but are inflexible and try to cement one particular meaning over the other. They constitute an inadequate way of representing the foreign Other because they isolate certain aspects, behaviour and inclination which are removed from the historical or cultural context; they ignore or put a slant on certain central aspects of identity of victims of stereotyping or on their culture and social life; and they cement representation of the foreign Other, impeding alternative ways of seeing and understanding them (Allport 1954 cited in Cristoffanini 2004:86). The process of categorisation is fundamental to the formation of prejudice and stereotypes: we think with the help of categories and in the process: (a) the mind forms groups and classes to guide our daily actions; (b) it assimilate as much as possible from each group; (c) the categories allow us to quickly identify objects; (d) we call the purely intellectual categories concepts, but generally the concept are added to feelings (e.g. concept: school and added feeling: “I like school”);

(e) Categories can be more rational based on nucleus truth or less rational (Cristoffanini 2004:83). Categorisations of human beings are made principally through a key semiotic system: language. Language allows us to represent people, groups and happening in simplified or enriching forms, in prejudice or tolerant ways (Cristoffanini 2004:85). Øyvind Dahl, a Scandinavian expert on intercultural communication says that the predictions we make about others from a different culture will inexorably be based on stereotypes and that this is a necessary and inevitable process. “We must recognise that we cannot communicate with people from our own or another culture (or talk about them) without stereotypes” (Dahl 1995 cited in Cristoffanini 2004:84).

To conclude Gadamer’s view of prejudice or stereotypes as a necessary and vital language to carry into a multicultural encounter and Allport’s view that prejudice/stereotypes as an ideology that legitimise the dominance of one group over another and lead to discrimination, inequality and exploitation; we look at Ruth Illman’s summary of both views. “Stereotypes may be necessary in human perception...but when portrayed as scientific conclusion and methodological devices they become devastating for communication. Therefore, it seems more adequate to treat stereotypes as a meaning creating device tied to human agency. In such efforts, it is suggested, special attention needs to be given to the emotional aspects of stereotypes (Illman 2006:102).

In hermeneutic terms, the whole reservoir of pre-understandings is called *horizon of understanding of an individual*. The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point. Our vantage point of understanding cultures is limited before intercultural encounters; hence Gadamer saw the need for prejudices – a positive initial viewpoint used as an eye-opener. Yet it is necessary to continually guard against over hastily judging the past (and future) to our own expectation of meaning (Gadamer 1997:305). Gadamer’s prerequisite (1997:299;302;305) at the thesis phase (phase one) is that students should be aware of the prejudices they hold about another culture before interaction with the cultures and that these prejudices are to be used as basic understanding whose theories must be tested.

Phase 2: Anti-thesis – Communication and Meaning production phase. Phase one was concerned with the individual pre-understanding prior multicultural encounters. Phase two focuses on the interaction or encounter between or among individuals. Intercultural and multicultural encounters referred to here are those that consist of face-to-face communication between or among the members. Simply being in a university with people of diverse cultural

background without ever communicating with them is not regarded as an intercultural encounter because it lacks the interaction.

Yet every intercultural encounter is a human encounter that is unique, with unique life experiences, relationships, languages, feelings, and faith (Jandt 2007:27-50). There are two potential courses possible during phase two: closed or open course of communication. *Closed course of communication* is a situation where students do not open themselves up for inter-subjective production of meaning by testing their pre-understandings. Instead, the students stick to their own stereotypes and use the interaction experiences to confirm former stereotypes – this is an act of self-filling prophecies Illman urges (2006:103). This often results in mistrust and suspicion, which can develop into ethnocentrism and even racism and violence. Another reason why stereotyping might persist is because stereotyping is useful in constructing positive self-image and because generalizing stereotypes make an overwhelming complex world around us easier to manage. Life is just too short to have differential concepts about everything and to consider every member of the group as endowed with the same cultural traits saves us the pain of having to deal with them as individual members (Pablo 1986:173 cited in Illman 2006:103). However, without search for understanding, pre-understanding tends to become rigid and immutable, and gaps of culture increase.

In an *open course of communication* students are open to new production of meaning, unfolding what constitute as individual comprehension. According to Illman (2006:109-110), each students at MHS can meet and perceive the other in three possible ways: (1) an *Idealized Other*- an exotic, romantic position, bored with my home country and looking for an adventure context; (2) a *Radical Other* - a negative interpretation of the different other, uninteresting and incomprehensible other, so no meaning connection can possibly exist. (3) *or an Autonomous Other*- open, respectable relationships, wholehearted encounter where defining and observing tendencies give way to a more direct mutual presence, seeking to know and understand the other. Gadamer challenges us to be sensitive to the possibility of seeing differently – of encountering an *autonomous other* and through the process of “fusion of horizons”, our journey to understanding may be reached. Fusion of horizons is an ongoing process because people change and cultures change altering encounters and meaning. Gadamer says that our experiences are not fixed, rather ever-changing like culture and always indicating new perspectives (Gadamer 1997). The question of understanding cannot be treated solely as an intellectual one: knowledge, attitudes and emotions are always inseparably intertwined (Illman 2006:111).

It is a challenging experience because during the fusion of horizons, pre-understanding and stereotypes are played off against one another through actions, speech and reflection to test the validity of culturally legitimate interpretations (Dahl 2008:9). Sensitivity is learned and developed over time and so is the skill to communicate effectively across cultures and habitual ways of thinking take time to mold. Communication either verbally or non-verbally does not instantaneously result in understanding, so misinterpretation and misunderstanding are common during fusion of horizons. In trying to communicate, we assume that words or body language have the same connotation associated with them in another person's culture as it is interpreted in our own culture. We become surprised when the "other" (a student from a different culture to ours) does not react in an expected way. Such time consuming and learning processing require working at negotiating meaning and establishing new understanding.

Gadamer's prerequisite at this point in the hermeneutic circle is "...we must bring, precisely, ourselves. We must already have a horizon in order to be able to transpose ourselves - a person who has no horizon is a man who does not see far enough and hence overvalues what is nearest to him. The concept of horizon expresses the superior breadth of vision that the person who is trying to understand must have. To acquire horizons means that one learns to look beyond what is close at hand – not in order to look away from it but to see it better, within a large whole and in truer proportion. Working out of the hermeneutical situation means the achievement of the right horizon of inquiry for the questions evoked by the encounter with tradition (Gadamer 1997:302-304). For many of the students, being outside their own country has helped them to understand their national, community or academic culture more than when they were still leaving within the particular culture. Some students also spoke of discovering a new understanding of their identity.

The right horizon is the fusion of horizons, that is your horizon and that of the person/culture into which you aim to gain understanding of which takes place when you encounter each other and open course of communication takes place. Pre-understanding is challenged and confronted with another's understanding and interpretation. The simultaneity of interaction and conversation among students at MHS makes visible the similarities and differences of the individual's understanding of culture and identity; creates a common reference points in time and space; makes visible differences in conceptions and interpretation; and negotiates the use of symbols, language, norms and values – therefore creating meaning and identity (Dahl 2008:9-10).

Phase 3: Synthesis – Post-understanding and Reflection. After the encounter, the post-understanding or reflective phase represents a new pre-understanding about situations, relations, tasks, projects, etc. The change of culture that is brought about is the result of continuous dynamics of intercultural communication. The frame of interpretation or the frame of reference is changed and new freedom to act is created. New meanings are generated that create new possibilities, choices, opinions for action, roles, habits, customs, norms and values (Dahl 2008:11). The most fascinating aspects of intercultural communication are those encounters between people with different reference frames that each from their own background can contribute to a new insight. It may enhance new solutions and recommendation also in the large community. Culture in the hermeneutic sense is a frame of interpretation that is always challenged and always in the midst of change, one that cannot be separated from the individual and the local context where the interpretations are created (Dahl 2008:11).

Commends on Gadamer's theory

Gadamer's theory was developed with the aim of using it for interpretation of written texts, especially texts in the areas of literature, religion and law. The hermeneutics approach was proven fruitful for the study of culture and intercultural communication, presenting an alternative approach for interpreting cultures (Dahl 2008). The book *Truth and Method* by Gadamer 1997 from where the theory of interpretation was derived from is not an easy read, perhaps owing to the original time it was written – the 1960s and the language style. As a result; scholars of Gadamer's theory need to some degree rely on other authors' commentaries, companion books on Gadamer's work in order to fully understand and appreciate his work. Hence I used authors such as Dahl, Svane, Dostal and other authors' commentaries and or models to digest Gadamer's work. The going back and forth between the commentaries and the original text provides added insight as the seeking process matures. The idea of prejudices is not fully explored by Gadamer in terms of practical application or examples. I used Lewis' theory as a sub-theory under the thesis phase of the hermeneutic circle to illustrate the forms of prejudices that can be deemed useful forms of categorizing used in the initial stages of establishing pre-understanding. I have also used authors such as Allport, Illman and Christofanini's analyses of stereotypes or prejudices as forms of categorization to further clarify and challenge Gadamer's view on prejudice.

Chapter Five RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter contains the finding from the data collection. As mentioned in chapter two under research methodology, the main sources for collecting data were one-on-one interview with research participants and observation of student interaction around MHS campus. My recording of the collected data is structured and presented under the following sub-headings: MHS culture, intercultural communication and multicultural teams.

MHS Culture

Some of the interview questions focused on MHS campus culture. I asked research participants to describe the university culture based on their personal experiences. Research participant's had similar and different descriptions of MHS culture. There were many similarities among people who came from similar backgrounds so I will present their unique views in groups according to the five continents as a general thinking. Not all students agreed on all issues, so these reflect a view held by majority:

European students: *religious*: most discussions are clouded a lot by religion which gives less room to analyse topics from a global studies or cultural studies perspective; *strenuous*: you have to work hard at including others due to the diversity unlike in other Universities where it's homogenous culture; *dynamic*: there is variation and continuous change to how things are done particularly in academics; *non ambitious*: the relaxed and casual nature is not encouraging to do more.

African students: *caring culture*: most African students spoke about how MHS staff members looked after them in terms of offering assistance when they recognised their practical needs and being available to comfort them during difficult times (e.g. loose of a family member back home); *punctuality*: all MHS activities start on time; *modern and advanced*: constant internet availability and free access and use of social media (e.g. sms newflash) to communication with students; *uncompromising culture*: although open minded to learning about other cultures, they local students are mostly unwilling to adjust. They are proud people; *inhospitable*: most African student said that some of the Norwegian students were naturally not good host; *lower expectation*: the culture does not stretch students academically.

Asian students: *direct culture:* People use direct form of communicating; *unfriendly:* Norwegian students were perceived as most unfriendly group of students.

North American students: *humbling:* constantly learning through differences; *politically correct:* people are afraid to express what they truly feel for the sake of equality, sensitivity and acceptance of differences; *lower expectation:* the culture does not encourage standing out.

South America student: *sensitive and understanding:* some students are sensitive to understand how challenging it is for foreign students to adapt to the new culture especially when they too have experienced being a foreigner.

Intercultural Communication

The majority of MHS students are not English first language speakers. Out of a total of twenty seven research participants, only two students are 1st language English speakers, seventeen are 2nd language English speakers, six are 3rd language English speakers and two are 4th language English speakers. Out of the 16 nationalities represented in the research participants, only four countries (USA, Cameroon, Uganda and Tanzania) have English as an official national language which makes it easier for students from these countries to communicate in English at MHS.

Language: Students discussed the advantages and disadvantages of having English as their language of instruction. The following were considered advantages: those who speak English well and fluently are perceived to be more intelligent than those who are not well spoken in English. Some students think that it's because they interact more in class discussion, or ask intelligent questions or easily express their opinion and thought about the subject which is why they are considered more intelligent than those who are always quiet. Most students said that they feel that they could have contributed more in school discussions, group work or social interactions if they were speaking their mother tongue instead of English. For students who are still learning English, they are not confident to speak in public, so they prefer one-on-one conversation and are often afraid of making a mistake or being laughed at. "It is difficult to follow during class lectures if your English hearing skills are not good and most lecturers are fast spoken", one student said. Speaking pace and dialect of the speaker can be challenging to hear if the speaker has a deep dialect or accents like some of the African and Norwegian or American English which can be too fast to catch what is being said. For international students, the use of the Norwegian language in class is excluding

(sometimes the class discussion would move from English to Norwegian and back again and those who do not know Norwegian would require translation which is not always offered). The Norwegian information posted on the university notice board which is also excluding. For example, the invitation will say: “To All Students” yet it’s written in Norwegian, but not all students understand this language. For Norwegian students who are not fluent or confident to speak English, they find conversations in English burdensome because they struggle to express themselves in English. As a result, some students are likely to join a group of Norwegian student in the canteen than a group with international students to avoid the challenge. Sometimes, Norwegian students would speak Norwegian to each other in the midst of international students and some international students feel disrespected or excluded from the conversation because they miss what is being discussed. Some students find it unfair that Norwegian students have an option of writing their assignments and exams in either Norwegian or English because it gives them an added advantage over those who do not have the luxury of choosing to write in the native language.

Miscommunication or Misunderstanding: (a) *Signs* - One student¹ understood whistling as a sign of joy or celebration, while another understood it as a sign for evoking dead and evil spirits. These two students were house mates and for a while this misinterpretation (based on their different cultural reference) interrupted their interaction. After tolerating the whistling for some weeks, one day his house mate asked him to stop whistling, explained how it made him feel; then the misunderstanding was cleared and the whistle discounted out of respect”. (b) *Body language* - many Norwegian students keep a large space between them and the next person. They would usually sit tables away from others in the canteen even though there are only two people in the room. They are not interest in me, one student thought. (c) *English Idioms and proverbs*: for those who are not English first language speakers, they often misunderstand English proverbs and idioms. Some of the Africans students like to speak in idioms or parables e.g. “Uneasy lays the head that wears the crown”, “Let sleeping dogs lie” or “Penny wise, pound foolish” etc. (d) *Context*: during class discussions, many students will give examples using expressions or situations that are only common to the speaker’s cultural background e.g. skiing or awaking the ancestors. This makes it challenging to understand fully or follow the class discussions. (e) *Slag or jargon*: it’s a challenge for some students to understand slag or jargon words.

¹ Duncan. 07.06.2011. MHS Stavanger. Interview number: B0027

For example, one student said he was broke and his friend understood him to mean he broke a body part like a leg and was concerned about his health, but the friend meant that he did not have money to take part in the activity. (f) *Invitation*: one of the African students¹ was asked out for dinner by his Norwegian colleague and he accepted. After they finished their meal at the restaurant, the Norwegian colleague only paid for his meal and the African colleague was amazed at his Norwegian friend's lack of host etiquette. If I knew that I was paying for myself, I would have declined the invitation because I did not budget for it, he said. Another international student invited friends to her apartment for a movie and one of the friends, a Norwegian, brought along snacks and drinks and presented them to the host. When the movie was over, the Norwegian friend took the uneaten and left over snacks and drinks back home. The African students thought it was inappropriate because if you give something you should not take it back unless its offered back, if you take it back then it might mean you gave reluctantly.

Communication and Culture: Norwegian students spoke about “janteloven” culture among Norwegians which encourages Norwegians to be equal and not stand out. This has influenced the way they express themselves. “In Norway, you are not supposed to show if you have accomplished something and you should never think that you’re good at anything. If you achieve something, you just keep it to yourself”². Norwegian students mentioned that this is a challenge for them when they communicate because they are not free to express their strength or achievements. When they see international students communicating their achievements, it is sometimes too much, strange and uncomfortable too, but some Norwegians admire their confidence.

For international students, it is common for them to compare Norway with their own country. They compare their lifestyle and habits e.g. how they practice Christianity, academic structure or government systems. Many international students have volunteering spoken highly about Norway's well-structured and transparent governance and good socialist values. On other areas, international students generally speak negatively about the way Norwegians do things because its different and not easy to accept e.g. Norwegians don't stop to say hello; in my culture it is rude to just pass by as through you do not know me³. Another international student said Norwegian women are dominating the men instead of sharing roles equally⁴.

² Joyce. 24.05.2011. MHS Stavanger. Interview number: B0017

³ Mary. 02.06.2011. MHS Stavanger. Interview number: B0024

⁴ Rodney. 26.05.2011. MHS Stavanger. Interview number: B0019

Hierarchy: Many African students mentioned that it is uncommon for them to sit next to the University Rector or lecturers during lunch and have a casual conversation because they did not experience this in their home country. “Lecturers in my country eat in a separate place from the student”⁵. When the lecturer joins students who find this practice uncommon and uncomfortable, it may cause some to be more cautious in their behaviour at the table (e.g. eat less, speak less or politely agreeing with everything said). Other students welcome this free interaction among lecturers and students even though it is uncommon. In Asia, it’s not good to question the lecturer or ask questions in class: it is considered disrespectful because the lecturer will think that you are challenging him and questioning his capabilities as a professional and qualified teacher⁶. Despite the language challenge, the Asian student found it difficult to ask questions in class and prefer to consult the lecturer in private so he/she can explain in a non-threatening environment.

Communication skills: Many students have observed that culture influences how people speak. Some international students felt that the European students were too direct, aggressive⁶ and impolite in their speech. Some mentioned that African students were very polite which was sometimes misunderstood as being weak or lacking assertiveness. Some said that other students were arrogant in the way they spoke to them and felt that it was not a culture issue but an issue of undermining and disrespecting the person they spoke to. Some of the African students said that they observed how Norwegians can say one thing verbally (agree to something), but their body language says otherwise, “they are not genuine”. One of the African students⁷ said she tends to avoid such students because she is not sure whether she is becoming a burdensome to the other students or not because they don’t honestly communicate their feelings. Topic to avoid at school were said to include religion, national identity and human rights issues. These are considered delicate topics for discussion as they often end up creating a tense and uncomfortable environment because students feel the need to defend their country’s ways or views.

Multicultural Encounters and Interactions: Many students have experienced culturally diverse environment prior coming to MHS and others had none until they attended MHS. From a total of twenty 27 research participants, ten students have only encountered multiculturalism within their own country excluding their visit to Norway. Seven participants have travelled outside their own country and experienced different cultures there.

⁵ Robert. 28.04.2011. MHS Stavanger. Interview numbers: B001

⁶ Kate. 14.05.2011. Skype Stavanger. Interview number B009

⁷ Carina. 05.05.2011. MHS Stavanger. Interview number: B004

Only six of the research participants have encountered multiculturalism both as tourist and residents in a foreign country for a minimum of six months (excluding international students' stay in Norway). Two students encountered multiculturalism through religious encounters and two have not experienced any multiculturalism because they have never travelled outside their own country and live in a homogeneous cultured country and community. Research participants who have encountered other cultures outside their counties of origin and abroad said: their experiences made it easier to encounter other cultures here at MHS, because you get used to it. They were more confident in approaching the other, ready to deal with the uneasy moments of first encounter and they had realistic expectations. Those that have encountered multiple cultures only from their own continents said that they experienced great difficulty with cultures outside their continent especially for African and Asian students. Out of the 13 research participants that have travelled outside their country, only seven have travelled to a different continent from their own. These seven students said that they found it easy settling in and fitting into their new environment at MHS because they have already developed a coping mechanism like asking questions even when it sounds stupid or not being afraid of making a mistake.

Social Expectation: Some expected to make friendships; academic partners or simply make acquaintances and others expressed a desire to focus solely on their academic life. Some have experienced culture shocks which have caused them to be withdrawn initially during the first six months of joining the university. On the other hand, some students have adapted well in the new MHS environment and culture allowing them to settle in quicker and smoothly than other students. This applied to both international students and Norwegian students who were experiencing a multicultural university for the first time or a new geographical environment if they had not previously lived in Stavanger.

Initial Interaction: Activities such as orientation week, COL week, canteen lunch and sporting games were said to provide an easy interaction platform among all students. "The challenge with orientation week is that few students participate and it's often the same people who participate. Some students have prior obligation like part-time work while others simply do not join in because they have other social networks outside school or have experienced these activities before"⁸. During COL week, most groups meet daily and work closely together on their class assignment.

⁸ Matthew. 01.06.2011. MHS Stavanger. Interview number: B0023

All the research participants who participated in COL week said they enjoyed the group interaction even though some did not like their assigned topics. During lunch breaks, it is common to find a group of students at the student cafeteria eating or just chatting to each other. The canteen is considered a good place to meet other students, socialise with class mates or make new friends from other academic programs. Most students gather there during lunch hour 11:00 to 12:00. Majority of the African students do not visit the canteen unless there is an organised university activity which they are invited to like MHS Christmas dinner. The students that go to the canteen for lunch feel that the African students who do not have lunch in the canteen are isolating themselves and automatically excluding themselves from social interaction - it is difficult to interact with people who are not available. MHS soccer team is multicultural and consists of both genders. Many European, American and African students agree that playing sports together has created an opportunity to interact more closely and create friendships on the field.

There are various factors that students said hinder or helps interaction among students, these barriers or enablers include: race, personality and social skills, age and religion. **Race:** All the African students are black and they say that when they see another black student on campus, they are automatically confident to approach each other because they believe that they share many commonalities such as cultural background which makes the interaction spontaneous. **Personality and social skills:** many students have linked individual's lack of social skills to their cultural background or personality. Majority believe that one's culture or personality can become a social barrier making initial interaction challenging or non-existent because of the physical and emotional distance it creates among students. **Age and position:** Few students are older than the general MHS student population who are mostly under 30 years of age. Due to the age difference, some younger students tend to hesitate interacting with the older students and are more at ease with peer groups. **Religion:** Ramadan – the Islamic month of fasting overlapped with MHS's first opening day of university both in August 2010 and 2011. As a tradition, MHS holds its orientation week during the first school week where most of the activities either include food and active games or sport activity. Students observing the fasting month, are unable to attend most activities, making interaction with them challenging during these initial academic weeks even though they are keen on social interactions.

Multicultural Teams

Five students said they prefer to work individually on school projects. Majority of those who prefer team work are male students from different continents. The rest of the research participants said they preferred both team work and individual academic task.

Team Work Challenges: students that have worked in multicultural groups at MHS for academic purposes said that they encountered the following challenges: (a) some group leaders can be dictators. In some groups, everyone wants to lead; (b) difficulty with intercultural communication and language differences; (c) some members impose their ideas on to the rest of the group; (d) there are often personality clashes that interrupt productivity. The discussions can be lengthy because everyone must have a chance to speak lest they feel excluded; (e) Group work is more time consuming than individual work; (f) not all members are proactive or positive or committed.

Team Member Traits: As part of the team work discussions, research participants were asked to describe the kind of team member they would select to be on their team if instructed to do so. The following are character traits that most students look for in group members: people with work ethics such as honesty; respect for others; those that are reliable and committed; good communicators, different genders, racial and cultural diversity would ensure the production of universally rich and holistic solutions and approaches; and people with a team player spirit as well as proactive people.

Overall Multicultural Experience: When asked about the overall experiences of the time spent at MHS, students in the majority had a good time. Research participants were not given measuring themes, this was an open ended question and all of them included the academic and social experience in their assessment and description or ratings. From a total of twenty seven participants, twenty two students said that they had a good overall experience at MHS (both social and academic), two had a negative experience (bad academically and bad socially) and three had an average experience (average social experience but bad academic). The social environment contributed largely to how the students rated their overall experience indicating that the social atmosphere strongly affected the overall university experience. If the social environment was good, this overshadowed the negative or unsatisfactory experiences in other areas. Similarly, if the student encountered a bad social environment at MHS, this bad experience cloud their judgement of the academic experience.

Chapter Six

ANALYSES OF FINDINGS

In the previous chapter, I discussed the findings from the research data collected mainly through one-on-one interview with research participants and observation of student interaction at MHS. In chapter four, I underlined two theories by Richard D. Lewis and Hans-George Gadamer on understanding and interpreting culture. In this chapter, I marry the theory and the findings to present my analyses of the research data and answer the research question: What happens when multi-culturally diverse students interact and work with each other within a university environment?

The following paragraphs are discussion of my interpretation of the research findings which revealed various factors of interest on multicultural interactions. The focus of this thesis is on analysing two major points, cultural behavioural norms and the collective identity traits shared by the students which go beyond native culture, pointing at human culture. I have arranged the analyses and my discussion points based on Hans-George Gadamer's (1997) hermeneutic circle and according to the three phases adopted from Scandinavian anthropologists Øyvind Dahl and Marita Svane (Dahl 2008:3) as per theory discussion in chapter four: First phase is the *Thesis* – reference frame before intercultural interaction; followed by the *Anti-thesis phase*- consists of the parts exposed during intercultural interaction; and third is the *Synthesis phase* - development of a new reference frame. I have also used chapter three's previously researched articles on higher education written by some of the experts on the subject of multiculturalism. What follows are the research participants' narrations of their personal encounters at MHS, their names have been disguised to conceal their identity and to respect their privacy. The footnote gives reference to each interview and observation note. Using their stories from the research interview, my observation notes and analysis, I simulate few discussion or scenario by merging two or more narrations of their experiences taken from different interviews to capture the essence of what is being communicated by these students.

Pre-Multicultural Interaction Thesis Phase

Basic Understanding

Thesis phase is about the pre-understanding that students had prior to or during initial stages of the multicultural encounter at MHS. Pre-understandings are everything that each individual student brings with them into an intercultural interaction. This includes a reservoir of basic pre-understanding on elements such as: space, body, time, worldview, social relations and language as well as basic understanding of self, other, life, values, norms and the world. All this basic understanding makes up an individual's frame of reference or frame of interpretation (Dahl 2008:8). Pre-understanding are fore-meaning (meaning prior the encounter) based on prejudice, stereotyping and generalization or categorizing of cultures. In chapter four we discussed the theory on the thesis phase; now the theory is applied to the findings to help us understand the basic pre-understanding on space, body, time and social relations that research participants held.

Space according to Dahl (2008:8) refers to the physical distance between or among people during social interaction. For example, John⁹ understood the proximity during conversation to indicate interest in interacting, so when James¹⁰ (from his class) sit tables away from him in the canteen during lunch break, John interpreted this to mean that James has no interest in chatting to him and therefore communicating the impossibility to develop friendship. James regards the respect of personal space to be important, so he sat tables away from John to allow John time to himself and illustrate to John that he respects his personal space. James thinks that because John is new in Norway, he has been potentially bombarded with questions about Asia or his initial thoughts on Norway; and would perhaps enjoy eating his meal in peace and quiet. James usually requires some time out after a rushed morning or week in order to recuperate and then he is ready to get into the social interaction again, so out of respect he gave John the same recuperation time. "My first encounter was that Norwegians were racist because they always kept a distant. They will not sit next to you in the bus or great you at church" John.

⁹ John. 12.05.2011. MHS Stavanger. Interview number: B0012

¹⁰ James 16.05. 2011. MHS Stavanger. Observation note number: D001

The Body, as discussed by Dahl (2008:8) refers to how people communicate using nonverbal communication expressed in body language. Suzan¹¹ and Kate¹² became friends during the orientation at MHS and were grouped together for a school project. Suzan felt that it was sometimes challenging to understand Kate. Kate said one thing with her words, but her body language communicated the opposite. For example, Kate said yes to Suzan's suggestion to execute their school project using her idea, but Kate's body language communicated disagreement. Suzan interpreted Kate's miscommunication to mean she was imposing her ideas onto Kate. Suzan usually felt the need to second guess what Kate was actually communicating. Kate on the other hand, liked Suzan and did not want to upset their friendship by challenging her ideas in public causing her to lose face.

Time, refers to how we perceive time; is time going or is time coming and do we plan our day with a mindset that is running out every second or with a perception that time is created or gained. Peter¹³'s social interactions were mostly spontaneous, so when he got to Norway, he found it challenging to set appointments to see other students. Most of the meetings were in a restaurant or coffee shop. For Peter this sort of meeting felt like a business meeting with an agenda and predetermined duration of meeting. Peter's friend Timothy¹⁴ needs to schedule all his activities so he is able to get the most of his day. So if Timothy must complete all his activities and meet social commitment he needed stick to plan and allocated duration. Peter thinks spending time with friends is important and should not always or mostly be under a timed stopwatch because it feels uncomfortable and staged. Patrick¹⁵ also shares Peter's view and thinks that Timothy's behavior is strange: "I have encountered a lot of strange stuff like the climate e.g. snow all over the place. People's behavior is also another strange behavior – individualistic and they enjoy private lifestyle. In my country people we enjoy communion with each other you don't even have to know each other, no appointments or plan for a gathering. Here you need an appointment and to plan ahead of time to meet for an hour, you can't just hang out for over three hours."

¹¹ Suzan 16.05. 2011 and 07.06.2011. MHS Stavanger. Interview numbers: B0011, B0026 and B0027

¹² Kate. 14.05.2011. Skype Stavanger. Interview number B009

¹³ Peter 18.05.2011 and 02.05.2011. MHS Stavanger. Interview numbers: B008 and B002

¹⁴ Timothy. 30.06.2011. MHS Stavanger. Interview number: D007

¹⁵ Patrick. 02.05.2011. MHS Stavanger. Interview number: B002

The term '**Social Relations**' refers to the way we create, develop and maintain social relationship as well as what we perceive as appropriate social conduct when relating to others according to (Dahl 2008). After enjoying a lengthy conversation with two Norwegian students, Mary was puzzled when these students who she now assumed were potential friends passed her without greeting her. People in Mary's university department back in her home country, usually took time to acknowledge each other's presence especially when they have interacted with one another during university activities. Several times when Mary saw them, they seemed to be in a hurry to get somewhere and looked busy all the time; never stopping to say hello or wave hi or even a nod in acknowledgement. Mary interpreted their behavior to mean that the interaction they shared the day before did not mean the beginning of friendship to them and it might have meant so little that they did not even recognize her days later. Most Norwegian students prefer to build friendship over time and allow the relation to take a natural course. Hence the constant greetings without having time for a sincere chat would be unnatural and an inconsequential act for them compared to taking time to spend quality time together. It's about taking time to say hello to the next person which Mary felt it was most important to the potential friendship that may follow.

Negative Stereotype

As discussed in chapter four, stereotypes or prejudices are forms of categorization which form part of the cognitive repertoire we use when we try to render the complex world around us more intelligible. Stereotypes are not merely automatic patterns of reaction, but also dynamic and context bound images used by individuals to create meaning in their lives and in their interpersonal relationships. They are built on social and cultural material as well as personal interpretation and take form in a constantly ongoing dialogue between different horizons of understanding (Illman 2006:110). Stereotypes or prejudice are fore-meaning which do not necessarily mean a false judgment, but part of the idea is that it can have either a positive or a negative value (Gadamer 1997:270). Owing to the fact that prejudice can be wrong, this is why "prejudice clearly requires suspending its validity and as long as our mind is influenced by a prejudice, we do not consider it judgment for what leads to understanding must be something that is already asserted itself in its own validity" (Gadamer 1997:299). Its negative thinking that does not mirror reality correctly, but taken to be truth and used as a power tool to demean other cultures or individuals who are different from us (Dahl 1995:17 cited in Illman 2006:104).

This is an example of a negative stereotype that a research participant held which hindered her from effectively interacting with “the multicultural other(s)” at MHS to experience meaningful social encounters. Their judgment or evaluations of others were based on misinterpreted culture or behavioral norms and insufficient information.

Abigail¹⁶ thinks that Norwegian people are cold; meaning that they are unfriendly and insensitive, exhibit no emotion or enthusiasm towards people outside their core circle. Meaning that, their body language is closed giving off signals which communicate inaccessible, egocentric or not interested. Abigail described Norwegians as being cold based on her observation of few Norwegian students on campus and general population outside campus in terms of how they related to each other and others. Abigail is well travelled and has lived in more than two different countries, and had not experienced such coldness in the other culture. As a result, Abigail was not interested in integrating with Norwegian people and her interaction kept reaffirming her prejudice about Norwegians being cold. This is associated with acts of self-fulfilling prophecy. In explaining their native social behavior, Lauren and Matthew said the following: “We are very cold in the beginning but once you get to know us we are very warm” Lauren¹⁷; “Many internationals say that Norwegians are shy. A lot of Norwegians now take a lot of alcohol and then they are not shy anymore and can interact, which is a bad way of doing it. Norwegians are introverts ...it takes time for us to get to know people more. Here at school I noticed that when there are no regular activities, it’s easy to just go home for all students. When there are activities, it’s natural to join in” Matthew¹⁸.

Positive Stereotype

The following are examples of positive forms of categorization because the examples refer to research participants who understood that their stereotypes or prejudices were inadequate and therefore treated their stereotypes as a meaning creating devices which were not cemented and concluded meaning. When encountering “the other” (foreign students), they placed their pre-understanding and fore-meaning to a test, accessing whether the thinking is valid and if it mirrored reality correctly. In cases where they realized their prejudices were incorrect, they were flexible to alter their thinking and opened themselves to production of new meaning through fusion of horizons (Gadamer 1997:299).

¹⁶ Abigail. 05-12.05.2011. MHS Stavanger. Interview numbers: B006, B004 and B00012

¹⁷ Lauren. 20.05.2011. MHS Stavanger. Interview number: B0014

¹⁸ Matthew. 01.06.2011. MHS Stavanger. Interview number: B0023

Some students had no prior knowledge of Norway or MHS before coming to study here and had not done any research on the culture or people. They simply assumed that it will not be too different to require such preparation, but came with expectation of which some were unmet. Abigail is one of such students, whose expectations were based on a limited frame of reference – seeing things according to her culture. Abigail gave up an opportunity to study in one of the prestigious university in her country to study at MHS and was highly disappointed on arrival. The size of the university building, the number of students in classes, the casual lectures, teaching style and quality of the lectures as well as the frequency of lecturers – all these resembled a high school experience for her. Norway represented, according to Abigail the best of Europe considering that it is one of the wealthiest cities in the continent and the world, so she expected MHS to mirror wealth, prestige and academic achievers and excellence presented from the outside to the inside - through architecture, formal academic structured and the culture. Perhaps if Abigail had read about Norway and collected positive stereotypes about its culture, she would have had a close to reality picture of Norway. She may have read that the Norwegians are casual in their dress code for work, don't care much for hierarchy but an equal system and that theirs is a laidback culture in comparison to other countries. She could have perhaps also read that the Norwegian education system might be casual like their culture; or about the independent student orientated teaching style. All these might have been someone else' view of Norway, but it is a helpful eye opening stereotype. With such informative stereotypes of Norwegian culture in hand, Abigail would have not come to MHS expecting to encounter Oxford University or Cambridge University. There is nothing wrong with the expectation itself, but a good example of how basic understanding derived from stereotypes than be helpful.

When Simon, Dave, Victoria, Sophia and Evan¹⁹ were assigned a week long intensive project which they were required to work on together as a group during COL week, they encountered many challenges regarding how to work effectively together: assign task and roles, decide on the project plan, articulate the group's goal, harmonize individual strength, create a safe and open environment for discussions and establish way of supporting the individual weakness. Analyses of such challenges teams experienced during COL week, show that many of the group difficulties were caused by the fact that the group members did not know each other and needed to establish basic knowledge of understanding their team members.

¹⁹ Dave, Evan, Simon, Sophia and Victoria. 02.06.2011. MHS Stavanger. Observation note: D006

This basic knowledge of each other would simplify the next stages of establishing and agreeing on group protocol and eventually completing the project successfully. When asked about group interaction challenges during COL week, Joyce said “there were some groups who had more heavy discussions due to personality clashes. My experience as I reflected about it I realized that we are not cultures, but humans. Sometimes we get so caught up with the different cultures forgetting that we are people not country talking to another country”. This is where the use of Richard D. Lewis’ (2006) theory LRM active culture can help groups to develop healthy and positive stereotyping about the other to help them work effectively through the critical first stage after being assigned to a group.

For example, knowing that Victoria is a multi-active cultured person who is not interested in schedules or punctuality, it would not be a good idea to ask her to manage the team’s daily progress ensuring that the work is on schedule. Victoria may be most beneficial to the group if she used her skills to collaborate all team members’ ideas and research finding in order to produce one corporate idea for the final class presentation. Knowing that Dave is a linear-active cultured person who is task-oriented and an organized planner, good at analyzing a project, compartmentalizing it and tackle problem in schedules. Dave may serve the team best if he works on clarifying the team goals and checking on performances and efficiency according to a team’s agreed plan. Considering that the group’s topic is about arranged marriages within a European context, Sophia’s dialogue-oriented cultured personality may be best utilized here to source first hand information from people at MHS or within the community on their personal experiences of arranged marriages. Simon is a good listener who concentrates on what the speaker is saying, never interrupts and takes a decent period of silence after the speaker has stopped showing respect for the weight of the remarks, which he considered unhurriedly and with due deference. In any group setting it is vital to ensure that every group member’s idea is heard without being rushed and all ideas are considered in the group’s decision making process. Simon’s reactive-active culture and skills comes handy here to ensure that each member is heard. Simon and Victoria may work together to ensure that every team member’s idea and thoughts are considered during the collaboration process. Evan’s cultural profile wander away from the Lewis’ LRM culture active triangle (see chapter four for details) axes occupying a central location inside the triangle (figure.2). Evan may possess qualities that enable him to be an efficient mediator or international team leader.

Although every team members is a potential leader, Evan's mediation trait sets him apart particularly in a group like this where all members are natives of different countries. In a group set up like these, the ability to pick up on the culture traits that Richard Lewis speaks of allows us to positively connect people's culture and other personal traits to areas where they can excel most. Granted, there is a high chance that some or all the members are wrongly placed, in which case the team might discover this early enough to make changes. The reality for many groups working together in a professional work environment is that teams often have limited to no time to get to know each other well enough to correctly place individuals and utilize their skills well. This is why many organizations' Human Resource departments rely on a psychometric test - any standardized procedure for measuring sensitivity or memory or intelligence or aptitude or personality before they decide to hire a new employee. The test is used to evaluate whether the person interviewed has the skills required for the position. The psychometric tests, like Lewis' LMR active culture test are used for initial ground work (eye-opener), later the test results (formed stereotypes) are tested through personal interaction when working with the individual.

Anti-thesis Multicultural Interaction Phase

This phase is an active phase of understanding, which is activated when the pre-understanding is insufficient. The pre-understandings are tested, previous experiences are placed in a critical light, and new things are explained and reflected upon. Symbols, language, interaction and interpretation are central to what happens in this phase. The investigation of the parts contributes to new wholes and production of meaning takes place (Dahl 2008:3). According to Illman (2006:109-110), students coming into a multi-culturally diverse environment will encounter others on three levels as an *Idealized Other*-an exotic, romantic position, bored with my home country and looking for an adventure context; a *radical other*-a negative interpretation of the different other; uninteresting and incomprehensible other, so no meaning connection can possibly exist; or an *autonomous other*-open, respectable relationships, wholehearted encounter where defining and observing tendencies give way to a more direct mutual presence – seeking to know and understand the other.

Duncan met idealized other in Norwegians. He is from a third world country and he received a scholarship to study in a first world country which he considered a great privilege to be accepted and funded. For Duncan, his purpose of being in Norway/MHS was to be taught profound things academically, personally and practically; learn about technology and modern culture; be enlightened and to absorb as much knowledge as he could, so he could use it all to enrich his community back home. He did not see himself as someone who could add value to his new environment. The truth was that Duncan had the treasure of real life experience on areas that some of the students had only read about and were willing to pay a lot of money to go on anthropological or mission trips to experience his life, be impacted by the lives of indigenous first nation natives.

Abigail met *radical others* in some of the students at MHS. She had a negative interpretation about her new environment at MHS and the people; she constantly criticized everything from the people to the lecturer and found it difficult to see any positive element about studying at MHS. Abigail had no friends at the university or in class because she felt it was not worth investing her time in friendships that will expire when the two year academic period ends. It would have been nice to make friends, but it required a lot of time and a lot of hard work initially to establish good friendship and even then there was no guarantee that it will result in solid friendship, Abigail thought. Abigail missed the COL week (compulsory group work) and did not get a chance to work in groups and missed the interaction. She thought that the group week could have made a difference if she attended, as well as regular classes and discussion groups which were lacking since there was a lot of independent study. Abigail also thought the classes did not add much to the total academic year, so one could miss the classes without incurring any significant consequences, according to her. Abigail was so negative that she did not try enough to see what other students saw – the potential to build mutually benefitting relationship whose experience could be enjoyed passed the experience. If only she was not short sided and closed to transposing herself interculturally. Victory or failure, there is always something in it worth learning from.

Mary and Joyce met an *autonomous other* in each other. They were in the same group during COL week and worked so well together that their interaction continued beyond COL week and into friendship which they continue to enjoy after the academic year ended. Joyce is from Europe, has never been to Africa, but has always had a keen interest in Africa particularly Ugandan people and their culture. Mary is from Africa and coming to MHS was her first trip to out of Africa.

Although Mary has lived and worked in the city, she enjoys the village lifestyle because people there share life together more intimately than in the city where people withdraw into private life with immediate family.

Both Mary and Joyce brought with them into this relationship “precisely” themselves; their varied individual horizons and allowed themselves to be transposed into a learning arena with the possibility of establishing lifelong friendship or academic partnership. What made their relationship mutually enriching was that they were open to learn more about each other and one another’s culture. Many people have the desire to learn about multicultural diversity and are partially open to it, but lack the humility to be open-minded, sincere and real within the interaction. Although Joyce was keen to learn about African people and culture, and build up her reservoir of knowledge as well as create an opportunity to visit one of the African countries, she did not let this desire be the driving force of her interaction with African people. Mary found it challenging to function in the new environment, discovering that there were many things she needed to familiarize herself with to ensure she settled in well and can perform optimally academically. Joyce was very helpful in this regard, since MHS is located in her home city. Although, Mary was keen to learn from Joyce since she was open to help. Mary did not establish friendship with Joyce or any other Norwegian in order to gain academic advancement. Joyce and Mary’s friendship was established out of genuine interest in the other. The informal interaction outside the classroom at dinner at Joyce’s home or hanging out together around the city provided many opportunities to get to know each other better. The two enjoyed mutually good friendship which they separately talked about with me during our research conversation. The significant moment of their friendship was when Mary was hospitalized and Joyce was by her side, held her hand through surgery and supported her through the recovery process too. Mary knew that Joyce’s friendship was not superficial nor a selfish kind (*techne*), but a genuine interaction (*praxis*) that went far beyond mere contact and a friendly façade.

Their interaction included learning about each other, difference in background, experience, and perspectives, as well as getting to know one another individually in an intimate enough way to discern common goals and personal qualities; and meaningful enough way to illuminate or reduce any previously held prejudices about Africans and Europeans or surpass language barriers. Their relationship is by no means perfect, but it’s a friendship with the right perspective that is open to and is allowing fusions of horizons to freely take place.

Open Course of Communication

Open course of communication means that students open themselves to new production of meaning as they enter into a multicultural encounter at MHS. Their openness means that their pre-understanding or stereotypes are put aside in order to experience each other without biases. The newly collected information about the other is played off against prejudice/pre-understanding information, through action, speech and reflection to test the validity of the initially held stereotypes. The simultaneity of interaction and conversation has the ability to make visible the similarities and difference of students' understanding of culture and identity; create common reference points in time and space in the here and now. Simultaneity makes visible differences in conceptions and interpretation; and negotiate the use of symbols, language and values, use of space and material; therefore allowing the creation of meaning and identity as well as a system of revelation about things, people and relations, activities and task (Dahl 2008:9-10).

One of the master degree classes established an open group that created their own extra mural activities to fill their time since they had a lot of free time, while ensuring they had enough interaction both on a quantitative and qualitative level. This open group was made up mostly of students from the same class. There were a few students from other classes who regularly joined in and other students dropped in and out of activities depending on their schedule. This group was culturally diverse with all genders as members and they joined in on activities such as: swimming, soccer, beach trips and a lot of eating together activities like canteen lunches, exploring the city's coffee shops, cooking and eating dinners together, celebrating birthday parties and exploring the city of Stavanger together and academic partnering for study purposes. Many are glad to have had an opportunity to encounter each other in a relaxed atmosphere, share life experiences and learn from one another. It is while engaged in an academic interaction like COL week group projects or an extramural activity like playing soccer that some of the meaningful interactions took place. The sport itself or the nature of the project is not the thing that influences interaction, but it is the atmosphere that is created while interacting during an activity that inspires and catalyses open communication and meaningful encounters. The sport brought them together creating a platform to penetrate each other's structures of meaning and generate new understanding since meaning is socially constructed; and the communication opens for a fusion of horizons (Dahl 2008:9-10).

“Commonalities among people make it easier to establish relationships – close relations, but it does not automatically establishment of good friendship” Patrick²⁰.

Research conducted by four multicultural anthropologists: Leung, Maddux, Galinsky and Chiu (2008:169-181) revealed that multicultural experience fosters creativity. As discussed in chapter three, the authors found that extensiveness of multicultural experiences was positively related to both creative performance (insight learning, remote association, and idea generation) and creativity-supporting cognitive processes (retrieval of unconventional knowledge, recruitment of ideas from unfamiliar cultures for creative idea expansion). Their studies also showed that the serendipitous creative benefits resulting from multicultural experiences may depend on the extent to which individuals open themselves to foreign cultures, and that creativity is facilitated in contexts that deemphasize the need for firm answers or existential concerns. The authors discuss the implications of their findings for promoting creativity in increasingly global learning and work environments. At MHS the students viewed the group discussions during COL week, class discussions and other interaction as extensiveness of multicultural experiences which were positively related to creative performances. It was during such discussions that students received insight knowledge about other cultures, their perception and their worldview; particularly in class discussion related to social anthropology or current affairs topics. Research participants found the class discussion particularly enriching because the discussion were directed, focused and structured although limited in frequency and duration. The discussion outside class during extra mural activities were also said to be insightful, but they occurred spontaneously and such moments were few and far in between. Topics like religion and politics are challenging to discuss in social setting, so students are more at ease and take things less personal if it's a general discussion in class. These are some examples of their recollected moments when they were inspired, encouraged, challenged to see things from the eye of 'the other':

Before I came here I knew nothing about the daily life in Africa only what I have seen on TV (which was mostly about poverty and famine). Now I know the people and how they live life and see the world. Before being here I could not imagine living in Africa. This also helped me to go on a study trip without fear. I have shared so much with the international students like eating dinner with friends and going to the market, sit together and laughed together. We helped each other in needy situations. Even my family has adjusted to the idea of me living in a foreign country, they don't say "you will die", but "we can understand". Before I knew anyone from Africa, if I saw them on the street, I would have assumed similarly to Norwegians that he is a refugee simply because he is black and not an educated person who is here to study. I don't feel that the Norwegians feel that way about

²⁰ Patrick. 02.05.2011. MHS Stavanger. Interview number: B002

me because I am more similar to them in the way I look and Norwegians have a good relationship with [my country]. Pamela²¹

I would like to have [worked with] people that do not agree with me. There are things that I do not know. When we are working with others I learn so much from them. In my class there are people who I do not agree with [have different perspectives or worldview] but have learnt so much from them through class discussions. We talk with respect and agree to disagree... I like class discussions but sometimes when the discussions are in English then I feel limited. I would have so much to say but end up not saying anything or contributing very little. There are some difficult words in Theology that I want to use but I don't know how to translate them. Lesley²²

They liked my chanting of the liturgy and were every interested in how I do it. I have stopped because I have become busier. It has helped me to get to know the other Norwegian students especially when we discuss the plan [daily university devotion] and they would be interested to learn how to do the devotion the Malagasy way. Being in the group means you have to talk and interact so you eventually get to know each other more. Duncan²³

In our culture, we do not celebrate birthdays in my tradition. It is difficult for a child to know how old he/she is because they do not count, so the birthday system is something I like and have learned here. John²⁴

...I have been able to tell other student about my culture especially when I explain to them why I do something and for them to be patient with me. Kate²⁵

It has been a rich experience: to meet people, to discuss with them, being able to open my mind for different possibilities and cultures. I would have enjoyed the discussions more and there have been few classes where discussions were possible. The class discussions were the best moments of being here. Chris²⁶

Closed Course of Communication

Closed course of communication occurs when students withdraw from interaction and the opportunity to openly communicate, so they stick to their former stereotypes – simply categorizing people without taking the time to evaluate if your categorization of them fits reality. In this case, stereotypes become frozen and were used as self-fulfilling prophecies. Without a search for understanding, pre-understanding becomes rigid and immutable and individuals may become locked into closed structures of meaning (Dahl 2008:9). Closed structures of meaning translates into keeping closed perception and understanding of roles, activities, task, sequence of action, institutions and worldview. These are some examples of closed course of communication among some MHS students.

²¹ Pamela. 03.06.2011. MHS Stavanger. Interview number: B0026

²² Lesley. 03.06.2011. MHS Stavanger. Interview numbers: B0025

²³ Duncan. 07.06.2011. MHS Stavanger. Interview number: B0027

²⁴ John. 12.05.2011. MHS Stavanger. Interview number: B0012

²⁵ Kate. 14.05.2011. Skype Stavanger. Interview number: B009

²⁶ Chris. 05.05.2011. MHS Stavanger. Interview number: B003

The culture here is very politically correct - "live and let live", but I think that there is a lot that goes unsaid. It's not a true global culture in a true sense of the word. You cannot achieve much on a shallow level. They very much believe that everyone is equal and are sensitive to differences past the level that people might be afraid to express what they are feeling. I have never had anyone express that they feel like they are being overrun by immigration issues due to all the immigrants that are coming in. They simply say they are a lot of immigrants. The older people seem to be more open and say what they feel about it, while that might not be politically correct; it's honesty that I appreciate. Carina²⁷

Carina's observation became a negative barrier and a stumbling block that prevented her from a more meaningful interaction beyond the superficial level. Carina's idea of friendship is a relationship with people who are real and honest with one another and anything void of these was simply passing time. Betty²⁸ supported Carina's thinking with this statement: "I sometimes feel limited in what I can do or not do here in Norway because I don't want them to view me as an immigrant but an international student... There are so many Russians in Norway and I know that Norwegians don't like the high volume of Russian immigrants. I would not speak in Russian so that they don't think I am Russian."

I think that people need to open their mind to other people's thoughts and ideas. In MHS some people view other students as being lower in status, so they treat such people with less respect. I believe that studying intercultural communication is about each individual developing themselves not focusing on how to change the other students. Kate²⁹

Kate resented people's tendency to correct her way of doing things, feeling that they are trying to convert her into doing things their way. Kate like every other student wanted to be respected which meant accepting the person she is and her culture.

Mandy³⁰ dislikes eating in the canteen because she finds it uncomfortable, inconvenient and unwelcoming. She enjoys hot meals for lunch which are not always available in the canteen shop. Although she could pack a lunchbox and heat up before lunch, she finds 11:00 too early to have lunch. Mandy is economical about her spending since she gets low allowance. Like Mandy, Nathan³¹ mainly enjoys eating native food which he eats with his hands; something that they believe might raise an eyebrow among others. Some food like lamb, cabbage or beans, have a peculiar and unpleasant smell and might cause an embarrassing scene. There is also the issue of the food size or the presentation of the food that might cause an unwelcome stare.

²⁷ Carina. 05.05.2011. MHS Stavanger. Interview number: B004

²⁸ Betty. 26.05.2011. MHS Stavanger. Interview number: B0020

²⁹ Kate. 14.05.2011. MHS Stavanger. Interview number: B009

³⁰ Mandy. 06.06.2011 and 07.06.2011. MHS Stavanger. Interview numbers: B005 and B0027

³¹ Nathan. 19.05.2011. MHS Stavanger. Interview number: B0013

Consciously Mandy is not making an effort to meet other students during lunch hour because she fears rejection or embarrassment– what if no one sits with me and I look lost or I do something considered stupid, it would be embarrassing³². She also has pride because as an international student there are many other changes one undergoes to adjust and fit into the local culture so much that in some cases international students resist to make alterations - If they want interaction let them make the effort. Charlotte³³ is from Norway and she believes that “at school a new student can sit in the canteen. When I came to school, I was invited to sit along with other student, but I do not know how it would be for an African student. I think new students should not be afraid of making mistakes because that’s how we learn. There are some mistakes of course that you just avoid by asking other students what is expected.”

The challenge that Mandy and Kate are facing, is common among many international students, when they realize that the host country is expecting them to adjust. According to the host country, change means easy integration into the society or community and becoming one of them and resistance to change means isolation. Part of integrating is learning to speak their language which they greatly appreciate when foreigners make the effort. The notion is that if an individual chooses to stand out like a foreigner then he/she will be treated as one and the foreigner will never enjoy the intimacy of a meaningful relationship at that distance – they expect the outsider to draw closer. Multicultural interaction requires a great deal of humility from both sides in order to create a central meeting point, otherwise there will always be a resistance and a battle of power. The question of who should be the first to show humility is not an issue when both parties approach each other with mutual respect.

Lucas³⁴ is one of the students at MHS who felt strained because his multicultural class interactions were too demanding and emotionally costly. When I asked him during the interview about his overall experience at MHS, he said:

For four years the social life has not been good, so I don’t think it will change. Everyone misses home because at home everyone is friendly. Norwegians think that they are better than our country and culture, not just Norwegians but also Europeans too. They look down on Arabic countries and Africans. They only have bad side-stereotypes to our cultures. They don’t understand that the world is improving. I can’t deny that my country has problems, but after living here in Norway I feel that they are worthless and useless. Same things that happen at home happen here too. Lucas

³² John. 12.05.20011. MHS Stavanger. Interview number: B0012

³³ Charlotte. 09.06.2011. MHS Stavanger. Interview number: B0028

³⁴ Lucas. 30.05.2011. MHS Stavanger. Interview number: B0021

When I asked Betty³⁵ if her multicultural encounters had changed her view of the world she said: “I did not know much about African people; it’s mainly been about Europe, it’s been good to learn about African people and culture. I never thought that African people are so “focused” on religion. My explanation is because the African people were colonized and are not wealthy so they are trying to find a way to a better life.” Betty’s stereotype about religion is that it’s for poor people and the wealthy do not need it since they have a better life already. I have sited this as an example of a closed course of communication because although Betty was open to interact with African students, she was not open to learn from them and allow her horizon to fuse with the other in order to see a real picture of who they are and why they relate to the world the way they do. I agree that people look to religion like Christianity for a better life because the Christian message is the gospel of hope. However, I regard the statement as being closed minded if this was her interpretation or only explanation after a two year interaction with African students. For those seeking truth and understanding of the multicultural other, the exploration cannot end with a disproved hypothesis, but continues with a hypothesis test till the production of meaning is reached and the cycle continues because culture is dynamic.

Sometimes the differences are so overwhelming to other students that their state of culture shock last longer and can be difficult for some students to deal with it because everything may be happening in a rush. As a result, some students may come across as being too negative or anti their host culture. “African students have so many critics about Norwegians students that cause a barrier between them and the others students. They need to accept that this is the way they [Norwegians] are and will not change, so we have to adjust in order to break into the society and make life easier for ourselves”³⁶.

Emily³⁷ is from Ethiopia and she came to Norway expecting to develop academically and to also make friends. It was a surprise to her that creating interacting can be such a challenge, but soon realized that in a multicultural setting there are many things that one should not take for granted even what seems simple.

I meet someone I know and they were with other people, I try to get to know them too [the students that were standing with my friend] and establish friendship with them. I did this on one occasion and the other person refused to shake my hand. Second and third time I tried, he also refused. I realized that in life, you will meet unique cultures and identity, and I should not have expectations. I asked the other guy [my friend] and he said the reason is because my friend does not

³⁵ Betty. 26.05.2011. Verven Stavanger. Interview number: B0020

³⁶ John. 12.05.2011. MHS Stavanger. Interview number: B0012

³⁷ Emily. 16.05.2011. MHS Stavanger. Interview number: B0010

know you well. Only when you have established friendship then you can shake hands. In Africa you shake hands at initial meeting, so this was strange for me. Relationships are not one way and can be established through friends too. Emily

Synthesis Phase of Multicultural Interaction

After the encounter, the post understanding or the reflective phase represents a new pre-understanding about situations, relation, task, project and other. The change of culture that is brought about is the result of continuous dynamics of intercultural communication. The process contributes to openness for new interpretations, an experience that can legitimize changes for future generations or newcomers in the community (Dahl 2008:11). After the encountered experiences with multi-culturally diverse groups at MHS, what do students take away from this experience? Most students had a good idea of the impact their interaction has had on them already. I believe there is immediate visible multicultural impact and delayed impact recognizable long after the encounter has passed. During the interview, I asked the research participants what they have learned from their encounter so far, many said their experiences at MHS broadened their mind on issues like open dialogue and respecting differences; how to live a socially and academically independent life; learning the simplistic way of Norwegian lifestyle; and learning that living outside your own country immediately makes one an ambassadors since you might be the only tangible representative.

In communication, both culture and identity are at stake (Dahl 2008:12). When a frame of interpretation or frame of reference is changed, a new freedom to act is created and new meaning is generated. So what new meaning or freedom did the interviewed students discover? When I asked Mary about her overall experience at MHS, she said, “It was a good experience to find people who were kind to me. I learned something different during my time in the hospital; people were so kind towards me and generous too. From Norwegians I learned not to over promise...In my country, people like to promise and they are left in a dilemma when they are unable to keep the promise. Here in Norway, they just say, I will try and if it happens it is ok.” When answering the same question, Joyce said: “I have learned a lot about culture. I thought people were representing their culture, now I realize that each person is an individual. Of course their cultural background plays a role in who they are but they are individuals. I have also learned much from seeing others interact. When I was with my international friend, a Norwegian nurse was rude to her because she did not speak the local language. I was so embarrassed....Norwegians are not yanteloven (don't have an equality mindset) when it comes to their nationality, culture or heritage.”

Lesley's take away from the MHS multicultural experience is newly discovered possibilities of impacting the world: "I have only been interested in mission in my own country since I have been here [MHS]; I am interested in mission in other countries. I am not afraid of going to foreign countries. I just know that something in me has changed. It has opened up the world and knowledge of it. Now I feel that I do not have to know everything about what I will get involved in. I always wanted to have control, full and detailed information about a project before I take part. I have learned to be more relaxed. I did not realize this before, it's only when I look back. I like the multiculturalism, but it's a lot of work yet enjoyable. It has been interesting and fascinating to see how international students interpret the bible and see it in a different light. This has also helped me develop in my interpretation of the Bible scriptures."

Lucy³⁸ discovered a new way of thinking and making decisions: "...new environment and new experiences made me more matured. It also helped me to understand myself better and look into opportunities that I didn't consider before."

Ben³⁹ has learned that not everything new is worth adopting and that even within unpleasant multicultural encounters; there will almost always be something within the interaction worth learning from. Lessons such as understanding how important it is to teach the next generation aspects of culture worthy of being passed on as cultural legacy and leaving behind cultural behavioural norms that prove worthless: "There are things that I have learned here that I would not wish my country can adopt. It's bad to see a family in one house who would act as individuals where the child has his food in his room or someone comes in the house and goes straight to his own room without greeting the parents. One thing I have learned here which I want to take home is the culture of every member of the family having an opportunity to prepare meals in the kitchen. It is not good to always rely on someone else to do things for you, you need to also learn."

It is evident that when multi-culturally diverse students interact and work with each other within a university environment, they are exposed to an intercultural encounter that is often a complex experience of adventure and frustration, similarities and differences, hostility and hospitality, community and estrangement. Such interpersonal encounters often involve strong feeling of varying kind which affects the communication in different ways. Emotions therefore should not be excluded from research on intercultural communication (Dahl 2001:69,176; Jensen 1998:13 cited in Illman 2006:110).

³⁸ Lucy. 21.05.2011. MHS Stavanger. Interview number: B0015

³⁹ Ben. 01.06.2011. Skype Stavanger. Interview number: B0022

The narrations of individual students' experiences at MHS illustrate how they have dealt with varied circumstances whether with resistance or open-mindedness. Through their stories, one can see the back and forth pacing between the reality they knew back home and the reality experienced here particularly for the international students; and there is constant comparison between their native culture and the Norwegian and the international culture found here in Stavanger. Those that have learned the art of surrendering their right to always be correct, meaning giving up the idea that their way of thinking and being is the only way and insisting that other cultures have it wrong simply because they do things differently. It is giving up the right to criticise everything or subject everything to comparison with our native culture.

Some students have had the opportunity to experience meaningful interpersonal or intergroup encounters that illuminate or reduce negative prejudices about multiculturalism. When people feel accepted, respected and embraced, they become free to open their world, their culture and identity presenting an entry to other students to learn from them and *vies visa*. Many students have been able to meet such a welcoming environment that allowed for transposing of and fusion of horizons. What makes MHS what it is; are the people. Each individual whether local or international is to some extent responsible for making the MHS environment welcoming enough for the next person and each one of us plays a role, it starts with the individual. It begins and ends with our willingness to see the other, not seeing as in a flitting glance but seeing 'the other' with the aim of conceiving them, their thought language and taking our understanding beyond the appeal of logic and reason to an emotional awareness of who they are. As discussed in chapter three, simply attending, an ethnically diverse college does not guarantee that students will have the meaningful intergroup interactions that are important for the reduction of [negative] prejudice [against multicultural diversity] (Guri et al 2002:330).

Chapter Seven

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This research examined what happens when multi-culturally diverse students interact and work with each other within a university environment through a qualitative research method using semi-structured interviews and observation as main data collection tools. The sample included 27 students from sixteen nationalities and five continents, selected from the MHS undergraduate and postgraduate classes. I aspired to conduct the kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification, but the kind that produces findings arrived from real-world settings where the multicultural encounters and interaction unfolds naturally. I sort to understand the given research topic from the perspectives of the local student population whom this research involves. Hence I choose a qualitative research method instead of a quantitative research method. There are ethical issues surrounding social researches in general, just as there are in any other form of human activity, so likewise in this form of social research I considered the consequences of my research and the finding or analysis thereof in terms of its impact on the research participants and readers. Being aware of the ethical issues did not limit my freedom to write, but helped me to write their story in a manner that protected their personal identity.

Culture was the main topic in this thesis and we learnt from Fred Jandt (2007:1) that the nature and character of culture is dynamic, fluid with static elements and that culture develops within a self-sustained group. From Clifford Geertz (1973), we learnt that the context of culture is essentially a semiotic one where verbal and non verbal communication signs such as words, images, sound, gestures and objects can be intelligibly described. Øyvind Dahl (2008:11) highlighted that although culture is dynamic in nature, the changes within a culture occurs in a process within a phase of understanding and meaning production, and manifests itself in the post-understanding phase in different ways, in different periods among different individuals depending on their situation, context and purpose. From Geert Hofstede (2001:1) we discovered culture to be a collective programming of the mind, manifested in our values, symbols, heroes and rituals and issues of preferences programmed early in life. To analyse culture accurately, we learnt from Clifford Geertz that cultural studies requires an in-depth study of a specific culture in its context; and analytical distinction between the superficial cultural webs (thin descriptions – a blink: to close and open an eye rapidly) and deep cultural webs (thick description – wink: to close and open the eyelid

deliberately, as to convey a message, signal, or suggestion) which we have created over time; yet observing the differences, that a wink between brothers may carry a different message from a wink between mother and daughter owing to the different contexts.

The three phases of Hans-George Gadamer's Hermeneutic Theory of Interpretation (1997) namely: thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis phases, guided the analysis process. **Thesis Phase** is the reference frame before intercultural interaction. At these phase, we discovered that multicultural encounters require prior preparation before entering the diversity context. It is advised here that MHS students for example need to have a good understanding of their selves in terms of their identity (personal and social-relational identity), their cultural frame of reference. Students also need to have some fore-meaning about who the "other" is in terms of cultural behavioural norms. The "other" for foreign students is mainly the Norwegian culture, students and academic system. For Norwegian students the "other" is the international students, MHS culture and the new city environment if they are coming from outside Stavanger. In terms of fore-meaning, Richard Lewis's theory trains us on how to be more self-aware (knowing ourselves better) and how to discover the other's cultural norms through positive prejudices or stereotyping. Correct and appropriate prejudices are positive, non-judgemental or non-evaluation but simply descriptive, thus helpful when consciously held and mirror reality correctly (Dahl 1995:17 cited in Illman 2006:104).

The **Anti-Thesis Phase** consists of the parts exposed and challenged during intercultural interaction. At this phase Gadamer highly recommends students to bring into any multicultural experience, precisely themselves (e.g. their culture, academic, professional and personal experiences as well as their social skills) into the encounter context; be open to transpose themselves as they encounter others; learn from each other and share new experiences and discoveries. Ruth Illman (2006:109-110) adds to this phase the wise advice on positioning our mindset to encounter multi-culturally diverse students as autonomous others instead of the *idealized other* or *the radical other*. Students should be open to meaningful and mutually respectful interactions, approached at with great consideration and patience, seeking to know and understand the other. It's vital to remember that communication (either verbally or non-verbally) in itself does not instantaneously result in understanding, so misinterpretation and misunderstanding are common during multicultural interaction. In trying to communicate, we assume that words or body language have the same connotation associated with them in another person's culture as it is interpreted in our own culture.

We become surprised when the “other” (a student from a different culture to ours) does not react in an expected way. Such time consuming and learning processing require working at negotiating meaning and establishing new understanding. Number three was the **Synthesis Phase**, the development of a new reference frame. In the final stage of Gerner’s Hermeneutic Theory of Interpretation, we see that an individual’s changed frame of reference is brought about as a result of continuous dynamics of intercultural communication that opens new possibility and freedom. New meanings are generated that create new possibilities, choices, opinions for action, roles, habits, customs, norms and values (Dahl 2008:11).

This then brings us to the findings and analyses of the research data collected from 27 MHS research participants. From the recorded findings, the following are some of the highlights: *Language*: MHS first positioned itself as a multicultural institution of higher learning in the 1960s when the university began accepting students from Africa. Today MHS has international students from 15-20 countries and the single common language for all is English. Although MHS regards itself as a Norwegian academic institution, by choosing to accept other nationalities and teach in English, the university automatically became an international academic institution with a Norwegian heritage. As we have seen in chapter five, the exclusive use of Norwegian language to communicate to students via multimedia or notice boards creates communication challenges and exclusion among non Norwegian students. The challenge of communication between MHS staff to students (specifically when the staff members are the senders and students are receivers of the message), calls for either the exclusive use of English or bi-lingual use of English and Norwegian so all students are included, informed and receive equal access to information.

Misunderstanding or miscommunication: Within a multi-culturally diverse institution like MHS, miscommunication and misunderstanding are bound to happen and should be expected. As discussed in chapter five and in chapter six, communication in itself does not result in understanding and therefore communication needs to be managed proactively. It is my recommendation that MHS should consider developing a one day compulsory orientation lecture on multicultural interaction at MHS to prepare the students to expect and embrace differences; to benefit from the cultural diversity by learning from each other and encourage an open course of communication and interaction. Hosting this type of orientation every year, will help to create a culture of open-mindedness and honest communication where students freely express themselves without fear of being socially incorrect within a multicultural student environment.

Culture: Norwegian culture is the dominated culture at MHS, simply because of its Norwegian legacy and owing to its geographical location. The integration of other cultures will not diminish MHS's Norwegian heritage but will help the foreign students to feel more at home and accepted as a valued part of the MHS family whose contribution is solicited. The university culture influences the interaction among students and students also contribute to the dynamics and transformation of the culture here. The degree at which students will contribute to the culture at MHS is among other things determined by how open the university culture is to open-dialogue or discussions about culture, social issues and current affairs, religious and political affairs as mentioned in earlier chapters.

Group Work: Most careers today require employees to work in groups although the ability to work independently is also needed. Preparing students for the workplace during university years is what every educational institution aims at. The research reveals that students view group work as a demanding and time consuming task, but acknowledge the rewards gained from it; agreeing that in the end, successful team work is highly rewarding. The COL week is the most popular week of the master program because it allows for discussions which satisfy the inquisitive and thirsty minds of the master students; and provides a suitable platform to interact, integrate and learn. The only constructive negative feedback given on COL week was directed at the frequency, short duration and the lack of feedback from the lecturers.

When I started on this journey, my aim was to establish what happens when multi-culturally diverse students interact and work with each other within a university environment? Based on my analyses, students were exposed to and experienced cultural differences manifested through interaction, different ways of interpreting experiences and ways of expressing one's views. They were challenged to learn from one another through meaningful-open course communication and develop broadened ways of seeing the world; to enable them to derive understanding and meaning about their individual identity and that of the foreign other; to understanding their role, the role of language in broad-minded way and the significance of correct interpretation. Those that opened themselves to multicultural encounters at MHS experienced meaningful interactions where they learnt about each other and from each other. Simply attending, a multi-culturally diverse university does not guarantee that students will have the meaningful interactions that are important for the reduction of multicultural narrow-mindedness. Unfortunately others were not completely open but may have gotten some introduction of the possibility of how enriching multicultural

encounters can be. Others failed to move passed the negative self-fulfilling prophecies; they were simply not ready.

What can students take away from this multicultural experience into their diversity encounter? Firstly, *not to act presumptuously*, it is dangerous to use stereotypes as a base for decision making regarding how we think about others or how we relate to or interact with others. Always self-check your thoughts or motives towards the culturally different other to evaluate if your thoughts are a result of faulty assumptions or not. Faulty assumptions about the foreign other may be a result of fear, pride, ignorance or inferiority complex. Taking for granted that your way, opinions, thoughts or view are best or the only way will lead to faulty assumptions about how others do things. We need to recognise that our horizons are limited, so we need to fuse our horizons with others to expand it. Secondly, is important to remember that *open mindedness is key* in understanding the multi-culturally different others. We need to look beyond what we see to understand what see. To understand why they behave in a particular way, we need to examine their frame of references – the root of their behaviour by simply taking time to know and understand them. Everyone desires to be accepted, included and understood especially within a multicultural environment. So when we enter into a multicultural setting with these tools in hand and the sincerity to know them, we will begin to see them. Lastly, is to *seek truth*. Checking to ensure that our interpretation of what you see, experience and encounter is devoid of egocentrism, insecurities, pride, ignorance or carelessness. Every multicultural encounter is unique and whether negative or positive, the experience is worth learning from because each experience can expand our horizons and edify our frame of reference enabling us to recognise and behold the truth of other horizons.

To conclude I refer back to the research question and summarise the answer as follows. What happens when multi-culturally diverse students interact and work with each other within a university environment? The interaction exposes them to differences. Their open mindedness and willingness to learn transpose them through communication to produce new meaning and developing a greater understanding of the whole by looking into its smaller parts. The extent to which one is able to develop or transform is determined by the level of their self-awareness, humble perception of situations and of the culturally different other, and ability to use learnt insight for accurate interpretation. An external force that can ease the learning process in all multicultural encounters is a welcoming context.

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Appendix A INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS

Perception and Background

- a) Which country are you from?
- b) Have you always lived there or have you lived in other countries before?
- c) Tell me about your country and your people? [in reference to your culture and values]
- d) Do you share the same cultural background as the rest of your family members?
- e) What activities do you like to do in your spare time?
- f) Were you working or studying before coming to Norway?
- g) Tell me about your work/studies?[in relation to question F above]
- h) Were the people at your previous work/school from the same cultural background?
- i) How would you describe yourself to a new acquaintance?
- j) What do you think about change & how do you adjust to it
- k) What study program are you currently registered for at MHS?
- l) What inspired you to study in Norway and at MHS?
- m) When did you arrive in Stavanger Norway?
- n) Did you have any fears or concerns about the new environment?

Interaction

- a) Tell me about your first week at MHS?
- b) How did you meet the other international students?
- c) Did you continually meet with the other international students in your first year at MHS?
- d) Have you used the MHS canteen during lunch or any other class breaks?
- e) How would you define a good friend?
- f) Have you established good friendships at school (MHS)?
- g) Was it easy to make friends here at MHS?
- h) During your first year here in MHS
- i) What were your daily activities during the week?
- j) What were your daily activities during your weekends?
- k) What activities do you do with your friends here at MHS?
- l) How is it like to be in this environment – positives and negatives?
- m) Have you worked on any school projects with other international students?
- n) Describe the project?
- o) How was your experience?
- p) Was the project a success?
- q) Do you work best in groups or individually?
- r) In your opinion, what makes a team to work successfully together?
- s) How would you execute a similar project if you were doing it at home?
- t) If you were given a similar project, but had to select your own team from any of the MHS students, how would you select your team mates? What would you look for in your team mates?
- u) What advice would you give to new MHS students as part of their orientation?
- v) [both local and international students]

Intercultural Communication

- a) What is your first language?
- b) How many languages do you speak?
- c) Are you comfortable using English to express yourself?
- d) Which language do you speak mostly with your friends or other international students here in MHS?
- e) How would you describe the MHS culture?
- f) Do you sometimes battle to understand the other students or the lecturer due to the different nationalities?
- g) Have you experienced any miscommunication with other international students or lecturers?
- h) What caused the miscommunication?
- i) How did you deal with the miscommunication?
- j) Did this happen in your first year at MHS?
- k) Have you encountered additional miscommunications or witness other people's miscommunication?
- l) What do you like about studying in a multicultural university?
- m) What you dislike or find challenging about studying in a multicultural university?

General Evaluations

- a) Can you describe your overall experience at MHS?
- b) Could the School have made your experience any better?
- c) After one year of studying at MHS, has your experiences impacted your life and how?
- d) Has the interactions with students from other countries changed your view of yourself?
- e) Has the interactions with students from other countries changed your view of the world?
- f) What have you learnt from being a part of a multiracial student culture at an international university?
- g) How would you compare your first year with your second year in at MHS?
- h) How would you compare your first six months with your last six months here at MHS?
- i) What influenced your comparison?
- j) If you were given funding for a special research which needed 5 additional researchers, what kind of team would assemble for this project?
- k) Has your perception about multicultural environment changed after a year at MHS?
- l) Do you have any final comments?

Note: For the purpose of this interview, International Students refers to students who are not from Norway.

Appendix B RESEARCH CONSENT LETTER

Dear [Student Name]

My name is Kay and I am a student at MHS (School of Mission and Theology), registered for Master of Global Studies. The title of my project is: Multicultural Encounters at an Academic Institution. I am using MHS as case study for my fieldwork; therefore I received your contact details from MHS. I will conduct personal interviews with student and use participant observation as a method. I will not write down personal information during the observation. May you please be one of the research participants in my research between May and June 2011? Herewith additional information about my research:

Purpose of Research

The purpose of this research is to establish what happens when students from various cultures interact and study together at an international university. It is also about establishing how student's intercultural experience impacted on their day to day life post the encounter. I will schedule a suitable time with you, the participant, to conduct face-to-face individual interview. As a participant, you will be asked a set of questions related to the study. Please answer all questions based on your personal experience, perception and viewpoint.

Duration of Participation

The face-to-face individual interview will last between one and two hours. I plan to use an audio recorder during the interview.

Confidentiality

The data will be treated confidentially, and you will not be recognizable in the publication/presentation of results. No one else will view collected data in detail. I will save the data file and the audio recordings by your number, not by name. Any recordings or files will be stored in a secured location accessed only by myself. The study has been registered at the Data Protection Official for Research, at NSD. The School of Mission and Theology has approved the procedures of this study. The collected data will be made anonymous no later than June 30th 2012. This means that your name, e-mail-address, audio recordings and other personal information will be deleted.

Voluntary Nature of Participation

Participation is voluntary. You do not have to participate in this research project. If you agree to participate, you can withdraw your participation at any time without penalty.

Please do not hesitate to contact me directly should you require any additional information. You can also contact my supervisor Marianne Skjortnes at Misjonshøgskolen on telephone #.

Kind Regards
Kgaogelo Kay Olorunju