A Pluralistic Approach to Multicultural Group Work

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Declaration of original authorship

I confirm that this is my own work and the use of all material from other sources has been properly and fully acknowledged.

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Abstract

Despite the internationalisation of higher education, which offers a multicultural space, there is little understanding as to what are the behaviours and attitudes within multi-cultural group-work. The cultural mix of values, beliefs and behaviours of students from different cultural backgrounds participating within multicultural group-work can present many challenges leading to misunderstandings. This thesis explored to what extent group behaviour and attitudes were related to cultural expectations within multi-cultural group-work and how the benefits of multicultural group-work could be maximised. The study explored the students' perceptions of their own behaviours and that of others within multicultural group-work. It also uncovered the challenges and the richness cultural behaviours brought to multi-cultural group-work. To achieve this, the study took an ontological position of phenomenology. Nine students were interviewed from different cultures. A series of four focus groups were conducted, with a total of 17 students, to identify from the student voices, the key factors that could be included in a pluralistic model that embraces diversity and capitalises on the benefits of multi-cultural group-work. The main conclusions from this study were that the long-term impact of family and societal cultural expectations did subsequently appear to shape the students' behaviours within multicultural group-work. In addition, this study found that despite the challenges experienced, the benefits outweighed the challenges. The study also identified that the students lacked certain 'critical skills' needed to successfully participate in multicultural group work. These were skills concerning cultural awareness, organisational and planning, negotiating and debating. There was also an inability to articulate ideas with different cultures and to speak confidently in multicultural group-work. The student voices from the focus groups gave rise to a conceptual teaching model, namely, the Awareness, Critical Skills and Ethical Dimensions Model (A.C.E), which helps to develop the 'critical skills' needed for multicultural group-work.

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Definitions

Collectivism societies

Collectivism is the extent to which individuals are integrated within a group. Collectivist cultures tend to integrate into strong cohesive societal groups in extended families (Hofstede, 1994).

Conceptual model

In qualitative research, a conceptual framework can be developed as a tentative framework based on what is in the literature or as the data is collected and analysed (Fox, Gouthro, Morakabati, & Brackstone, 2014).

Felt sense

This is when the body senses the situation and then regulates its behaviour (Harris, 2015).

Habitus

Habitus are inherited concepts of behaviour learnt in childhood and which reflect the social context and cultural norms of the society in which one lives. Habitus is an inherited set of concepts that influence tradition, history and principles and it is advanced through the process of imitation whereby individuals unconsciously adopt behavioural patterns passed on from society. A person's behavioural deployment is governed by his/her habitus (Golthorpe, 2007; Kimmel & Volet, 2010; Robbins, 1999; West, Fleming, & Finnegan, 2013).

Individualistic societies

Individualistic societies are independent and where the society encourages everyone to look after themselves (Hofstede, 1994).

Intercultural competence

Intercultural competence can be considered as a mind-set or a skillset or having knowledge of cultures and countries (of one's own and others) and where one practices the understanding of cultural awareness. Such an individual is considered as being open and flexible to different understandings. Such individuals are considerate of their own and others' conventions, beliefs and values. Intercultural competence is an appreciation for striving for justice or tolerance (Bennett & Bennett, 2004).

With the increased interest in intercultural sensitivity in the globalizing and multicultural society, disorientation related to this concept has been raised. Intercultural sensitivity, as an element of intercultural competence, has not entirely been comprehended yet. According to Chen and Starosta (1996, p. 2), the major problem of the disorientation is to misperceive these three concepts: *Intercultural awareness and Intercultural communication competence Intercultural sensitivity*. The three are separate concepts, even though they are closely related.

> **Intercultural awareness** "the understanding of cultural conventions that affect how we think and behave" (Chen, 2010, p. 35).
>
> **Intercultural communication competence** "is a generic term that is composed of interactants' ability to be effective, both behaviourally and cognitively in the development of intercultural communication" (Çiloğlan & Bardakçı, 2019, p1).
>
> **Intercultural sensitivity** concept is the subjects' "active desire to motivate themselves to understand, appreciate, and accept differences among cultures" (Chen & Starosta, 1996, p. 367).

Intercultural skillset

Intercultural skillset is students' abilities to predict misunderstandings, their ability to behave appropriately, not only to their own culture, but also to others cultures. It is having the skills to communicate effectively in cross-cultural situations and relate appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts (Bennett & Bennett, 2004).

Pluralism

Pluralism emphasises individual choices as well as compromise. It promotes respect for diversity and allows individuals to recognise their rights as well as those of others. It allows individuals to express their cultural identities. Fairness and respect are the cornerstones of pluralistic ethics (McNee, 2018).

Chapter 1: Introduction

1. Introduction

This chapter starts with an introduction as to how globalisation has initiated student movement within higher education. It then discusses how the mobilisation of international students has influenced group dynamics within the group-work learning environment. The chapter then presents an outline of the challenges and benefits multicultural group-work (MCGW) brings. This is then followed with a short introduction to the culture and how cultural attitudes are presented within MCGW. The chapter then provides a discussion on the pluralistic ethical principles that can provide cultural integration. Subsequently, the chapter provides a rationale for this study and the aims. Finally, it then presents a background to the university where this research is based.

1.1 The internalisation of higher education and student mobility

The impact of globalisation and the development of the free market has initiated university education to be seen as of global significance, initiating pressures of international ranking (Albach & Knight, 2007; Kettle, 2012; Marginson & Van DerWande, 2007). In order to facilitate the creation of a knowledge society, where intellectual capital has become an essential factor in economic success, governments have positioned higher education establishments as the key players in providing the necessary skills to address the future needs of global societies (Albach, 2009; Bridges, 2014; Kettle, 2017; Mayo, 2019). These movements have initiated the mobilisation of students, resulting in them traveling abroad to look for the best international educational opportunities in order to gain a competitive edge (Rienties, Luchoomum, & Tempelaar, 2014). Such student movements have encouraged universities to become competitive business markets (Marginson & Van DerWande, 2007; Mayo, 2019), positioning themselves as marketers of knowledge creation, developers of skills

and innovation, and intellectual capital (Bridges, 2014; OECD, 2013). In order to survive in these competitive marketplaces, universities in the United Kingdom (UK) have developed aggressive marketing strategies in order to attract non-UK students (Altbach, 2009; Barret, 2017; Kettle, 2017; Mayo, 2019). The result of such endeavours has triggered a shift in the graduate profile within some university sectors. Consequently, there is an increase in the number of European Union (EU) and non-EU students entering the university system (Popov, Brinkman, Mulder, Kuznetsov, & Noroozi, 2012; Kettle, 2017; Mayo, 2019).

1.2 Multicultural Group-Work (MCGW)

One area where the impact of increased multiculturalism can be considered significant is in the teaching and assessment of group-work within universities. Group-work is a common teaching, learning, and assessment strategy within higher education. The accounts within literature indicate that group-work assignments, more so than any other assignments, help develop interpersonal and collaborative skills (BahNir, 1988; Berccaria, Kek, Huijser, Rose, & Kimmins, 2014; Vermette & Kline, 2017). Group-work within higher education curriculums helps students develop team cohesion skills, encourage individual accountability, and build positive interdependences within the group members (Guth et al., 2019; Kimmel & Volet, 2010; Malekoff, 2018). Group-work teaching, learning, and assessment strategy, unlike other assessment strategies such as an essay or report writing, requires students to use their verbal communication skills, where they have to discuss directly with other group members (Kimmel & Volet, 2010; Volet, Summers & Thurman, 2008). The process of globalisation initiating shifting patterns in the student cultural demographics has resulted in group-work becoming multicultural (Exley, 2019; Kettle, 2017; Howe, 2016; Popov et al., 2012). Arguably the critical element that distinguishes multi-cultural group-work (MCGW) from homogeneous group-work is that students are asked to collaborate their learning with students from different cultures,

often with unfamiliar diverse cultural norms and behavioural attitudes. In its simplest form, Popov et al., (2012) defines MCGW as:

> A collaboration of two or more individuals from different (national) cultural backgrounds, who have been assigned interdependent tasks and are jointly responsible for the final results, who see themselves and are seen by others as a collective unit embedded in an academic environment and who manage their relationships within a particular educational institution (p.303).

Arguably MCGW manifests itself differently from homogeneous, small group-work because of the cultural complexities (Exley, 2019; Cohen, 1986; Kagan, 1992; Malekoff, 2018; Sweeny, Weaven & Herington, 2008).

1.3 The challenges presented in multicultural group-work

This multicultural demographic platform for learning presents many challenges for universities deploying group-work as a teaching and learning approach. This is the case in University X, where this research was conducted. Studies within the literature report that students are not communicating correctly with student group members and lecturers, due to culturally different standards of interaction (Exley, 2019; Hall, 1990; Malekoff, 2018; Pfaff and Huddleson, 2003; Summers & Volet, 2008). Research has also indicated that multicultural groups can become dysfunctional due to culturally different styles of problem-solving, conflict management, and member attitudes towards leadership. This can result in disagreements between student group members when attempting to solve the issues arising during decision making (Cox & Blake, 1990; Exley, 2019; Hall, 1990; Hofstede, 1991; Malekoff, 2018; Triandis, 1994; Watson, BarNir, & Pavur, 2005).

1.4 Assumptions made when administrating MCGW in university X

In my experience, there has been a lack of preparation when students participate in MCGW, resulting in groups becoming dysfunctional. My observations had shown that lecturers in university X, where this study was carried out, did not provide prior training for students before they engaged within MCGW. From the dialogues I had with my colleagues regarding administrating MCGW it seemed that the following assumptions had been made by lecturers in university X:

Table 1.1: The assumptions made.

This table identifies the assumptions I believe were made by lecturers in university X when administrating MCGW

There is an expectation by lecturers that students in heterogeneous groups are aware of their cultural norms and of that of other group members. It is assumed that they understand how habitus works, that it is a set of conceptualisations that subconsciously say what is normal and what is not. There is an assumption that when students go beyond what their habitus dictates, they can manage conflict independent of lecturer involvement and without the need for training on MCGW conflict management.
There is an expectation within university X that the benefits of multicultural group-work will emerge without students being trained on how to maximise their performance.

In order to develop the necessary skills required to work effectively in complex MCGW environments, where students come from cultures with different behavioural attitudes and values, there is a need for them to acquire a new set of skills in order to manage conflict. This conflict is due to cultural differences, and students have to learn to be able to communicate and negotiate with the different cultural behaviours present in the MCGW process (Exley, 2019; Leask, 2013; Scott, 2000). University curriculums need to design strategies to improve the student's ability to integrate, embrace, and understand diverse cultural norms, values, and behaviours, that different cultures present in MCGW environments (Antel & Friedman, 2008; Exley, 2019; Leask, 2013; Scott, 2000). However, before exploring the new skillset, for students who are required to participate successfully within MCGW, it is crucial to understand,

and contextualise what culture is, what dynamics exist within MCGW and the attitudes different cultures bring to the MCGW. The next section of this chapter provides an overview of what culture is and an insight into the cultural attitudes different cultures have when collaborating. This chapter also discusses the rationale for the study, the gap in knowledge or what is known and unknown within the literature, and the aims of the research and how this research may be of benefit to some higher education institutions. The last part of this chapter provides an insight into the researcher conducting this study. It then provides a context to the background of the university student profile in university X, where this study is set.

1.5 What is culture, and how are cultural attitudes presented within MCGW?

Culture itself is complex. It has been discussed within the literature as a set of behavioural rules individuals adopt, influenced by the environment in which they were raised (Biggs, Bussen & Ramsey (2020); Bourdieu, 1990; Goldthorpe, 2007; Hofstede, 2001; Howe, 2019; Sullivan, 2001). It is often discussed as a process of socialisation that impacts individuals' values, attitudes, and behaviours within MCGW (Spencer-Oatey, 2012; Stahl, Maznevski, Viogy & Jonsen, 2010a). The benefits of participating with different cultures include critical learning and self-reflection (Biggs, Bussen & Ramsey, 2020; De Vita, 2000; Kimmel & Volet 2010; Popov, Brinkman, Biemans, Mulder, Kuznetsov, & Noroozi, 2012), co-construction of knowledge leading to cognitive gains (Barron, 2003; Kimm el & Volet, 2010), and development of collaborative and interpersonal skills which are needed in diverse cultural environments (De Vita, 2000; Kimmel & Volet 2010; Popov et al., 2012). Equally, MCGW provides challenges due to different cultural behaviour patterns, presenting many complications when students from different cultures, values and different behavioural attitudes and expectations attempt to collaborate within MCGW (Anderson 2007; Behfar et al., 2012; Cronje, 2011; Hofstede, 2001; Jehn & Mannix, 2001; Schullery & Schullery, 2006; Stahl,

Mäkelä, Zander & Maznevski, 2010b; Triandis, 1994; Watson, Kumar & Michaelson, 1993) (see Appendix A: Hofstede's dimensions of culture).

1.6 The rationale for this study

The rationale for the selection of my research topic stems from my own personal interest. I have been a university lecturer teaching in the field of computer science and, more recently, hospitality and tourism for over fifteen years. Throughout my career, group-work has been presented in all curriculum designs I have delivered. This assessment format is typical in many UK universities. In particular, this type of assessment frequently features within the department of hospitality and tourism. This is because the hospitality and tourism industries have seen an increase in international mobility due to globalisation, bringing different cultures closer within proximity (Altbach, 2009; Albach & Knight, 2007; Barrett, 2019; Kettle, 2017; Mayo, 2019). As such, the sector recruits from an international global workforce, seeking individuals who can communicate their opinions effectively within a multicultural team (De Vita, 2000; Popav et al., 2012). Moreover, currently there is a need for research to explore what are the many different multi-dimensions of culture in terms of traditions, historical upbringing, norms, and how these variances inform student expectations and influence the way students act within group-work activities. In order to overcome the communication challenges that exist within MCGW, there is also a need to develop the student's intercultural skills so they can collaborate more effectively (Biggs, Bussen, & Ramsey, 2020; Bourdieu, 1990; Hofstede, 2001; Vryonides, 2007).

1.7 The gap within the literature

There have been extensive studies conducted on homogeneous group-work (Danieles, 2001). However, literature has not sufficiently explored the extent to which

heterogeneous groups can maximise on their learning opportunities and not feel overwhelmed by the cultural challenges.

The literature indicates that students' cultural norms are passed through generations by their own cultures and influences behaviour (Bourdieu, 1990; Hofstede, 2001; Vryonides, 2007). However, what is unknown is how the cultural norms society develops, influence the MCGW process (Popov et al., 2012). Little is known about how students within the MCGW process tolerate deviation from the cultural norms they expected within MCGW. There is a gap in the literature regarding their attitudes and perceptions of working in MCGW (Exley, 2019; Kimmel & Volet, 2010; Vermette & Kline, 2017) and how their cultural norms impact the dynamics of the group process (Biggs, Bussen, & Ramsey, 2020; Popov, Brinkman, Biemans, Mulder, Kuznetsov & Noroozi, 2012; Shi & Wang, 2011). More research is needed to explore these multi-dimensional experiences (Exley, 2019; Vermette & Kline, 2017; Shi & Wang, 2011). There are quantitative studies within literature exploring cultural dimensions, but they are within the business sector (Hofstede, 1991; House, Javidan, Hanges, & Dorfman, 2002; Swartz, 1994; Triandis, 1994; Popov et al., 2012) and not within MCGW. Also, the literature lacks significant qualitative studies exploring students' voices of their experiences within MCGW. The research examining the usefulness of group learning is extensive (Coilingridge, 1999; Exley, 2019; Vermette & Kline, 2017; Shi & Wang, 2011). However, what is lacking is the link between how cultural norms influence multicultural cooperative learning and group performance (Exley, 2019; Malekoff, 2018; Howe, 2016; Sweeney et al., 2008). Studies have identified the need to explore international students' cultural attitudes and their expectations towards MCGW (Howe, 2016; Sweeney et al., 2008; Shi & Wang, 2011). Many empirical studies are focusing on specific dimensions of group work, such as motivational outcomes, cognitive factors (Cantwell & Andrews, 2002), but few studies have focused on the cultural dimensions, attitudes and experiences of student learning within MCGW (Howe, 2016; Popov

et al., 2012; Volet, 2001). There is plenty of scientific literature about the impact of culture on individuals and communities (Hofstede, 1991; House, Javidan, Hanges, & Dorfman, 2002; Swartz, 1994; Triandis, 1994; Popov et al., 2012),. However, there is not yet a determined conceptual framework that quantifies the dimensions within MCGW or a conceptual model that enables better intercultural relations and builds on how the benefits of MCGW could be maximised (Popov et al., 2012).

It is crucial to investigate the influence of culture within MCGW, as a lack of understanding of the cultural factors impacting MCGW can lead to a division between what seem to be strange or deviant individuals from other cultures, resulting in dysfunctional groups (Biggs, Bussen & Ramsey, 2020; Guth et al., 2019; Popav et al., 2012). If new knowledge regarding student cultural behaviours and expectations can be obtained, then there may be opportunities to maximise the benefits of MCGW employing a pathway or a conceptual model that enables lecturers to help develop the students' intercultural skillset, so that they can be better positioned to recognise the underlying causes of conflict which transpire within the MCGW process.

1.8 Aim of the study

This study investigated the cultural dimensions that existed within the heterogeneous group-work. The aim was to gain a better understanding of the expectations, interactions, and behaviours that existed between different cultures within MCGW. The study attempted to explore the richness and challenges these inherent cultural norms brought to multicultural group learning. The student voices presented in this study provided an understanding of the mechanisms that promoted or provided a barrier to multicultural group learning. More precisely, this research focused on qualitative studies to investigate at a micro-level the voices of UK, EU, and non-EU students, their motivations, their cultural attitudes, values and

behaviours and their experiences within the MCGW process, and the meanings they attached to their experiences with other cultures. Fundamentally it investigated how assertiveness, power, ability to perform, communication, task completion, and planning the MCGW process influenced the complex cultural dimensions within MCGW. This study attempted to explore the complications that existed and investigated whether culture informed the students' expectations and behaviours within the group-work process. It also examined whether culturally different perspectives and attitudes to group-work affected the group cohesiveness within group-work settings in university curriculums. In addition, this study sought to identify whether a lack of knowledge of the differences in members' cultural norms and values provided for misunderstandings and conflicts within MCGW. As discussed, there is a gap in the literature as to how students can develop their intercultural skills, so they are better aware of their own and others cultural expectations and subsequent behaviours. This study also aimed to create or design a pluralistic MCGW model that embraces diversity and maximizes student learning (Exley, 2019; Howe, 2016; Malekoff, 2018; Popov et al., 2012).

1.9 The Approach Taken

In order to better understand students' cultural norms and how their habitus has influenced their behaviour within MCGW, an inquiry-based research study was conducted. This was a qualitative study, seeking to establish an understanding of the students' cultural attitudes and behaviours within MCGW, the challenges they experienced, and the benefits gained. The study also attempted to elicit student views on how the MCGW process could be improved, so students could better develop their intercultural skills. To achieve this, the study followed a two-step process: the first step had two phases, phase one followed a structured interview process whereby the questions asked were aided with a questionnaire and the interview was conducted interactively between the student and the researcher. This phase

attempted to identify and categorise the student's cultural norms. The second phase, which followed immediately, was to conduct a semi-structured interview with the same student. The semi-structured interviews with the students' attempted to identify their perceptions of their own culture and their perceptions of other cultures, and explore the challenges, issues, and benefits MCGW brought. Step one took approximately one and a half hours per student. Nine students took part in the structured interview, facilitated with a questionnaire, and followed by the semi-structured interview. The new knowledge generated from this step provided an understanding of students' cultural norms and how they influenced the group work process. From these rich data, themes were identified by means of content analysis. The themes that emerged from the content analysis provided a better understanding of the students' cultural norms, values, expectations, attitudes, and behaviours, and these understandings.

1.9.1 The Conceptual model

The second step of this study consisted of conducting a series of four focus groups that attempted to hear student voices on how the MCGW process could be improved. The focus groups were used as this method allowed for brainstorming of suggestions and ideas to be developed. The conceptual model was informed by the student voices from the focus groups. These students had participated in MCGW and were aware of the challenges and benefits MCGW brought. The ideas generated from the focus groups identified pathways that may help overcome the challenges faced within MCGW, suggestions on how to embrace diversity and maximize cultural integration and cultural awareness, as well as approaches to developing intercultural skills. These suggestions were then used to design a pluralistic MCGW conceptual model, which may help lecturers prepare students for MCGW.

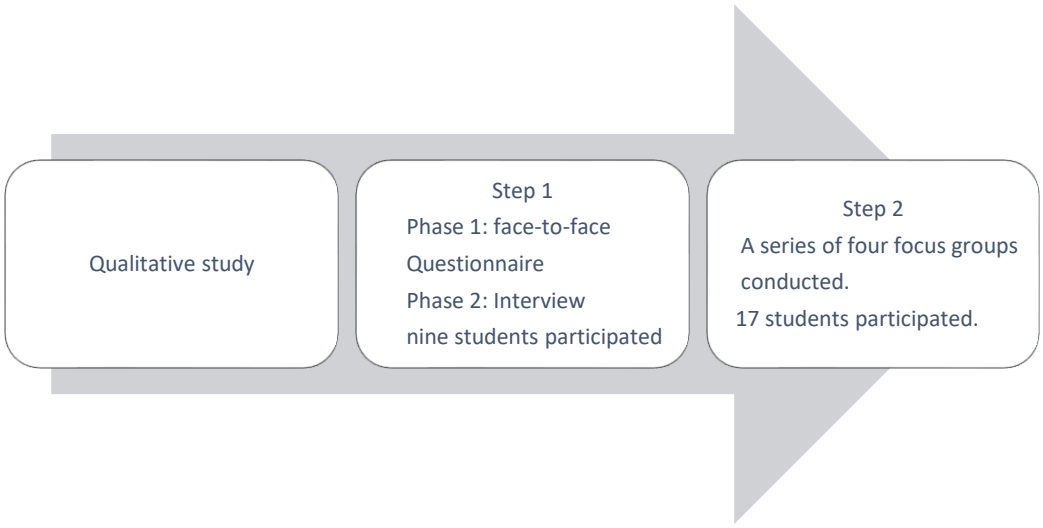

Figure 1.1: Steps in Qualitative Study

Having identified the gaps within literature and the rationale for this study, the next section provides a background to the university being investigated along with their student profile.

1.10 The researcher

I have a lot of experience teaching non-UK students. I was a course leader for the Graduate Diploma in Hospitality Management, which had an intake of 80 students each year. The students were primarily from India, Bangladesh, Nepal, the EU, the USA, Russia, and China. I was involved in establishing partnerships with the transitional branches, and this involved setting up partnerships with universities in India to deliver university X's courses. Along with the quality office, I validated the international centres' appropriateness as learning centres. Part of my role was to interview all lecturers, observe their teaching, and train them to the University X standards. These cross-border branches are exciting as they have the potential for advancing knowledge and human development within the developing countries. However, from my recent experiences of being a course leader for the BA (Hons) Hospitality

Management course as well as teaching on the Masters pogramme (MA) and undergraduate (UG) programmes, I and my collegues have seen that there are many cultural tensions which have manifested themselves within MCGW . Such strains have been reported in many studies (Behfar, Kern, & Brett, 2012; Bridges, 2014; De Vita, 2002). Nearly all modules have a group-work component and assessment in university X. In our teaching reflection days I had many conversations with lecturers, expressing their concerns regarding the challenges students experienced when participating in MCGW . There were concerns that students from different cultures were not integrating. The lecturers perceived these challenges impacted the productivity of group-work. This concern was often a focal point in the teacher training days. As course leader and module leader I considered it important that the students were well prepared for MCGW so they could perform well in assessments. I considered it important to understand the reasons behind why tensions arose and why groups became dysfunctional. Having this understanding could provide pathways for teaching mechanisms to be designed to help improve the student experience, the dynamics and functionality within MCGW. I was keen to find approaches to maximise the benefits multi-cultural educational opportunities can provide and devise strategies to bridge the gaps to address the lack of understanding of cultural norms and values and how they influence behaviour within MCGW.

1.11 **Where this study is carried out**

This research explored the cultural norms that existed within the MCGW process and attempted to identify pathways in which there can be better collaboration between students from different cultures. In order to achieve this, the research was carried out at University X, which was a post-1992 university and had observed an increase in non-UK based student numbers. This diversity and the significant rise in non-UK based numbers are demonstrated within statistics obtained from the university student records department.

Table 1.2: University X student demographics
table shows an increase in non-UK students entering University X. The data was obtained from the university student records department

	2010/11		2010/11 Total	2012/13		2012/13 Total	2017/18		2017/18 Total
Domicile	**UG**	**PG**		**UG**	**PG**		**UG**	**PG**	
UK	748	29	777	831	22	853	1000	62	1062
Channel Islands	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
EU	88	3	91	103	4	107	228	28	256
Non-EU	429	92	521	389	77	466	91	43	134
Grand Total	**1685**	**134**	**1819**	**1677**	**122**	**1799**	**1319**	**134**	**1453**

1.11.1Pluralism within MCGW

It can be argued, and if the students are unaware of other cultures behavioural expectations of how complexities should be resolved, conflict may arise. Too often, ignorance drives fear, which leads to diversion. However, education can be a route to intercultural literacy and communication (Global Centre for Pluralism, 2012). University curriculums can be designed to nurture knowledge skills, confidence, and critical reflection on differences and promote understanding. They can be designed to develop reciprocity, a sense of shared experience, and mutual obligation, which is essential for agreement between student groups (Global centre for pluralism, 2012). The challenges presented within MCGW indicate there appears to be a need for students to develop their intercultural skillset so that they can acquire the necessary cultural awareness skills, be aware of how other cultures think, identify their expectations and subsequent behaviours when working in multicultural groups (Exley, 2019; Malekoff, 2018; Stahl, Mäkelä, Zander, & Maznevski, 2010b; Sweeny, Weaven, & Herington, 2008). This line of thinking draws on several definitions and meanings that are linked to ‘pluralism.’ For this discussion, pluralism is defined by the Global Centre for Pluralism (2012) as:

> “Pluralism is an ethic of respect that values human diversity” (p.1).

Pluralism emphasises individual choices as well as compromise. It promotes respect for diversity and allows individuals to recognise their rights as well as others. It will enable individuals to express their cultural identities (McNee, 2018). Fairness and respect are the cornerstones of pluralistic ethics. Importantly there is a need for students participating within multicultural groups to respect differences by developing capacity and willingness to understand, negotiate, and accommodate other alternatives presented by culturally different students (Murray, 2018). It can be argued that in order to avoid conflict within MCGW, students need the capacity and knowledge of how to build bridges of shared goals and mutual understanding (Global centre for pluralism, 2012).

1.11.2 Student demographics

Currently, University X educates home students, primarily from London, the EU, and increasingly non-EU. The statistics from the University X student monitoring records database 2015 indicated the following EU profiles: Romania, Italy (includes Sardinia, Sicily), Lithuania, Portugal (includes Madeira, Azores), Poland, Spain (includes Ceuta, Melilla), France (includes Corsica), Bulgaria, Latvia, Germany. The statistics from the University X student monitoring records database 2015 indicated the following non-EU profiles: India, Thailand, Malaysia, Korea (South), United States, China.

University X prides itself as being vocational, boasting the fact that 97% of their students find suitable employment on graduation. It has a strong reputation for hospitality, tourism, events, and airline management courses. It is known internationally for its hospitality courses, and for the employer links, the university provides for placements to London hotels and restaurants. The hotel placements range from the Ritz, Five Star luxury hotels, to boutique and budget hotels. The university provides placements not only within London but has links with resorts in the USA, Florida, Canada, and Europe.

1.12 How group-work is administered

The group-work assessment at University X was designed to run over either 6 or 14 weeks. During this time, the students worked on the group assignment and then presented their work in a final summative assessment. In university X, this was achieved by asking student groups to provide a solution to a set problem either as a written report or as an oral presentation. Often group work activities were graded assignments to encourage students to work collaboratively and cooperatively (Exley, 2019; Sweeny et al., 2008; Vermette & Kline, 2017). In university, X group-work is a popular form of assessment and occurs in nearly all modules as the hospitality and tourism industries require these skills. When the literature is probed in-depth, it can be observed that lecturers have two goals for group-work assignments: to increase each student's understanding of the subject discipline and to help all students develop team working skills, so they are better prepared to work in the industry, which is increasingly becoming multicultural in a globalised world (Anderson, 2007; BahNir, 1998; Beccaria et al., 2014; Kettle, 2018; Mayo, 2019; Schullery & Schullery, 2006).

1.13 Summary of chapter one

This chapter provided an introduction as to how the student demographics have become multicultural within higher education due to the forces of globalisation. The chapter also identified why it was necessary to conduct qualitative research investigating the voices of students participating in MCGW and their attitudes and experiences. It gave a brief introduction to the challenges the students faced within MCGW and how culture may have informed student behaviour within MCGW. The chapter identified how the cornerstones of pluralistic ethics might benefit intercultural relations within MCGW. The rationale for this research, the aims and approach taken were briefly explained. Lastly, there was a short

discussion introducing the university where this research was conducted and the student demographics.

Chapter 2: A literature review

2. Introduction

This chapter is organised into two parts. The first part explores the boundaries of multicultural group-work (MCGW) and discusses the skills set students need when participating within MCGW. It also presents the challenges and benefits MCGW brings. This is then followed with an analysis of the different perspectives of culture, presenting a critique on the differences in behaviours learned from family and social groups. Later, it attempts to explore the concept of habitus and group coherence, and how culture informs practice, concerning deep and surface cultural understanding.. Lastly the prerequisite for effective intercultural education is presented. Part two of the chapter explores how new behaviours can be learned positively within MCGW. It also provides pathways on how higher education can offer teaching approaches to help students communicate effectively within MCGW and move towards effective multiculturalism in education. It includes a discussion on academic assertiveness, felt sense, and intercultural competences. The chapter attempts to define the boundaries of intercultural skill set. It discusses the importance of critical consciousness and negotiation skills in the interactions between individuals in a multicultural group concerning Peace and Anti-bias education. The chapter then provides a summary of the theories that will inform the analysis of the data findings. Throughout this chapter identifies the gaps within the literature concerning the dynamics, the attitudes and behaviours international students bring to MCGW, and identifies the lack of strategies within the literature as to how intercultural competences can be developed within MCGW. From this critical analysis of the literature, a series of research questions have been formulated, which attempt to address the gaps within the literature.

PART ONE

2.1 Multicultural group-work (MCGW)

2.1.1 Contrasting perspectives of MCGW

Group work is central to assessment strategies within the Department of Hospitality and Tourism at University X. Unlike essay writing or exam-based assessment strategies that are individual, group work brings together students within an environment that requires good communication and negotiation skills. It focuses on developing skills of discussion, critical thinking and problem solving and developing the skills set to communicate ideas verbally (De Vita, 2002; Exley, 2019; Kimmel & Volet, 2010; Popov, Brinkman, Biemams, Mulder, Kuznetsov, & Noroozi, 2012; Vermette & Kline, 2017). Higher education requires these critical skills to be developed for academic progression and employability (Exley, 2019; Popov et al., 2012; Vermette & Kline, 2017). However, the process of globalisation bringing students from different parts of the world together is influencing the type of skills needed by the student. Increasingly we are observing a need for a global skillset rather than a local skillset (Ho-Kyung Huh, Seong, & Jun 2015; Marginson & van der Wende, 2007; Rientes et al., 2015). The skillset needed to engage within a global group-work context, which involves debating, negotiating, and communicating effectively with students from different cultures, is vastly different from those required within a monocultural group-work context (Barrett, 2017; Exley, 2019; Kettle, 2017). Multicultural education involves building on a student's cultural and societal background infusing these precious qualities with an appreciation of multicultural awareness (Ho-Kyung Huh, Seong, & Jun 2015). The issue of multicultural group work has attracted much interest and presents contrasting perspectives (De Vita, 2002; Kimmel & Volet, 2010; Malekoff, 2018; Summers & Volet, 2008). The literature has reported a wide range of performative correlations within MCGW. At one extreme report are citing significant positive relationships between diversity and performance (Stahl, Maznevski, Voigt, & Jonson, 2010a; Summers & Volet,

2008), claiming that this helps students share culturally diverse knowledge and develop intercultural competence skills (De Vita, 2000; Popov et al., 2012). At the other extreme of the spectrum, additional studies are indicating negative correlations between diversity and performance. Reviews of Watson, Kumar, and Michaelson (1993); Jehn and Mannix (2001) and Stahl, Maznevski, Voigt, & Jonsen (2010b) claim challenges exist because of culturally different styles of problem-solving. In contrast, some studies have surprisingly found no overall relationship between diversity and performance (Stahl et al., 2010a).

2.1.2 The skills set needed within MCGW

One of the key learning elements within monoculture group-work is often related to solving problems. This can be challenging in itself but is made more difficult within MCGW as studies by Ho-Kyung Huh, Seong, & Jun 2015, Malekoff (2018) and Watson, Banir and Pavur (2005) have shown because culturally diverse students have culturally different styles of problem-solving and decision-making skills which may result in conflict. Students face many challenges within MCGW due to cultural differences and their perceived realities. Koo, Park, and Seol (2009) alerted that culture is composed of different totalities as it is acquired due to societies having different social realities, cultural traditions, and perceptions of moralities. Ho-Kyung Huh, Seong, & Jun 2015) built on this observation by deducing that due to such diversity when individuals of different cultures meet, conflicts transpire from their exchanges. Such studies provide valuable insight into cultural behaviours. Yet, some studies have identified a gap within the literature indicating more research needs to be conducted regarding students' cultural dimensions, attitudes and subsequent behaviour within MCGW (Ho-Kyung Huh, Seong, & Jun 2015; Howe, 2016; Popov et al., 2012). This research attempts to address the gap within the literature, seeking to hear student voices on their perceptions of their cultures and that of others and how this informs their behaviour within MCGW. This research is important as misunderstandings can occur when different cultures interpret the variety of facial

and body language gestures differently. From my experience as a lecturer and the pilot study I conducted, it became increasingly clear that within a multicultural environment, the students did not have the skills set to appreciate what cultural norms they possessed and how these subconsciously influence their behaviour in a group work process (Spencer-Oatey, 2012). However, Ho-Kyung Huh, Seong, & Jun, (2015) asserted that the benefits of multicultural education allowed individuals to remove their cultural biases and stereotypes. Fundamentally, Ho-Kyung Huh, Seong, & Jun 2015 alluded that education systems can embrace diversity and learn how to understand and respect different cultures and put them into practice. Yet few studies have identified how this can be achieved within MCGW. This study attempts to address this gap in the literature. In 1957, the Nobel Peace Prize winner who wrote the book entitled *Democracy in World Politics* went on to become the fourteenth Prime Minister of Canada. Lister B. Pearson brought attention to the importance of learning to live with diversity when he identified that different civilisations need to learn to live side by side in peaceful interchange. He encouraged learning from each other's history and ideas to explore different cultures' art in order to enrich the understanding of each other's lives. He emphasized that if civilisations did not try to understand each other's cultures, misunderstandings, tensions, clashes, and catastrophes would result (Pearson, 1955).

The need for multicultural education systems has become more essential today than ever before. In order to avoid '*misunderstandings, tensions, clashes, and catastrophes*' as Pearson alluded to, there is a need to recognise cultural diversities, based on a pluralistic philosophy. This recognition enables the pursuit of mutual understanding, based on empathy and communication and one that practices cultural diversities (Halbesleben, Wheeler, & Buckley, 2005; Ho-Kyung Huh, Seong, & Jun 2015; Willie, 2002). This study endorses the above commentators and adopts the premise that a lack of awareness of different cultural norms may contribute to misunderstandings and misinterpretations within the group work

process (Antal & Friedman, 2008; Beccaria, Kek, Huijser, Rose, & Kimmins, 2014; Hahn, 2016).

The lack of understanding of cultural norms is not the only gap in knowledge. The students do not possess the necessary skills to negotiate with different cultures and have the skills set to manage the different expectations cultural variations bring (Popov et al., 2012). This lack of knowledge is not surprising as in the past student groups were not composed of international students from all over the world, providing a mix of cultures and therefore would not have developed the necessary skills allowing them to be aware of different behaviour patterns exhibited by different cultures (Biggs, Bussen & Ramsey, 2020; Kwiek, 2001; Marginson & van der Wande, 2007). As will be presented later in this chapter, multicultural groups may experience many challenges as there is a lack of knowledge of other cultures' expectations (Biggs, Bussen & Ramsey, 2020). This gap in knowledge needs to be explored in more detail. This study attempts to hear student voices to seek new knowledge as to the students' experiences and behaviours within MCGW, their suggestions on how they can develop the necessary skills needed for functionally active multicultural groups. This exploration is important as in recent years, universities are witnessing an increase in international students entering higher education (Kettle, 2018; Laurillard, 2002; Mayo, 2019); as such, these skills are ever more important now.

2.1.3 Benefits of MCGW

Probing more in-depth into the research reveals studies indicating that MCGW creates a more global and less ethnocentric approach to studies (De Vita, 2000). In broad terms, this aids collaborative learning as it provides opportunities to question each other's assumptions (Kimmel & Volet, 2010; Popov et al., 2012). If students support each other, then this way of learning does not impair individual learning activities. Vygotsky's research on the zone of

proximal development illustrated (Popov et al., 2012) that collaborative learning triggers interaction amongst students, generates explanations and disagreements. It also activates cognitive learning mechanisms, such as knowledge elicitation and cognitive elaboration during an exchange of ideas (Dillenborg, 1999; Stahl et al., 2010a; Watson, BarNir, & Pavur, (2005). Numerous research studies by Stahl et al. (2010a) on MCGW have concluded that team members' culturally diverse experiences provide an accumulation of alternative perspectives and access to different information and knowledge bases, which lead to better analysis and evaluation of problems. Interestingly Stahl (2010a) emphasised that culturally diverse teams challenge ideas and provide valuable input long after a monocultural team has reached a saturation point. There is evidence that the motivation for being in multicultural teams is that students obtain new learning experiences and personal growth (Stahl, 2010a). The same studies emphasised that students had reported exposure to new ways of thinking brought about in culturally diverse teams and that it was highly satisfying (Stahl, 2010b). Banks and Banks (2005) emphasised the positive outcomes of culturally diverse groups. Their research provides empirical support for the benefits of participating in heterogeneous groups, claiming that they perform better in team project tasks in comparison to homogeneous groups (De Vita, 2000; Kimmel & Volet, 2010; Schullery & Schullery, 2006). It is also claimed that diverse groups provide a platform for differences in prior knowledge, experiences, and understandings, thus providing increasing opportunities for group members to question and develop concepts (Kimmel & Volet, 2010). There is considerable debate on the findings of MCGW. There is evidence that cross-cultural groups are also useful in conveying inherent values of cultures and communicating messages of equality to students (Volet, Summers & Thurman, 2009), which can aid in understanding cultures. Few studies within the literature explore the benefits of participating in MCGW. Stahl (2010a) encourages more studies to

explore this further. This study aims to investigate the range of benefits and the challenges MCGW offers.

2.1.3.1 Social identity theory and similarity-attraction theory

Studies indicate that both home and international students express pre-existing negative feelings towards MCGW group-work mainly based on previous experiences (De Vita, 2001; Rienties et al., 2015). There is evidence that these negative feelings are compounded when students are asked to work in heterogeneous groups. Studies have indicated that students only select group members with whom they think they have similar societal, cultural, and educational values, as it enables them to feel comfortable (Popov et al., 2012; Watson, BarNir, & Pavur, 2005; Rienties, 2015; Sweeney, Weaven, & Herington, 2008). This behaviour can be explained by the 'the 'Similarity-attraction' theory, which says that students prefer to work in same-cultural groups as it is a natural affinity to prefer to work with individuals close to their own identity (Stahl et al., 2010a) as they share the same fundamental values and beliefs and feel strong similarity-attraction (Cronje, 2011; Hoppe, 2012; Stahl et al., 2010a). This line of thinking needs investigating further as the literature lacks studies to support this notion.

Although the similarity-attraction theories may help identify the isolation issues that occur within MCGW, and in explaining why students may feel threatened if they are not in the same culturally similar group, they are themselves less helpful in providing pathways to enhancing positive relations within MCGW. The familiarity of culture often means that students are unable to transcend from their cultural zone. The inability to step out of their cultural zone means the benefits MCGW has on the students learning, providing for a unique combination of culturally diverse individuals, (meta) cognitions, culturally inspired motivations, peer contributions and

group dynamics (Kimmel & Volet, 2010; Rienties et al., 2014), all inherited from the cultural capital and societal norms, will not be enjoyed.

Surprisingly, another reason why home students prefer to work in groups like themselves, i.e., monoculture groups rather than heterogeneous groups, is because they believe they are more likely to get better marks in monoculture groups (De Vita, 2002). Despite the belief that multicultural group-work will have a detrimental effect on their average assessed mark, to date, no significant research has been conducted to support this behavioural belief (De Vita, 2002). What limited research has been done indicates that once culturally diverse groups have settled, they outperform monocultural groups (Watson, 1993). Interestingly, De Vita (2002) concluded that multicultural groups produced higher quality solutions. Belbin's (1981) research went even further and indicated that diverse, multicultural groups were more effective than one composed of high flyers.

2.1.3.2 A shift in thinking patterns

Attitudes change over time, and this can lead to a change in thinking patterns. The uneasiness international students experience in MCGW has been acknowledged in the studies of Behfar et al. (2006). They indicated that international students voiced fear of participating in culturally dissimilar groups. Hall's (1990) study stated that cultural dimensions of behaviour affect students' understanding of collaboration. But what is interesting is how this equilibrium changes with time. There is research suggesting that international students who have studied within the country for a while have become confident communicators and enjoy group activities (Summers & Volet, 2008). Both home and international students have expressed a positive change in their feelings about group-work at the end of the group-work

activity (Sweeney et al., 2008). This is not to be confused with acculturation (adopting cultural traits or social patterns of another group). Instead it is merely a shift in the thinking patterns of the students brought about by exposure to the different cultures.

International students, in particular, have expressed a predisposition to a positive opinion of group learning during the activity, indicating a positive relationship between learning activities and learning outcomes has been induced (Kimmel & Volet, 2010). Perhaps the reason as to why the research on MCGW is inconclusive can be attributed to the research on student voices as being in its infancy. The literature cites only a few examples, and clarity can only be achieved if more qualitative research can be conducted that provides a better understanding of students' opinions and perceptions of MCGW (Sweeney et al., 2008).

2.1.4 Challenges within MCGW

Researchers have found that there are other factors, other than merely cultural differences, deterring novice group members from performing effectively within MCGW, such as including team member personalities, unequal workloads (Popov et al., 2012), differences in content knowledge, academic attitude, and ambitions (Cox & Blake, 1991; Pfaff & Huddleston, 2003; Summers & Volet, 2008; Watson, BarNir, & Pavur, (2005). Despite being a popular assessment strategy within higher education (Popov et al., 2012; Rienties, 2013; Watson, BarNir, & Pavur, (2005), face-to-face group-work is a challenging assessment platform for international students (Robbins & Fredendali, 2001; Schullery & Schullery, 2006). They are presented with issues of combating not only different cultural norms but also mistrust and lack of cohesion, free-riding, all of which has the detrimental effect of demotivation (Hoppe 2012; House et al., 2004; Soares et al., 2006).

MCGW presents other more complex challenges in addition to the above. Many

studies have categorised the problems that manifest themselves within MCGW, namely issues related with leadership, conflict management, and decision making, with group-performance, integration, behaviour and analytical frameworks; and lastly, matters concerned with communication (Exley, 2019; Popov et al., 2012; Shi & Wang, 2011; Vermette & Kline, 2017). Many of the challenges that occur within MCGW can be attributed to students having culturally different styles of interaction. Also, they often have insufficient English language skills, and this inhibits their ability to communicate with lecturers and other students effectively (Hall, 1990; Popov et al., 2012). Effective communication involves the transmission of meaning between individuals (Stahl, 2010b). Even if bilingual team members have a shared language in which they communicate, their native language may not always translate in the way it was intended (Stahl, 2010a). What is unknown is whether this can impair the communication process within MCGW. Few studies are bringing this to light, and more studies need to be conducted in order to address this gap in the literature.

2.1.4.1 The social interaction and communication process

Studies have indicated that culturally different standards of interaction and communication can influence group equilibrium and communication (Cronje, 2011; Gelford & McCusker, 2002; Hofstede, 1994; Von Glinow, Shapiro & Brett 2004). Social interaction for some cultures can be extremely challenging (Hall, 1990; Popov et al., 2012; Watson, BarNir, & Pavur (2005). If we were to reflect on the dynamics that exist within MCGW, we would observe the varied extent to which different cultures feel it appropriate to intervene in group discussions. Studies have indicated that attitudes in behaviour may be culturally biased (Sweeney et al., 2008). For some cultures intervening in group discussions or providing opposing arguments can be second nature. In contrast, for some others the pressure of being asked to defend a group decision they did not agree with or if they are expected to present

opposing arguments, can be unsettling, as their culture does not promote open debating, which is a crucial skill needed within MCGW (Watson, BarNir, & Pavur, (2005).

2.1.4.2 Surface-level verses deep-level aspects of culture

The discussion in the above section indicated some studies had found communication can present difficulties within MCGW (Watson, BarNir, & Pavur, (2005). However, Stahl's (2010a) studies have provided contradictory evidence. Interestingly their studies have demonstrated that there was no direct effect on communication effectiveness and group equilibrium within multicultural groups. They claim the context in which the challenges have been reported can be considered controversial. They explain this interesting contradiction by identifying that those studies that have reported culturally diverse teams as being less effective in the communication process have only shown these results when researchers have focused on measuring '*surface-level'* aspects of culture which they categorise as ethnicity or associated with race. Surface-level cultural cues are observable characteristics of diversity which individuals observe when they first meet in MCGW meetings. Stahl et al. (2010a) warned us that if researchers were to focus their research on measuring the effectiveness of the communication process within MCGW, based on surface-level cultural cues, their studies would indicate social categorisation. Perhaps a better approach for researchers to focus on is the '*deep-level*' aspects of culture, which identify the differences in knowledge, attitudes, and values. All of these are associated with information-processing of diversity (Stahl et al. 2010b). When research pays more attention to deep-level aspects of culture, then focus is more likely to be given to the benefits of different perspectives MCGW brings for creativity, namely better explaining of ideas, better listening and feedback leading to more satisfaction, motivation and social engagement and building of trust (Bennett & Bennett, 2004; Stahl et al., 2010a; Stahl et, al., 2010b). Then over time, the surface-level characteristics may cease to act as a barrier

(Stahl, 2010a). Importantly Stahl et al. (2010a) identified that in studies that adopt a more '*deep-level'* research approach focusing on values or attitudes associated with culture, then communication and group equilibrium was seen as more effective in multicultural teams than even in monocultural teams. Stahl (2010a) is a solitary voice in bringing this to attention. It is an exciting proposition, and more studies need to be conducted to explore this further. Bennett and Bennett (2004) applied this principle to MCGW, suggesting that if group members focus on the similarity of difference, that would allow group members to respect the different perspectives multi-cultures bring.

2.1.4.3 Scope for enrichment and potential synergies

The literature does not attempt to identify the scope for advancement and potential synergies (Stahl et al., 2010). The literature is peppered with a myriad of articles highlighting that culturally diverse groups experience conflicts and lack motivation (Robbins & Fredendall, 2001). Stahl et al. (2010a) claimed that such literature provides an over-emphasis on the problems and barriers that exist instead of identifying scope for aspects that could potentially enrich cultural encounters (Stahl et al., 2010a). Stahl et al. (2010a) observed that research often presented culturally diverse teams as 'mixed-blessings' or 'doubled-edged sword.' Such expressions they claim have been founded on contradictory research studies, and Stahl et al. (2010a) objected to terms used within the literature such as *'culture clash', 'cultural friction', 'cultural incompatibility*', as they discourage chances of achieving potential synergies. Stahl et al. (2010a) claimed research had given little attention to what conditions needed to be in place to enhance culturally diverse teams' productivity. They claimed that research should take responsibility for identifying the benefits culturally diverse teams bring and provide mechanisms to enable this to happen.

2.2 Culture

2.2.1 What is culture?

Having an understanding of what culture is can provide a platform for understanding the differences and the challenges that may arise within the MCGW process. When researching literature, I am presented with a multitude of perspectives varying in their definitions of what constitutes culture. Suffice it to say the cultural concepts appear complex and blurred. Literature does not provide concrete boundaries for this concept. Despite the haziness and indistinctness of the idea, it seems to influences students' values and beliefs, importantly it impacts their behaviour within MCGW (Biggs, Bussen & Ramsey, 2020; Ho-Kyung Huh, Seong, & Jun 2015; Matsumoto, 2007; Popov et al., 2012; Spencer-Oatey, 2012). To add to these complexities, it can be observed that even within the same culture, individuals interpret their cultural norms differently, depending on their histories and societal positions. Culture is characterised by diversity and goes beyond factors such as age, gender, family, and social statuses (Kai, 2005). There appears to be no consensus on a definition, despite discussions attempting to define culture (Spencer-Oately, 2012). The outdated view that biological characteristics somehow define how people behave and interact has been discredited by recent studies (Bennett & Bennett, 2004; Biggs, Bussen & Ramsey, 2020; Howe, 2016). An Individual's behaviour can be attributed to cultural factors rather than race, which has been typically defined in terms of physical characteristics such as skin or hair colour and facial features (Bennett & Bennett, 2004; Biggs, Bussen & Ramsey, 2020; Howe, 2016). Having established how race is configured, we attempt to understand what culture is. Hofstede's (1994) definition of culture has been widely accepted within the literature, which states that:

> "Culture is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one category of people from another" (p.1).

2.2.2 Categorisation of culture.

The Hofstede (1980) study is a significant study that provides an insight into cultural behaviours. In the early 1970s, Hofstede conducted a major scientific quantitative study to study cultural differences (Hofstede, 1994). The intention was to provide an analytical framework for large international businesses to enable them to understand the behaviour of employees from different cultures. The study provided an insight into national cultures, what their expectations were and which behavioural outcomes they prefer (Biggs, Bussen, & Ramsey, 2020; Howe, 2016; Shi & Wang, 2011; Sivakuma & Nakata 2001; Soares, Farhangmehr & Shoham, 2007). It is important to note that their studies did not explore the cultural issues within MCGW; they were conducted within the business environment. However, the Hofstede study's findings are pertinent for this study in helping to understand the dimensions of culture. Their study provides cultural dimensions that have been acknowledged by many studies as being representative of a culture (Biggs, Bussen & Ramsey, 2020; Signorini, Wiesemes, & Murphy, 2009; Shi & Wang, 2010). The Hofstede study's dimensions to categorise behaviour identified the following set of indices according to Shi (2011): power distance which refers to whether the society identifies with a high or low power distance; uncertainty avoidance, which refers to the society's tolerance of uncertainty and ambiguity; individualism-collectivism, this refers to the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups; and long-term orientation which refers to whether a culture prefers to prioritise thrift and perseverance, dedication, perseverance, and diligence or short-term orientation, whereby the culture places emphasis on respect for tradition, and fulfilling social obligations (Biggs, Bussen & Ramsey, 2020; Hofstede, 1994; House, Javidan, Hanges & Dorfman, 2002; Shi & Wang, 2010)**.** House, Javidan, Hanges, & Dorfman, (2002) brought further insight into the importance of understanding culture, identifying that practices that go against the deeply held cultural values of individuals are likely to make individuals feel

dissatisfied or uncommitted and less able to perform well in the group (Biggs, Bussen, & Ramsey, 2020; House et al., 2002; Signorini, Wiesemes, & Murphy, 2009).

2.2.3 Collectivist versus individualistic cultures

Further exploration of the Hofstede's (1999) categorisation of cultures reveals two important dimensions that are of interest to this study, that of the individualistic and collectivist cultures. Hofstede (1994) claimed individualistic cultures were vastly different to collectivist cultures. Collectivism he claimed was the extent to which individuals are integrated within a group. Hofstede (1994) referred to individualistic societies as being independent and where society encourages everyone to look after themselves. However, his research found that collectivist cultures tend to integrate into strong, cohesive societal groups in extended families, where the group interests prevailed over an individual's interest (Biggs, Bussen, & Ramsey, 2020; Signorini, Wiesemes, & Murphy, 2009). The groups protect the individual, but in turn, there is an expectancy that the individual is loyal to the group (Biggs, Bussen, & Ramsey, 2020; Signorini, Wiesemes, & Murphy, 2009). Within the classroom context, the collectivist cultures teach via a teacher-led approach; conflict is avoided while classroom harmony is maintained, and maintenance of 'face' is important (Signorini, Wiesemes, & Murphy, 2009). Studies of Biggs, Bussen, & Ramsey, (2020) and Hofstede (1994) claim individualism prevails in Western countries while collectivism prevails in less developed and Eastern countries (Hofstede, 1994). Watson, BarNir, & Pavur (2005) indicated that it would be interesting for researchers to explore the equilibrium between collectivist and individualist cultures. He suggested there were few studies that explore how the behaviours within MCGW are influenced by collectivist cultural upbringings from that of individualistic cultures. This study attempts to discover some knowledge in order to address this gap in knowledge.

Watson, BarNir, & Pavur, (2005) and Cai (2017) suggested that several studies have

found differences in attitudes for individualist and collectivist cultures. Watson, BarNir, & Pavur (2005) claimed individualistic cultures were more appreciative of diversity compared to collectivist cultures. Watson, BarNir, & Pavur (2005) also stated that collectivist cultures preferred to focus on similarities and shared values, whereas individualist cultures valued uniqueness or differences in-group members. This stemmed from their preference for working as individuals rather than focusing on collective goals. Whereas, Individualist cultures saw differences as a necessary precursor in achieving goals, collectivist cultures emphasised focusing on differences led to dysfunctional groups. Popov et al. (2012) intimated that the individualistic culture's necessity to strive for individual excellence might create feelings of resentment and hostility towards teams.

Although celebrated extensively within the literature, Hofstede's studies are not without criticism. Signorini, Wiesemes, & Murphy (2009) brought attention to Hofstede's model as having limitations. Signorini, Wiesemes, & Murphy (2009) claimed that Hofstede oversimplified cultural differences and lacked empirical evidence to support his research claims. Despite drawing criticism, Hofstede's insight into culture is interesting and worthy of exploration for this study, as Hofstede prefers to consider culture as being influenced by the process of socialisation, i.e., socially constructed, which is the premise of this study is adopting for MCGW.

The study aligns with Hofstede's premise that cultural rules that are presented via a process of socialisation influence behaviour. These cultural rules typically guide the interpretation of how to behave in life situations (Stahl et al., 2010b). However, as discussed by Signorini, Wiesemes, & Murphy (2009), Hofstede oversimplified cultural differences by categorising cultural behaviour. Arguably, their claim becomes increasingly significant in the

context of globalisation. Yet, this study makes references to collectivist and individualist cultures, despite the limitations of these terms. Despite the terms drawing criticism, this study uses these terms as perceived comparative parameters. It is recognised that these historical terms or assumptions do not necessarily represent the breadth of subtle cultural norms existing within the society. Adopting this simplistic view may diminish an individual's cultural identity as applying the same characteristics to different sets of students would ignore the different factors that richly combine to form an individual's cultural identity, which this study is seeking. As explained in section 2.2.8 it would not be appropriate to stereotype cultures. The individualistic and collectivist comparative parameters are used purely as heuristic devices to identify distinctions between cultures. These heuristic or artificial constructs are used to assist in exploration of social phenomena. They are not optimal but suffice to reach an approximation to find a satisfactory solution. The rationale for using perceived parameters stems from the desire to identify patterns and obtain a better understanding of cultural behaviours.

However, there are other perspectives on culture. More recently, Spencer-Oatey (2012) has pointed out the different characteristics of culture, claiming that:

> Culture is a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations of life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people and that influence (but do not determine) each member's behaviour and his/her interpretations of the 'meaning' of other people's behaviour.
>
> Spencer-Oatey (2012, p.2).

There is an overlap in both definitions in that they both say common characteristics infused by society influence behaviour. However, Spenser-Oatey's (2012) definition attempts

to go a little further and places emphasis on specific parameters, such as beliefs, values and behavioural conventions influencing culture. It can be argued that Spenser-Oatey's (2012) categorisation of culture, focusing on values and beliefs, is closely aligned with those who intimate that research should concentrate on focusing on the 'deep value' systems cultures adopt. Her dimensions extending to policies and procedures are perhaps more relevant in recent times, as opposed to when Hofstede did his study. This new insight into culture, as presented by Spenser-Oatey (2012), is impressive. However, the literature lacks studies exploring students' cultural values and beliefs with MCGW, an area of research that is important as student groups are becoming multicultural due to globalisation.

2.2.4 Culture is learnt behaviour

While Spenser-Oatey's (2012) concept of culture is an appealing characterisation of culture, her research does not provide categorisations of cultures, which would benefit future studies in the same way as the Hofstede's (1994) study did. As such, we cannot disregard Hofstede's perspective of culture. It can be observed that Hofstede's rejection of the anthropological view of culture as a set of guidelines inherited by individuals associated with a particular society, paves the direction for embracing the notion that culture formulates a collection of ideas and habits that individuals learn and transmit from generation to generation (Biggs, Bussen, & Ramsey, 2020; Shi & Wang, 2011; Soares, Farhangmehr, & Shoham, (2007); Tares, Steel, & Kirkman, 2012). Hofstede maintained that culture is learned not inherited and derives from one's social environment (Spencer-Oatey, 2012). It can be argued that this is of significance because it is through this process of socialisation, as eluded to by Hofstede, that students learn cultural rules on how to behave in society and subsequently within the MCGW process. The literature is peppered with the research explaining how behavioural norms are shaped. Many have argued that it is influenced by upbringing. Bourdieu

(1990) and the later studies of Kimmel and Volet (2010) indicated that the behavioural norms students possess about how society works have emerged from their upbringing. It is essential to recognise that these socio-cultural norms and values are unwritten and unspoken and have been transmitted unconsciously to the students by family members and the society in which they live (Biggs, Bussen & Ramsey, 2020; Bourdieu, 1990; Hofstede, 2004; Kang & Mastin, 2008; Signorini, Wiesemes, & Murphy, 2009; Shi & Wang, 2011; Sivakumar & Nakuta, 2001). This unconscious adaption of behaviour patterns has been explained by the concept of 'Habitus,' which will be explored further in the next section. The literature falls short in studies identifying students' perceptions of their own cultures, their explanations of their behavioural patterns or habitus, and that of others. This interesting gap in knowledge will be investigated by this study.

2.2.5 Bourdieu and habitus

Bourdieu (1990) uses 'concepts' to establish meaning for culture. Robbins (1999) explained that concepts allowed us to fix conventional meanings which affected practices. He indicated that concepts did not have intrinsic meaning themselves; however, they aided in classifying phenomena. Bourdieu used the concept of habitus to give sense to culture. He indicated that human depositions are an inherited concept of society, which they then adapt according to their situation and the experiences they encounter (Golthorpe, 2007; Kimmel & Volet, 2010; Robbins, 1999). Bourdieu stated that a persons' behavioural deployment is governed by their habitus. Habitus is inherited concepts of behaviour learned in childhood and which reflect the social context and norms of the society in which one lives (West, Fleming, & Finnegan, 2013). Bruen (2014) extrapolated the concept of habitus by saying that it is an inherited set of concepts that influence tradition, history, and principles, and it is advanced through the process of imitation whereby individuals unconsciously adopt behavioural patterns passed on from society.

2.2.6 Implications of habitus for MCGW

For this research, discovering and exploring a student's habitus is considered a useful analytical tool in helping to understand international students' behaviour and thinking processes within group-work (Brooks, 2008). The concept of habitus allows an understanding of the narratives of students who have participated in MCGW. Habitus can provide an understanding of the context and behaviours and actions experienced within MCGW (Bruen, 2014). Habitus, in itself, can be extremely powerful in influencing thought processes. Bourdieu indicated that habitus is a discrete entity that unconsciously determines behavioural patterns, which are influenced by societal norms. It engages with our histories and is carried through generations influencing the choices made and decisions taken (Bruen, 2014). However, Bourdieu indicated that if an individual's situation changed, then repositioning was possible but that each individual had a different capacity for potential change and was often dependent on encounters with others in the group and their historical, cultural backgrounds (Robbins, 1999). This realisation has become ever more critical in recent times as the impact of globalisation has encouraged students to study in different countries. Consequently, their cultural environment has changed, resulting in their behavioural norms being repositioned (Marginsons & van der Wende, 2007). Exploration is needed at a micro-level concerning what happens when this delicate balance of what is acceptable within social norms, governed by the unconscious, is disrupted within the group work process and how the resulting tensions that arise are managed. This gap in the literature has intrigued me, and my research intends to explore how habitus impacts the behaviours of students within the MCGW.

Bourdieu talked about the difficulty of cultural adaption experienced when different cultures engage in a new situation. He referred to it as a '*clash of civilisations* (Antal and Friedman, 2008; Biggard, 2001). Within MCGW, if the student's habitus does not fit naturally in the group-work process, he/she may feel uncomfortable and isolated (Bruen, 2014). Having

an understanding of habitus and how it influences behaviour may be of interest to lecturers as Write (2011) is critical of lecturers' lack of imagination, particularly those who followed procedures rather than investigating the cultural, behavioural patterns within MCGW. Bruen (2014) criticised teachers for being unaware of the different educational systems and having a lack of connection and understanding of a student's habitus, often resulting in students either being excluded or excluding themselves. Perhaps the criticism towards lecturers not having an understanding of students' habitus and not knowing how to develop their intercultural skills can be attributed to the lack of research studies exploring this area. The literature lacks models to help lecturers address this issue. Lecturers' teaching practices are often informed by theoretical models within the literature. However, conceptual models identifying the concerns within MCGW, giving instructions on how to prepare students for MCGW, and teaching student intercultural skills specific for MCGW are lacking. In qualitative research, conceptual models can be developed as a tentative framework based on what is in the literature, or they can be developed as the data is collected and analysed (Fox, Gouthro, Morakabati, & Brackstone, 2014). This study aims to address this shortfall and develop a conceptual model from students' voices on how to improve the MCGW process. This may help lecturers be better prepared for delivering MCGW.

2.2.7 Complexity of culture

Habitus is not the only factor that influences students' cultural behaviours, Schein (1990) considered it desirable when analysing a particular group's culture to distinguish three levels: a) observable artefacts, (b) values (c) basic underlying assumptions. Schein (1990) suggested that to understand a member's behaviours, you need to understand their values. In essence, he claimed that values govern behaviours. Schein (1990) said that to fully understand a group's values you needed to delve into their underlying assumptions, which

unconsciously determine how they feel and think and it is only by interviewing and listening to what individuals say about their valves and attitudes that you get an understanding for the rationalisation of their behaviour. This is significant, and this research attempts to investigate it further. There appears to be an overlap in his thought process with that of Spencer-Oatey (2012). Schein has referred to assumptions that are hidden from others and are seen as being ultimate, not debatable, and taken-for-granted. They result in unconscious behaviour (Biggs, Bussen, & Ramsey, 2020; Hofstede, 1994; House et al., 2002; Shi & Wang, 2011; Signorini, Wiesemes, & Murphy, 2009; Spencer-Oatey, 2012;). It may be worth distinguishing between assumptions and values.

2.2.8 Stereotyping cultures

The discussions so far have categorised behaviours according to theoretical models within the literature. Acknowledgment is given to the criticisms that the models outlined within the literature are generalised and attempt to simplify cultures into well-defined stereotypes (Vanaik, 2013). It is arguable whether such generations can be representative of whole nations. Communities may differ with regard to many other factors, such as age, migration, religion, as illustrated by Kai's (2005) '*iceberg model of cultural diversity'* (see Figure 2.1: The Iceberg model of cultural diversity). Figure 2.1 evidences the complexities and identifies the other many factors, such as age, migration, religion, which can blur these generalisations. More recent literature indicates that the process of migration (Lugar, 2009; Watson, BarNir, & Pavur, (2005), in particular, potentially may infuse the process of acculturation, adopting cultural traits or social patterns of another group which may have distorted the precise cultural dimensions. Studies supporting this are limited, and it is a subject worthy of investigating further.

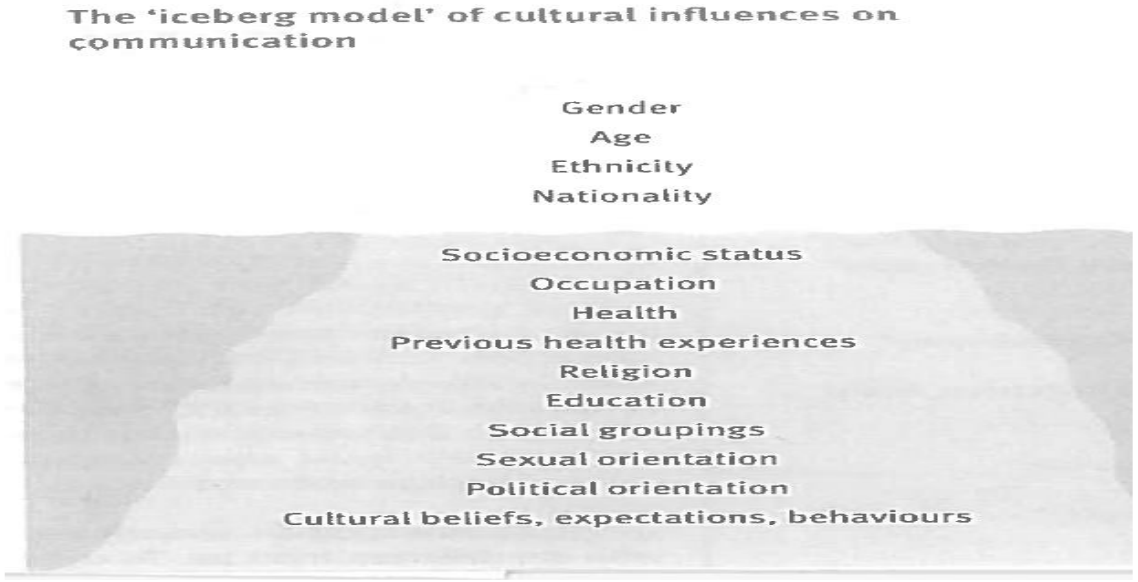

Figure 2.1: Source Kai (2005) The Iceberg Model of cultural diversity,

It can be argued that there is a blurring between a student's culture and personality, and it may be worthwhile making a distinction. This study recognises a student's culture as being different from their personality, based on Spencer-Oatey's (2012) suggestions, which distinguish culture from human nature and personality, by claiming that human nature is the ability to feel fear, anger, love, joy, and sadness. How one manages these feelings and expresses them is governed by culture. Personality, in contrast, is unique to an individual and is both learned and partly inherited and influenced by personal experiences (Spencer-Oatey, 2012). This study focuses on the influence of culture on behaviour as opposed to personalities.

2.3 Prerequisite for effective intercultural communication

The above sections identified that society's values influence culture (Biggs, Bussen, & Ramsey, 2020; Schein, 1990). It has also been determined that culture is acquired through

the learning and socialisation process, and Ferraro (1998) and Spencer-Oatey (2012) said this had several important implications for group coherence. The same consequences can be extended to MCGW. To address the challenges experienced when cultures integrate Ferraro identified a prerequisite for effective intercultural communication s having self-awareness of one's cultural norms. This, coupled with an understanding of the other cultural, behavioural traits, can lead to a higher tolerance for cultural differences. Secondly, he suggested that culturally relevant training programmes could teach essential intercultural skills, which could help individuals learn to function in other cultures, just as they had initially learned to internalise their cultural norms and behaviours. Issues may arise within the MCGW process if students of a particular culture do not realise that their own norms and valves are specific to their culture. If this occurs, then it is only when their beliefs, values, and behaviours are challenged by students from different cultures, that they appreciate that their conduct is governed by cultural norms. This happens during the debating, negotiating, and challenging process that occurs within the face-to-face MCGW process. This realisation is, in itself, insufficient to foster collaboration within MCGW. Students need to be equipped with the necessary skills to identify and be able to manage any changes presented that deviate from their childhood habitus (Biggs, Bussen, & Ramsey, 2020; Howe, 2016). Summers and Volet (2008) suggested that this skill set should include being able to counter-cultural prejudice and be able to foster a students' development of intercultural competence. Summer and Volet (2008) urged that there was a need for structures and procedures to be placed within university curriculums to formulate this achievement. The study endeavours to address the gaps identified in the literature discussion above by attempting to design a conceptual model that embraces this gap in the literature by providing a mechanism for students to understand their own culture and that of others. It also aims to provide pathways for university lecturers to foster the development of students' intercultural skills.

The above section explored the boundaries of MCGW, and the skills set needed within MCGW. Also, it reflected on what constitutes culture and habitus and scoped the skills necessary to develop intercultural competences. The above section also explored some of the benefits and challenges experienced within MCGW and obtained an insight into the students' fears and attitudes within the MCGW process. The next section explores how higher education can develop the necessary intercultural skills which are needed for active participation within MCGW.

Part one of the literature review brought attention to several gaps within the literature, which have been discussed. This study draws on the literature review and the gaps to formulate the following research questions:

2.4 Main Research question one

This section will summarize the gaps identified in the literature review for part one. From the deficiencies identified in the literature review, the research question one has been formulated. The literature review identified that there was a lack of research identifying voices of students' perceptions of their habitus, values, beliefs, cultures, and also a gap in their perception of others and how their culture informs their behaviour within MCGW. The literature review also identified the fact that multicultural groups may experience many challenges, and further studies are needed to explore the range of benefits and the challenges MCGW offers. The literature indicated that it would be interesting for researchers to explore the equilibrium between collectivist and individualist cultures. It also stated that there are few, if any, studies or instruments that explore how the behaviours within MCGW are influenced by collectivist cultural upbringing, as opposed to individualistic cultures.

The literature identified students' need to be equipped with the necessary skills to identify and be able to manage any changes that present deviation from their childhood habitus. In addition, the literature identified that there is a need for skillsets to be taught as to how to counter-cultural prejudice, and be able to foster the students' development of intercultural competence. The literature urges that there is a need to understand better how these skills can be developed and how structures can be placed within university curriculums to formulate this achievement. There were indications that there is a need to design culturally relevant training programmes that can teach essential intercultural skills, which will help individuals to learn to function in other cultures.

This study attempts to address the gaps identified in the literature discussion above, in trying to design a conceptual model which embraces this gap and provides a mechanism for students to understand their own culture and that of others. This conceptual model could indicate pathways for university lecturers to foster the development of students' intercultural skills.

2.4.1 Formation of main research question 1

To address the above gaps, the following research questions have been formulated:

Main Research Question 1)

To what extent are group behaviours and attitudes within MCGW related to cultural expectations?

Sub Research Questions

Sub RQ (1) What are the students' cultural attitudes and behaviours?

Sub RQ (2) What are the student's perceptions and experiences of other cultures within MCGW?

Sub RQ (3) What are the challenges and benefits of participating in MCGW?

PART TWO

Part one discussed the challenges presented within MCGW and identified the approaches to address these concerns, which are limited within the literature. Part two further identifies the gaps in knowledge as to how positive interactions can be developed within MCGW. From the identification of these gaps, a series of research questions were established for this study. In order to explore the skill set needed to develop positive interactions within MCGW, this chapter investigates how behaviours of academic assertiveness, negotiation skills, critical consciousness, and felt sense could be learned. The chapter provides a review of the theories from PEACE education and Anti-bias curriculums that may help higher education to offer teaching approaches that allow students to develop the multicultural skillset needed to participate within MCGW.

2.5 The skillsets needed to communicate and negotiate within MCGW

2.5.1 Academic assertiveness

The previous section identified some of the challenges presented within MCGW. These are related to students not having the communication and debating skills when participating with other cultures (Exley, 2019; Popov et al., 2012; Shi & Wang, 2011; Vermette & Kline, 2017). Searching the literature on how we can empower students with the skillset to communicate and negotiate more effectively within MCGW, brings to light, vibrant discussions on academic assertiveness. There is an argument that having academic assertiveness skills set may provide the emotional and psychological behaviours needed to converse and negotiate ideas (Biggs, Bussen & Ramsey, 2020; Moon, 2009), which may be a beneficial skill to possess within the MCGW process. The literature indicates assertiveness skillset may provide individuals with useful language that helps them to articulate their ideas and communicate effectively in a discussion group as well as providing a toolset that helps them

to address disharmony between individuals (Moon, 2009). The literature lacks significant studies identifying whether assertiveness skills are beneficial within MCGW; such a skillset may be beneficial when students are required to collaborate, debate, and negotiate with students from different cultures, as in MCGW. Moon has conducted some research on academic assertiveness and claims that it is a mix of self-awareness and an awareness of others' behaviours. This is interesting research, but what exactly the 'mix' between self-awareness and awareness of others behaviours is, has not been articulated or supported rigorously within the literature. it would be beneficial to have further studies to explore this more. Part one of the literature review identified that students are unaware of their own and other students' cultural behaviours, and developing assertiveness skills may help them. Scrutiny of the academic assertiveness skillset reveals a myriad of behaviours. Moon (2009) has identified those skills that would allow students to have the necessary skills to participate effectively within MCGW as follows: being able to find your voice, through which you can engage in critical debate; a willingness to challenge and to accept a challenge; being able to cope with the likelihood of not being right; willingness to change one's mind; openness to feedback; willingness to listen and take account of others' viewpoint (Moon, 2009). For these skillsets to be developed people need to be open to changing behaviour. However, Dweck (2000) identified there are two types of people. The two types of people Dweck (2000) pointed out are differentiated according to the association with their own 'self-theory.' Self-theory indicates that one set of individuals consider themselves as a fixed entity, unable or unwilling to change their behaviour and, therefore, will not attempt to change. The second group of people considers themselves adaptable and able to change. They will identify what in their behaviour they need to change in order to reach their goal successfully and then implement actions to achieve change. Although Dweck (2000) succinctly stated that there were two types of people who either welcome or repudiate change, the consequences of changing behaviour

must not be overlooked. The notion of embedding an assertive skillset within the curriculum stirs up notions of changing behaviours, which have become part of the students' cultural norms. This line of thought initiates a further question as to whether students should be taught assertive behavioural skills or not if this involves changing behaviours? This question arises because Dweck (2000) concerned herself with the issue of '*how do you feel about changing.'* A basic premise assumed by those who adopt teaching assertiveness behavioural development within their curriculum is that you can change and become more assertive if you wish to. What is important to note is that by teaching assertiveness skills, we are encouraging a change in behaviour, which can lead to guilt feelings (Moon, 2009). This is particularly noticeable if you are going against behaviours you learned as a child or due to the cultural environment you were brought up in. For example, you may have learned as a child '*you should listen and follow the advice from those who are older than you*' as a form of respect. Within the group-work process for collectivist cultures, voicing or disagreeing with members older than themselves may be difficult or may create guilt feelings as it goes against their cultural norms. Moon (2009) suggested that by changing, you would need to recognise the guilt and appreciate it is as a feeling and be prepared to let it go. What the subsequent consequences of letting go of these feelings has not been documented. Further studies that listen to student voices on how the students feel about changing behaviour and the consequences of behavioural change ought to be heard.

Moon (2009) argued that there are important academic assertiveness skills one needs in group-work. She used the Universal Declaration of Human Rights formulated in the United Nations General Assembly in 1948 as reported by Alberti and Emmons (1982) as a framework to contextualise and highlight some academic rights, which she argued were central to the group-work process. Specifically, she brought attention to the following Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Moon claimed, "You have a right to be different, …. 'You have the right to

privacy, solitude, and independence" (Moon, 2009, p 24). Moon continued to say, "You have a right to say 'yes or no' … You have a right to decline something; you can decline to take responsibility for the needs and problems of others… You can express your opinions and values that are different from others...You have a right to express your feelings, opinions, and values in an appropriate way" (Moon, 2009, p.23). Moon considered it important for students participating in group-work to have assertiveness skills and argued that these rights or value systems could be incorporated within the MCGW process by claiming, '*You have the right to say yes or no for yourself*.' Teachings of academic assertiveness, encourage students to have independent thought, to express their feelings, thereby exercising their rights to agree or disagree. It can be argued many of the rights Moon contextualised are fundamental to MCGW." *You have a right to be different*" (Moon, 2009, p.23) is fundamental in allowing for individual identity. It encourages group members to be open to differences and appreciate them.

However, there is another right which Moon (2000) and the Higher Educational Academy contextualised within MCGW and which may cause disharmony to some cultures, namely the notion that "*You can decline to care about something or can decline to take responsibilities for dealing with the needs or problems of others" (*Moon, 2000*,*p.24*).* The tension that arises here lies because it does not address Asian cultural value systems, which encourage a collectivist approach to help others, even if the action does not meet their own individual goals.

It can be argued that to establish a common standardisation approach to MCGW can undermine the strength of national cultures. There is an argument that academic assertiveness theories have a bias towards western cultures, and there is a lack of awareness of alternative contexts, values, and beliefs. Several scholars in recent times have challenged the assumption that theories formulated within the western cultures are not applicable

universally (House et al., 2002; Sivakumar & Nakata, 2001; Soares et al., 2007). Such voices have driven this study. This study aims to hear the voices of students from collectivist cultures as well as individualist cultures to achieve a balanced viewpoint.

The literature established that different cultures have different expectations of behaviour due to their different value systems. In addition, there is an indication that assertiveness skills may provide valuable toolsets for students enabling them to voice and articulate their opinions within MCGW. However, there remains a gap in knowledge as to how encouraging the development of assertiveness skills resulting in changes in behaviour, impacts students that come from different cultural value systems. The attention turns now to how we can achieve a sense of understanding of other cultures, which will enable students to build on the benefits MCGW brings.

2.5.2 Felt sense

The previous section discussed how an assertive skillset could provide students with the language to articulate their ideas, thereby developing their communication skills, enabling better integration. However, developing skills of assertiveness is not all that is needed for communication; emotion plays a part in how an individual communicates and behaves within MCGW. For effective communication leading to integration, students need to be in tune with their emotions and feelings and that of others so that they can regulate their behaviour. The question arises then: How can students regulate their emotions and feel connected to each other? The literature indicates for emotion to be invoked and to feel connected means having to experience empathy (Nussbaum, 2004). Harris (2015) referred to the work of Gendlin (1992), where she explained that to feel empathy, group members need to have what Gendlin termed a ‘felt sense,’ which is when the body senses the situation and then regulates its’ behaviour (Harris, 2015). If members are not sensing the situation or have a lack of felt sense,

they may not understand or empathise with another member's behaviour due to a lack of understanding of other cultures expectations and behaviours, potentially resulting in groups becoming dysfunctional (Antal & Friedman, 2008; Bridges, 2014, Cai, 2017). The literature indicates, behaviour is often transpired as a result of the thought process individuals have, which are often influenced by their culture. Therefore, within MCGW, an ability to have a 'felt sense,' understanding, and sensing other cultures' attitudes and expectations, which may influence their behaviours can be considered necessary. A felt sense allows an individual to have some understanding of what different cultures may be feeling. Galvin and Todres (2013) indicated it was possible to attain this, as individuals inherently can understand other peoples' suffering even if we are not in the same situation, as they may have had similar experiences. Group members may be able to relate to international students experiencing transitional settling issues or in some cases having to deal with traumatic events occurring at home, such as an earthquake because Galvin and Todres (2013) suggested that somewhere deep within an individual there is bodily recognition of the other individual's desperate struggle. This can be at an existential level, as part of the events a human being undergoes, for example a struggling baby exposed to life at birth, or at a personal level, for instance, at a time when he could not swim as a toddler and the parents were out of sight (Galvin & Todres, 2013). The specific details are not important, rather the feeling of vulnerability, having the ability to invoke a felt sense as a fellow human being, is what is important. Within the MCGW context, having the ability to invoke the student's felt sense may help students regulate their emotions and feel better connected with other group members enabling them to understand each other's needs and behaviour better.

The above section identified literature indicating that a felt sense may be a pivotal skill to help develop a student's ability to empathise and understand group members' feelings. However, the literature does not identify how this can be achieved, and the study aims to

explore this further by listening to student voices in order to narrow the gap in knowledge. It is acknowledged that these student voices will be individual suggestions. However, they may provide some consideration that might inform the development of the conceptual model aimed at helping lecturers prepare students for MCGW. The next section focuses on how students participating in MCGW can further develop their intercultural competence.

2.6 Intercultural competencies

2.6.1 Developing Intercultural sensitivity

Due to globalisation and student mobility, within higher education, there is an agenda for promoting the development of curricula that have a cosmopolitan outlook and a concern for global citizenship (Exley, 2019; Nussbaum, 2004; Vermette & Kline, 2017). This is achieved through a process of 'intercultural education.' Incorporating this form of learning within the curriculum results in developing students' intercultural sensitivities and competencies (Bridges, 2014; Cai, 2017).

With the increased interest in intercultural sensitivity in the globalizing and multicultural society, disorientation related to this concept has raised, too. The literature presents a blurring of the terms: Intercultural sensitivity, intercultural competence, intercultural communication, and cultural awareness; these terms appear not to be entirely comprehended yet. They are separate concepts, even though they are closely related (Çiloğlan & Bardakçı, 2019, p1).

Intercultural communication competence is a generic term " that is composed of interactants' ability to be effective, behaviourally and cognitively in the development of intercultural communication" (Çiloğlan & Bardakçı, 2019, p1). In contrast, intercultural awareness is the understanding of cultural conventions and norms that affect how people think and behave (Çiloğlan & Bardakçı, 2019). Whereas intercultural sensitivity is an individual's desire to understand, appreciate, and accept differences among cultures (Çiloğlan & Bardakçı,

2019). Bennett (2017) defined intercultural sensitivity as the ability of individuals to recondition themselves cognitively and behaviourally from rejecting cultural differences to the inclusion phase of cultural variation and appreciating cultural diversity.

There are several interpretations of what 'intercultural competence' is. The literature presents it as an umbrella term, incorporating intercultural sensitivity. It can be considered as a mind-set or a skillset (Bennett and Bennett, 2004) or having knowledge of cultures and countries (of one's own and others') and where one practices understanding of cultural awareness (Dimitrov, Dawson, Olsen & Meadows, 2014). Nussbaum (2004) considers such an individual as being open and flexible to different understandings. What literature doesn't speculate on is the argument presenting some correlations between the terminologies of intercultural competences and that of 'felt sense'; both encourage understanding and awareness of other cultures, maintain their perspectives and enhance the ability to embrace and orient themselves to different cultures. Equally, there appears to be a distinction between the terminologies. Felt sense seems to have a stronger affiliation towards being empathic to others experiences by having both a felt sense and empathy, but there is potential for better understanding. Combined collectively all the terms go a little further by encouraging an appreciation for striving for justice or tolerance by opening the mindset towards consideration of one's own and others' conventions, beliefs and values, appreciation for striving for justice and tolerance (Biggs, Bussen & Ramsey, 2020; Bridges, 2014; Howe, 2016). These competencies are appealing to have for MCGW. However, there is a gap in knowledge, due to the blurring of these terms, as shown in figure 2.1. However, there also exists a gap in knowledge as to how intercultural competences can be developed within MCGW and a sense of empathy and understanding of other culture's expectations and behaviours. This study attempts to hear student voices on how intercultural competences and skills can be developed to understand and empathise with other cultures' viewpoints.

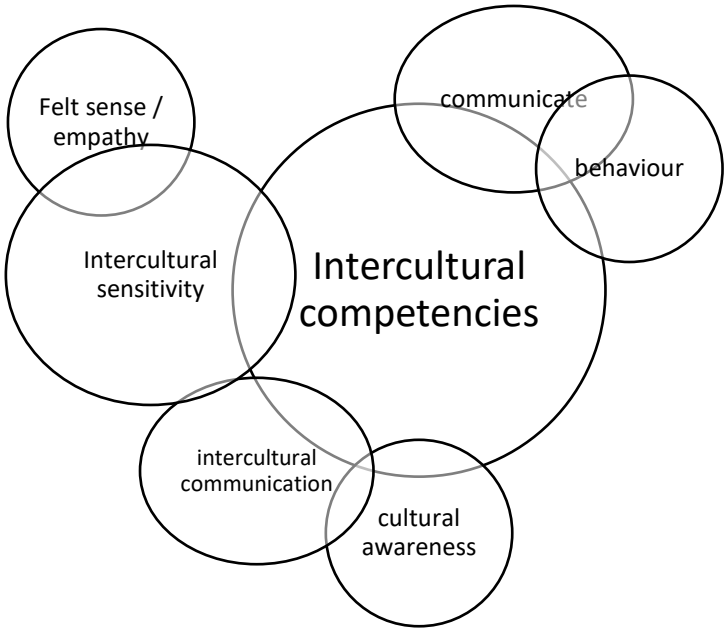

Figure 2.2: Visram 2020 Blurring of competency terms

2.6.2 Intercultural competencies and mind-set

In the previous section, Intercultural competences were introduced and were identified as a relatively new field of study within the literature. However, if higher education is to develop these skills, they need to be scoped to some degree. Bennett and Bennett's (2004) research focused on the social science field of intercultural communication of the study of face-to-face interactions between people from different cultures. Bennett & Bennett, 2004, defined *intercultural competence* as:

> "The ability to communicate effectively in cross-cultural situations and relate appropriately to a variety of cultural contexts." (p.149).

This is a broad statement. Bennett and Bennett (2004) provide further explanation by identifying two critical components to intellectual competency, namely that of: "The ability to communicate effectively to different cultures' and 'an individual's ability to behave accordingly with different cultures" (Bennett & Bennett, 2004, p.149). They emphasise the necessity to

combine communication and behaving appropriately and refer to this as the *"intercultural mindset and skillset"* (Bennett & Bennett, 2005, p.156). The mind-set which allows for effective communication and appropriate behaviours towards different cultures may be achieved if students have an awareness of their cultural communication style and their cultural value systems (Ho-Kyung Huh, Seong, & Jun 2015; Howe, 2019; Stahl et al., 2010a). As previously discussed, cultural norms and learnt behaviours influences how a student makes decisions and behaves (Biggs, Bussen, & Ramsey, 2019; Cronje, 2011; Hoppe & Eckert, 2012; Signorini, Wiesemes, & Murphy, 2009; Shi & Wang, 2011). Arguably by developing a students' appreciation of their own cultural identity and cultural value systems, they are then better able to understand their behaviours, which may be influenced by their emotions (Stahl et al., 2010a). Here Bennett & Bennett (2004) provide an extension to the traditional claims that behaviour is influenced by cultural norms to include stating that behaviour cannot be separated from emotion. In the previous discussion, we observed emotion was also an essential intertwining aspect, paving a pathway to develop felt sense and empathy. Bennett & Bennett (2004) did not guide how intercultural competences can be improved or to what extent having an understanding or self-awareness of one's own culture and emotions enables better cultural communication skills. It can be argued that understanding one's feelings may help them to appreciate why the sentiments of students participating within MCGW may be unsettled when they are placed in situations where they have to adapt to behaviours that deviate from their traditional upbringing and value systems. Equally, to achieve an intercultural mindset and effective communication and display appropriate behaviour to other cultures, students would benefit from an awareness of different cultures within the MCGW. The MCGW process can become fraught, as there is a lack of understanding about how culture influences behaviour within MCGW and how and why a student makes a decision and why they behave in such a manner within the group work process. It has already been argued that this lack of

understanding stems from the student's inability to understand their own cultural value systems and those of others and how these cultural influences impacted the student's decision-making process (Cozart, Cudahy, Ndunda & Van Sickle, 2003). However, it can be argued that students have not been trained as to what to expect when collaborating among students from different cultures, as the literature lacks teaching models on how to manage their emotions. Developing students' appreciation of their own curiosity towards being tolerant and enabling them to have the skillset to create the motivation for understanding new cultures may allow them to manage their emotions and their behaviours better when deviations occur from their cultural norms. There is a gap in the literature as to what approaches and strategies can be used within MCGW to bring awareness of cultural diversity and achieve tolerance to difference to maximise the benefits of MCGW. This research attempts to seek out approaches according to students who have participated within MCGW.

Having discussed the importance of the intercultural mindset and the importance of infusing behaviours, emotions, and the subsequent communication mannerisms, this discussion now proceeds to consider how students' intercultural skillset may be developed.

2.7 The continuum for intercultural mind-set

2.7.1 The Development Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS)

Bennett and Bennett (2004) identify the intercultural skillset as students' ability to predict misunderstandings, their ability to behave appropriately not only to their own culture but also to other cultures. Bennett and Bennett (2004) identify that there is a continuum for this mind-set, and students can fall anywhere within this continuum. Although Bennett and Bennett (2004) do not provide approaches on how to develop intercultural competences, they do attempt to pictorially categorise the mindset continuum of intercultural collaboration, which can be argued provides some indications as to the different gradients of intercultural skills.

They have termed this pictorial spectrum the Development Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS). The model is based on the assumption that as one's experiences of cultural difference increase then one's competence in intercultural relations increases. This is a plausible assumption but lacks supporting studies within the literature qualifying the claim. However, their model is a significant model within the research that attempts to identify possible gradients for intercultural competences, so it is worthy of exploration.

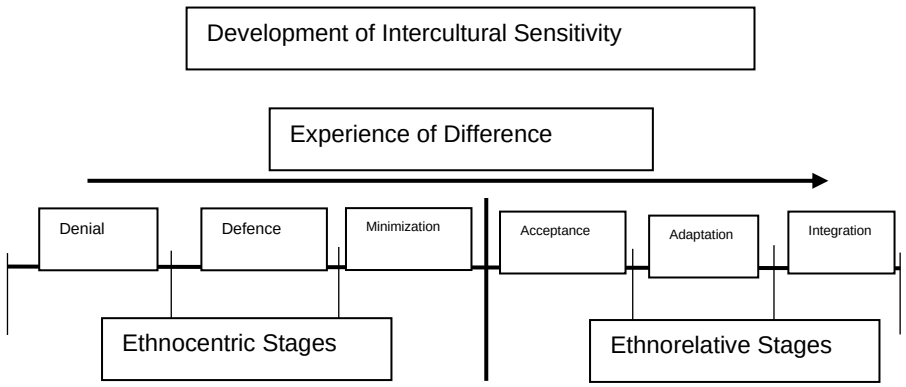

Figure 2.3: The Development Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS).
Source: Bennett and Bennett (2004)

The first three DMIS stages have been referred to as *ethnocentric.* Students can be at any stage within this model when participating within MCGW. However, if the students have not had any prior training on developing their intercultural competences, it could be argued they will be at the ethnocentric stage when they are encountering multicultural teams for the first time. At this stage, they are immersed within their own culture and see that as their reality. In the *denial stage,* consideration of other cultures is avoided by maintaining isolation from other cultures they have not experienced before. They consider students from different cultures as foreign and are likely to avoid the subject of diversity (Bennett & Bennett, 2004). In the defence stage, one's worldview is viewed as 'them and us,' and a feeling of being held captive is often indicated by statements like 'they are taking all our jobs.' It could be argued

that at this stage, the students have not developed a felt sense. In the final stage of ethnocentrism, the students are in a position to assume that 'deep down we are all the same.' Other cultures are viewed as equally complex as one's own, this being the last stage and the most complex one for avoiding cultural differences (Bennett & Bennett, 2004). In general, the ethnocententric stages are when students are '*avoiding cultural differences*. At this stage, they are in denial of the existence of other cultures or are raising defences against them. Antal and Friedman (2008) consider the denial, defence stages inappropriate as they say in a globalised world, individuals need skills to deal constructively with cultural differences. If group-work were monoculture or composed of just local students, then this would not be an issue. However, in recent times we have seen an increase in the number of international students entering higher education, and therefore possessing these skills set becomes essential (Kwiek, 2001; Marginson & Van der Wende, 2007). It is the second three DMIS stages referred to as *ethnorelative* that allow for integration. Antal and Friedman (2008) echoed the importance of integration when they said,

> "that all human beings are worthy of respect and equally important and no cultural repertoire merits a right of dominance." (p.364).

Antal and Friedman (2008) provided a more in-depth insight into integration than Bennett and Bennett (2004) as they identified that to achieve a state of incorporation within diverse cultures, individuals must have the ability to understand and reconcile differences. Attaining such a state is of importance to MCGW as when students have achieved this disposition, they are in a position to '*seek cultural differences*' (Bennett & Bennett, 2004). At this stage, they recognise the importance of different cultures, are capable of adapting and appreciating different perspectives and being able to integrate fully. It could be argued that this stage is when the students have developed a felt sense and are capable of empathising with other cultures. Attaining this stage within MCGW would be desirable as it is during this

stage, the student's culture is experienced in the context of other cultures. When a student reaches the *acceptance stage,* then they are now able to see other cultures as complex but acknowledge they are different constructions of reality (Bennett & Bennett, 2004). They accept that other cultures' values and beliefs are equal but fundamentally recognise them as being various complexities of the worldview (Bennett & Bennett, 2004).

It is questionable at what stage we would want the students to be in, within Bennett and Bennett's model, when they start MCGW and if we want them to progress incrementally within the equilibrium. There is the argument that if the students within a multicultural group were all at different stages within the development model, then the chances of conflict would be increased. Conversely, it can be argued that students are better able to learn the skills of negotiation and can see different cultural practices if they are presented with students at various stages of the model. A fair assumption to make is that students in the latter part of their model will be able to integrate well with different cultures as a student has attained the ability to visualise and understand and position themselves within different cultures and see it from their perspective. Bennett and Bennett's (2004) model provides a theoretical model on the different gradients of intercultural competences pivoting on the 'integration stage' on the ethno-relative levels, allowing students to shift perspective in and out of other cultural worldviews (Bennett & Bennett, 2004). However, there are no significant studies that provide evidence that if such a state is reached, then there will be better dynamics and integration between different cultures and that the challenges students face within MCGW could be addressed.

Antal and Friedman (2008) also argue that intercultural competence skills enable students to be in a position to '*intentionally shift*' into a framework of different norms and behavioural responses as they have enough knowledge of other cultures. Theories of 'felt sense' also attempt to achieve this stage. However, felt sense theories encourage attaining

this stage through developing empathy at an existential level or by invoking a felt sense. Regardless of how this is achieved, such a disposition may help reduce conflict within MCGW. If students are at this stage, they may be able to think outside of their own cultures, and this is often an essential skill needed when working in multicultural teams. Bennett and Bennett (2004) referred to this as the '*cultural empathy*' stage. At this stage, students can adapt their behaviour because '*it feels right'* rather than '*feeling this is how I should behave.'* In the *integration stage,* the student can include movement in and out of other cultures. This stage is about cultural identity. At this stage, students would be generally multicultural in their worldview (Bennett & Bennett, 2004). They would have the ability to move quickly in and out of cultural context. These theoretical models provide scoping and pathways for positioning intercultural competences but do not indicate how this can be achieved. The literature is still in its infancy for practical teaching approaches that can address this issue. This research attempts to seek student voices and present suggestions on how intercultural competences can be developed, arising from their own experiences of participating in MCGW.

2.7.2 Developing students' intercultural skillset

Bennett and Bennett's Development Model for Intercultural Sensitivity provides an in-depth understanding of the stage's students migrate through as their awareness of different cultures develops. However, as discussed previously, the model is limited in that it provides little guidance for training educators on how the students they are teaching can transition from the '*avoiding cultural difference*' to '*seeking cultural difference.'* What little advice given regarding implications for teaching is perhaps most suitable for the denial and defence stages. Bennett and Bennetts (2004) have suggested an *objective cultural* approach to education or, as they have termed it, the capital C culture. This approach aims to build familiarity with the culture. This could be achieved by having ethnic food in the student café or by the university

having culture days and displaying art, costumes, music concerts from different cultures by having newsletters to increase the visibility of other cultures. This is of particular benefit for those who are in the denial stage and where culture is '*out of sight*' and '*out of mind*' for them. Such an approach may help them to become familiar with differences.

However, familiarity in itself will not help to develop the necessary intercultural skills needed to transition into the ethnorelative stages, i.e., the steps when students are in a position to work collaboratively and productively with others from different cultures in small group work proximity or are in a position to shift their mindset to appreciate the perspective of other cultures. One approach Bennett and Bennett (2004) suggested to further students who are in the defence stage is to have culture-specific seminars advising on different cultural expectations and bringing self-awareness of one's own culture. Such an approach highlights the importance of diversity and provides some scope to the term. They have referred to this as the '*assimilationist approach,*' which precedes the 'isms approach.' The 'ism approach' they claim enables one to focus on the development of the person and correct any negative concerns one has with culture.

2.7.3 What are the inhibiting factors preventing students from attaining the ethnorelative stage?

Before discussing approaches that may help provide a transition into the ethnorelative stages, it is worth reflecting on the inhibiting factors preventing students from attaining the '*Ethno-relative stage*.'

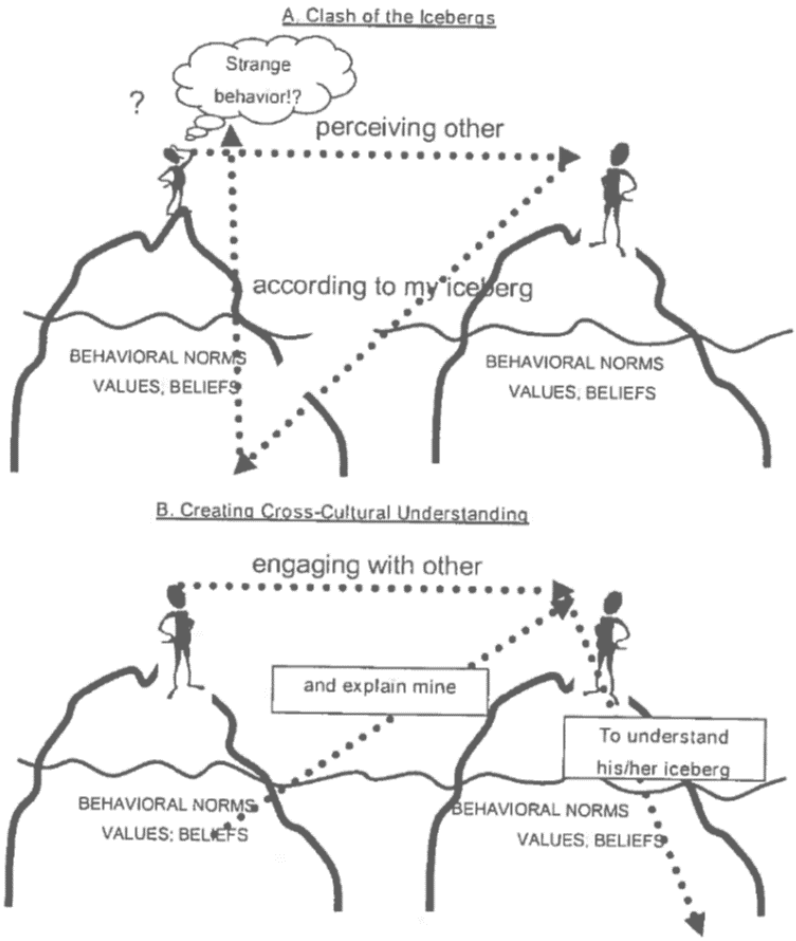

Figure 2.4: Applying the Iceberg Model of Culture clash of Icebergs Source: Antal and Friedman (2008, p.372)

One reason may be due to the student's expectations and assumptions. As can be seen from Figure 2.4, each culture's behaviour is influenced by their cultural norms, values, and beliefs, and this informs their expectations. Antal and Friedman (2008) explained student behaviour diagrammatically in their model termed: '*Clash of icebergs model'* (see Figure 2.4). In their model, they portray behaviour as being visible on the top of the iceberg. However, importantly the assumptions made by an individual and the understanding of the role of an individual are located deep below the surface along with the norms and values. These norms and values shape their expectations of how one behaves and are hidden from the other individuals they

are communicating with (Antal & Friedman, 2008). The natural tendency would be to interpret behaviour in terms of how one sees the world according to one's cultural assumptions and beliefs. However, this approach tends to give rise to misunderstandings and disagreements, resulting in the '*clash of the iceberg*' (see Figure 2.4).

If we were to propagate this line of thinking to MCGW, we could explain the challenges that arise in MCGW by obtaining an understanding of the behaviour norms, values, and beliefs of the different cultures the students come from. Such an agreement can be achieved by hearing student voices who have participated in MCGW. These voices are missing from the literature, and it is essential to obtain understandings, as the societal and cultural norms govern their behaviour and their expectations of other students' behaviour within the MCGW process. Arguably having this understanding is essential before a shift can occur in their consciousness. Such a change in consciousness might allow students to better engage with students from different cultures. Antal and Friedman (2008) identified limitations to Bennett and Bennett's (2004) model. They claimed that the adaption stage focuses on developing sensitivity to cultural differences and does not address the issues as to why these cultural differences arise and how they can be resolved. They are critical of the approach and claim that at its worst, adaption can be observed as being a form of manipulation whereby individuals claim to be able to read other cultures' mind-sets and copy their behaviour (Antal & Friedman, 2008).

2.7.4 Critical Consciousness

Having obtained an insight into the concerns that may inhibit students from getting the ethnorelative stage, the discussion now attempts to address what teaching strategies can be employed in order for students to reach the pinnacle ethno-relative stages, or what others have named '*critical cultural consciousness'* (Lin et al., 2008). The '*critical cultural*

consciousness' stage is seen as the stage when a student has increased sensitivity and awareness to multiculturism. Many have argued that to achieve this, the student needs firstly to be aware of their cultural traits and be able to question them as well as being able to make connections to their cultural heritage (Cozart et al., 2003). If they have this ability, then they can question their own beliefs and endeavour to see others regardless of race, class, gender, or culture (Cozart et al., 2003).

2.7.5 Counter approach: The Intercultural Competence Model of Negotiating Reality.'

Antal and Friedman (2008) suggested a counter-proposal to Bennett and Bennett's DMIS model. Their model allows for a shift in consciousness and empowers students to have the ability to 'negotiate *reality*' by exploring differences as a source for learning. The '*The Intercultural Competence Model of Negotiating Reality*,' as they have termed it, encourages the individual to examine the other person's behaviour and attempt to understand what is driving their behaviour. Importantly dialogue needs to take place for both to explain their behaviour. This leads to creating cross-cultural understanding and a potential shift in consciousness. They suggest a technique that is very simple to aid understanding. The method is to divide a piece of paper and allow both individuals to write their thoughts as to what is going on in their minds, their expectations and assumptions. They then need to write dialogue as to what they understood was said, and then write what the other person said according to the following instructions:

Table 2.1: Source Antal and Friedman (2008) Dialogue expressing student's expectations and assumptions

The left-hand side of the paper What was going on in my mind While each person in the dialogue is speaking (included yourself in speaking)	The right-hand side of the paper Write what each person said

The participants would then change papers and attempt to understand each other. This is simple in its implementation but provides deep insight into the subconscious mind of the other individual. This technique helps students become aware of why the other person did not draw the same conclusions. This can happen, mainly if they are from different cultures and have different expectations. It may help them realise that the inferences made may have been unjustified (Antal & Friedman, 2008).

2.7.6 Changes in behaviour: 'Advocacy-Inquiry' matrix

The short-comings in the literature regarding how changes in behaviour can be made may be addressed to some extent by Antal and Friedman's (2008) model. They went further in their research and designed a model named '*Advocacy-Inquiry*' matrix, which they suggested can help to attain the stage of '*High Advocacy – High Inquiry*'. Their model identifies four levels a student behavioural disposition can be in High Advocacy – Low Inquiry; High Advocacy – High Inquiry; Low Advocacy – Low Inquiry; Low Advocacy – High Inquiry, as illustrated in Table 2.2. Although not propagated within the literature, it appears that this model may provide pathways for students to reach the same juncture as the '*integration*' stage in Bennett and Bennett's (2004) model (Figure. 2.2). If students achieve this level, Antal and Friedman's (2008) indicated that students would be in a position where their highest level of learning could be made.

Table 2.2: Source: Antal and Friedman 2008, p. 378) Combining Advocacy and Inquiry

High Advocacy – Low Inquiry	**High Advocacy – High Inquiry**
Expresses strong opinions clearly and unambiguously Ignores or hides information that does not support one's position Does not listen or listens only to refute Overpowers defensiveness	Treats opinions like 'hypotheses.' Expresses explicit opinions and provides The reasoning behind them Invites questions into one's reasoning Asks questions and listens in order to understand the reasoning of others Seeks data that might disconfirm one's own opinion Engages defensiveness
Low Advocacy – Low Inquiry	**Low Advocacy – High Inquiry**
Asks leading questions Gives hints and double-messages Camouflages threatening information Ignores or hides information that does not support one's position Attempts to circumvent defensiveness	Asks questions listens and tries to understand Refrains from judging or expressing opinions Attempts to avoid raising defensiveness

Key to table 2.2: Advocacy means clearly expressing what one thinks and trying to make ideas and reasons clear to others. Inquiry means posing curiosity-driven questions and suspending judgment to explore and take the perspectives and logics of others seriously.

The Combining Advocacy and Inquiry model (see Table 2.2) identifies potential stages in the attitudes a student may be in. Antal and Friedman (2008) indicated that even if students attain High Advocacy – in the High Inquiry stage, it is essential for students to be open to alternatives. This means, amongst other qualities; individuals need to "*seek data that might disconfirm one's own opinion*" (Antal & Friedman, 2008, p.365). This model provides valuable parameters about the positioning of attitudes and behaviours. However, even with this model, the same quandary is presented as was by Bennett and Bennett's (2004) model, that is to say, concrete guidance as to how a student encountering and working with students from other

cultures can reach a High Advocacy – High Inquiry state is not made clear by (Antal & Friedman, 2008).

Antal and Friedman (2008, p.371) provided another model which presents a step by step approach to negotiating reality, which they have termed: The Intercultural Competence Model of Negotiating Reality (2008, p.371). This model provides six steps (see columns one and two in Table 2.3) that provide some understanding as to how cultures influence thinking and behaviour, how to explore people's constructions of their realities, to explore different ways of managing conflict. Both the Model of Negotiating Reality and the Combining Advocacy and Inquiry models are not designed for MCGW. However, the Combining Advocacy and Inquiry model is attractive because of the identification of parameters presented in the High Advocacy – High Inquiry level, which are valuable attributes and behaviours worthy of having in the MCGW process. In addition, for this research, the stages in the low advocacy and high Inquiry level present desirable characteristics, mainly: 'listens and tries to understand refrains from judging or expressing opinions.' However, currently, the model cannot be related to MCGW as it was not designed for that purpose, in order to identify the significance of these models and give meaning to the context of MCGW and provide some indication as to how the model may apply to MCGW, I have combined and adapted both models to reflect how the concepts can be applied to MCGW in column three of Table 2.3.

Table 2.3: The intercultural competence model of negotiating reality in MCGW Source: Antal and Friedman (2008, p.371) adapted by Zabin Visram.

Step Column one	Objective Column two	Concepts and Activities adapted for MCGW by Zabin Visram – this study's researcher Column three. Strategies to develop intercultural competences within MCGW
Step 1	Understanding how culture influences thinking and behaviour.	Cross-references can be made here to the Iceberg model of culture. Students analyse their own cultural makeup in-group work sessions by presenting aspects of their culture to other group members.
Step 2	Exploring how people construct 'reality images.	Small group discussions in pairs during the MCGW session. Then an activity to write on paper what was going on in my mind. The left-hand column is referring to the negotiating reality model. Reflecting on experiences that happened during the group work process
Step 3	Grasping how their behaviour is guided by mental 'theories of action.'	This is referring to what is written in the right hand column of the negotiating reality model Write what each person actually said Identifying gaps and contradictions in understandings between the two paired cultures in the MCGW session.
Step 4	Combining action strategies of high 'inquiry' with high 'advocacy' in intercultural communication.	References can be made here to the Kolb's Learning Cycle. Getting students within MCGW to reflective on their experiences and to try and make sense of what happened. References can be made here to the Advocacy-Inquiry Matrix.
Step 5	Exploring different ways of framing the conflict	Exploring conflict situations within MCGW Exploring and designing strategies to deal with conflict
Step 6	Experimenting with different ways of responding to personal case	Role-play within MCGW and providing feedback sessions and then redesigning the scenario so that it demonstrates integration

'The Intercultural Competence Model of Negotiating Reality.' A stepwise Process for Learning to Negotiate Reality. Antal and Friedman (2008) have created a model termed their model as the 'I*ntercultural competence model* of 'negotiating *reality.'* This model attempts to provide

some understanding as to how cultures influence thinking and behaviour. The model has been adapted for MCGW by me to depict how the concepts can be used within MCGW in column three.

2.7.7 Overlapping models

There is some overlap in both the Antal and Fridman's (2008) and Bennett and Bennett's (2004) theorist models. The Intercultural Competence Model of Negotiating Reality model encourages individuals to become aware of their own culturally shaped interpretations to a given situation and to be open to jointly test their interpretations and designing strategies to manage situations (Antal & Friedman, 2008). Bennett and Bennett's (2004) model also emphasises the importance of such measures as they bring culture into consciousness, and thoughts emerge where conflict appears to be resolvable through inclusivity. For this research, the Bennett and Bennett (2004) model and the Antal and Friedman (2008) models provide an essential insight into the stage's students can find themselves positioned during MCGW.

2.8 Educational teaching approaches to promote cultural integration

2.8.1.1 Values

The above sections mapped out the different gradients of intercultural competences. The next section attempts to explore how cultural integration may be achieved. In part one of the literature review, Stahl et al., (2010b) stated that when researchers focus on the '*deep-level*' aspects of culture which identify attitudes and value systems, then attention is more likely to be given to the benefits multiculturalism brings for creativity, and integration, engagement and the building of trust. There are many different value systems, but it is difficult to scope which value systems bring better understandings leading to the integration of cultures, and it is questionable as to whether they should be. Antal and Friedman (2008) and Bennett and Bennett (2004) have conducted valuable research on value systems and attitudes

different cultures bring. However, they do not necessarily indicate the value systems that should underpin the educational models that can bring change within the students' mindset to promote a shift towards pluralistic thinking. Nevertheless, some promising work on what value systems should underline the education system allowing for a pluralistic approach towards multiculturalism is produced by the World Declaration on Education. The 1990 World Declaration on Education encourages educational opportunities that provide for understanding tolerance. Fountain (1999) provided a behavioural of change model and quoted the 1990 World Declaration on Education as:

> "Every person … shall benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their learning needs. These needs compromise both essential learning tools (such as literacy … and numeracy) and the basic learning context (such as knowledge, skills values, and attitudes) required by human beings … live and work in dignity. The satisfaction of these needs empowers individuals in any society and confers upon them a responsibility to … further the cause of social justice …. To be tolerant towards social, political, and religious systems that differ from their own, ensuring that the commonly accepted humanistic values and human rights are upheld and to work for international peace … in an interdependent world." (p.2)

Whether values are universally shared by all cultures is questionable. There are forms of behaviour that are unacceptable in certain cultures and acceptable in others. Inevitably, the teaching of values and attitudes at a higher education level can be seen as culturally biased or, at worst, an imposition by some cultures, a form of arrogance (Fountain, 1999). UNICEF has acknowledged that different value systems exist. However, they have continued to develop support for Peace Education programmes with the rationale that peace evaluation primarily teaches common humanitarian values. Such an approach is seen as essential for human development and participation in society. For this research study, this rationale seems

acceptable and appropriate for higher education. This is not to say that each culture's values are not important or that different value systems exist. Indeed, it can be argued that diversity brings strength. However, the acceptance of establishing some values considered as common humanitarian values is deemed to be satisfactory only to allow for some pathway for the promotion of collaboration.

The above UNICEF statement is addressed by Peace Education, which presents a response on how values that provide for an understanding of tolerance can be incorporated and embedded throughout the curriculum. Peace Education is considered as an educational process that enables adults to prevent conflict by developing skills that promote understanding of attitudes and values, which in turn will bring about behaviour changes that create conducive conditions at local or international levels (Fountain, 1999). Where Peace Education differs from models such as Bennetts and Bennett's (2004) is that it is not allocated a distinct 'subject' within the curriculum. Instead it functions by allowing values and attitudes to be integrated or embedded within the whole syllabus or institutions. This appears an extremely appealing approach for teaching intercultural skills in higher education, and for this research study in particular, as separate teaching approaches, albeit incremental, would not have the same impact as an approach that infuses respect for values firmly embedded within the entire curriculum. Although the literature has a gap concerning what values might be useful to adopt within MCGW, these models may help provide some pathways. Crucially the gap within the literature that needs to be addressed concerns not only the values that may be useful to adopt but the possible vital factors that need to be included in a pluralistic model for MCGW and how best to embed them within the curriculum.

2.8.2 The UNICEF model of behaviour and tolerance of difference: teaching approaches

Although the literature has a gap regarding what strategies allow for tolerance of difference to enable integration within MCGW, there are strategies adopted in other sectors that may provide for pathways. UNICEF offers some exciting strategies. UNICEF suggests that it is essential to give demonstrations of the principle of equality, that is of non-discrimination, and to provide a forum for discussion of values. They recommend using teaching and learning methods that promote participation, cooperation, and respect for difference (Fountain, 1999). Peace Education promotes the development of values as the basis for positive behaviour change. UNICEF has embedded Peace Education's teachings of instilling values via the process of behaviour change. This is done through a series of stages developing three characteristics of an individual: '*Knowledge,' 'Skills,' and 'Attitudes.'* An individual's knowledge is designed so that the individual becomes aware of the issue, shows concern, acquires knowledge and skills pertaining to it, becomes motivated, intends to act by trying out new behaviour and finally evaluates the trail and continues to practice the new behaviour. The '*Skills'* promoted are active listening, assertiveness, critical thinking, ability to think critically about prejudice, dealing with emotions, ability to deal with stereotypes, conflict prevention, and constructive conflict resolution. The attitudes considered essential to achieving these values are self-respect, tolerance for others, respect for others, empathy, social responsibility, sense of justice, and equality (Fountain, 1999). This model is named the '*UNICEF model of behaviour.'*

2.8.3 The significance of the models identified in the literature and their applicability to MCGW

The models discussed within this literature review were created independently of each other and were not intended for MCGW. They all provided different perspectives and parameters, enabling some understanding of cultural integration. However, they offer significant underlying theories for this research and have the potential to be applied to MCGW. Their applicability to MCGW becomes apparent when connections are made between these models, and they are combined collectively. The UNICEF 'Process for Behaviour Change Model' (Fountain, 1999, p.5), the Antal and Fridman's (2008, p.372) theoretical 'Iceberg Model of Culture' framework, the Antal and Fridman's (2008, p.372) 'Inquiry For Learning Model' and Antal and Fridman's (2008, p.378) 'Combining Advocacy and High Inquiry' have been combined with the PEACE Educations indicators for Peace Education: Knowledge, Skill and Attitude (Fountain, 1999, p.36) in Table 2.2 to demonstrate how they can collectively provide pathways for developing intercultural skills and competences within MCGW. The central column, column three, has been highlighted in yellow and is the column that identifies the different scenarios a student encounter within MCGW. Columns one and two are the models identified in the literature that applies to the situations and can help develop the students' intercultural skills and competences. Column one in Table 2.2 is based on UNICEF 'Process for Behaviour Change Model,' and these stages identify the process individuals go through when they are making changes in their behaviour, thus adopting a pluralistic behavioural approach to different cultures. Column two draws on three of the models proposed by Antal and Friedman; the Iceberg model of culture identifies how students can become aware of their own and other cultural norms when presented with an argument within MCGW. The Inquiry for Learning Model enables a pathway for students to handle conflict within MCGW. The Combining Advocacy and High Inquiry model helps students to develop their negotiating skills

in a cooperating manner. Column four focuses on the Peace Education indicators that can help students understand the causes of conflict and how they can take steps to become more understanding of different cultures' behaviours. Columns five, six, and seven identify the steps the students can choose to adopt and open a pluralistic approach to different cultures.

Table 2.4: Developing integration skills within MCGW. A table demonstrating the importance of the theories and models identified in the literature review to MCGW. The theories independently were not designed for MCGW, however the relevance of the theories to MCGW become apparent when combined. The theories are the UNICEF 'Process for Behaviour Change Model' and the Antal and Fridman's theoretical 'Iceberg Model of Culture' framework, and the Antal and Fridman's 'Inquiry For Learning Model' and Antal and Fridman's 'Combining Advocacy and High Inquiry' and the PEACE educations indicators for peace education: Knowledge, Skill, and Attitude. These models have been combined to show how they can be relevant to MCGW.

UNICEF 'Process For Behaviour Change Model' Stages Column 1	Antal and Friedman's Models Column 2	**Situation that may be applied within MCGW created by Visram – this study's researcher** **Column 3**	Knowledge development from PEACE education indicators Column 4	Skill development from PEACE education indicators Column 5	Attitude development from PEACE education indicators Column 6	Possible outcomes Column 7
Becomes aware of the issue	Antal and Friedman's (2008, p372) Iceberg model of culture.	Student becomes involved in an argument with another group member of a different culture. Student only aware of his or her own cultural norms.				
Become concerned about the issue .		Student becomes concerned they have not handled the situation well as there is a breakdown in communication and this is causing damage to other group members	Understating the causes of conflict	Improved communication skills	Development of Tolerance	Attitudes of acceptance
Acquires knowledge and skills pertaining to the issue	Antal and Friedman's 'Inquiry For Learning Model' (2008, p384)	Learns about alternative ways of handling conflict. Students learns about other cultures. Antal and Friedman's (2015) theories.	Students are able to describe causes of typical conflicts in MCGW	Listens to other students,	student shows they can restate their ideas	Students will demonstrate attitudes of acceptance and respect for students who are different from themselves in terms of culture
Becomes motivated, based on new attitudes and values		Tries to understand the value and belief systems of other cultures Becomes motivated to try out these skills in this real life situation	Students will be able to list causes of conflicts including conflicts over feelings, over values or beliefs.	After listening to other students they will be able to show that can restate the speaker's ideas, reflect the other students feeling. The student will be in a position to ask open ended questions.		In situations where others express racial or cultural stereotypes student responds by countering the stereotypes and corrects misinformation . The student will also be able to demonstrate body language that conveys respect to the speaker
Intends to act		Makes a decision to try out new behaviour skills next time in conflict situation		Student demonstrate body language that conveys respect to the speaker		
Tries out a new behaviour	Antal and Friedman's (2008, p378) Combining Advocacy and High Inquiry' model	Try out new behaviour of negotiating in a cooperative manner				Students can identify why stereotypes and misunderstandings can be harmful and unjustified
Evaluates the trial		Reflects on experience and evaluates if the outcome was less emotionally harmful to themselves and other group members				
Practices the recommended behaviour		Make a commitment to looking for new negotiating behaviours that have a positive outcome to the group spirit				

2.8.4 How can Peace Education be incorporated within the teaching curriculum?

Peace Education has been adopted by UNICEF, and interestingly it takes its teaching activities out of the traditional teaching environment and into the wider world. UNICEF indicates strategies that can be used to build cultural awareness and tolerance by adopting teaching activities outdoors that encourage engagement between culturally diverse students. This they claim can be achieved by providing opportunities for the students to take leadership roles and engage in teambuilding activities through activities such as camps, sports, and recreation, travelling theatre, and puppetry within the curriculums. Their studies have found intercultural skills can be developed through camps that bring young people together from all ethnicities for the study of the history of the country and by having a focus on themes of 'dealing with differences,' which can bring mutual understandings. They found teaching approaches such as magazines, travelling theatre, puppetry, and competitions within curricula can be compelling as they help develop intercultural competences. They help adopt the belief that people learn best from first-hand experiences. Here teachers and students were allowed to interact and teach students from cultures that are different from theirs. This allowed them to become more accepting and tolerant of diversity and enabled students to accept others regardless of gender, race, and culture.

2.8.5 Anti-Bias curriculum

There is a significant amount of overlap in the thought processes of Bennett and Bennett (2004), Antal and Friedman (2008) models, and the Peace Education indicators for Peace Education (Fountain, 1999). Acknowledgment is given that they allow for categorisation of the thought processes of students, which help to position their consciousness within

paradigms. However, they provide limited concrete teaching strategies to help address the challenges students face within MCGW or any indication of how a shift within thought processes can be made. The literature of 'Anti-Bias' teaching programmes does not necessarily cross-reference with these theorists. Nonetheless, correlations can be made that may provide an illuminating light on how educators can implement teachings that may cause a shift in student behavioural patterns, helping to lean towards tolerance and collaboration. Anti-Bias teaching theories can teach students to achieve the levels of the stages identified in the '*adaption* and *integration stages'* of Bennetts and Bennett's (2004, p.153) development model of intercultural sensitivity, or indeed achieve the state of '*High Advocacy – High Inquiry' in* Antal and Friedman (2008, p.378) '*Combining Advocacy and High Inquiry*' model. The approach to reach these stages is termed the '*Service Learning'* approach to learning. Service-learning is a model that provides lecturers with tools for making sense of differences. This can be done in a variety of ways, whereby students do practical field-based tasks either in 'in*direct service'* where they provide service to a community or '*advocacy'* where they create awareness or promote action on an issue of public interest that relates to their course (Lin et al., 2008). Service-Learning Kaye (2004, as cited by Lin et al. 2008) indicated allows students to engage in projects that help or serve communities from different cultures. It can help develop skills of advocacy and help create awareness of cultural issues. Service-learning can also enable students to confront culturally diverse stereotypes and beliefs, raise the level of multicultural consciousness and increase their ability to negotiate with different cultures and to make sense of social injustice (Lin et al. 2008). Lin et al. (2008) claimed Anti-bias curriculum enables:

> "learners to construct identity, develop empathy and just interactions with diversity and develop critical thinking and the skills of standing up for oneself and others in the face

of injustice…… the aim of the anti-bias education is inclusion, positive self-esteem for all, empathy and activism in the face of injustice." (p.189)

In practice, it enables individuals to develop confidence, the skills to negotiate, and to help overcome their own biases, to adopt new behaviours, to acquire a felt sense, and to create cultural consciousness.

2.9 Main Research Question Two

The literature review identified a gap in knowledge as to what competencies or skills set was needed to develop multicultural skills, a sense of empathy, and understanding of the expectations of other cultures, including behaviours. The literature identified models that help towards understanding the different acceptance stages of cultural differences and the approaches necessary to help develop intercultural skills. However, the literature also identified a gap in what teaching strategies develop students' awareness of cultural diversity and how to maximise the benefits of MCGW. This research attempts to recognize student voices and suggestions as to how intercultural competences can be developed by drawing on students' own experiences of participating in MCGW.

Table 2.5: The Research Questions

Main Research Question 1) To what extent are group behaviour and attitudes within MCGW related to cultural expectations? (sub RQ1,2).
Main Research Question 2) What are the key factors that need to be included in a pluralistic model for MCGW? (sub-RQ 3,4).
Sub Research Questions
Sub RQ (1) What are the students' cultural attitudes and behaviours?
Sub RQ (2) What are the student's perceptions and experiences of other cultures within MCGW?
Sub RQ (3) What are the challenges and benefits of participating in MCGW?
Sub RQ (4) What approaches and key factors can bring awareness to cultural diversity and maximise the benefits of MCGW?

2.10 Summary for part two

The second part of the literature review explored how students can acquire a specific skill set, such as assertiveness, to help them better communicate with all cultures participating within MCGW. The review presented several models such as the intercultural mindset, the development of intercultural sensitivity model, and the advocacy and Inquiry model. These models provide a deep understanding of the students' mindsets and how they can be positioned within these continuums. However, they were limited in that they did not offer educational models that help embed value systems that enable a shift in students' mindset so that they can work collaboratively and productively within MCGW. The review proceeded to explore educational models that allow for these pluralistic value systems to be integrated within the education system, in particular, the UNICEF Peace Education and Anti-Bias teaching approaches. The review also attempted to address the fundamental gap as to how they can be incorporated into MCGW.

Chapter 3: Methodology Chapter

3 Introduction

This qualitative study attempted to develop an understanding of the different cultural norms and behavioural expectations students exhibit within MCGW, the challenges the students faced and the benefits MCGW brings. This study also explored students' suggestions on how the interactions between culturally diverse students could be more pluralistic. This research took a subjectivist, interpretative stance adopting a constructivist position, as it was based on uncovering perceptions, voices, and thoughts of individual students. The study followed a two-phased process: the first phase consisted of a structured-interview facilitated with a questionnaire that was conducted interactively with the researcher and the student, addressing sub-RQ1, followed by a semi-structured interview discussing sub-RQ1,2 and 3. The second phase consisted of a series of four focus groups, addressing sub-RQ 4. The methods deployed attempted to address the following research questions:

Main Research Question 1) To what extent are group behaviour and attitudes within MCGW related to cultural expectations? (sub RQ1,2).
Main Research Question 2) What are the key factors that need to be included in a pluralistic model for MCGW? (sub-RQ 3,4).

Sub Research Questions
Sub RQ (1) What are the students' cultural attitudes and behaviours?
Sub RQ (2) What are the students' perceptions and experiences of other cultures within MCGW?
Sub RQ (3) What are the challenges and benefits of participating in MCGW?
Sub RQ (4) What approaches and key factors can bring awareness to cultural diversity and maximise the benefits of MCGW?

This chapter starts by identifying the research's methodological approach used to search for truth, together with the ontological assumptions made, which in turn, gave rise to

the epistemological assumptions. The chapter then unfolds to identify the methods used and how they were analysed. This is followed by a discussion on the participants and the sampling approach used. Finally, the ethical considerations and limitations raised by the methodology will be discussed.

3.1 The Ontological research approach

Ontology is concerned with 'what exists' or what is reality (Eisner, 1992; Hammersley, 2005; Patel, 2015). The literature presents many research paradigms that provide a set of propositions on how the reality of this world is perceived (Hodkinson, 2004, Sarantakos, (2005). The research paradigms attempt to break down the complexities of the real world to identify what is essential and legitimate (Hammersley, 1992; Hannon, 2006). There are two ontology pathways: objectivist or the subjectivist, interpretative approach which help to understand reality. The objectivist approach claims there is a single reality while the interpretive approach argues that there is no one single truth, it claims reality is created by individuals or groups of individuals (Eisner, 1992; Rovai, 2004). In broad terms, this study attempts to discover individual truths within MCGW, thus to achieve this, the next sections will explore the different approaches in more detail to ascertain how they may be made.

3.2 Subjectivity

The research questions provided students with an opportunity to articulate their own opinions, experiences, and versions of their truths. It was acknowledged that this was a perceived truth because it was subjective. Individuals have created realities of the world according to their own cultural and historical upbringing (Eisner, 1992; Hammersley, 2005; Hiltz et al., 1996). My research accumulated a collection of 'individual subjective truths,' in their own right. The epistemological positivism paradigm explores reality, assuming that there

is only one single truth. It also considers it essential that reality is measured for it to be reliable (Eisner, 1992; Hammersley, 2005; Patel, 2015). Such an approach was inappropriate for this study as the positivistic philosophical approach claims that objective detachment, elimination of one's value system, and personal bias and neutrality is desirable when conducting research (Patel, 2015; Sarantakos, 2005). The nature of this inquiry meant it would not be beneficial for students to be detached from individual bias and perceptions, as they were sharing the different realities of their experiences within MCGW and perceptions of their own and other cultures and how culture influences behaviour, making the research subjective (Carter, 2000; Heikkeinen, Kakkori, & Huttunen, 2001). This research did not seek to provide for predictability and generalisations as it is acknowledged that the individual voices will all have their own individual truths (Hammersley et al., 2001; Hiltz et al., 1996).

3.3 Phenomenology

The approach this research took was that of phenomenology (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2005; Powell & Cody 2005; Paulus 2005) as it sought to understand the world from the students' perceptions of their experiences within MCGW. The phenomenological stance this research adopted naturally followed the social constructivism position and is represented visually in Appendix B (see Appendix B). Phenomenology of constructivist representation proposes that the real world is based on perceptions and interpretations, and claims that there are multiple constructions of realities created by individuals based on their values and beliefs (Bryman, 2008; Hammersley, 2005; Eisner, 1992; Hiltz et al., 1996). This research was a search for reasons rather than causes, whereby meaningful properties of social realities of individuals' experiences of their interactions within a MCGW were presented. Such an approach was appropriate as the research was seeking students' perceptions of their cultural norms, their values, and their realities, experienced within MCGW.

3.4 Epistemology

Epistemological considerations in relation to research studies are concerned with what is an acceptable form of knowledge. Epistemology attempts to identify, understand, or know reality (Hammersley et al., 2001; Oakley, 2000; Patel, 2015). As discussed two epistemological considerations had been contemplated for this research: The positivism approach, which transcends from the ontological approach of objectivism and realism, and the interpretative social constructivism approach, indicating reality is created by individuals in social contexts and is subjective (Oakley, 2000). The following section will discuss the interpretative approaches in more detail, as this research is based on the phenomenology approach.

3.4.1 The Interpretative Inductive Paradigm

The interpretative phenomenological approach is based on the view that new knowledge is created when the voices and thoughts of individuals are explored (Hammersley, 1993). In terms of attempting to understand the realities of the world, the epistemological stance adopts the notion that facts need to be interpreted. For this research, it was essential to discover the underlying meaning individuals create of their experiences in MCGW. These meanings are not documented within the literature, and this gap of knowledge is what is being investigated. This research did not start with the aim of proving or disapproving a theory; instead, it sought to generate new knowledge from student voices (Biesta, 2010; Hammersley, 2001). It aimed to build in a theoretical productive way on from other previous theories within the literature related to culture, in particular, the Hofstede theory (Cronje, 2011; Hoppe, 2007; Hoppe & Eckert, 2012; Hofstede, 1994). This study was interested in the meanings, perspectives and understandings students attached to their experiences within MCGW, as such, interviews were used to generate new knowledge in terms of an idea or a concept that

offered some new light on the dynamics within MCGW and how meanings and understandings were related to cultural norms. The methods used enabled this new knowledge to be formulated by the use of codes and identification of categories (Sarantakos, 2013; Elo & Kyngas) through the process of content analysis. The analysis of the inductive nature of qualitative theories can lead to predictive methods, which can be tested in the future. However, equally, the review of inductive qualitative studies can lead to the construction of a model (Eisner, 1992; Hammersley, 2001). The development of a model was preferable for this research, as the study identified there was a gap in the knowledge of how to develop the students' intercultural skills and allow for better integration within MCGW. This methodological approach used a qualitative approach. Thus, the researcher and participants became inductive co-constructors of knowledge, in which the researcher immersed herself within the realities of the participants and attempted to express their truths (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013).

3.5 Qualitative approach

Traditionally social research has been seen as two competing paradigms, which are at odds with each other and have conflicting assumptions about the nature of how the realities of the world are understood (Hammersley, 2001). This research used qualitative methods to seek out and identify the meanings the participants attached to their behaviour. There was an interest in what goes on between the start of the MCGW phase and the end of the process of MCGW; how the dynamics and understandings of cultural behaviour were formed and how the students negotiated and discussed concepts; the meanings they associated with culture as derived from their experiences. Hammersley, (2001) categorised qualitative research as having four features: A focus on natural settings, an interest in meanings, perspective, and understandings; an emphasis on process; inductive analysis. For this research, the natural

settings were implemented by interviewing the participants in university X, as this was an environment the students were familiar with structured interview with questionnaire semi-structured interviews and focus groups were conducted to obtain meaning. These methods provided verbal narrative accounts by the students, which provided rich data and insights into their experiences. This inductive approach was used to generate theories and identify patterns. While this data was not in structured form, as would have been the case in quantitative research, the qualitative methods did provide a process that was amenable to being structured via content analysis. The content analysis allowed the generation of categories, to a minor degree, which helped develop theory from data (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Sarantakos, 2013). Charmaz (2006) indicated content analysis is a useful technique for providing categories that can be raised to conceptual levels because of their theoretical reach. I used content analysis for analysing the interview and focus group data. I found content analysis offered an insight into what was happening within the MCGW process, helping to uncover new knowledge. The method of content analysis allowed me to count the frequencies of occurrence of ideas, themes, pieces of data, and words generated within the semi-structured interviews. This allowed me to identify repeating cultural patterns and themes and to make sense of the data using intuition and interpreting the data to cluster it into categories of behaviour. This unpacking of data brought the interview data to life. To help understandings to emerge, I connected the data with the theories and models identified in the literature review. Qualitative methods provided a means to grasp the complexity and flux of social encounters within MCGW. The process of the content analysis revealed some behaviours within MCGW as variable or emergent and developmental (Hammersley, 2001). Equally, the structured interview with the questionnaire study revealed some stability and consistency in behaviours with previous studies on culture (Hoppe & Eckert, 2012; Hofstede, 1994; House et al., 2002; Shi & Wang, 2010).

3.6 Qualitative Data Collection Methods

This section discusses the methods used to address the research questions. This was a two-phased research approach, and the first phase deployed two methods. The first method was that of a structured interview facilitated with a questionnaire addressing sub-RQ1. It was used to capture the student's cultural profile. This was an interactive process whereby the student completed a questionnaire in the presence of the researcher. (see Appendix F, Questionnaire). This was immediately followed with the second method that of a semi-structured interview that addressed sub-RQ 1,2, and 3 (see Appendix G, Interview questions). This method captured individuality and context from the inside and the student's voices on their experiences and their emotions. The interview process consisted of interviewing nine students who had participated in the MCGW process for the hospitality and tourism courses. The cultures investigated were carefully selected to represent the diversity within university X. They included: English, Latvian. Kenyan. Malaysian, Ghanaian, China. Korea, Italian and Scottish cultures. The second phase attempted to capture the student voices on how a pluralistic approach to MCGW might be attained. This was achieved using the third method that of focus groups and addressed sub-RQ4. Four focus groups were used, with 17 students participating from a variety of cultures. The students participating in the focus groups were not necessarily those who were interviewed; the criteria were that they had to have participated within MCGW.

Table 3.1: The data collection methods used to address the research questions.

Research Question 1) To what extent are group behaviours and attitudes within MCGW related to cultural expectations? (sub RQ1,2).
Research Question 2) What are the key factors that need to be included in a pluralistic model for MCGW? (sub-RQ 3,4).

Sub Research Questions	**Methods**
Sub RQ (1) What are the students' cultural attitudes and behaviours?	Structured interview facilitated with the questionnaire Semi-structured interviews
Sub RQ (2) What are the students' perceptions and experiences of other cultures within MCGW?	Semi-structured interviews
Sub RQ (3) What are the challenges and benefits of participating in MCGW?	Semi-structured interviews
Sub RQ (4) What approaches and key factors can bring awareness to cultural diversity and maximise the benefits of MCGW?	Focus groups

The following sections will discuss the rationale for choosing and administrating the methods. In addition, there is a discussion on the process used to analyse, map, and categorise the data from the structured interview with the questionnaire study, including the cultural, behavioural profile of students. This section will also detail the analysis processes used to provide meaning to the interview and focus group data.

3.7 Structured interview facilitated with a questionnaire

As this research was exploring students' cultural norms and behaviours, it was essential to categorise their cultural profiles. The categorisation of behaviour was captured using the questionnaire I designed to facilitate the structured interview process, which captured each student's cultural profile (see Appendix F, Questionnaire). It addressed sub-RQ (1):

What are the students' cultural attitudes and behaviours?

The literature review identified theories and models indicating that behaviours stem from the culture an individual is brought up in (Cronje, 2011; Hoppe, 2007; Hoppe & Eckert, 2012; Hofstede, 1994; House, Javidan, Hanges & Dorfman, 2002; Shi & Wang, 2010; Signorini, Weisemes, & Murphy, 2009). The Hofstede study (Hofstede, 1994) was of particular interest as it categorised cultural behaviours into clusters, and as such, was an appropriate study on which to base this study's questionnaire foundations. Though criticised within the literature as being stereotypical and generalised (Shi & Wang, 2011), for this research, the Hofstede cultural indices: power distance; uncertainty avoidance; individualism-collectivism, long-term and short-term orientation provided valuable starting parameters for the design of the questionnaire (see Appendix A). However, Hofstede's research was based on a quantitative study using a questionnaire conducted within the business sector, and as such, the questions within the Hofstede study (Hofstede, 1994) were not appropriate for investigating students' perceptions of cultural behaviours within MCGW. To make the parameters for investigation relevant and applicable for investigating the behaviours experienced within MCGW, I adapted the parameters of the Hofstede study so they could provide an investigating lens into the students' perceptions of how their cultural behaviours are presented within MCGW. Despite this study being informed by the theories stemming from the deductive Hofstede studies (Hofstede, 1994), this study was not a deductive study based on the hypothesis. It was an inductive approach, driven by the gaps found in the literature review. As such, the questionnaire design focused on addressing the research questions that emerged from the literature review.

3.7.1 Contextualising the questionnaire

The questionnaire design was informed by the gaps in the literature, indicating more research is needed to explore the students' values, their life experiences, and cultural attitudes

towards collaboration (Biggs, Bussen, & Ramsey, 2020; Signorini, Wiesemes, & Murphy, 2009). The literature review also identified the fact that individual behaviour is informed by habitus, which is inherited concepts of behaviour learned in childhood and reflected society's norms. However, there is a gap in knowledge as to what these cultural norms are and how they inform a student's behaviour within MCGW. The questionnaire I designed attempted to explore some of these gaps identified in the literature. Questions 1-5 tried to provide a background to the student's country of origin (see Appendix F, Questionnaire), questions which aimed at identifying the country the student was born in, the number of years he/she had lived there, and attempted to seek the student's perception of what country their cultural norms adhered to. The literature review also indicated that there was a need for more research to be conducted as to whether students considered they learned better in groups composed of their own culture than with different cultures (De Vita 2002). Questions Q6a - Q6d were designed to explore this further and sought to investigate how students like to learn, whether they prefer to learn in monocultural groups or multicultural groups. The literature has also indicated that individualistic societies' values encourage looking after oneself, whereas collectivist cultures prefer to integrate as strong, cohesive societal groups (Hofstede, 1994; House et al., 2002). However, the literature lacks direction as to what the student's views are towards group loyalty within MCGW. Questions 6a – Q6d were designed to address these concepts (see Table 3.2). A further gap emerged within the literature regarding discrepancies between individualistic and collectivist cultures and how they approached problem-solving, how they look on the role of the team leader, whether they favoured a decisive leadership or a democratic one. Questions Q7a-Q7d sought indicators for identifying attitudes towards the power-distance relationships that exist within MCGW. These questions aimed to determine the importance a student places on obeying the group leader and deferring decisions to the group leader. The Hofstede study identified that different cultures have different degrees of

comfort levels with uncertainty. However, the literature is unclear as to what uncertainty looks like within MCGW. Questions 8a – Q8d seek to investigate how comfortable students are with uncertainty within MCGW. The literature has also indicated the fact that different cultures have different values, behaviours, and attitudes stemming from their habitus. However, there is a gap regarding students' attitudes and behaviours towards different cultures and social obligations. Questions 9a – 9 explores which cultures steer towards long-term and which towards short-term categories. The literature has categorised cultures that are drawn towards one of two categories that of Individualism-collectivism behaviours (Biggs, Bussen, & Ramsey, 2020; Bourdieu, 1990; Hofstede, 2001; Vryonides, 2007). However, there is a lack of guidance as to how they appear within MCGW. Questions 9e - 9g attempted to explore what categories students lean towards when participating within MCGW. Questions 10a - 10h attempt to address the significant gap within the literature as to how participating within MCGW has helped develop student's skills.

Table 3. 2: The dimensions of culture adapted for MCGW by this study addressing RQ1.
The table depicts the dimensions of culture adapted for MCGW by this study. The first column reflects the dimensions of culture that have been adapted, to reflect behaviours within MCGW. Column 2 identifies the specific questions from the questionnaire (see Appendix F) designed to address sub-RQ1. The highlighted columns are the questions stemming from the Hofstede study.

The dimensions of culture adapted for MCGW for this study.	The questions (see Appendix F, Questionnaire) eliciting the student's cultural categories
Column 1	Column 2
Background to the student profile.	Questions 1-5
How students like to learn in monocultural groups or multicultural groups	Questions 6a-6d
Perceived Power Distribution The extent to which there is a P**ower Distribution** presented within MCGW. Obedience to the group leader within MCGW:	Questions 7a – 7d.
Perceived Individuality or collectivist culture. The degree to which students are integrated into groups in the MCGW process.	Questions 6d, 6e, 9e, 9g
Perceived Uncertainty avoidance The student's tolerance to **uncertainty** and ambiguity within MCGW	Questions 8a – 8d
Perceived Short-term and long-term orientation. The extent to which there is respect for tradition, fulfilling social obligations, saving face	Questions 9a, 9b,9c,9d, 9f
How helpful was MCGW in developing understanding, acceptance and social relations with other cultures	Questions 10a – Q10h

3.8 Categorisation of students' cultural behaviours

The only questions that were selected as mapping parameters to categorise the student's culture were those that carefully mapped onto the Hofstede study cultural parameter dimensions. This study sought to explore more parameters than the Hofstede studies did. It investigated the benefits and challenges the students faced in MCGW. This research aimed

to explore meanings to the experiences the students encountered with MCGW. As such, there were other questions in the questionnaire which sought to elicit more information. Question 10 was explicitly related to whether the students benefited from participating in MCGW, in terms of whether the process of MCGW helped them to better understand and interact with other cultures.

3.9 Analysing the questionnaire data

The above sections identified how the cultural dimensions of interest within MCGW have been categorised. The next section defines how the student responses to my questionnaire, conducted during the structured interview, have been mapped to identify their perceived cultural dimensions for MCGW. The questionnaire (see Appendix F, Questionnaire) data for each student was analysed. The responses to the questions 7a-7d, 6d,6e,9e,9g,8a-8d,9a,9b,9c,9d,9f (see column two in Table 3.2) were mapped onto their perceived cultural dimensions as identified in column one in Table 3.2. For example, question Q6e: 'I value group loyalty over my own individual goals,' investigated whether the student's culture emerged from an individualistic or collectivist society. If the student's response to Q6e was 'I agree, or I strongly agree with the statement,' then the response was given a score of 4 or 5 accordingly. This score of 4 or 5 was later interpreted as meaning that the students were perceived to come from a collectivist society. Similarly, if the student's response was 'I strongly disagree or disagree with the statement, then a score of 1 or 2 was given. This score of 1 or 2 was later interpreted as meaning that the student was perceived as coming from an Individualistic society (see Table 3.3, Mapping the data).

Table 3.3 Mapping the data

Questions in the questionnaire selected to categorise student cultural behaviour	**Category of behaviour being investigated and mapped**	**Mapping of the response in the Likert scale in the questionnaire**	**Cultural behaviour**
Q6e: I value group loyalty over my own individual goals	Individualism/ Collectivism	If the student answer for Q6e was given a score of 4 or 5, then it was interpreted as - the student is perceived to come from a collectivist society. If the student answer for Q6e was given a score of 1 or 2, then it was interpreted as - the student is perceived to come from an Individualistic society.	collectivist society Individualistic society

The above Table 3.3 - Mapping the data explains how the scores have been interpreted to identify the student's cultural behaviours as either perceived collectivist or perceived individualistic. However, where several questions were identifying a category, for example questions 6d, 6e, 9e, 9g which were all used to determine whether a student's culture stemmed from a perceived individualistic or collectivist culture, then the mean was calculated for the scores. The same process was applied when identifying whether the student's culture stemmed from high or low power distance, high or low uncertainty avoidance, long-term or short-term orientation. The resulting patterns that emerged after the analysis process are reported in the findings chapter.

3.10 Semi-Structured interviews

The previous section discussed the first stage of the interview, which involved conducting a structured interview facilitated with a questionnaire for the student. The following section will discuss the second stage of the interview, which consisted of conducting a semi-structured interview. The semi-structured interviews were conducted to address the following sub-research questions:

Sub RQ (1) What are the students' cultural attitudes and behaviours?

Sub-RQ (2) What are the student's perceptions and experiences of other cultures within MCGW?

Sub-RQ (3) What are the challenges and benefits of participating in MCGW?

The next section will provide the reasons for selecting semi-structured interviews as the method for collecting student voices, the advantages and challenges semi-structured interviews offer, and the process involved in conducting the interview. This section also details the analysis process conducted revealing the content analysis categories, which provided meaning to the data.

3.11 Rationale for a semi-structured interview

Semi-structured interviews were the chosen method for this research study, as they enabled me to penetrate the layers of meaning and the different perspectives and understandings the students attached to the range and depth of their experiences within MCGW. They provided me with the opportunity to check for understandings and obtain clarifications (Hammersley, 1992; Flick, 2011). This method also allowed me to probe more deeply into the participant's cultural norms to elicit opinions, perceptions, and attitudes related to their individual cultures. I could ask probing questions, which allowed me to obtain an in-depth understanding of the participant's values, experiences, and ideologies (Cohen et al., 2000) addressing the main research question 1. I found the semi-structured interviews enabled me to seek out specific situations. More importantly, they were not too restrictive, allowing the students to express themselves spontaneously (Cohen et al., 2000; Flick, 2011). This meant that no two interviews were the same, and it permitted me to explore the richness of the student's experiences within MCGW. The interviews allowed me to discover the thought processes of different cultures which guided their behaviour within MCGW, and also, how, in their view, their behaviours were informed by their cultural upbringing. Like all methods, the

interview process has flaws. The trustfulness of the data depends on how openly and truthfully the student speaks. This method also depended on the student's perception of me and how they viewed my inquiry and interpreted my questions (Hammersley, 2001). I was conscious of this. Therefore, I designed my questions so they were open-ended, and I tried to be sensitive to the students' feelings, so they felt comfortable to speak openly and freely, as they disclosed deep insights into their cultural way of thinking.

3.12 The semi-structured interview process

I designed the interview process based on the seven-stage process as identified by Cohen et al. (2000): thematise, design, interview, transcribe, analyse, verify and report. Sub-RQ 1,2, and 3 formed the overarching themes the semi-structured interview questions were addressing (see Appendix G, Interview questions). The interview asked participants how they perceived their cultural norms. It enquired about the traditions and cultures they were brought up with, and how they felt these areas influenced their perceptions and experiences of MCGW.

Once the themes and objectives of the semi-structured interview were established, I considered where the best place would be to conduct the discussions so that the students might feel comfortable sharing their experiences. I decided to hold the interviews in a meeting room as the discussions were of a subjective nature and students were sharing their own individual experiences. The meeting room provided a quiet space and was away from my own office, thereby offering a neutral space. I ensured no disturbances by placing a note on the door explaining the interview was in progress. The purpose of the interview and what would happen to the data was made clear to the student at the start of the meeting. The participants were asked to sign the ethics form (see Appendix D, Information sheet, and Appendix E, Consent form), and permission was also obtained to record the interview. After conducting the interview, I started the transcribing process. I had recorded the interview conversation and made a full transcription later. I also referred to the notes I had made, as this helped me to

consolidate what was said. I then analysed the data through the process of content analysis by seeking out natural units of meaning, categorising the units of meaning.

3.13 Focus groups

This section identifies the research questions the focus groups addressed, the advantages and disadvantages of the focus group method, and the role I played in administrating the focus groups. It then details how the focus group findings informed the creation of the conceptual model to maximise the benefits of MCGW. In order to address the research questions:

> Main research question 2: What are the key factors that need to be included in a pluralistic model for MCGW?
>
> sub-RQ (4): What approaches and key factors can bring awareness to cultural diversity and maximise the benefits of MCGW?

I used focus groups as opposed to interviews, as focus groups have the advantage that they yield a lot of information, enable interaction within the group, and generate discussion and debates. The production of debates and the opportunity to brainstorm was important as this method needed to allow for the generation of new ideas (Cohen et al., 2000). In the focus group, I set the research theme and then provided a few prompting questions. I then allowed interaction and debates between students to develop. (see Appendix H, Focus group questions).

There were disadvantages in using focus groups. Firstly deciding on the group size was challenging. Cohen et al. (2000) indicate that if the group size is too small, then it risks the possibility that only a few suggestions and discussions will merge; if it is too big, then it will be challenging to manage the group and record their ideas. Cohen et al. (2000) indicated that between four and twelve students per group were appropriate. For this study, between four and five students were used per focus group as the pilot study demonstrated that this number

allowed for coherent discussions. Also, their conversations could be quickly recorded as the interactions were manageable and transparent. My role as chair was to keep the meeting open-ended, encourage dialogue between members, keep them focused on the themes being discussed. I focused their discussions on how the MCGW process could be improved to allow for better group dynamics for MCGW and for it to be more pluralistic.

After the focus groups were conducted, the rich data from the focus group was analysed, and the suggestions and themes that emerged were used to formulate a conceptual model. The conceptual model took into consideration the challenges and benefits MCGW brings as voiced in the student interviews and the student suggestions regarding how students could be better prepared for multicultural group work so the benefits of MCGW could be maximised and challenges reduced. The conceptual model intended to present articulation of student suggestions about how awareness of cultural diversity could be brought and how students could develop their intercultural skills. In essence, the conceptual model attempted to signpost how university lectures could better prepare students for MCGW rather than merely immersing them within the process.

3.14 The pilot study

The need for a pilot study is emphasised by Cohen et al. (2000), indicating that the practicability of the research can be improved by conducting a pilot study. This research found that the pilot study enabled the testing of the research instruments used (Cohen et al., 2000; Williamson 2011), and as Cormack (2000) had indicated, it provided direction regarding the adequacy of the research design. It also identified the problems that could arise when administrating the questionnaire, interviews, and focus groups. Once I had designed the methods, I checked the format and relevance of the questions against the research questions and with my supervisors, for all three methods. This involved reviewing the purpose of the

questionnaire; whether the questionnaire addressed the research questions. It also allowed me to gain clarity about the questions I had designed, in terms of whether the type and format of the questions were appropriate (Cohen et al., 2000). The supervisor's feedback indicated I needed to reword some questions so that the wording aligned with the research questions. I then conducted the pilot study with a colleague first and then later with one student. The interview in the pilot study with the colleague lasted one hour and fifteen minutes, and the interview with the student lasted one and a half hours. The individual interviews had two stages, the first being a structured interview guided by a questionnaire; this was then followed immediately with the semi-structured interview. At the start of the pilot study interview, I explained the purpose of the questionnaire, which was to try and identify their cultural norms, their expectations of behaviours within MCGW, and how culture had informed their behaviour. The process of the pilot study consisted of conducting a structured interview with the questionnaire face to face, and this was done by giving the student a paper copy of the questionnaire. The student was asked to complete it in my presence. There was a discussion about certain terms, which the student found unusual, and the student also asked for clarification of the questions presented in the questionnaire. Some questions in the questionnaire had sliding scales, and this presented a challenge for the student, resulting in her seeking guidance on how to interpret the sliding scale (see Appendix C, the pilot study questionnaire). Once the questionnaire had been completed, I started the semi-structured interview, exploring the student's cultural expectations, the benefits and challenges, motivations, attitudes multicultural students bring to the group work process (see Appendix G, Interview questions). During the interview, references were made to the questionnaire, and on some occasions, the interview built on the issues identified in the questionnaire.

The pilot study questionnaire, interview, and focus group were held at the Department of Hospitality and Tourism in a vocational university. The interviews and focus groups were

held in a dedicated interview room. The pilot study questionnaire and interview were conducted with a Malaysian student on the master's programme. She was selected purposefully as she had been involved in several group work projects with students from different cultures. Permission had been obtained from the student for transcribing and recording the interview. The interview was arranged by myself with the MA student. I had taught this student in the previous year. The terminologies used in the questionnaire stemmed from the Hofstede model that formed the skeleton foundations of my questionnaire, and there was a concern that particular terms such as 'power distance' may cause misunderstandings (See Appendix C: The pilot study questionnaire). I felt that the student needed to know the direction and context from which this study was being approached. To this end, I sent a link to the student, before the interview, detailing two videos that explained the Hofstede model's cultural dimensions by way of illustration of the cultural, behavioural characteristics the study is exploring (see Appendix C, the pilot study questionnaire). Acknowledgment is made that by showing these videos, the student's image of cultural, behavioural characteristics may have been tainted a little. Indeed, Cohen et al. (2000) implore the researcher to be careful not to colour the interviewee`s perception of reality. To mitigate this, I explained to the student during the interview that these videos were only to be used as references for providing meaning to the terminology used in the questionnaire. I explained they should be considered possible frameworks, to help explain some terminologies that would be used in the interview. The rationale for this is given by Eisner (1992), indicating the importance of securing frameworks to understand socialisation. However, the student did not feel the videos shed insight into the terminologies. Instead, they initiated many questions. The student invited me to clarify and scope the exact meanings of the terminologies. After I had explained the terminologies, the emphasis was placed on ensuring the student understood how the Hofstede model underpinning the questionnaire would help to categorise a culture. I also explained that the

semi-structured interview that would immediately follow the questionnaire had a different purpose, in that it would be an opportunity to hear her voice regarding her experiences in the MCGW process. After the interviews, I conducted two focus group pilot studies. One group was composed of four students and the other of eight students. The pilot study was an opportunity to identify which group size allowed for coherent discussions so that all voices could be heard and their suggestions transcribed.

3.14.1 Pilot study findings

Despite explaining the terminology used in the questionnaire through videos before conducting the questionnaire, it became quickly apparent that the terminology used within academic business models in the literature, such as 'power distance,' was not interpreted in the way I had intended for this study. When I clarified the intended meaning of the phraseology of each question in the questionnaire, the student changed her answers. Providing a different response to the original response. I subsequently changed my approach for the main study. I dispensed with the videos, as they did not give any value in explaining the term. Instead, in order to bring clarification to the terms, I went through each question, and I asked the students what they had understood the question to be and then clarified any misunderstandings. I found the discussions we had were instrumental in checking if the questions were interpreted as I had meant them to be, and the discussions provided for reflection on the suitability of the questions. More importantly, the discussions helped to eliminate ambiguities (Cohen et al., 2000)**.** The pilot study confirmed that the questionnaire could not be administrated unaided, as complicated terminologies and concepts were being investigated, and they could be open to being misunderstood and misinterpreted (Gillham, 2000). As such, I needed to be present to clarify any misunderstandings arising due to the terminology stemming from a business

environment. It also confirmed that ascertaining the student's cultural profile using the questionnaire was an appropriate facilitating tool.

Further, the sliding scale I used in the pilot study first draft (see Appendix C, the pilot study questionnaire) caused confusion and the student needed clarification on how to interpret the scale. I decided later to redesign the questionnaire without the sliding scale and instead to use a Likert scale. I provided more meaningful contextualisation to the terminologies and related them to that of group work and used terminologies the students were familiar with. However, the central concepts, the behavioural characteristics, identified by the Hofstede model, categorising culture, remained embedded within the questionnaire design (see Appendix F: Questionnaire).

The findings of the pilot study semi-structured interview revealed the interview questions were clear and appropriate, so no significant changes were needed to the questions (see Appendix G, Interview questions). For the pilot study focus group, I conducted two focus groups. To decide which would be the most appropriate size to generate debate and discussion that could be manageable, I conducted one focus group comprising of four students and the other of eight students. The group composed of four students generated more coherent discussions than the group of eight students. During the focus group pilot study, I became conscious that students might say something about a particular culture, or make an interpretation, which someone might find offensive. I adjusted my introduction to the focus group session. I informed the students that we were not attempting to stereotype cultures but to hear experiences and get a better understanding of cultural behaviour and cultural expectations so that we could create a conceptual model for better dynamic interaction and learning within MCGW. I asked them to think carefully before speaking as to how they would phrase their interpretation of their experiences with different cultures and how they would phrase their suggestions for improving the MCGW process so as not to offend any culture

(see Appendix H, Focus group questions). The focus group revealed that the questions I had designed were appropriate and easily understood by the students and were good probing questions, which allowed for discussions to be generated (see Appendix H, Focus group questions).

3.15 The participants

The participants for the three methods: structured-interview with a questionnaire, semi-structured interview, and the focus group studies were selected from the undergraduate and master's courses delivered at the university being investigated in the Department of Hospitality and Tourism. The students were composed of undergraduate students in the first year, which the university referred to as Level 4 (L4) students, and students from the final year of the undergraduate degree, which the university referred to as Level 6 (L6) students as well as students from the master's level which the university refers to as Level 7 (L7) students. These levels were chosen as I taught on these levels, and it was convenient for me to reach out to them as I had already built a trusting relationship with the students. The students were chosen from this department as group-work forms essential teaching, learning, and assessment component in every module on their courses. The Department of Hospitality and Tourism enjoys a diverse range of non-EU, EU students and home students on their programmes. The students' age range is equally diverse. The undergraduate programmes have students ranging from 18 - 22 years with a few mature students. The master programmes tend to have students who have worked in industry and are aged between 25 - 40 years. The proportion of males to females tends to be equal. All students participated in MCGW as it was a key assessment strategy. They all underwent the same process for group-work. The group-work process starts in the first lecture as it is the normal practice within the department to give students their group assessment in the first lecture. The students are then expected to conduct

the group-work process independently in their own time. The students form their groups. Typically, each group is composed of 4 -6 students. This is a standard group size in university X for both undergraduate and master's levels, as the department considered this group size would be more comfortable for the lecturer to monitor student learning and progression.

3.16 Sample size

A careful selection was made as to whom to interview. To identify appropriate participants, the sample size selected used a combination of convenience sampling and purposive sampling (Bryman, 2008). They were chosen according to their cultural background. The university has students from a range of cultures. Attempts were made to accept as many different cultures as possible. I already knew the students and their cultural background as I had taught them. Initially, a verbal conversation took place during class time; there were 16 different cultures present in my class. I explained the purpose of the study, and I explained participation was voluntary. I then asked the students to email me if they wished to take part in my research. Five students emailed me, and I then approached a further four students who had expressed an interest in being interviewed. In total, I had nine students that represented different cultures, and there was equal representation from the collectivist and individualist cultures, which were the underlining dimensions of culture represented in my study. The interviews were conducted until a theoretical saturation point was reached, whereby the collectivist cultures and individualistic cultures were not presenting any further new ideas, other than that which had already emerged from previous interviews. Although gender was not as significant a criterion as culture was for this study, there was an equal representation of male and female students, which was reflective of the cohorts being investigated. The students who volunteered to take part in the study were from the following cultures: England,

Scotland, Germany, Ghana, Malaysia, Latvia, Kenya, Korea, China, Italy (see Table 3.4 Interview participants).

Table 3.4: Interview participants for the structured interview facilitated with the questionnaire and which was immediately followed with the semi-structured interview

Student cultural group	Course/programme
England	BA (Hons) Hospitality Management programme
Scotland	BA (Hons) Hospitality Management programme
Germany	BA (Hons) Hospitality Management programme
Ghana	MA in Hospitality Management programme
Malaysia	MA in Hospitality Management programme
Latvia	BA (Hons) Hospitality Management programme
Kenya	Graduate Diploma in Hospitality Management programme
Korea	BA (Hons) Hospitality Management programme
China	BA (Hons) Hospitality Management programme
Italy	BA (Hons) Hospitality Management programme

Once the student had agreed to be interviewed, I sent a letter to the student via email explaining the purpose of the study and consent forms prior to the interview (see Appendix E, Consent form). The interviews were arranged at a convenient place and time and lasted between one and a half hours to two hours. Once the interviews had been completed, I proceeded to conduct the focus groups. During my classes, I explained to the whole class the objectives of my research, and what would be involved in the focus group meetings. I explained they did not have to take part; it was voluntary. Two classes were approached, final year students and students who were in their first year. The focus group participants did not necessarily have to take part in the questionnaire and interview, as they were providing an insight into developing a conceptual framework for MCGW, but they had to have participated in MCGW. The focus groups were composed according to the module they studied and the level. I had two groups from the first year and two groups from the final year.

Cohen et al. (2000) suggest that sampling is a significant key to the success of a focus group and indicates that focus group samples should be selected so that the participants are

bearers of specific characteristics. In the case of this research, the characteristics were concerned with their culture. Students invited to join the focus groups were selected from as wide a range of cultures as possible. From those invited, 17 students had volunteered to take part in the focus groups. There was a wide range of cultures represented, which was reflective of the cohorts. As far as possible equal numbers of male to female were chosen to give a balance. I created the focus groups myself ensuring a wide range of cultures in each group, and I tried to minimise having any one group being dominated by one culture. I tried to have between four and five participants per focus group as the pilot study had indicated this was an appropriate number for allowing interaction and debate (see Table 3.5). Also, the pilot study had shown it was possible for me to record all their conversations. The focus groups were conducted until a theoretical saturation point had been reached, which is when no new ideas emerge from what had already emerged in the previous focus groups I had conducted (Durbarry, 2018).

Table 3.5: Focus group participants

FOCUS GROUP	Year	Course/programme	Module	Number of students	Student cultural group
1	L6 students Final year final year	BA (Hons) Hospitality Management programme	Hospitality Information Technology strategies.	4	Caribbean India Iran Ghana
2	L6 student's final year	BA (Hons) Event Management programme.	Events and Future issues'	4	Jamaica Germany Ireland America
3	L4 students first year	BA(Hons) Airline and Airport management programme	Principles of Management and Leadership	4	Romania St Lucia Nigerian Romania
4	L4 students first year	BA(Hons) Hospitality and Tourism Management programme	Academic Development and Employability'	5	Italian French Mauritius Egypt Bangladesh

3.16 Analysis of the Qualitative data

3.1.1 Content analysis

This section will identify how the qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews and focus groups were analysed. The semi-structured interview transcripts were analysed using content analysis, which produced categories linked to the sub-RQ 1,2, and 3. The key categories and subcategories and codes that emerged are detailed in the findings chapter.

An inductive research approach was adopted when analysing the qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews. This approach is recommended when seeking new knowledge or when the knowledge available is fragmented, as is the case in this study (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007). The first step was to organise the data by the process of open coding, which involved identifying codes and creating categories and then conducting the abstraction process (Sarantakos, 2013). Once the narrative interviews had been conducted, I familiarised myself with the transcripts by reading them several times and immersing myself within them, always reflecting on the research questions. Open coding involved writing notes and creating labels in the text while reading (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007). Deciding on what to analyse and in what detail was an essential factor. Controversy exists as to what should be selected as the unit of analysis. Some authors suggest that researchers should note down their first impressions (Hsieh & Shannon 2005; Sarantakos, 2013). This approach came naturally to me. I found analysing full sentences and highlighting parts of the sentences provided meaning to the student transcripts. This approach, often referred to as Latent Content Analysis (Elo & Kyngäs 2008), also allowed me to gain an insight into the feelings and ideas of the students and identify the hidden meaning to their cultural behaviours (Sarantakos, 2013; Graaf & Vossen 2013; Bryman 2004). I found in subsequent readings, I naturally started to use the Manifest Coding Technique, whereby I focused on visible text elements such as words or sentences. This approach provided me with the flexibility to compare student comments, permitting the

formation of categories to be easily identified. For each unit of meaning I identified, I attached code in the column next to the text preparing it for counting (see Table 3.6).

Table 3.6: Demonstrating the process of open coding. The table identifies how codes were produced from the student's interview transcript.

Can you explain German culture?	**code**
Overall, it's very structured society, e.g., everyone has to be punctual. You need to have a formal day, and you must know what is happening in the week. You need a rough plan as to who you will meet. What you will be doing during the week. You need an overview of your finance; your life goals are outlined for you from a young age from your childhood.	Germany structured society Punctual Structured day Plan your week Must know what is happening Plan from a Young Age Life goals

The content analysis process followed an abstraction process, whereby a series of codes was produced, once the open coding process was completed, I organised the codes into a hierarchal structure (Hsieh and Shannon 2005) whereby codes were sorted into key categories, sub-categories, and codes (Dey, 1993). The intention was to reduce the number of headings, grouping them together so that they were classified to belong to a group (Dev, 1993). These broader higher categories were made to provide meaning to the data, to help describe the phenomenon, to increase understandings and knowledge about the culture (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007). Details of the key categories and the associated sub-categories are given in Appendix I. This thematic approach enabled the generation of codes from the data and emerging common themes or patterns to be identified, providing an illuminating light into the dynamics within MCGW (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Sarantakos, 2013; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). This was an iterative process, and the categories and codes were refined after re-visiting the transcripts many times. Later the frequencies of the codes for each sub-category were added

up and analysed to produce frequency totals for the codes or units of meaning for that sub-category (see Appendix J, Total Frequencies). The analysis process was interpreted using the following technique: If the codes frequency was high, then I interpreted that key category, sub-category, or code as being a significant concept in their culture. The frequency totals of the analysis process (see Appendix J, Total Frequencies) have been summarised and presented in a simplified snapshot in Table 4.4 in the findings chapter to categorise the behaviours of the culture. For example, totals for the sub-category 'Family' and 'Value' in Table 4.4 score much higher for the perceived collectivist cultures than those of the perceived individualist cultures, indicating that family and adhering to their value system is essential for the collectivist culture.

3.17 Reflexivity

Porter (2000) suggests that good researchers should embrace *reflexivity.* Thus, I will reveal the values, interests, and influences associated with my own subjective experiences and the personal factors that may have affected the research. I was a course leader and senior lecturer in the institution where my research was carried out. There were many advantages to being an insider researcher. As the student base was available to me, and I had taught the students, I had no difficulty in seeking participants for the study. Reflecting on my role as a researcher; however, there are concerns for this research. We were dealing with ethnographical insider-research, where the participants were also my students. It is imperative that students' best interests were maintained. Reflecting on my position as a researcher, and the students' lecturer, meant reassuring the students that my research would not impact their studies or grades. I informed them that taking part was voluntary. Also, I was conscious how students respond and behave during the interviews and focus groups. I knew that they might be influenced by my position of responsibility as presented in a teacher-student relationship

and that this might be a concern for the students (Miller et al., 2012; Silverman, 1997). To mitigate this, the structured interviews with the questionnaire, the semi-structured interviews, and focus groups were conducted after the semester had finished, and all assessments had been marked.

There was also concern students might be cautious about discussing other group members' cultural norms. I reassured them of the confidentiality and anonymity aspect of research (Cohen et al., 2000). In addition, I was aware that these students were coming from very different worlds and had their upbringings routed in various cultural norms, values, and beliefs, different from my own. Therefore, I consciously tried to guard against making any judgements during the interviews and focus groups, attempting to maintain a neutral disposition, to avoid bringing in bias.

3.18 Ethical considerations

For this research study, rigorous attention was given to the ethical considerations, as it was a collection of personal data. Students' consent for participation was obtained through consent forms, which outlined the reasons for conducting the research (see Appendix E). Also, students were reassured that they could refuse to take part or withdraw from the study at any point and that this would not affect their assessment marks (Flick, 2011; Rudestam & Newton, 2007) (see Appendix F). Maintaining anonymity was necessary, as Silverman (1997) warns us that when signed consent is sought, subjects are less willing to commit themselves, in fear of something being traced back to them. To mitigate this risk, the students' names remained

anonymous and they were offered the opportunity to check or change the transcripts (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). Full details of the research proposal and methods to be used, their rational and sampling approach, underwent critical evaluation by the ethical committee of the University of Reading for approval before commencing the research.

3.19 Discussion of sensitive issues

In this study, sensitive topics were discussed to bring awareness to the experience students have encountered within MCGW. The intention was not to stereotype any culture or to convey that the experiences or thought processes discussed are typical of any one culture. The experiences discussed and projections made by individual students are only particular to them and are shared in good faith to advance knowledge and understanding of their experiences in MCGW.

3.20 Limitations

3.20.1 Limitations of Interpretivism and subjectivity

There are weaknesses with the interpretive approach which need to be acknowledged. This research approach focused on individual experiences that were subjective, and that recognised the fact that the existence of the social world was differently constructed by individuals and was tainted with their own individual bias (Davis, 2006; Heikkinen et al., 2001; Hodkinson, 2004; Holland, 2007; Silverman, 2010). In addition, such research relied on the researcher's interpretation, which was influenced by individual bias resulting in conscious or unconscious interpretations made during the research process or during the interpretation of the data findings (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, (2000); Silverman 2010). Acknowledgment is given that no research can be without bias (Abraham, 2008). Subjectivity is part of the interpretative process and based on the belief that reality and knowledge are created by individuals participating within the MCGW process (Hammersley, 1993). It is recognised that

these realities were created in relation to their own personal frameworks (Eisner, 1993). In the execution of this study it was viewed that despite the limitations of the method, the interpretive approach was appropriate as it was essential to allow students the freedom to voice their own experiences and perceptions of their understanding of other cultures, as well as to be able to reflect their cultural upbringing. Although experiences of MCGW may have individual meanings that are particular to an individual student and his/her reality influenced by culture, nevertheless they provide an insight into the realities of this world, and to the expectations of that student. These insights have been absent from the literature. They are essential to unravel as they provide some indications of the potential reasonings and the triggers that influenced their behaviour and their expectations of behaviour within the MCGW process. It is essential to clarify that there was no attempt to make generalisations; it attempted only to provide meaning to student experiences.

3.20.2 Limitations of content analysis

The interpretive approach and my role as the interpreter of the interviews and focus groups are framed by subjective perceptions, and although the use of content analysis strengthens human insight to uncover truths, it also has the weakness of being heavily dependent on the research's skill, intellect and discipline (Durbarry, 2018). I found that each inquiry was distinctive, and the results depended on my skills and insights as to the researcher (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). The constructionist ontology representation, based on interpretivist epistemology, claims that the reality presented in content analysis is not objective but interpreted (Sarantakos, 2013). I was left attempting to create the reality of the world according to my own cultural and historical upbringings (Eisner, 1992; Hammersley 2005). Bryman (2004) warns that the drawback of content analysis is that researchers unwittingly put emphasis on measurement, resulting in over-compressed codes. I was conscious of this, as due to the volume of data I collected, I had to compress the codes to make some meaning. A

counter-argument is presented by Dey (1993), citing that a lack of sufficient compressed codes results in the inability to categorise the data. I can conclude that the flexibility of content analysis means that the realities of experiences can be discovered. However, a lack of firm procedure or uniformity made it a complex technique (Hsieh and Shannon 2005), even though the outcomes can provide for a critical appreciation of the contents (Sarantakos, 2013). Unlike other rigorous research techniques, which provide firm definitions, the content analysis attempts to provide a platform for both explorations of subjective themes and a systematic quantitative approach. For me, the emergence of categories was seen as a strength for inquiry-based research, where information is fragmented. The process of content analysis has provided an exciting insight into the validity of the approach, and the following section presents the findings of the interviews in more detail. The subjectivity associated with qualitative research has meant my judgment in the formation of codes and interpreting the data accurately left me open to potentially disregarding some information. This was small-scale research; the scope of this study comprised only a small sample of nine participants, all from different cultures. The research does not purport to claim generalisations; instead, it gives acknowledgments that the findings may provide some insight and understanding, which may be of small value to the broader educational community.

3.20.3 Limitations of frameworks

A key research question, `What are the key factors that need to be included in a pluralistic model for MCGW? ` gave rise to the production of a conceptual model. The creation of a conceptual model or framework is received with mixed views within the literature. All structures will have limitations, not least this model, as it was constructed on a small sample of participants' views. However, Eisner (1992) claims that accepting the creation of frameworks or perceptions does not prevent us from seeing the concept of truth if we

acknowledge there are ‘shared’ frameworks of perception and understanding. Suggesting that even though we cannot have knowledge where the validity is absolute, we can judge if the beliefs proposed by the framework are sound and achieve some consistencies. I adhere to Eisner’s comments and propose the structure I have created will provide some glimpses into individual truths. Yet, I acknowledge Hammersley, Gomm, and Woods’ (2001) criticism, suggesting realism is flawed as frameworks of presuppositions can never be fully assessed. However, I invite lecturers to review the conceptual framework I designed in this study, which attempts to give direction as to how the benefits of MCGW can be maximised. I encourage them to apply and revise it within their contexts and to provide some reasoning as to how it can be developed further.

3.21. Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the design methodology implemented in order to address the research questions. The research methods and the reasoning for selecting them were provided. The implementation of the research process data collection, the pilot study, data analysis, ethical considerations, and limitations of the study were provided. Finally, my position, my role as a researcher, reflection on my personal bias, was presented as being integral to the overall study process. The following chapter presents a portrait of the findings derived from the research study.

Chapter 4: Findings

4 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of this research study.

Main research question:

Main Research Question 1) To what extent are group behaviour and attitudes within MCGW related to cultural expectations? (sub RQ1,2).
Main Research Question 2) What are the key factors that need to be included in a pluralistic model for MCGW? (sub-RQ 3,4).

Sub Research Questions
Sub RQ (1) What are the students' cultural attitudes and behaviours?
Sub RQ (2) What are the student's perceptions and experiences of other cultures within MCGW?
Sub RQ (3) What are the challenges and benefits of participating in MCGW?
Sub RQ (4) What approaches and key factors can bring awareness to cultural diversity and maximise the benefits of MCGW?

4.1 Background to the study

This research aimed to understand to what extent group behaviour and attitudes are related to cultural expectations within MCGW. In addition, the purpose of this study was to identify from students voices the key factors that could be included in a pluralistic model that capitalises on the benefits of MCGW. To achieve these aims, three methods were deployed: structured interviews facilitated with a questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups. Nine interviews were conducted with the students, and the approach is taken consisted firstly of conducting a structured interview with a questionnaire that was completed with the researcher and participant together in order to ascertain the student`s cultural profile and to get an indication of their cultural, behavioural norms, addressing sub-RQ 1. The findings from this method enabled patterns to be identified between the collectivist and individualist cultures. The patterns that emerged have been presented in this chapter, and their significance is discussed in the discussion chapter. This chapter then reports on the findings

of the interview study, which addressed the main research question 1 and Sub-RQ 1,2, and 3. The interview followed on from the structured interview and collected information on the students' upbringing, parental influences, schooling, and expectations of cultural behaviour within society. Then the students discussed their experiences of interacting with other cultures within MCGW and the benefits and challenges they experienced within MCGW. The key findings that emerged from the content analysis conducted on each interview are presented, along with the categories, sub-categories, and codes that emerged. The key interviews that most closely addressed the research questions are offered as a series of vignettes. Finally, a series of four focus groups were conducted to address the main research question 2 and Sub-RQ 4. The focus groups elicited the students' suggestions regarding the key factors that needed to be included in a pluralistic model for MCGW. They also uncovered what approaches they considered could bring awareness to cultural diversity and maximise the benefits of MCGW. The next section will contextualise the findings. Acknowledgment is made that exploring students' cultural behaviour norms to provide some meaning and gain some understandings of the interactions that occur within MCGW is a sensitive issue. This chapter does not elaborate on this, however, the rationale for discussing sensitive issues have been identified in the methodology chapter in section 3.20.

4.2 Structured interview findings

The findings produced from the structured interview with a questionnaire and interview studies are a-typical as the sample of students participating in the study was small. However, some interesting findings emerged, which may provide some contribution to the knowledge base as to how culture presents itself within MCGW. It is essential to acknowledge that in the presentation of my findings, attempts are made to compare one culture with another on different attributes, as identified in the Hofstede study (Hofstede, 1994). Still, it does not tell

us anything about the variability within each culture nor does it inform us whether the particular students I sampled are typical or atypical of the culture. The account presented in the findings provides indications of the differences between cultural behaviour. This principle of distinction is considered necessary in understanding intercultural communication (Cronje, 2011). However, equally, if mutual understandings of shared values and goals are to be achieved, then as Roche (2002) indicated, it is essential to pay attention to similarities and differences.

4.3 Findings addressing sub-RQ 1

This section details the findings from the questionnaire study (see Appendix, F Questionnaire) delivered as part of the structured interview that allowed the student's cultural behaviours to be categorised into traits as identified by the Hofstede study (see Table 3.2). Hofstede's research was a critical theoretical model that provided plausible dimensions to categorise cultural behaviour in terms of high and low power distance, individualism-collectivism, high and low uncertainty avoidance, long-term and short-term orientation. The perceived categorisation for these cultural behavioural norms was achieved by analysing the responses given to the questions identified in column 2 of Table 3.2. The data from the questionnaire was populated and categorised visually into Table 4.1 (see Table 4.1, Results of the Questionnaire study).

The data produced brought some light to both the similarities and the differences in cultural behaviour and expectations of perceived collectivist and perceived individualistic cultures within MCGW, and these emerging patterns have been highlighted in green for the perceived collectivist cultures and in yellow for the perceived individualist cultures in Table 4.1. The section below explains how the questions designed within the questionnaire were used to allow for categorisation of cultures.

The mean scores for the Questions 7a – 7d identified the students that came from societies seeking direction from their group leader within MCGW and who were inclined towards high power distance. These students were from Kenya, Korea, China, Malaysia, Italy, Ghana, and Latvia. The other students indicated their upbringing was from a social culture that favoured a low power distance. They were from Scotland, England, and Germany.

The students` perception of their tolerance of uncertainty and ambiguity, was addressed by calculating the mean for questions 8c and 8d in the questionnaire study. The mean findings for questions 8a – 8d had an unexpected result for the Ghanaian student, indicating he preferred to identify with rules and adhere to them. The students having a preference for certainty within MCGW were from Ghana, Italy, Latvia, England, Germany, and Scotland. The students` indicating that their culture was more tolerant of deviation against the rules were: Kenya, Korea, China, and Malaysia.

This study produced a surprising result: the two students from the same African continent fell under different categories for tolerance to uncertainty. A plausible reason may be because the Ghanaian student was brought up in England, which may have influenced his perceptions and thus may be leaning towards individualistic thought processes. In contrast, the Kenyan student had all his upbringing in Kenya and so veered towards the collectivist cultural expectations.

There were no particular skewed results from this study compared to studies in the literature, about the categorisation of student's culture for the traits collectivist or individualistic culture, as determined by the mean for questions 6a, 6e, 9e, 9g. Those students indicating their culture preferred to show work collaboratively exhibited loyalty towards the group over their own individual goals were from Kenya, Korea, China, Malaysia, Ghana, Italy, and Latvia. The results for this study were consistent with the literature for those students who expressed

importance or prioritisation of individual goals; they were from Scotland, England, and Germany.

Finally, the mean result for questions 9a, 9b, 9c, 9d, 9f identified students indicating respect for fulfilling social obligations and traditions. This is termed within the literature as short-term orientation, and these students were from Ghana, Kenya, Korea, China, and Malaysia. This was an interesting result as, on this occasion, both students from Africa had the same response.

Table 4. 1: Results of the questionnaire findings
Results of the questionnaire findings depicting the cultural attitudes and values of students within MCGW. The patterns that emerged brought to light the similarities in behaviours between cultures. Emerging patterns identifying similarities in cultural behaviours between cultures have been highlight, as per the key given below.
This method addressed the following sub-RQ (1) What are the students' cultural attitudes and behaviours?
Key: Emerging patterns have been highlighted as green for perceived collectivist cultures and in
yellow for perceived individualist cultures

High Power Distance	Low Power Distance	Perceived Individualism	Perceived Collectivism
Kenya Korea China Malaysia Italy Latvia Ghana	Scotland England Germany	Scotland England Germany	Kenya Korea China Malaysia Ghana Italy Latvia
High Uncertainty avoidance (need certainty – seek to minimise uncertainty by planning and creating rules)	**Low Uncertainty avoidance (cultures are more tolerant of opinions from others)**	**Long-term orientation. Thrift and perseverance**	**Short-Term Orientation. Respect for tradition and social obligations**
Ghana Italy Latvia England Germany Scotland	Kenya Korea China Malaysia	Scotland England Germany Italy Latvia	Ghana Kenya Korea China Malaysia

The next section discusses the emerging patterns, as presented by the analysis of the data presented in Table 4.1.

4.3.1 Similarities in the individualist cultural behaviours

It was interesting to observe the perceived individualist cultures as identified by this study`s questionnaire, namely, Scotland, England, and Germany, all exhibited similar attitudes and values. The results of the study indicated that the perceived Individualistic cultural value systems stemmed from a competitive drive to excel individually. The literature has referred to

this as obligations to self, and a leaning towards 'I' learning (Hofstede, 1994). It can be argued that this is reflective of the western countries' economic and cultural aspirations, leaning towards individualism (Albach & Knight, 2007; Kettle, 2012), which informed their behaviour within MCGW, resulting in them focusing on individual goals. The other exciting characteristics that emerged was that they were unsettled with uncertainty, or as the literature framed it as exhibiting high uncertainty avoidance. This study found their upbringing was from structured learning environments, where precise objectives were defined and where there was an expectancy to follow strict timetables or project plans. They preferred long-term orientation, which meant they had a preference for thrift and perseverance, being very careful about how they used and prioritised their time. What characterised them as different from the collectivist cultures was that they considered showing emotions was acceptable, and an essential means of communication. The emerging patterns have been highlighted in yellow in Table 4.1 (see Table 4.1, Results of the questionnaire findings).

4.3.2 Similarities in the collectivist cultural behaviours

This study found the Kenyan, Korean, Chinese, Ghanaian, and Malaysian cultures exhibited the expected behavioural attributes as collectivist cultures. Their responses showed a tendency for high power distance; that is, they considered it their duty to be obedient to parents and teachers. In contrast to the perceived individualistic cultures, prioritising individual goals, this study found the perceived collectivist cultural values centred on the 'we' consciousness; this meant they considered they had obligations to group members, and showing respect towards them was extremely important, even if their own individual goals were shadowed. They categorised themselves as being in the low uncertainty dimension, showing a tendency to being comfortable with vague objectives and timelines and preferred

not to show emotion. The collectivist culture preferred the literature terms as short-term orientation, respect for tradition, fulfilling social obligations, and not losing face.

Some perceived collectivist cultures did not follow the expected tendencies as had been identified in the Hofstede study (1994). The Ghanaian student showed a preference for high uncertainty. The Italian and Latvian students also deviated from the norm expected, in that they categorised themselves having the same attributes as the collectivist cultures, bar a preference for high uncertainty and long-term orientation.

4.4 Semi-Structured interview analysis findings

Having identified the cultural behaviours as to how the students categorised themselves and thereby providing some meaning to their cultural traits, the next section will present the findings of the semi-structured interviews. Through the method of semi-structured interviews, the respondents were asked to discuss their cultural upbringing and how their cultural norms and expectations were related to their experiences within MCGW (see Appendix G Interview questions). They were also asked to discuss their experiences within the MCGW process and the challenges and benefits it presented. The methods used to address sub-RQ 1,2 and 3 are shown below,

Sub Research Questions	**Methods**
Sub RQ (1) What are the students' cultural attitudes and behaviours?	Structured interview facilitated with the questionnaire Semi-structured interviews
Sub RQ (2) What are the student's perceptions and experiences of other cultures within MCGW?	Semi-structured interviews
Sub RQ (3) What are the challenges and benefits of participating in MCGW?	Semi-structured interviews

The content analysis process involved several iterations of reading the interview transcripts. During this process, the key-categories, and the associated sub-categories and

the codes that emerged from the content analysis conducted were created and are detailed in Appendix I (see Appendix Content Analysis key categories and associated sub-categories) alongside the research questions they were related to. A summary of the six key categories that emerged: culture, family, schooling, perceptions, and experiences of other cultures within MCGW, challenges experienced within MCGW, benefits of MCGW, are presented in the next section and developed in more detail throughout the chapter.

4.5 The codes generated for Sub-RQ1

Culture

The critical category of culture produced codes related to the students' perception of the norms of the culture they were brought up in. The codes were collated into the following

sub-categories: cultural expectations of behaviour, values, care, and loyalty. This essential category generated a lot of new information and produced extensive codes. The codes have been divided into the perceived collectivist culture and the perceived individualist culture. The key codes, presented within the collectivist culture's '*cultural expectations of behaviour'* strand, centred around their cultural norms and cultural, societal behaviours which were influenced by the tribes and groups they lived in, their sense of belonging, the codes identify that bribery and corruption are dispersed throughout their society, the codes also identified the expectations that traditions and social obligations and behaviours need to be upheld within their society. This was demonstrated by the Ghanaian student's comment,

"The corruption and bribery are big not as much as in Nigeria but Ghana is ruled by money so you can slap or hit a person, but when the police come you can give 5 or 10 dollars, and they just wipe it clean. That's how it is we have bribery. The corruption levels are bad".

Importantly codes were created to identify the societal notion that the collective goal has significance over the individual aspirations stemming from a strong family and societal

bonds. This was demonstrated in Table 4.4, the Chinese and Malaysian frequency codes associated with family had the highest score, that of 13 and 15, indicated that family connections had strong bonds for them**.** It was also found that they were comfortable with uncertainty as they feel secure that the family or group they belong to will support them.

The codes created were:

influence of tribes, bribery, and corruption, the structure within society, class society, traditions, social behaviours. *Comfortable with uncertainty, authoritarian, collective goals*.

For the collectivist culture, the notion of loyalty was essential towards family and society, as opposed to individualism. This is demonstrated in Table 4.4; the frequency totals generated for the code loyalty for the collectivist culture were highest for the Chinese, Malaysian, Kenyan, and Korean. The English student has the highest total overall. However, the references he made in his interview were negatively associated, claiming bonds of loyalty were easily broken, for him loyalty was based on trust, if it existed, then one can show loyalty. For the individualist culture, the sub-category of loyalty produced the code: *trust.*

In contrast, the other cultures made strong references to the importance of maintaining good bonds with society and family. The sub-category for the loyalty strand for the collectivist culture produced the code: *loyalty to family and society.*

For the collectivist culture, the sub-category '*values*' appeared significant, with strong associations to respect for the elderly and people in authority. This value system was ingrained and something they cherished deeply as being part of their societal and cultural norms. This can be seen from the Ghanaian student's comment,

"We have a very strong sense of culture where you respect the elders…. But the bond with mother and father is very strong. There is more togetherness".

The Malaysian student said,

"My parents were strict, but they allowed me to study, but they said you can do what you want, but when at home, respect tradition don't do anything modern or bad. Here in England, you don't have to be polite to everyone. At home, even if someone does something bad to you, but they are older - you have to respect them - you can't argue back. In England, you can say this is wrong - you don't have to be polite."

The Chinese student made 23 references to the importance of maintaining values; this figure was double than of any other culture. An extension to their values of collective goals and belonging to a group came to the notion that if harmony is to be maintained in groups, it is essential to consider the other person's feelings. The codes generated were: *respect for elders, parents, and teachers, considering other people's feelings, sense of belonging*

The perceived individualist cultures did not argue in favour of necessity for duty and cared towards family and societal groups in the same way as the collectivist cultures did. For the collectivist culture, care for the elderly, family, and society, appeared extremely important and appeared to be ingrained in them from an early age. The sub-codes for the *care* strand for the collectivist culture produced the codes: *care for the family, elderly, and society.* Once again, the Chinese culture produced the highest frequency for the code: value.

The perceived individualist cultures produced a completely different set of sub-categories. They did not emphasise the concepts the collectivist cultures focused on: that of care, loyalty, respect, and societal structures, underpinned with bribery and corruption.

For the perceived individualist culture, the sub-category of cultural expectations of behaviour code centred around the importance of making decisions independently, valuing their judgement and part of making sound judgments involved being able to minimise risk by planning and organising tasks. The following codes were produced: *Independent thought, prefer certainty of rules and regulations, low power distance, prioritising individual goals.*

Family

Family, what it is and what it represents, was discussed by both the perceived collectivist and perceived individualist cultures. They had different perspectives on what family meant to them. For the collectivist cultures, there was an expectation of behaving in a way according to societal demands so as not to disgrace the family. The family is seen as a secure unit that needs to be respected. The culture accepted punishment as a tool for maintaining societal expectations of what is acceptable and right behaviour. A different perspective for the family unit was perceived by the individualistic cultures, echoing that the family unit is easily destroyed and a weak chain. The key-category of family produced the sub-category of the family unit. The codes for this sub-category have been divided into the collectivist culture and the individualist culture.

For the perceived collectivist culture, the sub-category of family unit produced the following codes:

The parental expectation of behaviour, extended family, Strong, cohesive family unit, parental authority, right and wrong behaviour, respect, and obedience to parents, punishment.

For the perceived Individualist culture, the sub-category of family unit produced the following codes:

the weak family unit, disunited,

Schooling

Schooling was very different for the collectivist and individualist cultures. For the collectivist cultures schooling, like their social and cultural norms within society was governed by an authority, where the teacher led the class with minimum interaction with the students, providing little opportunity for students to work in groups. The Malaysian student said,

"Back home, we automatically separate the boys from the girls – they don't talk. Girls stick to girls. Girls never go toilet alone. We must be accompanied". She continued to explain,

"In school, the teachers are always seen as right - we can't say anything to the teacher – if we do, then we get serious punishment."

For the collectivist culture, the classes lacked discussion sessions. In addition, they cited punishment was also acceptable within schools when students did not follow the guidance given. The perceived individualistic cultures presented a very different approach to schooling. The classes were student-led, and they had the opportunity to work in groups, so group-work was a new teaching method. They had the confidence to critique and debate, as that was the schooling they were brought up in, and they were also in a familiar environment.

The key-category of schooling produced the sub-category of teaching and assessment approach, and confidence to engage. The codes for these sub-categories have been subdivided into the perceived collectivist culture and the perceived individualist culture. The codes that emerged in this key-category were related to the teaching style and assessment structures within the UK and how they compared with their own country's schooling.

For the collectivist culture, the sub-category of teaching and assessment produced the following codes: *teacher-led learning, teacher punishment, unfamiliar with teaching and assessment approach, confidence to engage: lack of confidence to participate in MCGW.*

Individualist culture:

For the perceived individualist culture, the sub-category of teaching and assessment produced the following codes: *student-led learning*, *confidence to engage, voice opinions, able to critique, assertive, confident in debating in groups, familiarity with teaching and assessment of MCGW.*

4.6 The codes generated for Sub-RQ2

Sub RQ (2) What are the student's perceptions and experiences of other cultures within MCGW?

Sub RQ2 related to the perceptions and experiences of other cultures within MCGW. The codes produced addressing this sub-research question were divided into two sub-categories, that the collectivist cultures' perceptions of individualist cultures, and the individualist cultures' perception and experiences with the collectivist culture.

The collectivist cultures saw the individualistic cultures as confident, able to articulate themselves well within MCGW, decisive, knowledgeable assertive, organised, and good leaders. This was observed and acknowledged in the English student's interview,

"The group said they wanted me to be the leader of the group because I have got strong leadership skills."

They also considered the individualistic cultures as arrogant, rendering them distant and unapproachable, not friendly, and strict on task completion deadlines. This can be seen from the comment made by a student from the collectivist culture,

"The British speak very fast and understand things quicker than us, but they don't respect our opinions. The international students felt their opinions are not taken into account, so they stop talking".

The individualistic cultures saw the collectivist cultures as friendly, warm, relaxed, tolerant, and polite. However, equally, they were frequently frustrated with what they perceived as an inability to integrate with them, and they found them quiet and not good at posing challenging arguments and that they could not lead and critique.

For the collectivist culture, the sub-category of collectivist cultures perceptions of individualist cultures produced the following codes: *arrogant, impatient, distant, intolerant, assertive, organised, leadership, confident, articulate, decisive, knowledgeable, punctual, and strict on deadlines, participative, unfriendly, disciplined and organised approach.*

For the individualist culture the sub-category of the individualist cultures perception and experiences with the collectivist culture produced the following codes: *Quiet, respectful,*

tolerant, approachable, unengaged, lack confidence in speaking in discussions, don't critique arguments, or challenge in MCGW, followers not leaders, inability to integrate and participate, friendly cultures, reserved cultures, relaxed cultures, inability to show emotion, lack planning, tolerant to other cultures and polite.

4.7 Codes generated for sub-RQ3: Challenges within MCGW

Sub RQ (3) What are the challenges and benefits of participating in MCGW?

The perceived collectivist cultures experienced more challenges than perceived individualistic cultures. This can be observed from the frequency table, Table 4.4. The English student did not make any references to challenges, and the German student made only two references. In contrast, the Malaysian student made 12 references to the challenges she experienced, and the Korean student made 17 references to the challenges he experienced. Also, the problems encountered by the perceived collectivist cultures were significantly different from those experienced by the perceived individualistic cultures. The individualistic cultures' main challenges were associated with communication issues with the collectivist cultures and what they perceived as them lacking the skills to critique and debate within MCGW. Whereas the collectivist cultures complained extensively about having to adapt to different educational approaches, the challenges related to transitioning to a new country, unfamiliarity with educational structures, rules and regulations, and challenges in having the skills to use the English language to pose arguments. The Malaysian student reflected on the differences in the educational experience as,

"We are given a specific book or paper to read, and we don't study independently. It's challenging for me to adapt to study in England as they expect us to study independently".

The key category of challenges for the collectivist culture within MCGW produced the sub-categories of transition issues, communication, and confidence in MCGW, teaching and

learning environment, time management, and planning. The codes for these sub-categories have been divided into the collectivist culture and the individualist culture. For the collectivist culture, the sub-category of transition issues produced the following codes: *complications of time pressures due to opportunities in the UK and settling in the UK, transition issues to UK teaching and assessment, time taken to translate and think in English and misunderstandings, time to translate from English language and understand meanings of conversations, unfamiliar with rules and following rules, sense of belonging outweighs individual goals.*

The collectivist culture identified they lacked confidence resulting in them having difficulty in debating and sharing ideas. When asked if they contributed in MCGW, one student said,

"*Depends if I am familiar with the topic, I like to express my views in the group I am confident. If I don't know the topic, I like to get my head around it as I feel they may laugh at me, and I will look silly. The Ghanaians are proud people".*

He went onto explain why they had difficulty in contributing to debates by saying,

"The English are very last minute they know what to do but are laid back. They get it done on time. They know what they are doing. But this behaviour can impact the group work process. They may be fast, but I know it takes me longer to understand the stuff…. It takes me time to digest and assimilate the work.

The Malaysian student commented,

"I think those students who stayed in Thailand all their life they are not confident to speak in another language. They are not good at showing opinion in MCGW. This is the culture".

For the collectivist culture, the sub-category of communication and confidence in MCGW produced the following codes: *difficulties in debating and sharing of ideas, lack of*

confidence, body language, lack of awareness of cultural expectations, losing face - afraid of looking silly.

For the collectivist culture, the sub-category of teaching and learning environment produced the following codes: *difficulties in adjusting to independent learning, unfamiliar teaching environment, unfamiliar with assessment strategy.*

For the perceived individualist culture, the sub-category of communication and confidence in MCGW produced the following codes: *communication breakdown – lack of awareness of cultural expectations, collectivist culture unengaged and lacks the confidence to speak in MCGW, impacting dynamics and formation of ideas not being generated, debates are not productive as they should be, individual goals not prioritised by collectivist cultures.*

For the perceived individualist culture, the sub-category of time management and planning produced the following codes: *planning and organising group work with other cultures is challenging*.

4.7.1 Critical skills needed within MCGW

Table 4.2 lists the main challenges that were expressed by the students during the interviews and attempts to identify the emerging critical skills needed within MCGW. Column one in Table 4.2 identifies the challenges experienced by students when participating in MCGW. They are grouped into four main categories: Transition issues, communication, teaching and learning, and time management. Column two of Table 4.2. summarises these challenges and identifies them as the student's gap in knowledge about other cultures or the vital critical skills needed within MCGW. The challenges regarding 'transition issues' were concerned with differences in teaching and assessment backgrounds, having to develop the skills to study independently. This section identifies the fact that misunderstandings did occur during the MCGW, due to the time it takes to translate the English language. These challenges

have been summarised in column two, as the 'students lack the skills to **'articulate arguments'** within MCGW. The second challenge termed 'communication' indicates that students felt they lacked awareness of other cultures norms, resulting in culture clashes. This can be observed in the Latvian student's comment saying,

"I worked with Italians. I find them very lazy they are very relaxed about things which are appropriate for them but not for me. I want to get things done I don't like to leave to last minute the Italians will leave to last minute, and that frustrates me we had a big conflict, it was confrontational …..but I can relate with students from Sweden and Russia they had similar upbringings, and that helps bring us closer. The memories we share running around in woods and watch the same TVs shows".

She went onto say,

"The Chinese are very quiet. She does the work, but to do a group work with her, she was very quiet and is more of a follower and so very hard to work with".

Communication issues were compounded further as collective cultures were reluctant to speak up and share ideas in fear of losing face. These challenges have been summarised as the students '**lack of cultural awareness, lack of confidence in communicating, and lack of skills in debating and negotiating.** The third category of challenges termed 'Teaching and learning environment' was concerned with the difficulties that arose due to students coming from different teaching styles, that of teacher-led, and these challenges have been classified as **'Independent learning'** as they lack the skills to learn independently. The final category of challenges was concerned with time management and planning. This category raised concerns about different cultures' expectations on how to organise and plan the MCGW. The lack of awareness of planning has been summarised as students lack '**planning and organising skills.**

Table 4.2: The challenges within MCGW and the Key Critical skills needed in MCGW

Column one	**Column Two**
Transition issues The opportunities England present can be overwhelming, compared to what their own countries offered, impacting the time students can give to MCGW Group members are from different teaching and assessment backgrounds Unfamiliarity with independent learning for some cultures. Freeriding Transition issues Misunderstandings *Need more time to think and translate - need to start early* People prioritise other things - don't come to meetings	**Summary/interpretation of the Key Critical skills needed in MCGW** *Articulate arguments*
Communication Difficulty communicating as lack of awareness of other group members' culture. Cultural clash. Share ideas only when familiar with the topic and understand it well so as not to lose face. Body Language is important when participating in MCGW. *Unwilling to share ideas unless confident, they will receive positive responses.*	*Lack of cultural awareness* *Confidence in communicating* *Debating and negotiating*
Teaching and learning environment Group members are from different teaching and assessment backgrounds so not familiar with the UK teaching approaches Some cultures are unfamiliar with *independent learning*. Some cultures are teacher-led, and other student-led. Differences in teaching styles and expectations **Time management and planning** Planning and organising group work with other cultures is challenging as they are unaware of the different cultures' practices and expectations.	*Independent learning* *Planning and organising*

Table 4.2 above identifies the main concerns that transpired from the interviews. The table outlines the challenges students faced in MCGW in column 1. In column two are the interpretations/summaries this study made and identified them as the essential critical skills needed within MCGW.

4.8 Codes generated for Sub-RQ3: Benefits of MCGW

Sub RQ (3) What are the challenges and benefits of participating in MCGW?

Interestingly, despite the challenges the students experienced, there were significant benefits (see Table 4.3, The benefits of MCGW). This study identified a higher number of benefits than challenges. The section above identified that the challenges the collectivist students experienced were different from the challenges the individualistic students experienced. In contrast, both the collectivist and individualist cultures expressed the same benefits. The benefits, therefore, have not been divided into collectivist and individualistic characteristics, as was the case with previous key categories above. The key-category of benefits of MCGW produced the sub-categories of changed behaviour, improved cultural awareness, and understanding of cultures, confidence building, improved learning. This was shown when the Latvian student said,

"I think MCGW has improved my outlook on the world's cultures, and I believe my grades improved. I worked with Romanian Indian and German and the experiences from Germany like report writing and discipline, and we got a better mark".

The Kenyan student claimed,

"MCGW helps build my confidence."

The sub-category of improved cultural awareness and understanding of cultures produced the following codes: *cultural awareness and understandings, appreciation of other cultures' traditions, values and beliefs, managing expectations, and understanding expectations of behaviour of different cultures. Cultural perceptions of life, friendships, understand and appreciate differences in behaviour.*

The sub-category of improved cultural confidence-building produced the following codes: bu*ilt confidence in discussions and developing solutions to problems, building courage, grades improved, broader understandings,*

The sub-category of improved learning provided the following codes: *different perspectives, different approaches to solving solutions, improved project management. This was shown in the Ghanaian student's comments,*

"You have a broader much boarder spectrum of the same topic because different cultures see things different, …. They gave me different dimensions I get a different view. I get better learning. I get a stronger sense of the topic because of the different aspects".

The details of the benefits produced by participating within MCGW are given in the way of quotes taken from student interviews and are presented below in Table 4.3. The table identifies quotations from student interviews and details the main benefits that were expressed by the students during the interviews.

Table 4.3: The benefits of MCGW

Changed behaviour
"Interacting with other cultures helped me to reflect on my behaviour." "Allowed development of consciousness; responsibility to other group members and cultures."
Cultural awareness and understanding of cultures
"Obtained an understanding of perception of life for other cultures. Realities of life are different for all cultures. Got a holistic understanding of realities". "Opportunity to get to know other cultures and work with them to get a broader understanding." "Different cultures bring new experiences from different worlds." "Enabled new friendships to be made with other countries." "MCGW provides a platform to experience differences in cultures." "MCGW allowed me to value other cultures' contributions". "MCGW gave understanding of behaviour of other cultures." "MCGW provides a platform for cultural awareness and understanding, thereby prevents conflicts."
Confidence building
"Participating in MCGW built the confidence to travel to other countries and interact with different cultures." "Developed confidence to speak up in groups." "Makes you courageous." "Builds confidence; others listen to me and feel motivated to learn. Learning becomes fun".
Different perspectives
"Understand that different cultures have different ways of thinking."
Improved learning
"Better understanding of a topic as different cultures approaches the task differently and offer different views on how to solve a problem." "Grades improved as collective thinking from different cultures enabled different perspectives to be seen." "Forced reflection as any solution designed to solve the problem set in MCGW had to be rethought: considering as to the implications the solution proposed has on other cultures. Enabled a broader outlook". "MCGW allows project and time management skills to be developed, as different cultures have different approaches to project management." "Project management improves as each culture approaches project differently."

Table 4.3 details student quotations from the interviews depicting the benefits of MCGW addressing sub-RQ (3) What are the challenges and benefits of participating in MCGW?

4.9 Frequency of the codes

The process of content analysis, as described in the methodology chapter, identified the codes that emerged from the interview and are detailed in (Appendix I, Content analysis key categories, and associated subcategories). Subsequently, the codes were added together

to identify the frequency at which they occurred, and the frequencies are presented in the appendix (see Appendix J, a snapshot of the Total Frequencies). The frequencies of the codes have been summarised and shown in Table 4. 4 (Depicting the abstraction process). This allowed emerging patterns to be spotted. In Table 4.4, each sub-category has a numeric value for each culture. This numeric value refers to how many times the student referred to that particular code in their interview, for example in Table 4.4; the sub-category `care` has the numeric value of 10 for the Chinese student, this indicates that the Chinese student referred to the concept of `care` 10 times in her interview. We observe that all students commented on their sub-category `cultural expectations of behaviour,` with the Kenyan student scoring the highest code frequency. We can see the importance the collectivist cultures place on upholding values by inspecting the frequency of the codes associated with the sub-category 'values' in Table 4.4. The frequency totals for the code `value` for the Chinese, Ghanaian, Latvian, Kenyan, and Korean were high compared to the perceived individualist cultures (see Table 4.4). The Chinese student scored the highest code frequency associated with values totaling to 23. As the frequency of the code `care` was high, it was interpreted as the Chinese culture places high importance of providing care. This was made clear in the Chinese student`s interview,

> "*In China, grandparents always look after young children and pick up the children from school. Their grandparents live with the family so they can help. The children give some money to their parents, and in the Chinese culture, as the parents get older, the children have to look after their parents*".

References to `family` were also most noticeable within the collectivist cultures. Interestingly, only three cultures brought attention to the schooling system in the UK. Challenges featured in all interview discussions, bar the English student. The greatest surprise was the frequency with which all cultures identified the benefits of MCGW. Although all

cultures identified with benefits obtained by participating within MCGW, looking at the frequency of the 'benefits' sub-category in table 4.4, we observe that the highest frequencies total for `benefits` emerged from the: Malaysian, Ghanaian, Latvian, Kenyan, and Korean cultures, indicating that the collectivist cultures benefited significantly from participating in MCGW.

Table 4.4: Depicting the abstraction process. Table shows the frequency of the codes associated with each sub-category for the nine interview transcripts.

Frequency subtotals of codes for:	English	Chinese	Malaysian	Ghana	Latvian	Kenyan	German	Korea	Italian	Research Question
Perceived Cultural expectations of behaviour Sub-categories	7	2	4	2	2	13	5	5	4	Sub RQ1
Values	1	23	4	10	10	10	0	9	3	Sub RQ1
Care	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Sub RQ1
Loyalty	6	4	3	2	0	3	0	4	1	Sub RQ1
Family	9	13	15	6	0	0	1	8	0	Sub RQ1
Class society	0	0	4	0	0	0	1	3	0	Sub RQ1
Schooling	0	0	9	0	0	0	8	9	0	Sub RQ1
Challenges within MCGQ	0	2	12	6	5	4	2	17	2	Sub RQ3
Benefits of MCGW	5	1	10	11	13	17	16	13	3	Sub RQ3

4.10 Student profiles

The students came from Malaysia, England, Germany, China, Latvia, Kenya, Ghana, Scotland, and Italy; all bar two had studied on the hospitality and tourism undergraduate

programmes; two students were on the MA programme, one from Malaysia and the other from Ghana. All the students were in the age range of 18-25.

4.11 Vignettes

The following section reports on a selection of interviews that were conducted. Not all interviews can be reported on in detail due to the word count. The ones selected were chosen as they met the research questions most closely.

4.11.1 German student

This section presents findings emerging from the German student's contribution and starts with an introduction to her upbringing and her interpretation of the German cultural norms and societal expectations. This is then followed with a discussion on her experiences of MCGW. She started by explaining she considered her culture to be German; this is where she was born and brought up. She considered culture as being associated with the values and background she learned in her childhood in Germany, despite having travelled and lived in Australia and the USA during her late teens. She currently studies in England. She started to explain her perception of the German culture by saying it is a

> "*very structured society; everyone has to be punctual, you must know what is happening in the week, at the very least a rough plan and who you will meet. You must have an overview of your finances, your life goals, these are outlined for you from a young age*".

She explained that the planning process starts in early childhood. She went on to say that in early childhood, the parents instill the importance of planning for the future. However, in adulthood, she considered it necessary to be independent and make her own decisions. She said,

"*I take their advice, but I make my own decisions*, *they are supportive, but I do what I want to with my life, I never really did what my parents said but what was right for me, but I always felt they supported me, but I don't think they are in a position to advise me so their advice won't be helpful."*

She felt confident in making decisions and did not consider she needed parental guidance. She went on to explain how travel and study abroad influenced her thinking and behaviour

"*I think travel changed my thinking, I see people and cultures differently, and I value cultures more now. I came from a tiny village and was not open to things, after participating in MCGW I have changed. I am open to different cultures. I don't see them as skin colour and am happy to interact with them now*".

She continued by discussing how travelling and studying abroad had changed her as an individual,

"*from travelling and studying abroad, what I lost from my own culture, is the need to be punctual, I am more relaxed and easier going and my family find I have changed, they feel I am more sociable*."

Having reflected on how MCGW had benefited her she then spoke about the education system in the UK, commenting that,

"*German education is advanced and very structured in delivery, so it helped me to transition into the UK; in particular, we have the same assignment group-work and teaching style, so it made it very easy for me to adapt to the UK system……we had homework and were expected to work independently, we had group-work and project work*".

She identified similarities in the education system between Germany and the UK. She commented on how the similarities in the teaching and learning systems helped her transition into the MCGW process in the UK. She then reflected on her experiences in MCGW,

> "*We had to set our goals in assignments and plan. In Germany, group-work was similar to here, but in MCGW I found other cultures thinking was very unstructured, in Germany people are formal and making close friends is hard. Still, I found other cultures were open to making friends they were happy to go out after class. In contrast, in Germany, it takes us a long time to make friends our conversation is formal it's unusual in the first meeting to socialise after….. The other cultures were warmer, and I found it harder to mix with the warmer cultures like Spanish, Indian, and American culture; however, as a result of participating in MCGW, it became easier. The Russian and Swedish were easier as they were bit colder, I guess like us".* She went on to say how her behaviour changed*. "I had to start to change my behaviour to mix in, and I started to think about what others felt and tried to include them."*

She then explained how MCGW had changed her approach and made her become more open to other cultures' views and see her limitations.

> "*I always took leadership, but this was mainly for planning someone else always had to lead on the emotional side, I always used to think I was right in all matters but having participated in MCGW I found that even if they were a different culture like Malaysian, they would have some good ideas and mine were not so good on reflection*."

She then stated how she had changed her behaviour to avoid conflict. She talked about one particular instance that caused her to understand cultures better, reflect on her behaviour and change her attitude

> "*There was a South African girl in my group, and she was so laid back and unorganised, it frustrated me a lot …. the old German in me thought, why wasn't she*

goal-oriented? She was always late and didn't complete the task on schedule… so I pushed her a bit, I told her I was expecting her to do things on time and she took it the wrong way she called me racist, and I thought that's not good considering our German history, so I started to behave. Differently, I tried to make conversation with her and get to know her. I gave her the group-work task but didn't interfere I let her get on with it I didn't keep checking on her. Ah, well, she did things last minute not in a structured, organised approach but now I appreciate she did do the work; it wasn't the best learning approach for me, but it helped me to change how I thought about other cultures and appreciated there are different ways to work. But it's important to know that I would have pushed anyone to plan and structure their work. It wasn't because of her skin colour".

Having clarified she was not biassed towards or against any culture or race, she went on to say that she felt a little disillusioned and felt judged, her behaviour was not due to any form of prejudice but was simply because of her cultural, behavioural upbringing, focusing on the importance of planning and being organised. At the same time, her thinking had changed to appreciate other cultures that worked at a different pace but got the work done on time. She commented on how beneficial MCGW had been for her

" *I won't behave like this again. I learned why other cultures behave differently, and this is the most significant benefit, I changed my personality to understand cultures better. I think MCGW has been very beneficial for me; it's opened my mind and allowed me to interact better with different cultures, understand their behaviour and thinking. I know why they act as they do… I wonder why did I make such a 'big drama,' next time I am with different cultures I won't behave like this I have a better understanding of cultural behaviours and their expectations".* She explained the MCGW process shaped her thinking and knowledge of other cultures in other ways,

"I learned about their food, way of life, behaviour, expectations …. But I also appreciate I grew up in an environment where I have freedom, and other cultures don't".

Here she was referring to her upbringing in that her parents allowed her to voice her opinions. In contrast, the other cultures she had interacted with, she said, appeared to make decisions under parental influence and authority.

4.11.2 Chinese student

Whereas the German culture emphasised planning and organisation and independent thinking, a very different way of thinking was presented by the Chinese culture. The next section will discuss the Chinese student's understanding of her cultural norms and upbringing, and this will be followed by a discussion of her experiences in MCGW. In the interview with the Chinese student, she emphasised the importance of appearances, being obedient, and the importance of showing respect to all group members within MCGW. The Chinese student explained that in the Chinese culture, it is imperative not to 'lose face' during MCGW. She stressed the importance by demonstrating the extent to which the culture would go in order not to lose face by saying,

"*Chinese people will fight to pay for a meal if they don't have money they will still pay otherwise they lose face with other people; even if they have just 100 pounds in the bank account and the meal costs 100 pounds they will pay – they won't lose face… they worry about what other people think, pretence is important, it's very important in a group setting when you are socialising*".

She smiled and laughed, she joked about it. Later she became serious and talked about the culture is very authoritarian. She explained how her upbringing had instilled the importance of obeying authority and being fearful of crossing lines. She commented,

"*The child can't question the parents' decisions, if they don't listen, the parents can hit the child, and I have had painful encounters, but I learnt my lesson and didn't repeat my behaviour, we know our barriers, and we cannot cross them*."

She said that despite the culture being strict and having certain expectations of behaviour, it is very caring. She explained the grandparents look after the children, so strong family bonds were made in early childhood. She commented that there is a cultural expectation that when the children grow up, they will look after their elderly parents. The children are expected to care for them financially and to live with them. She said there is an expectation of loyalty to the family and to the society you reside in. This is instilled in them from birth; the bonds of loyalty she claimed had become particularly strong as they had a one-child policy in China. Their culture also emphasised the importance of respect towards parents, teachers, and when socialising with others. She explained that for her culture, to show respect is to speak carefully and be restrained when speaking with someone you consider in a position of authority, such as an older person or a group leader. For her culture, showing respect also meant accepting their decision without question. She explained cultures which follow these 'guidelines' are much easier to get on with than those cultures who speak their mind with freedom. She acknowledged a lack of understanding of other cultures' expectations could cause misunderstandings, she said.

"*If you are from the same culture, you know the way to say things, how to behave, what is expected, and so there are no misunderstandings, but if you don't know their culture, you get misunderstandings*."

She then discussed the benefits of working in MCGW by saying that,

"*You can learn different ways of thinking. Chinese people's thinking is always the same; it's similar"*.

4.11.3 English student

The attention now turns to a markedly different culture and process of thinking, which is of the English culture. This section will start with a discussion on the English student's perception of his cultural norms and expectations, and this will be followed with a discussion on his experiences in MCGW. The English student explained that the English culture is stiff 'upper lip' by that he implied they have certain expectations of behaviour, he claimed, "*It's not acceptable to be late*." He emphasised the word 'acceptable,' it appeared that it was repugnant for someone to be late. He said that the English are polite. He continued saying that the English culture was friendly and that people liked to go out, which he found was not the case with other cultures. He explained that the English family unit is not secure compared to different cultures he had experienced, expressing that in England, the family is often composed of parents who are separated. For him, like many other English students he knows, they are not close with one parent. He explained his childhood experiences had taught him that loyalty was not a certainty, he says,

> "*I don't think blood is stronger than water…water can turn into the blood through trust and getting to know someone and vice versa*."

This was a very different way of thinking from that of the Chinese, Malaysian, Ghanaian and Kenyan cultures who were inclined to be loyal to their family, and their society. He explained,

> "*His generation goes against social norms, and we don't think like previous generations*."

He explained his ability to think independently provided him with confidence to take leadership roles in MCGW. He told his culture expected individuals to have integrity, and this quality of integrity was admired by other cultures in his group-work activities. He elaborated by saying different cultures would confide in him,

"*In the English culture, personal issues are kept quiet, and when someone tells you something private, you can't tell others*."

He spoke at length about the Chinese culture as he had experienced it in MCGW and also because he had worked in China for a year. Surprisingly, he had two perspectives of the same culture, which were contradictory. Within MCGW he expressed he found the Chinese culture quiet they did not engage and considered that,

"*Maybe they were lazy*,"

yet at the same time when he spoke about his experiences of working in China he claimed,

"*The Chinese culture was the most hardworking, open-minded and friendly people he had met; they put other people's needs and that of his, before their own….they have hearts of gold and did us proud with their work…. They would start at 9 am and work until 11 pm constantly working hard*".

He gave his account as to why there were differences in how the two cultures plan in MCGW by saying,

"*The English are spontaneous than the Chinese culture we don't need to plan, but in China, they don't have facilities, so they need to plan and evaluate repercussions to deal with the situation*."

He explained that,

"*The Chinese have a lot of respect for westerners, even though they were five years older than me, they showed me a lot of respect because I was white and British*."

He also said that the Chinese respected everyone, and this was an essential value system for them.

"*There is a lot of respect between men and women."*

4.1.3 Malaysian student

Finally, I would like to bring to attention the insights I obtained into the Malaysian culture. This section starts with a discussion on the Malaysian student's perspective of her cultural norms and upbringing, and it is then followed with a focus on her experiences within MCGW. The interview with the Malaysian girl had many similarities with that of the Chinese culture, in terms of their value systems. Close parallels exist between the two cultures as they both consider it necessary to show respect for the elderly, their parents and teachers, and all in positions of authority. Like the Chinese culture, she explained her culture refrained from speaking their mind. She considered her culture was strict and emphasised respect for tradition. There were some differences between her culture and that of other cultures; She said that the Malaysian culture segregated male and female. She had to adjust to the UK co-education system. A significant difference was that the teaching and learning processes in the UK were profoundly different from what she was used to. She claimed they did not have independent study; they were provided with one book to refer to, and the teaching was teacher-led. In contrast, she considered the UK system placed a lot of emphasis on the student being independent learners and using their initiative. This difference presented by the UK teaching system resulted in her experiencing transition difficulties when having to adapt to the teaching and assessment structures, she elaborated by saying,

> "*When students new to the country come it`s not easy for them to work in groups, it's a new way of learning and English is not their first language, therefore, establishing yourself in a group is a slow process, misunderstandings occur easily with different cultures as we don't understand each other's expectation…. My culture tends to show respect by listening more, and then when they have stopped talking, we present our opinions, British culture speak fast, understand quicker, I have to take time to translate in my mind*".

She commented on the fact that the English students were impatient and did not take the time to listen to the opinions on non-English students. She continued that the English students did not appear to trust the international students' views and so she felt left out of the group, alone and reluctant to contribute, as she said,

> "*I have to translate in my head, and the accents make it harder, and I know they will get frustrated if I contribute late to the discussion ….. In MCGW the time is short, I wanted to contribute but couldn't as I am too slow to translate and many voices talk at the same time".*

Despite her challenges, she said that she considered studying abroad, travelling and by participating in MCGW, she had developed confidence and had become decisive. As she explained by saying,

> "*At home, I cared about what others thought, and my mood used to change, but I noticed in the west people make their own decisions so I copied them and started to make my own decisions, but when I go home I revert to the cultural expectations of behaviour expected in our culture to show respect."*

She said that her experiences in MCGW has allowed her to,

> *"Speak up more; I have developed confidence, others listen to me, so I get motivated to learn."*

This now concludes the presentation of the interview findings. The next section presents the focus group findings, which sought to elicit information on how to make the MCGW process more beneficial.

4.12 Focus Group Findings

A series of four focus groups were conducted to address the main research question 2 and the sub-RQ 4:

Main Research Question 2) What are the key factors that need to be included in a pluralistic model for MCGW? (sub-RQ 3,4).

Sub RQ (4) What approaches and key factors can bring awareness to cultural diversity and maximise the benefits of MCGW?

The findings of the four focus groups conducted are presented in Table 4.5. In Table 4.5, the student quotes are shown in column two, and the main suggestion made by the comment is summarised in column one. The findings generated exciting ideas. There were discussions about how groups are formed. The students said they preferred to formulate groups with students from similar cultures; however, at the same time, they also acknowledged that this stopped them from mixing with other cultures and developing their intercultural skills. Some suggestions setting targets helped students to motivate themselves and gave them something to work towards. They also suggested that the lecturer could formulate groups composed of different cultures. Some students who came from different education systems made comments that they would like the assessments to reflect their cultural backgrounds. They claimed they were not familiar with group-work, and their learning was conducted individually. They also said the assessment could be designed in line with the assessment formats they were accustomed to. They claimed they experienced many transition issues and had to adjust to the English culture, that having assessments they were familiar with might have reduced the number of adaptions they had to make. They indicated that intercultural skills were best learned in multicultural work environments, and lecturers might consider having internships or placement opportunities that assessed their abilities to integrate with the local culture. Students identified the fact that they wanted to share information about their culture, their values, their cultural expectations, equally they wanted to learn about their peers' cultures. They considered the learning environment focussed on setting the assessment and working on it and little if any time was spent in familiarising themselves with their peers' cultural

expectations. They suggested the lecturer could have bonding activities before the assessments started. There were discussions on how technologies could help students meet outside of university time and suggestions that virtual meetings could be scheduled in as part of the group meetings. Interesting proposals were made regarding how to build trust between cultures. They suggested creating a dedicated module on intercultural behaviour and integration. This would involve developing teaching strategies that submerged the student into other cultures, using case studies written by different cultures, voicing their cultural thought processes, having activities to teach them to become 'global citizens,' to be able to appreciate other cultures' values and see their perspectives. One way they recommended aiding understanding of cultures was to create scenarios of situations occurring in different countries and for them to learn about the other cultures' expectations of behaviour and then to design a solution based on the other cultures' behavioural expectations. To fully immerse themselves into other cultures they suggested creating courses where students had to go to different countries to study as part of their degree. They discussed developing a 'contract for respect' of other cultures and values. They suggested the lecturer could actively create an environment that supported all cultures, by firstly discussing what respect was, how different cultures perceived what was respectable and acceptable, and what it would mean to lose face for some cultures. They suggested the students could create group contracts which identified what acceptable behaviour towards all cultures was and that students needed to become self-aware, so they were conscious of how their behaviour impacted other cultures. They suggested it was essential to know who they were first before they could relate to different cultures

The primary suggestions for improving the MCGW process were: create a multicultural environment, vary activities according to the cultures being taught, design courses with industry as co-partners, have bonding activities to build trust between the different cultures

from the start of the MCGW and, set up virtual spaces for collaboration. Another suggestion was to design courses that developed the students' cultural awareness and skills to integrate, communicate and debate with other cultures,

Table 4.5: Focus Group Findings

Summary of the focus group comment **Column one**	**Student Quote from the Focus groups** **Column two**
FG1) Create a multicultural environment that has a balance of different cultures – no one culture dominates the group	"Individual experience matters - if the group members are half white group and half Indian or mix of Chinese, then cultures won't stick together. For us Asians, we are not familiar with working in groups, so it's hard to adapt to different cultures. Therefore, it's important the lecturer creates balanced multicultural groups rather than let the students select their group as they will only stay in their cultural groups."
FG2) Set interim targets for group work	"Set targets for group work; you can set them each week. At work, I noticed all cultures integrate much better than at university because we have targets to meet, and we are eager to meet the targets we are forced to integrate to reach our goals".
FG3) Vary activities so that they are appropriate for the different cultures	"We are from moderate traditional cultures – lecturers need to try to design activities they are familiar with our cultures so we can relate to them as that helps us to feel more comfortable with group work. This is important as group work is a new way of learning for us. We have the hurdle of working with new cultures – which I enjoy as I am exposed to different kinds of people and so gain new experiences – but at the same time we need to adapt to this way of learning, we are not used to group work learning, we come from exam based environments. If the assessment is set within the English culture we also have to learn about the English culture and become familiar with that before attempting the assessment task. Thus we have two hurdles.".
FG4) Design courses so students work within the industry early on in their direction.	"Maybe have students go into industry earlier, in their placements, so they learn about different cultures from within the workplace. At work you have to work in teams and mix with new cultures, this is a perfect experience. You get to know about their culture, and you get to understand them …. But the advantage you have in work is that you have the time to get to know new cultures; understand their behaviour in a relaxed environment, whereas in MCGW it is stressful as your grades depend on the group work activity and your focus is on getting the best grade not on understanding the behaviours of other cultures, which can lead to conflict as you don't understand them".
FG5) Bonding before MCGW	"We are asked to work in groups I have no idea how to arrange meetings with new people you need time to get to know people,

	it's hard to get to know people in a short time. Maybe lectures can try to mix the students and ask them to introduce each other – this way, we get to know who is from where - you will also get a chance to speak to them. Maybe the lecturer can ask them to present their culture, their values, their expectations within society – this way; you learn how to address different cultures. Then get the class to discuss behavioural expectations. A couple of days should be spent in bonding – may be inductions, lecturers can create fun activities such as treasure hunt, or have an activity to say something good about our cultures, so we build confidence with our own identities. Also, the module can have field trips at the beginning of the course, where we are encouraged to work with different cultures on different activities. This would help build confidence and encourage cultures to talk".
FG6) Set up Virtual meeting spaces Peer feedback opportunities	"It's difficult to meet when we all have different schedules, commitments, and perhaps lecturers can set up virtual meeting spaces on SKYPE so we can see each other and share our documents." "In my training at work, we have to provide feedback. The power of feedback is incredible. I went on a training course for managers, and we were all stood in line, and we had to say what I did best and what I could improve. It was like a reflection process, it worked very well, and I felt confident. May be within the MCGW process, the lecturer can set up peer feedback sessions".
FG7) Build trust and ethical dimensions	"You have to learn to trust the unknown, create a module on international behaviour in business. This way, we learn the academic elements of other cultures. If we read case studies on different cultures behaviour, work practices, we have trust …. if it's supported by academic sources. Teach them skill-set on how to be a global citizen, how to appreciate other cultures, their values, what is acceptable and not acceptable behaviour in MCGW. Create scenarios of situations occurring in different countries and ask the students how they would behave in this situation – so, in essence, the scenario places them in a foreign country and then ask them to conduct academic research on how to behave, in say, the Middle East. They can do role play to make it interesting, but also you get to reflect on how we would behave. You can have cultural fairs and food fairs to learn about the cultures".
FG8) Design courses with a full year of study in a different country.	"You can only learn culture if you immerse them in a different country. Practical experience is more relevant than being taught culture in a class. Get students out studying in different situations so they can learn about the culture - doing is better than sitting and studying – being immersed in a different culture, having to integrate with them, seeing and observing helps us to understand family and social life."
FG9) Explain social obligations and norms for different cultures.	"Create an environment that supports all cultures – explain the concept of respect according to the customs, losing face, etc.

Toolset for cultural awareness and learning multicultural skills. Create a contract for 'respect' and the rules associated with 'respect' and an Ethical dimension	then get the class to draft norms – what is acceptable and not acceptable in the MCGW environment. Then they must sign up for a duty to contribute and share. What is essential is students must do exercises on self-awareness. Have courses or modules that teach students how to integrate, communicate, and debate with different cultures. The module needs to show them who they are - They need to know who they are first before they can relate to other cultures and then learn about different cultures.

4.13 Summary of Findings

The findings for sub-RQ (1) Main research question:

Main Research Question 1) To what extent are group behaviour and attitudes within MCGW related to cultural expectations? (sub RQ1,2).
Main Research Question 2) What are the key factors that need to be included in a pluralistic model for MCGW? (sub-RQ 3,4).

Sub Research Questions	**Findings**
Sub RQ (1) What are the students' cultural attitudes and behaviours?	This study found the expectations of the collectivist culture were firmly based on their value system, of care for the elderly and societies in which they live. On respect for authority and the elderly, this also included restraining from voicing opinions. They have strong ties of loyalty to family and traditions. This study found the perceived individualistic cultures were assertive, confident to voice their ideas and debate provide critique in MCGW. They avoid uncertainty, prefer low power societies. They were also familiar with the teaching and assessment strategies.
Sub RQ (2) What are the students' perceptions and experiences of other cultures within MCGW?	This study found the collectivist cultures' perceptions of perceived individualistic cultures were: they are arrogant, impatient, distant, intolerant, assertive, organised, had good leadership skills, confident, able to articulate arguments well, decisive, knowledgeable. This study found the perceived individualistic culture's perceptions of the collectivist cultures were: quiet, respectful, tolerant, approachable, unengaged, followers, not leaders, don't provide critical views, or present challenges in MCGW. Are not confident
Sub RQ (3) What are the challenges and benefits of participating in MCGW?	This study found the perceived collectivist cultures were presented with more challenges than the perceived individualistic cultures. What was revealed was despite the multiple challenges presented within MCGW, the potential benefits in developing understandings of other

	cultures, improvement in their learning, the enhanced perspectives and confidence-building outweighed the problems that were presented
Sub RQ (4) What approaches and key factors can bring awareness to cultural diversity and maximise the benefits of MCGW?	The focus group findings presented several ways in which MCGW process can be improved: Vary activities so that they are appropriate for the different cultures Prepare activities or toolset that allow students better to understand their learning and that of others and allow for bonding activities to take place between cultures Explain social obligations and norms for different cultures. Toolset to develop intercultural skills and how to understand their own culture and then become aware of other cultures' expectations and norms.

The findings brought insight into the myriad of ways different cultures think and behave because of their values and societal upbringing, which subsequently influenced their behaviours within MCGW. The findings highlighted how the gaps in the students` knowledge regarding cultural expectations caused misunderstandings

. The discussion chapter draws on these findings to develop a conceptual model, which may help lecturers to improve the MCGW process.

Chapter 5: Discussion Chapter

5 Overview of the chapter

This chapter discusses the data presented in the findings chapter. The chapter starts with a discussion identifying a gap in knowledge within the literature regarding the cultural dynamics within MCGW. The chapter then systematically examines the data relating to each research question, starting with a discussion on the student's inherent cultural attributes, and their expectations of behaviour addressing sub-RQ (1). This is followed by attempts to interpret the cultural patterns in behaviours that emerged within MCGW addressing Sub-RQ (2). It later discusses the students' perceptions of other cultures who participated in MCGW and the challenges that arose. It then attempts to provide meaning as to why these challenges arose, based on the students' accounts of their cultural expectations addressing Sub-RQ (3). This is followed by a discussion extracting insights from the findings into how gaps in students' knowledge of other cultures' expectations of behaviour and value-systems can lead to misunderstandings within MCGW. The chapter then discusses the benefits of participating in MCGW. Finally, a conceptual model is detailed, which may provide some insights for lecturers who may wish to maximise the benefits of MCGW. The research questions are presented in Table 5.1. The next section provides a systematic discussion addressing the research questions.

Main research questions
Main Research Question 1) To what extent are group behaviour and attitudes within MCGW related to cultural expectations? (sub RQ1,2).
Main Research Question 2) What are the key factors that need to be included in a pluralistic model for MCGW? (sub RQ 3,4).

Sub Research Questions
Sub RQ (1) What are the students' cultural attitudes and behaviours?
Sub RQ (2) What are the student's perceptions and experiences of other cultures within MCGW?
Sub RQ (3) What are the challenges and benefits of participating in MCGW?
Sub RQ (4) What approaches and key factors can bring awareness to cultural diversity and maximise the benefits of MCGW?

Figure 5.1: The main research questions and the sub research questions

5.1 Introduction

Existing studies have indicated that laying early foundations of identity and behavioural expectations through cultural and societal norms penetrate throughout adult life (Bruen, 2014; Hofstede 2004; House 2002; Popov et al., 2012; Watson, BarNir, & Pavur, 2005; West, Fleming, & Finnegan, 2013). However, as the first chapter identified, there is a gap in knowledge as to how the cultural dynamics that exist within MCGW are influenced by the students' cultural behaviour (Sweeney et al*.,* 2008; Volet, 2001). This study's findings shed some light on how culture impacts students' perceptions, expectations, and behaviour within MCGW. This chapter attempts to provide some more in-depth insights into what they are. The discussion chapter also strives to provide some deeper meanings to the underlining reasons for students' behaviour within MCGW and why challenges arose. The research identified that there are benefits in MCGW (De Vita, 2000; Popov, 2012; Stahl et al. 2010a; Summers and Volet, 2008). However, this study identified the fact that the benefits of participating in MCGW outweigh the challenges, and the focus group provided some identifications as to how these benefits can be capitalised. This section will attempt to give more meaning to the benefits

specified and use the findings of the study to determine a conceptual framework that may help to quantify the dimensions needed to be established within multicultural group-work.

5.3 Discussion on Sub-RQ1

From this study, it was clear that the students' attitudes and expectations of behaviour within MCGW were informed by their culture (see Figure 5.2). Table 4.1 in the Findings chapter identifies the cultures that had similar cultural attributes and expectations of behaviour. Where they had similar cultures, the findings demonstrated that they had a better understanding of each other's behaviour and that this resulted in fewer misinterpretations. This was observed when the Chinese student commented,

"*If you are from the same culture, you know the way to say things, how to behave, what is expected, and so there are no misunderstandings, but if you don't know their culture, you get misunderstandings*."

The study found that, in many instances, the cultures did not understand each other's expectations. This may be due to the perceived collectivist cultures bringing very different cultural attitudes and expectations of behaviour to MCGW from those of the perceived individualist cultures. These differences in cultural attitudes and expectations, between the collectivist and individual cultures, may provide some explanation as to why there are tensions within MCGW. These tensions are uncovered in more detail in the next section

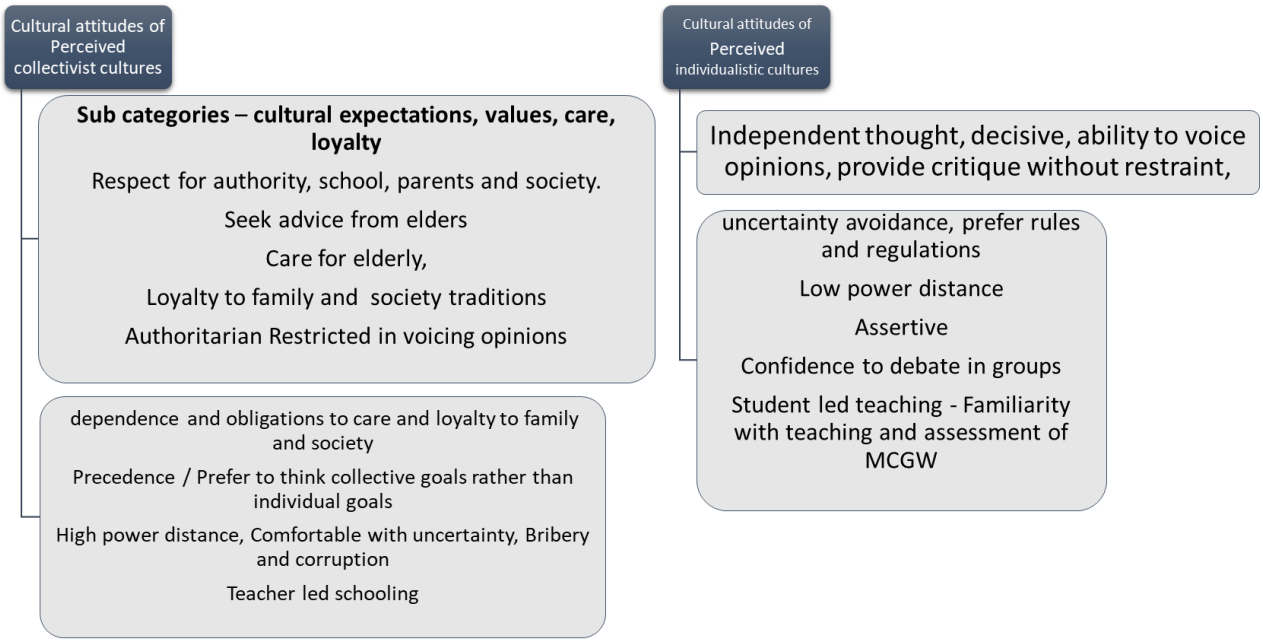

Figure 5.2: Addresses Sub RQ (1) What are the students' cultural attitudes and behaviours? This figure summarises the findings from the structured interview and semi-structured interview studies conducted to address sub-category cultural expectations, values, care and loyalty for the perceived collectivist cultures and the perceived individualistic cultures.

5.3.1 The Perceived Collectivist cultures

One key difference in attitudes between the perceived collectivist and perceived individualist cultures that emerged from the interviews was that the perceived individualistic cultures considered decisions could be made independently from family members or people with authority. This was seen when the German student said she would listen to her parents but make her decisions independently, often contrary to their advice. However, the study identified that the collectivist culture placed far greater importance on upholding the values of respect for tradition and obedience towards authority and their parents than the perceived individualist culture. This impacted their behaviour when making decisions. The interview findings revealed that for the collectivist cultures upholding their value-systems of showing

respect for family, tradition, and social obligations were closely intertwined and subsequently influenced their decision making and appetite to think independently. The reasoning behind their thought process is fascinating. Their interpretation of 'tradition' is different from the modernist perspective, which is based on observing customs. The collectivist cultures interpreted the word 'tradition' as transferring knowledge, experience, and wisdom from the older generation. Their value-system, of seeking guidance from elderly members of society when making decisions, was extremely important. This was done primarily as a form of respect and essential because they considered their leadership would prevent them from making mistakes. However, despite the positive aspect of receiving guidance from elders, that of building their confidence to make decisions, it did have the disadvantage, according to the Malaysian student, that by deferring their decisions to parents or teachers, the collectivist culture had less of an opportunity to develop their independent thinking than the perceived individualist culture.

Another interesting observation made by this study was that the collectivist cultures had a strong desire to abide by the authority. The literature has made some references to the collectivist culture having a preference for considerable power distant societies, and so this is not new in itself (Hofstede 2004; Sweeney et al. 2008; Watson, BarNir, & Pavur, (2005). However, this study's findings have provided a more in-depth insight into the reasons behind this. In the interviews I conducted with the collectivist cultures, the Chinese, Kenyan, Ghanaian, and Malaysian students expressed a reluctance to challenge authority and did not seek to pose critical arguments. We can get an insight as to why this is so, from the Chinese student's interview, where she explained that challenging authority is disrespectful but also had the consequence of punishment. The interview findings revealed that being obedient was ingrained from childhood. This was observed when the Malaysian student cited that parents are strict in her culture. She explained that their parents and society set firm expectations

deeply rooted in traditional values and that children are taught early on that the rules established by authoritarian figures must be adhered to. The analysis of data for this study uncovered the fact that the long-term impact of family and societal expectations did subsequently appear to shape the students' behaviour. These students did not challenge the authority of the team leader or give conflicting arguments when working within MCGW. This would appear to be a reflection of the collectivist cultures' social norm of showing respect towards their fellow team members and group leaders. This may seem unusual to students from perceived individualistic cultures. However, the perceived collectivist cultures value systems were, it appeared, deeply rooted in their perspective of human rights, which they interpreted as everyone has the right to be respected, by not being undermined, in the presence of others. This line of thinking meant that presenting challenging or opposing arguments in front of other group members was seen as undermining that group member resulting in the 'losing face.' The challenge then for future educators is how to teach the skills of critical debate and posing counter-arguments without upsetting the balance of respecting the collectivist cultures' traditional values. There may be other reasons for not presenting counter-arguments. It could be argued that the collectivist cultures' childhood experiences of being punished in society and by family when posing critical arguments or challenging authority, may have rendered them unwilling to produce critical evaluations to group members within MCGW discussions. In contrast to the individualist cultures, presenting counter-arguments, and being assertive within MCGW, is considered an essential element of achieving a solution to a problem and is encouraged in societies where independent thinking appears to be part of their upbringing.

5.3.2 The Perceived Individualist cultures

There were some nuances or particular differences in expectations of behaviour between the perceived collectivist cultures and perceived individualist cultures, about planning, organising, and setting rules for group-work that influenced the dynamics of MCGW. The group of students from Scotland, England, and Germany were categorised by this study's structured interview's questionnaire as being of the perceived individualistic culture. This study identified that these perceived individualist cultures found it essential to conduct the MCGW process in an orderly manner. The group work process can be considered an unstructured assignment or activity, in that the students are given the assignment brief, as in the case of university X, and are then left to plan and organise their own group's development towards a solution for the problem brief, independent of the lecturer (Spencer-Oatey, 2012; Summer and Volet, 2008). This study brings new knowledge from its findings. It identified that perceived individualist cultures need governance, rules, and regulations to be established within MCGW. They did this in order to avoid uncertainty and minimise risk. To achieve order, they created rules, which they expected the group to adhere to and mapped out planned milestones. The need for rules and regulations was identified in the German student's interview when she laid emphasis on the importance of what she termed as 'having structure' within MCGW and the need to plan and have set deadlines. She referred back to her upbringing, saying her parents and the society she grew up in had taught her the importance of planning and adhering to deadlines. While rules and regulations provided the perceived individualist culture certainty to a degree, the emphasis on adhering to a timeline frustrated the collectivist cultures. The Kenyan student from the collectivist culture said that their culture did not seek to set rules for MCGW, and they were comfortable with the flow of unplanned or dynamic progression within MCGW. The Kenyan student also indicated that he came from a corrupt society, where rules were expected to be broken, and therefore not adhering to deadlines was acceptable. The

differences in expectations caused tensions within MCGW, and many times the German and English students expressed vividly, during their interviews, their annoyance as they considered projects ran the risk of not being completed because the other cultures did not keep to timeframes.

5.4 Discussion on sub-RQ2

Sub-RQ2 (What are the student's perceptions and experiences of other cultures within MCGW?) attempted to uncover the students' perceptions of different cultures. This was done to bring a better understanding in order to establish if a gap in knowledge of other cultures' expectations had any bearing on the challenges experienced within MCGW. Interestingly, the collectivist cultures and individualist cultures both had similar perceptions of each other's cultures, from their experiences in MCGW. The perceived collectivist cultures considered the perceived individualist cultures as arrogant and impatient but regarded them as good leaders. The Kenyan, Malaysian, Ghanaian, and Chinese all mentioned that they felt the English and European were impatient with them during the group meetings. They considered them distant and challenging to approach and said they felt the English and German cultures were intolerant of them. They felt their impatience made it difficult for them to make suggestions during the group meetings. Given these accounts, it is unclear as to why the perceived collectivist cultures referred to the perceived individualist cultures as good leaders, as it appears, they had difficulty in communicating with the leaders. They admired the English for their assertiveness; they thought the English and German cultures were decisive and confident and considered them as good organisers. The collectivist cultures were in admiration of the English, Scottish and German cultures' ability to articulate their thoughts. They commented that they were capable of formulating compelling arguments due to their command of the English language. However, given these accounts, it may be questionable whether the

students were confident and competent communicators because of their cultural upbringing, or if it was because they were studying in an environment they were familiar with. From these accounts, it appears command of the language may give rise to confidence in the development of arguments. A topic that may be worth exploring in future research is whether the collectivist cultures were equally capable of formulating compelling arguments in their language and in their familiar country. An important issue to raise is the lack of language skills, and this may be a good indicator as to why the perceived individualist cultures felt the collectivist cultures were less confident. This was demonstrated in this study when the Malaysian student said she found language was a barrier for her when trying to formulate and articulate counter-arguments.

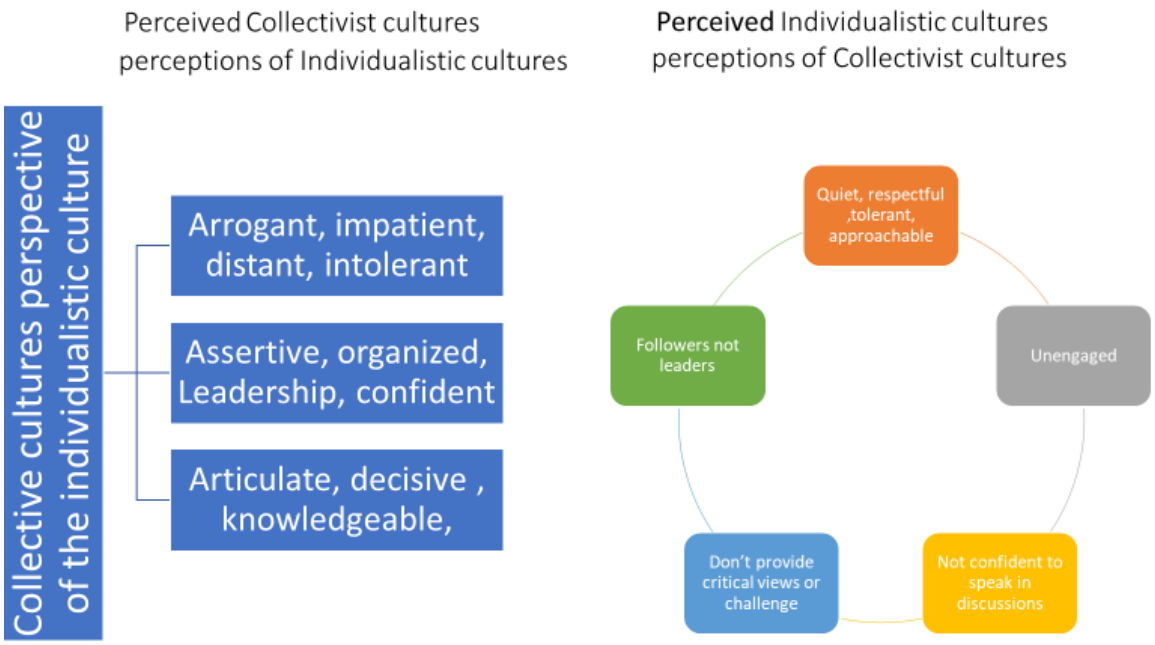

Figure 5.3: Findings for Sub RQ (2) What are the student's perceptions and experiences of other cultures within MCGW? The diagram summaries the findings of this study. The blue section identifies the perceived collectivist cultures perceptions of the perceived individualistic

culture's participation within MCGW. The section on the right of the diagram summarises the individualistic cultures perceptions of the collectivist cultures.

As can be seen from Figure 5. 3, the perceived individualistic cultures commented that the group work experience was made pleasant as the collectivist cultures were approachable and respectful, much more than they. However, the perceived individualist cultures considered the perceived collectivist cultures as unengaged and that they lacked confidence. They came across as very frustrated with the collectivist culture and were not as complimentary as the collectivist cultures were about them. It can be argued that the perceived individualistic cultural norms allowed them to voice their critical opinions, which the perceived collectivist cultures appeared hesitant to do. One of their significant frustrations that the English, and mainly the Scottish culture commented on, was how quiet the Chinese and Korean cultures were. They claimed the collectivist cultures did not demonstrate their ability to plan, organise, debate, negotiate, communicate confidently, and lacked independent learning skills and the ability to articulate ideas. This study has categorised these skillsets along with cultural awareness skills as the necessary key critical skills needed in MCGW. This was a common recurring observation made by the perceived individualist cultures and was seen as a significant obstacle to making progress in group discussions. In particular, during the interview with the English student, he showed his frustrations and appeared to be dismissive and impatient with the collectivist cultures. The Scottish student had shown such frustration that she considered it almost rude that the collectivist cultures were not participating in the discussions. The perceived individualist cultures had a far lower opinion of the collectivist cultures' abilities. The individualist students' experiences led them to believe that the collectivist cultures lacked confidence, and they felt that they were uncomfortable taking part in MCGW and were followers, not leaders. Although, understandably, the perceived individualist cultures may show frustrations arising from a lack of engagement by the

collectivist culture, from the collectivist cultures accounts, it is possible to deduce that one reason as to why they appeared disengaged may be due to collectivist culture feeling threatened. What they said in the interview indicated that they perceived the individualist cultures dismissive and arrogant and, as such, did not speak up in discussions.

Despite the energetic outbursts by the perceived individualist cultures, during the interview with the English culture, there was a change in the English student's perceptions of the Chinese culture. This change in perspective was exciting. Although he had surmised that the Chinese were not engaged within MCGW and were quiet, when he reflected on his one-year work experience in China, he spoke exceptionally positively about their culture, saying that the Chinese were very respectful, exceptionally hardworking. They were more confident and fluent in their environment and were capable of problem-solving and were good leaders. This was contrary to his previous claims. This observation by the English student provided an argument that people of the Chinese culture were capable of good leadership when they are in their home environment. This observation was in contrast to his previous account of the Chinese culture's attitude in MCGW. When probed further, as to why he had changed his perception during the interview he concluded that when he reflected on the time, he had spent living in China, he changed his view of the culture, he considered living in the country had brought better understandings and awareness of the Chinese culture. This he thought was not possible when he was simply engaging infrequently with them, during the MCGW process. What may be deduced is that understandings of a culture's behaviour and expectations appear to be improved when the student is immersed in the country's culture. However, it could also be argued that the English student, by being submerged into the Chinese culture in China, had developed a felt sense and as Moon's (2004) research had indicated, a 'felt sense' may have led to feelings of empathy towards the Chinese culture. It may also be the case that the student through the process of MCGW had progressed from the *denial stage* in the

ethnocentric stage of Bennett and Bennett's (2004) model, where he avoided other cultures and was reluctant to accept differences, as they appeared foreign to him, to the *ethnorelative* stage, where he was now willing to take that there were differences. Antal and Friedman (2008) identified this is like the state of integration whereby an individual could understand and reconcile differences or was in a position to '*seek cultural differences*' (Bennett & Bennett, 2004). It could be argued he was now in a state where he could recognise the importance of different cultures and was capable of adapting and appreciating different perspectives and could integrate fully.

5.5 Discussion on sub-RQ (3)

5.5.1 Discussion on sub-RQ (3) The challenges in MCGW

This section is divided into two parts. The first part brings deeper meanings to this study's findings in relation to the difficulties the students experienced in MCGW. The section that follows will discuss the benefits found in participating in MCGW.

Discussion on sub-RQ (3) The Challenges in MCGW

The following section addresses Sub RQ (3) What are the challenges and benefits in participating in MCGW?

There was no culture that did not experience challenges within the MCGW sessions. Problems encountered within group-work are discussed extensively in the literature (Popov et al., 2012; Rienties, 2013; Watson, BarNir, & Pavur, (2005). However, this study revealed that the challenges faced by the collectivist cultures were markedly different from those experienced by the perceived individualist cultures. This study also showed that collectivist cultures experienced more challenges than individualist cultures. Importantly, it was also found that the challenges experienced by the collectivist cultures were more complex than those experienced by the individualist cultures. The findings in Table 4.2, which identify the

challenges experienced within MCGW, indicate that the challenges fell into four broad areas: Transition Issues; Communication, Teaching and Learning Environment and Time Management. The primary challenges experienced by the collectivist cultures were concerns with transition issues, communication within MCGW, and the teaching and learning environment. In contrast, the perceived individualist cultures had two main concerns: that of being unable to manage project deadlines and experiencing communication challenges during the discussions held with the collectivist cultures.

One of the biggest challenges encountered by collectivist cultures is that of adjusting to the UK environment. This study revealed exciting insights that the collectivist cultures experienced challenges when settling into the external environment, which included: transitioning to the UK, communicating with group members, living in a different culture, speaking a different language, adjusting to climate variations, understanding the transport system, trying to interpret the English humour and cultural expectations. A significant factor was not having family or friends to turn to for help. They claim that, although not related directly to the MCGW task, all these challenges contributed collectively to their lack of confidence and performance within MCGW. Although university X did have some measures to help international students' transition, it appeared they did not address all their concerns with the transition. It may be deduced that it is essential for universities to evaluate the transition support they provide international students and see if they are adequate to deliver an enabling environment to help the transition process. A lack of appropriate support during the transition period appears to dent their confidence when participating and presenting themselves and in MCGW.

Aside from the adjustments to the external environment, the change to the teaching and learning environment and assessment strategy of MCGW appeared to be a significant hurdle. The literature has indicated that the mode of teaching for collectivist cultures tends to

be teacher-led, whereas the UK mode is student-led (Robbins & Fredendali, 2001; Schullery & Schullary, 2006). The Malaysian student, like the others from collectivist cultures, referred to the difficulties she had transitioning to the UK educational system, revealing that it contrasted significantly with her early childhood educational experiences. Their education system focused on recall in a surface approach to learning, where she claimed retention and reproduction of information was emphasised (Maher, 2004; Kim and Davies, 2014), rather than preparing their critical analysis skills, essential skills of evaluation and building concrete academic skills as is the case in university X, (Hubbard's, 2006; Ogbu, 1992; Sullivan, 2001; Watson, BarNir, & Pavur, (2005). What this study identified and is not discussed within the literature is that the collectivist cultures felt a culture shock when presented with the different assessment strategies the UK offered. The Malaysian, Kenyan, Korean and Chinese students said they thought they had to adapt quickly to the particularly challenging assessment strategies as group-work was a form of teaching and assessment strategy that they had not encountered before. This made them feel they had not had the opportunity to develop their full potential and, as such, were disadvantaged.

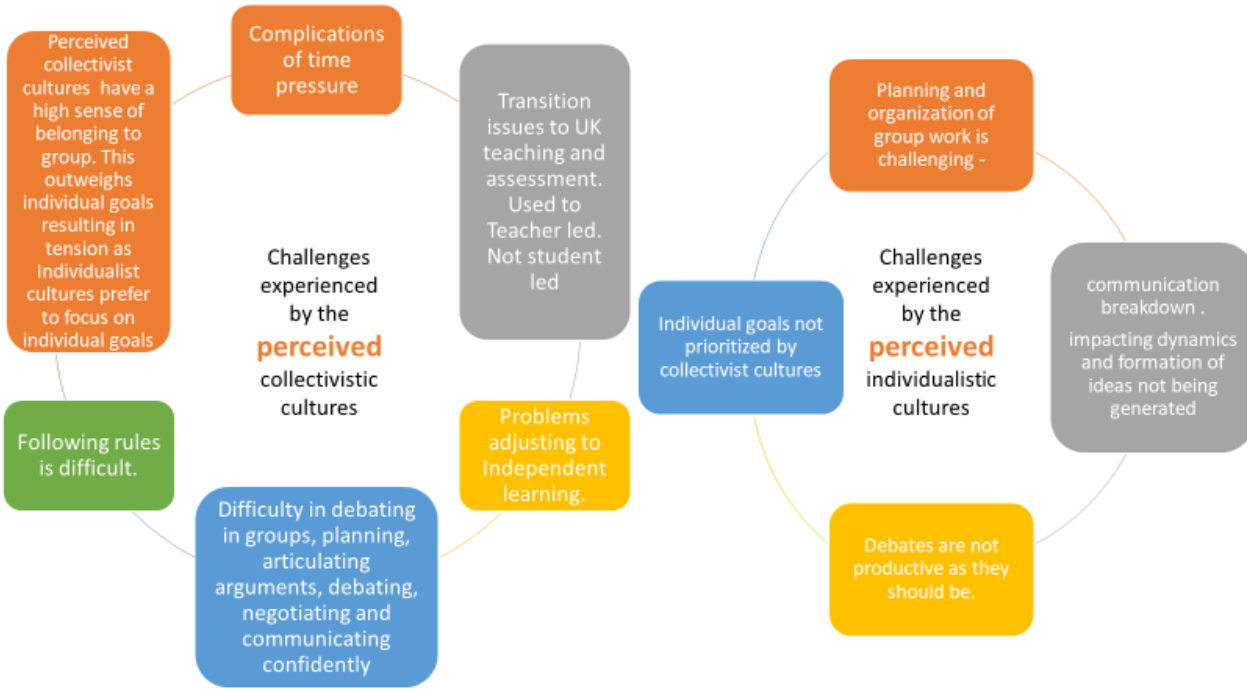

Figure 5. 4: Sub-RQ 3 What are the challenges and benefits of participating in MCGW? The diagram summarises the findings of this study, through student voices collected from the interviews, identifying the challenges experienced by the perceived collectivist culture (left) and the challenges experienced by the perceived individualistic cultures (right)

Figure 5.4 identifies a new understanding this study has brought to light. It noted that the collectivist students felt they did not have the necessary skillset for debating in the MCGW discussions. This study identified that their education system did not encourage or indeed permit the students to challenge the teachers using evoking discussions, which the Malaysian student perceived was the education stance the UK higher education adopted (Popov et al., 2012). They did not feel they were trained in putting forward challenging arguments, a skillset they indicated from their interviews that they lacked because their upbringing and educational

systems did not provide them with the opportunity to develop these skills. During the interviews, the Malaysian student reflected on how her schooling years had been devoid of group work, and the opportunities to develop the skillsets necessary for negotiating, debating complex issues within MCGW were limited or non-existent. The collectivist cultures claimed it took a long time for them to acquire these skills and refine them over time. They explained the lack of experience in these skillsets meant they lacked confidence in MCGW, and this impacted their ability to perform well during the MCGW discussions. From their accounts, it may be argued that there was a significant learning hurdle during the transition process for the collectivist cultures adjusting to the teaching and assessment approaches, which the individualist cultures did not have to experience.

Looking at the quantitative data presented in the findings chapter (see Tables 4. 4, depicting the abstraction process), it can be observed that the category schooling featured predominantly in the Malaysian and the Korean students' interviews. Both made nine references in their interviews with their schooling system differing from the UK system and the difficulties they had in transitioning to MCGW learning and assessment strategies. Conversely, the German student also made eight references to her schooling system in Germany. However, but all of them were related to how similar their teaching and learning and assessment strategies were to the UK system and how seamless it was for her to transition to the UK system. Reflecting on the factors the collectivist cultures experience, that of different teaching and assessment methods, a lack of belonging, not having the skillset to debate and formulate arguments, it is understandable that they lacked confidence. Being in an unfamiliar cultural environment meant they could not express the tensions this caused them, particularly as the perceived individualist cultures came across as impatient and frustrated, which they said contributed to them withdrawing in group discussions and appearing unengaged.

A new understanding this research brought to light is that the purpose of education appears to differ for the individualist and collectivist cultures. The differences in what was considered to be the purpose of education may have caused some tensions to arise when students participated in MCGW. The perceived individualist cultures' education systems appear to lay emphasis on identifying individual goals and rewards, stressing individual success, and encouraging competitiveness between individuals (Hofstede, 1994; House et al., 2002). The perceived individualist cultures' education systems focused on developing critical evaluation and research skills and the ability to study independently and in achieving individual goals. Whereas, for the collectivist cultures in this study, as sub-RQ (1) discussion mentioned above, their educational and societal systems appear to develop strong values of respect, tolerance, and empathy towards others. It may be possible to deduce that the collectivist cultures' upbringing created a 'sense of belonging' and loyalty towards the extended family and community members resulting in them prioritising collectivist goals rather than individual ones within MCGW. This emphasis on team cohesion and building relationships was an attempt to avoid open conflict as they considered it might negatively influence group cohesion. The importance the collectivist culture places on upholding values and showing loyalty towards family and authority stemmed from their upbringing. It can be evidenced by looking at the high tally of the frequency count of the codes associated with the sub-category 'values' and 'care' in Table 4.4 (see Table 4. 4, Depicting the abstraction process). From the interviews, it is possible to observe the strong emotional bonds of loyalty between family and society members who they live with, from the number of occurrences the word family was used in the interview for the Chinese and Malaysian cultures. For the Chinese and Malaysian cultures, the frequency of the word 'family' totaled to 13 and 15 in Table 4.4 (see Table 4. 4, Depicting the abstraction process). This figure was appreciably higher than any of the perceived individualistic cultures. The study concurred with the literature findings

that the perceived collectivist cultures lay emphasis on collective goals, and the perceived individualist cultures prioritise individual goals (Cronje, 2011; Triandis, 1994; Schullery & Schullery, 2006).

Thus, this study is deducing one of the reasons tensions arose within MCGW was due to the differences in goal prioritisation between the individualist and collectivist cultures. The collectivist cultures would go to extensive lengths to support their team members, placing aside their own individual goals. The consequence of the collectivist cultures' tendency to focus on group goals and be loyal to group members within MCGW, often meant they overlooked the shortcomings of other group members. This was made apparent in the Kenyan student's interview when the Kenyan student drew deeper understandings of their notion of loyalty by suggesting that the lateness of a group member could easily be forgiven, as it is important to maintain harmony between group members. This attitude frustrated the perceived individualist cultures, who preferred to focus on achieving individual goals, as was observed in the German and Scottish students' interview, where they would have preferred to sanction the deviant group member. From the individualistic cultures' accounts, the German, Scottish, and English cultures did not feel allegiance to the group members and did not seek a sense of belonging. They preferred working in isolation and opted to be focused on the task rather than building relationships (Hofstede, 1994). This study proposes that the individualist cultures may have had a lesser need for a sense of belonging due to their cultural upbringing. However, it may also be due to them having family and friends within the country, and so they did not yearn for a sense of attachment to group members. However, from the interviews with the collectivist cultures, it appeared they struggled with teams that were not in harmony and which lacked a sense of belonging to a group. The collectivist cultures felt that dysfunctional teamwork was a result of the perceived individualist cultures' desire to focus on their own individual goals at the expense of the team members. Tensions arose as the perceived

collectivist cultures felt that what they considered ‘extensive individualism’ weakened the team, impacting its cohesiveness.

This study may be able to provide an insight into why there was also a difference in how the perceived individualistic and the collectivist cultures viewed loyalty. From Table 4.4 in the findings chapter, it can be observed that the English student made six references to loyalty in his interview, this was more references than the other cultures. However, the English student did not consider being loyal to a team member in the same way as the collectivist cultures, whereas for the collectivist cultures, loyalty was a duty, expected and necessary for harmony to the cohesiveness of a group. For the English student, loyalty had to be earned, and so he did not feel loyalty to group members in the same way as the collectivist did,

> “*I don’t think blood is stronger than water…water can turn into the blood through trust and getting to know someone and vice versa*.”

The perceived individualist cultures had challenges, but these appeared to be of a lesser degree. Their primary concerns stemmed from what they perceived was a lack of confidence in the collectivist cultures to take leadership roles and debate within MCGW. A significant frustration as identified when addressing sub-RQ (2) was that they found the collectivist cultures were unable to generate new ideas and contribute to critical debates during their meetings. The collectivist cultures were aware of this criticism towards them, and in the interviews, they explained as to why they felt the perceived individualist cultures were frustrated with them. The collectivist cultures said that the speed and freedom with which the English interpreted the requirements of the assignment and expressed their solutions was alarming. The Malaysian girl explained that it was not that they were incapable of proposing new ideas. Instead, she needed time to translate the English dialogue taking place within MCGW in her mind. She recalled that the simultaneous group members’ talk appeared fractured, and it took her time to develop meaningful translations from these intertwining and

convoluted voices, resulting in potential ramifications, whereby the English speakers became impatient with her.

The other reason as to why the collectivist cultures did not speak up in the discussions was concerned with appearing unknowledgeable. The Chinese student identified that it is better not to say anything in conversations in case they made a comment that was perceived as wrong by the other cultures. They feared if their remarks were seen as incorrect by the other group members, they would be laughed at and looked upon as unworthy. The Chinese student referred to this as 'losing face.' From the interview with the Chinese student said, 'losing face' was seen as shameful and such situations she considered must be avoided so that her reputation is maintained within society. The Ghanaian student also mentioned in his interview that the Ghanaians are a proud culture and that he would not present an argument within the MCGW discussions unless he were sure it was correct. From these accounts, it can be argued that due to the cultural norm of not 'losing face,' the collectivist cultures may have been hesitant to provide counter-arguments in MCGW

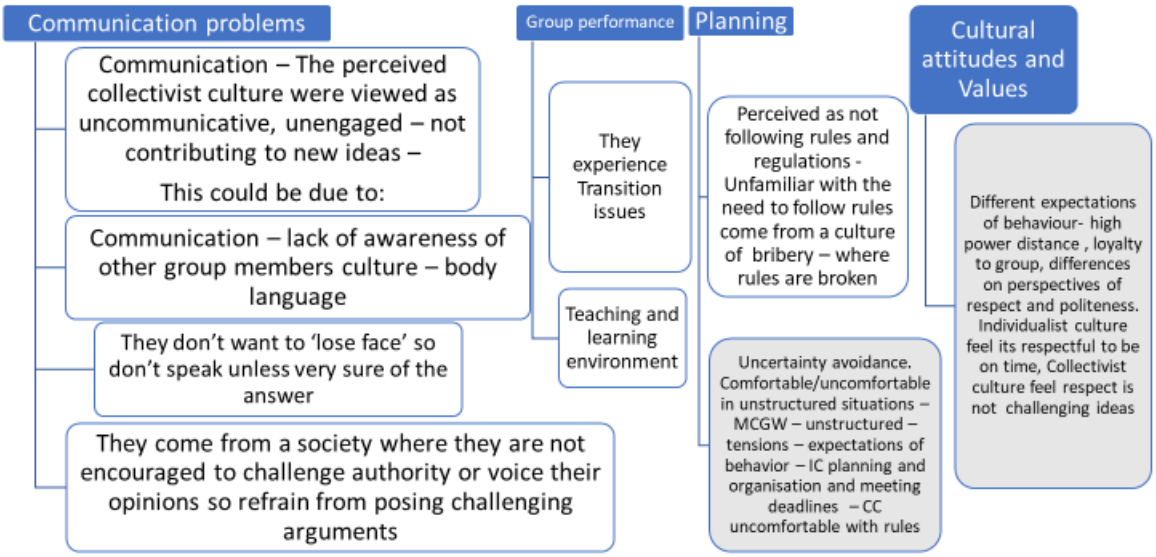

Figure 5.5: An insight into the tensions, perceptions and behaviour of the perceived collectivist cultures within MCGW. The diagram depicts how tensions arose, through communication problems (left), group performance issues and transition issues and due to differences in teaching and learning environments (middle). The diagram also shows tensions also arose due to variations in cultural attitudes and values (right).

As detailed in Figure 5.5, this study brought new knowledge to light, revealing that whether students adhere to deadlines may be determined by the structures present within their society during their upbringing. For this study, corruption appeared to form a significant part of the everyday fabric of society for some of the collectivist cultures. As discussed before, the Kenyan student alluded to the structural foundations of the society he grew up in, and said they did not value following rules and regulations, as such, he did not follow them readily in the UK. He claimed the culture he came from was immersed in bribery and corruption. The impact of corruption meant that in his culture, rules were not respected. Thus, the transition to the UK system required a degree of adjusting as he eventually had to become familiar with

the requirement of following rules. To his surprise, if he did not, penalties were imposed, such as when handing in an assignment late, something he had not encountered before in his education system. He explained he had a cultural shock about how strict the university rules and regulations were at university X. A further exciting reason as to why the collectivist students struggled with keeping to deadlines was due to the varied range of opportunities the UK presented. He explained the multitude of opportunities presented in the UK was not available in his home town. These included visiting historical sites, socialising, and working part-time. He was unprepared for managing these unexpected, overwhelming opportunities, and subsequently, he appeared unorganised and unable to meet all the demands this presented. These conflicting demands impacted the time he could give to MCGW, which often frustrated the perceived individualistic cultures.

5.5.2 Discussion on sub-RQ (3): The benefits of participating in MCGW

The following section addresses Sub RQ (3) What are the challenges and benefits of participating in MCGW?

It can be observed from this study's findings that despite the challenges experienced in MCGW, there was an overwhelming number of positive comments. The statistical data presented a total of 96 references made in the interviews to the benefits of MCGW. These positive remarks far outnumbered the 50 references made to the challenges the students experienced within MCGW. Once collated together, five dominant categorical benefits emerged: *Changed behaviour, Cultural awareness, and understanding of cultures, Confidence building, Different perspectives, Improved learning*.

This study brought to light some interesting new observations from participating within MCGW not referred to in the literature. In the interviews, some students revealed they had become more confident and had noticed changes in their behaviour. The collectivist cultures identified

that participating in MCGW, over some time, had improved their confidence, and they felt more self-assured and capable of posing counter-arguments in the discussions and even to make suggestions on solving problems. This newfound confidence to contribute to MCGW was welcomed by the perceived individualistic cultures, who said that they benefited from hearing about the different approaches to solving problems from the other cultures. However, building confidence was not instant. The collectivist cultures indicated that it took them many weeks to get to this stage. A further new piece of knowledge revealed by this study was that the students observed that their grades improved. They considered the improvement in their learning and grades was a result of them learning together from each other. In particular, they said the collective thinking from different cultures forced them to rethink solutions, as each culture presented and highlighted different criteria that needed to be met for the solution to be viable in their country (Banks & Banks, 2005; De vita, 2000; Kimmel & Volet, 2010). This study interpreted from the findings that the process of MCGW overtime enabled the students to become more open-minded, as they began to become familiar with each other. They were able to perceive and appreciate the realities of different cultures (Kimmel and Volet, 2010) and had improved their understanding of other cultures (Stahl, 2010b; Watson, 1993). They became open to hearing the contributions other cultures made, they valued them, despite these contributions being markedly different from their way of thinking. This was demonstrated when the German student said,

> "*I always took leadership, but this was mainly for planning someone else always had to lead on the emotional side, I used always to think I was right in all matters but having participated in MCGW I found that even if they were a different culture like Malaysian, they would have some good ideas and mine were not so good on reflection*."

Many studies within the literature have also reported that students experience personal growth when participating in MCGW (Devita, 2002; Stahl, 2010a; Stahl, 2010b; Watson, 1993). It can be argued that to acquire this personal growth; the students may have needed a period of disagreement and argument to understand other cultures' expectations and behaviours better. However, this study emphasized the fact that the time it took for students to change their thinking was far too long. Precious weeks were lost in arguments, challenges and misinterpretations. The students indicated it would have been better if they had been taught the tools to develop their intercultural skills.

An important finding from this study is that the students indicated that they had a better understanding of their own cultures, and the perceptions of other cultures changed by being placed in an environment composed of cultures very different from their own. This helped them to see differences in cultures, which in turn helped them get a better understanding of their own identity, their values, beliefs, expectations, and that of other cultures' identities. It appears from their accounts there was a development in their consciousness as they had become aware of their behaviour and how it impacted other cultures. Importantly, over time, as the Kenyan and Ghanaian students said, they observed commonalities between cultures, and they made connections between cultures, which enabled them to bond. The literature does not emphasize the similarities between cultures. But it does identify the similarities in behaviour between collectivist cultures, and the same can be said of individualist cultures. However, this study found similarities between all cultures. For example, both the perceived individualist and perceived collectivist cultures had a desire to learn about other cultures' behavioural norm. They both valued differences in behaviours; they all claimed they had benefited and learned from their experiences in MCGW. This study also found commonalities in that all cultures evidenced a sense of empathy and understanding about different cultural, behavioural expectations. Bennett and Bennett's (2014) research alluded to the fact that

empathy was important if cultural awareness is to be achieved. The interviews revealed that these differences disappeared in the eyes of the students over some time. This was demonstrated when the German student said,

" *I won't behave like this again. I learned why other cultures behave differently, and this is the biggest benefit, I changed my personality to understand cultures better. I think MCGW has been very beneficial for me; it's opened my mind and allowed me to interact better with different cultures, understand their behaviour and thinking. I understand why they act as they do… I wonder why did I make such a 'big drama,' next time I am with different cultures, I won't behave like this. I have a better understanding of cultural behaviours and their expectations".*

Their accounts indicated they bonded and appeared to mold into one after several weeks of interaction within MCGW. They claimed once they had formed friendships, the benefits of MCGW started to materialise. This can be seen from the Malaysian student's account,

"I learned to speak up more than before - through MCGW. I feel more confident. After I got to know them and make friends, I said I can't follow your accents; my culture is different we listen more to others then speak, I'm not used to speaking in groups, so they give me time to think and speak. I gave different perspectives to problems from my culture. I felt more motivated to learn because it's not so serious now - we don't talk about the work all time we get to know each other it's feels more fun learning".

It appeared the benefits occurred once the students had reached a stage whereby they were able to respect each other's value-systems and expectations of behaviour, were open to listening to each other's views, and had started to appreciate the fact that different thinking was possibly due to cultural upbringing. Once this stage had been established, they claimed their learning had improved as they could see different perspectives and solutions to problems.

. Perhaps their ability to integrate and learn from each other may have been due to them transitioning from surface-level cultural cues, which focus on categorisation of ethnicity or race, which Stahl et al., (2010a) warns causes tensions in multicultural environments, to a focus on deep-level aspects of cultures, which identifies differences in knowledge, attitudes, and values. It could be argued the benefits of MCGW were also realised as Schein's (1990) claims when the students started to understand a group's values fully and delved in their underlying assumptions, which unconsciously determine how they felt and thought.

However, this research found understanding a group's values and assumptions occurred only after several weeks of interactions between the different cultures. It appeared that reaching the stage took a long time during the MCGW process. The students went through the entire process of understanding their own identity, and then that of other cultures' identity, and then they experienced clashes and misunderstandings during the MCGW process. Eventually, the benefits of MCGW started to take form. This was shown when the German student referred to her own identity as 'The old German in me', and then she explained the clashes that occurred and how she then went about changing her behaviour "*I started to behave differently."*

> "*There was a South African girl in my group, and she was so laid back and unorganised, it frustrated me a lot …. the old German in me thought, why wasn't she goal-oriented? She was always late and didn't complete the task on schedule… so I pushed her a bit, I told her I was expecting her to do things on time and she took it the wrong way she called me racist. I thought that's not good considering our German history, so I started to behave differently I tried to make conversation with her and get to know her I gave her the group-work task but didn't interfere I let her get on with it I didn't keep checking on her. Ah, well she did things last minute not in a structured, organised approach but now I appreciate she did do the work; it wasn't the best*

learning approach for me, but it helped me to change how I thought about other cultures and appreciated there are different ways to work. But it's important to know that I would have pushed anyone to plan and structure their work. It wasn't because of her skin colour".

As indicated in the section above, the process of MCGW can bring about changes in behaviours. From the students' accounts, it appeared that these changes in behaviour occurred as a result of changes in their perceptions of other cultures. This study indicated that despite the cultural groundings being firmly established in young life (Bourdeu, 1990; Bruen, 2014; West, Fleming, & Finnegan, 2013), in some instance, they were susceptible to being transformed (Bourdeu, 1990; Brooks, 2008; Kimmel & Volet, 2010). This can be observed from the Malaysian and German students' experiences. Despite having well-established cultural foundations, participating in the MCGW changed their perceived expectations of culture and brought better understandings. Significantly, they both referred to how their behaviours had changed in order to adapt to the other cultures' expectations. Similar observations have been cited in many studies (King & Martin 2008; Signorini, Wiesemes, & Murphy, 2009; Shi & Wang, 2011; Sivkumar & Nakuta, 2001). However, this study brought to light the fact that these changes may be permanent changes in behaviour or maybe provisional changes, lasting only for the time they live in a different culture. The reason why these changes in behaviour may be interim was explained by the Malaysian student. She claimed that the changes in her behaviour were temporary behavioural changes. She was self-aware of the changes in her thought patterns, which emerged as a result of her experiences within MCGW, namely, independent thought, confidence to express her opinions and willingness to take the lead. She reflected on the changes in her thinking and behaviour and evaluated whether they would be appropriate when she returned to her own culture. She

decided that on her return home, she would revert to the behaviour that was expected by her parents and society. However, she had expressed a desire to maintain her new outlook on the importance of independent thought and the ability to make decisions. It can be argued that it is natural for cultural identities to evolve and cause changes in behaviour when exposed to different cultures during a prolonged time, as is the case within MCGW (House et al., 2002; Shi & Wang, 2011). However, the interview with the Malaysian student reinforced the fact that even though her outlook and behaviour had changed, the society which she came from had not changed. Her society's high-power distance expectations set by parents, teachers, and society coupled with the short-term orientation, that of respect for tradition and social obligations, are firmly embedded, resulting in her affirming her family's dignity by firmly immersing herself into the social-cultural behaviours expected. The German girl changed her behaviour within MCGW when she realised her stance on adhering to rules and regulations had upset the African girl in her group. The German girl claimed she had become more tolerant of other cultures' expectations and was willing to relax her rigid approach to planning and meeting deadlines. She claimed this was a permanent change in her behaviour, which her parents had observed. She came from a low-power distance society and a society that values long-term orientation, where thrift and perseverance take precedence over respect and social obligations, resulting in a more tolerant attitude from parents and society with regards to a shift in behaviour. One of the most interesting accounts of changes in thought patterns as a result of experiencing different cultures was that of the English student. His perception of culture changed significantly when he was immersed in China for a year, indicating that the short exposure students have within MCGW is not sufficient enough to have an in-depth detailed understanding of cultural awareness.

5.5 Key essentials in the conceptual model for MCGW

This section addresses the main research question 2, RQ (2): What are the key factors that need to be included in a pluralistic model for MCGW? And Sub RQ (4) What approaches can bring awareness to cultural diversity and maximise the benefits of MCGW?

Three fundamental essentials were used to inform the construction of the conceptual model. The first essential reflects on the main interpretations established from the discussion chapter. The second essential revisits the theories identified within the literature review, which inform this study. The third essential recaps the findings of the focus group, which identified the key factors that need to be included in a pluralistic model. Acknowledgment is given that the theories and models selected within the literature have been devised independently and over a longitudinal period. However, this research considers them relevant and attempts to bring these models together, extrapolates them, and aligns them with the focus group findings, to inform the presentation of the conceptual model. This conceptual model intends to aid in the development of intercultural skillsets, broadening of understanding of different cultures, and to provide for curiosity-driven thinking and exploration of how to improve student integration, learning, and collaboration within MCGW. Importantly it proposes to provide pathways in which students can develop the critical skillset needed within MCGW. The ‘critical skills’ were identified in the interviews when addressing sub-RQ 3, and they are Skills to articulate arguments, cultural awareness, confidence in communicating, debating and negotiating, Independent learning, Planning and organising (see Table 4. 2, The challenges within MCGW).

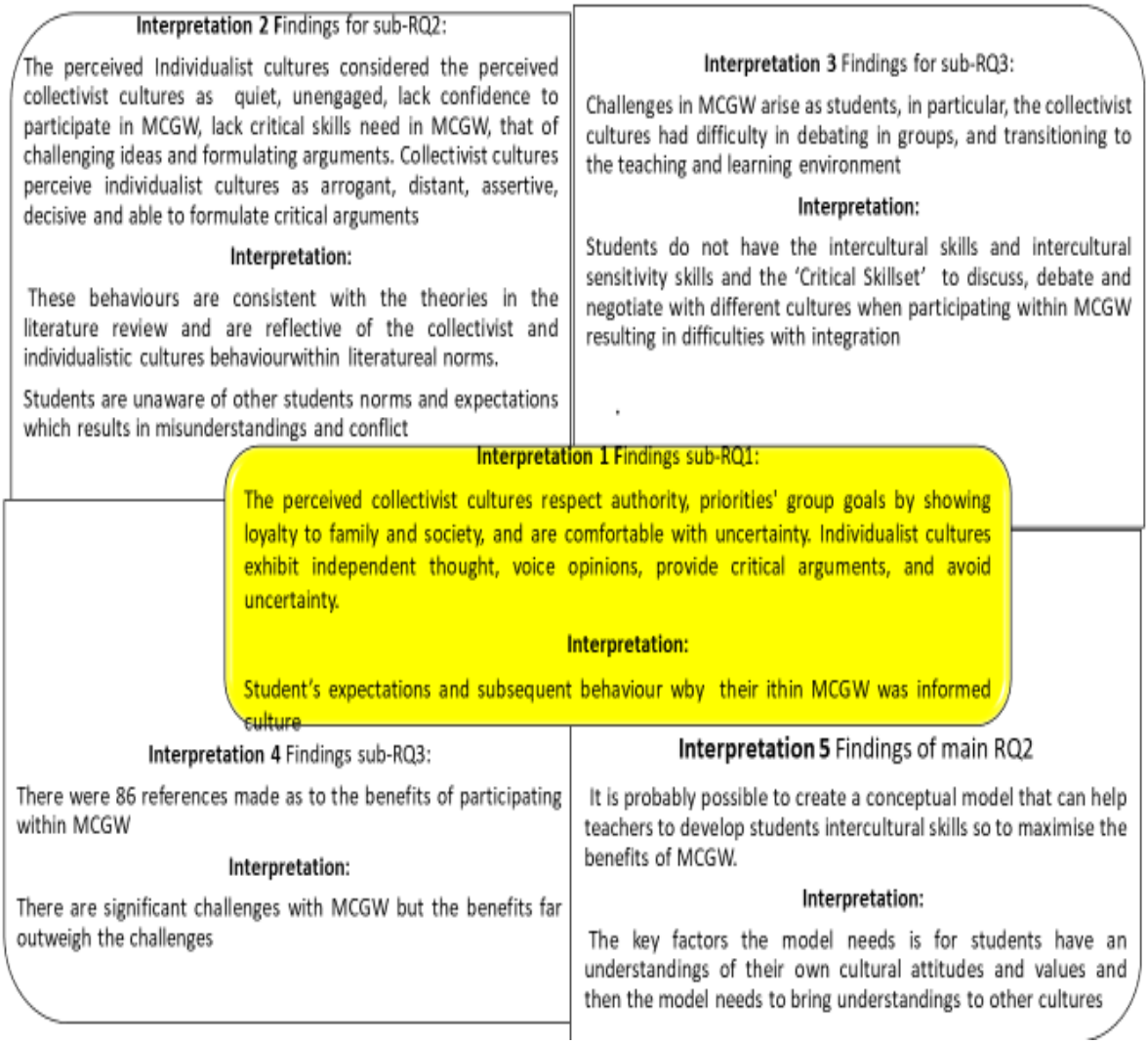

Figure 5. 6: Key Interpretations from the findings

Fig. 5.6 identifies the five main interpretations made in this study from the findings; the following section discusses these interpretations in more detail. The main interpretations made from the findings for sub-RQ1 argue that the dynamics within MCGW vary according to the cultural norms participating in the MCGW. The cultural norms depend on the students' inherent cultural attitudes, which stem from the students' upbringing and expectations. The subsequent behaviours within MCGW were influenced by parents, schooling, and the societies they were brought up in. These findings concurred with the studies of Bennett and Bennett (2004) and Hofstede's (1994) studies. For the collectivist cultures, the cultural norms

that appeared prominent were associated with respect for authority, care, and loyalty to family and society members. They appeared comfortable with uncertainty, whereas the cultural norms for the individualistic cultures were aligned with independent decision making, ability to critique, and preferred certainty. The findings of this study aligned with the Hofstede (1994) study. Sub-RQ (2) concerns the second significant interpretation. The findings identified that the perceived collectivist and perceived individualist cultures had nuances or differences in their value-systems, cultural expectations, and perceptions, which resulted in a perceived 'vacuum' in the understanding of fellow group members' cultural identities. This was also illustrated in Bennett and Bennett's (2004) research study. The interpretation made is that the students are unaware of other students' cultural norms and expectations, which result in misunderstandings within the MCGW process. These findings concurred with the studies of Antal & Friedman (2008). Sub-RQ3 identified that although understandings and a shift in the perceptions of other cultures can be developed when participating within MCGW, these findings were consistent with the studies of Summers & Volet (2008). It appears that a better understanding of other cultures may be achieved if the student's exposure to different cultures is extended by living within another country's culture, as was indicated by the Peace Education studies. This was an unanticipated and interesting finding, and it is worth studying further. Importantly sub-RQ (3) found that the collectivist cultures felt that they were not prepared, nor had the 'critical skills' needed when participating within MCGW. Thus, the third significant interpretation made is that students do not have the critical skillset needed within MCGW to debate and negotiate with students from other cultures. Bennett and Bennett (2004) studies indicated that students need to develop their intercultural skills to participate in multicultural environments. This study's findings build and develop on this knowledge by suggesting that for MCGW to be successful, the students need to have intercultural skills but also need the critical skillset specific for MCGW. These critical skill sets have been identified in this research

findings as that of Skills to articulate arguments, cultural awareness, confidence in communicating, debating and negotiating, Independent learning, Planning and organising (see Table 4. 2, column two, The challenges within MCGW). It was also deduced from this study's findings that an enabling environment could help the transition process from teacher-led education to student-led. Also, enabling mechanisms need to be provided that allow for transitioning to a new country, which in turn can aid their learning. Having summarised the four main interpretations of the findings and having previously summarised the gap in knowledge, this section attempts to narrow that gap identified in the literature, indicating that there is no conceptual model to help lecturers develop the student's intercultural skills and competences for MCGW. This gap in knowledge is addressed by building on the interpretations of this study's findings and the focus group findings in order to create the conceptual model. The focus group findings demonstrated that it was probably possible to create a conceptual model that could help teachers develop students' intercultural and critical skills that were needed within MCGW. The fifth key interpretation made is that the students need to have an awareness of their cultural norms and attitudes and that of other cultures, as proposed by the studies of Bennett and Bennett (2004), Antal and Friedman (2008), and Fountain (1999). Once a better understanding of cultures is achieved, then changes in behaviour can occur, which may allow for better integration with different cultures. This model attempts to allow for changes in behaviour by developing skills of advocacy, which empower the students to articulate clearly their ideas to others (a need identified in sub-RQ (3) findings, see Figure 5.4) and through the means of inquiry, they pose curiosity-driven questions and suspend judgment to explore the perspectives of other cultures (a need that was identified in sub-RQ (2) findings, see Figure 5.3).

Before presenting the conceptual model, it is important to draw together the key theoretical frameworks that emerged in the literature chapter, as these theories will provide

foundations for the conceptual model. The literature review identified two models, that of Bennett and Bennett (2004) and Antal and Friedman (2008), which were considered to provide important insights into the importance of the development of an intercultural skillset and sensitivity. However, these research studies, as the literature review identified, do not indicate how changes to students' mindsets towards pluralistic thinking can be brought about or what activities lecturers can use to develop the students' intercultural skills. The literature identifies theories on teaching practices that can help develop students' intercultural skills as presented by the Peace Education and Anti-bias theories, which provide some teaching practices that help the development of intercultural skills, but they were not designed for MCGW. Nevertheless, they help to provide some indication of the possible activities that may be incorporated within MCGW. More concrete ideas on what the key elements needed to develop a pluralistic model are and how the 'critical skills' can be developed were obtained from the focus group findings, see Table 4.5. The interviews and focus group findings identified that it is important to appreciate the students' value-systems, and they recognized that all cultures had different value-systems. While the literature review acknowledged that teaching values in higher education might be seen as culturally biased, the teaching of common humanitarian values would allow some collaborative pathway forward, as supported by Foundation (1999), UNICEF, and Peace Education theories. It is important to note that this conceptual model, as such, does not attempt to promote any particular value-system but is designed to allow for exploration of values and expectations so that a better understanding can be achieved when students participate within MCGW.

5.6 Defining the Pluralistic Conceptual Model

To provide some meaning and insight into the issues surrounding MCGW a conceptual model has been designed which lecturers may wish to use to help structure their MCGW

delivery (see Figure 5.7, The ACE conceptual model). This model is constructed using the models from the literature as identified above and the students' suggestions from the focus groups (see Table 4.5, Focus group findings). I have given this conceptual module the acronym '**ACE**.' This acronym arose from the key elements that make up the model: **A**wareness, **C**ritical skills, and **E**thical Dimensions (ACE). The first strand in the conceptual model is that of **A**wareness. A critical finding from the focus groups was that there needs to be an awareness of the different cultural expectations from the onset (see FG9 in Table 4.5). The literature review revealed that, for students to be able to understand different cultures' behaviours and their diverse cultural realities, they need to develop their mind-set, so their intercultural competencies are developed (Bennett & Bennett, 2004; Ho-Kyung Huh, Seong, & Jun 2015; Stahl et al., 2010a). The literature also identified the importance of developing intercultural sensitivity or, as Bennett and Bennett (2004) have referred to in their model, enabling students to develop their skills. Hence, they move towards the ethnorelative stage. Their research falls short of identifying pathways to do this. The development of this conceptual model draws on indicators for establishing intercultural sensitivity from the work of UNICEF, Peace Education, and Anti-Bias teaching approaches as well as the focus group findings. As can be seen in Table 4.5 (See FG1, FG3), students noted that awareness of different cultures could be achieved if lecturers create a multicultural environment, which has a balance of different cultures. No one culture dominates the group formation. The focus group findings also identified activities that need to be constructed, so they are appropriate for different cultures and encourage cultures to mix (see FG4, FG9 in Table 4.5). The first part of the Awareness, Critical skills, and Ethical dimension model (ACE) encourages lecturers to make students aware of their own cultures and that of other cultures and to explore the concept of pluralism (

see key strategy Awareness in Figure 5.7, The ACE conceptual model). The focus group findings FG5 (see Table 4.5) identified the importance of building a sense of belonging between group members. The Global centre for Pluralism (2019) in Canada guides educating lecturers on pluralism, and it suggests how important it is that the dignity of each person is recognised and that everyone feels they belong. Building Bennett and Bennett's (2004) model, the ACE model identifies strategies in which lecturers can help students better understand their culture and identities and feel a sense of belonging (see key strategy Awareness in Figure 5.7). The second key element that makes up the ACE model is that of developing Critical Skills for participating within MCGW (see key strategy Critical Skills Figure 5.7). The interview findings and the focus group findings identified that the collectivist cultures needed opportunities before their MCGW assessment process to develop what this research has termed as: the 'critical skills', which are skills needed to propose and defend their arguments within MCGW. This study interpreted these critical skillsets as the skills of articulating arguments, building cultural awareness skills, confidence in communicating, skills of debating and negotiating, developing independent thought and planning and organising skills (see Table 4.2 column two and key strategy Critical skills in Figure 5.7). To be successful, they need to possess the mind-frame where they accept that they will experience unsettling emotion, as they will be placed in unfamiliar cultural environments and will have to appreciate behaviours that deviate from their traditional value systems.

Peace education strategies can be used to identify meaningful activities that can achieve this. They suggest designing camps to help bring community service in different countries so that different cultures can build mutual understandings and internalisation of dialogues, or by having sports programmes that build on team-working skills to get the first-hand experience to engage with different cultures and allowing them to become more accepting and tolerant to diversity, (see column 3 in Table 2.3 the intercultural competency

model of negotiating reality in MCGW, and column 3 in Table 2.4 Developing integration skills within MCGW and also key strategy Ethical Dimensions in Figure 5.7, The ACE conceptual model). Such activities may develop the students' capability to adapt and appreciate different perspectives so that one can integrate fully within different cultural societies, which Antal and Friedman's (2008) research recognises as important in order to develop intercultural skills. Such activities may also help develop what Lin et al. (2008) referred to as, the 'critical cultural consciousness' stage when a student has increased sensitivity and awareness of multi-cultures (see column 3 in Table 2.3 the intercultural competency model of negotiating reality in MCGW, and see column 3 in Table 2.4 Developing integration skills within MCGW and see key strategy Critical Skills in Figure 5.7, The ACE conceptual mode**)**. The focus group findings (see FG4 and FG8 in Table 4.5) suggested that this shift towards critical consciousness can be achieved by having cultural festival days where students parade their cultural food and dresses and dances, or by designing activities that are specifically related to culture and allow other cultures to experience them. Peace Education suggests this development can be aided by travelling theatres, which allow students to confront culturally different stereotypes and beliefs, raise their multicultural consciousness, and increase their ability to negotiate with different cultures (Lin et al.,2008). The focus group findings suggested there is the number of ways how this can be achieved. This can be done either by providing students with opportunities to be part of a balanced multicultural group whereby they are given culturally related activities, so they can debate and discuss the other students' cultures and pose counter-arguments to get a better understanding (see Table 4.5, FG1, FG3), or they suggest that the lecturer set up an enabling virtual group-work environment (see FG6 in Table 4.5). It is not necessary for the lecturer to get involved in the group-work formation but rather to provide mechanisms that will facilitate the students to have the autonomy to develop their group relations and independent solution design to problems and adhere to timelines. This

can be done by setting interim targets and milestones during the MCGW process, so students are submitting elements of their design to the problem (see FG2 in Table 4.5). The students suggested that if the virtual group-work sessions use video technology such as SKYPE (see Table FG6 in 4.5), it allows the lecturer to see the students and their body language. The lecturer can take the opportunity to view the virtual group-work sessions to give feedback as to whether students are providing critical arguments to debates and guide them on how to articulate themselves in group discussions.

The focus group findings identified that the students consider it important that they are provided with opportunities to build trusting relations and are permitted to participate in activities that build bonds between cultures Table 4.5 (see FG 7 FG5). As such, the third element in the ACE model is concerned with developing the students' ethical dimensions to build trust and an understanding and appreciation of social obligations, values, and norms, so that respect and better understanding of different cultures can be developed, (Schein, 1990) (see key strategy Ethical Dimensions in Figure 5.7). The focus group findings in Table 4.5 (See FG1, FG3, FG5) identified this more concretely by indicating it is important for students to have an understanding of their cultural value-systems before the MCGW starts. Otherwise, as this study found, misunderstandings can occur as students lack an awareness of each other's value-systems and cultural expectations. It is, therefore, important for lecturers to develop an environment of respect for diversity and openness to understand other cultures' expectations, values, and beliefs. The FG7 findings (see Table 4.5) identified that it is important for lecturers to create bonding opportunities between group members before starting MCGW. Facilitating bonding between different cultural value-systems can be difficult. Indicators as to what skills allow for bonding can be drawn from Moon's (2004) research, which suggests a 'felt sense' can lead to feelings of empathy towards other cultures. Bennett and Bennett (2004) also identified parameters that may help to bond. They say for an 'empathy

stage' to materialise; students need to adapt their behaviour so that 'it feels right' rather than 'feeling this is how it should be.' These theorists fall short on providing pathways for lecturers as to how this can be achieved within MCGW. UNICEF suggests that when working in teams, this can be achieved by students reflecting on their behaviour and then identifying outcomes in how group spirit can be improved (Fountain 1999). The focus group findings in Table 4.5 (see FG5) suggested that lecturers could ask students to give presentations on their culture, the problems they have encountered, and how they resolved them. They felt this understanding might encourage closeness between cultures, which have very different values and expectations of behaviour. Lecturers could also capitalise on technology advances in augmented reality or virtual reality games, which could be used to experience different cultures, expectations, and behaviours within society (Visram, 2018). Virtual reality could be used to experience and understand the way of life of other cultures, their schooling system, family life, and work environments. The focus group finding (FG5) identified that the lecturer could ask students to participate in games that build trust when working in groups, such as treasure hunts and groups to organise their field trips, so they get an opportunity to rely on each other and build trust.

To build an enabling environment that helps students transition into the UK culture and learning environments, the conceptual model has been presented as a holistic concept pictorially, drawing from the components of the ACE model as presented above, and is presented pictorially in Figure 5.7 in the hope that lecturers may find it useful before designing MCGW activities.

Key strategy Awareness	STUDENT FOCUS Exploring a student's own cultural identity and that of other cultures. Exploring the concept of pluralism.	TEACHER FOCUS Teaching approaches Student reflections on identity – individual exercises to explore own cultural identity, cultural norms, and cultural expectations. Student exploration of other students' cultures norms, expectations and behaviours Activities to develop better understandings.
Key strategy Critical Skills	STUDENT FOCUS Exploring the critical skills needed in MCGW. Developing students negotiating and debating skills, building confidence to work with other cultures.	TEACHER FOCUS Teaching approaches Student presentations of own culture, group discussions and debates, drama, cultural dances, group work activity. Study in a different country to be immersed in different cultures. Virtual reality and augmented reality. University approaches Celebrating cultures – art exhibitions, music festivals, cultural food festivals, tradition exhibitions. Modules designed to help transition to UK teaching and assessment system.
Key strategy Ethical Dimensions	STUDENT FOCUS Exploring student's own value systems and other cultural value systems. Developing understandings and appreciations of cultural value systems. Virtual reality to immerse in different cultural value systems.	TEACHER FOCUS Teaching approaches Student reflections on ethical identity. Individual exercises to explore value systems. Exploration of ethical frameworks.

The A.C.E. model preparation for MCGW

Figure 5.7: The **A**wareness, **C**ritical Skills and **E**thical Dimensions (ACE) conceptual model details approaches that may help lecturers prepare students for MCGW. The ACE conceptual educational model brings new knowledge to address the gap within literature as to how lecturers can develop students' critical skills and intercultural skills when preparing students for MCGW. The model builds on three core strategies: Awareness, Critical Skills and Ethical Dimension.

The Awareness strategy is concerned with students exploring their own and other cultures' identities and exploring the concepts of pluralism. This stage also identifies a few approaches teachers could use to aid students reflect on their own cultural identity and that of others.
The Critical Skills strategy focuses on students reflecting on the critical skills needed when participating in MCGW as identified in Table 4.2 column 2 from the findings of this this study. They focus on developing students' negotiating skills, building their confidence to work with other cultures and learn how to debate and negotiate. This stage also identifies teaching approaches teachers can use to develop students' critical skills. The models underpinning this stage are: Antal and Friedman's (2008) intercultural competency model of negotiating reality in MCGW (see Table 2.3), and The Developing integration skills within MCGW model (see Table 2.4) The strategies to develop these skills are influenced from PEACE education and Anti bias education strategies and the findings of this study (see Table 4.5 Focus Group Findings).
The Ethical Dimensions strategies are sourced from the focus group findings (see Table 4.5 Focus Group Findings) and from the Table 2.3 column 3 and Table 2.4 column 3 which identify how students can develop their integration skills. This stage identifies how students can explore their own and others' cultural value systems. It also identifies how teachers can use ethical frameworks to aid in developing students' understandings of different cultural value systems.

The conceptual model draws on the interpretations of the findings of this study along with the focus group findings, in an attempt to encourage a 'shift in consciousness' during MCGW, whereby a student is empowered with the ability to negotiate different realities (Antal & Friendman, 2008; Bennett & Bennett, 2004, Lin et al., 2008). It then amalgamates theories of Bennett and Bennett (2004), Antal and Friedman (2008), and the Peace educational theories to produce the model.

5.8 Discussion chapter summary

The discussion chapter reviewed the findings of this study, discussed the main interpretations that were drawn from these findings, and identified where new knowledge had been produced, as well as where the findings concurred with the models and theories presented within the literature review.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6. Introduction

This chapter starts by presenting the aims of the study. It is followed by a summary of the essential findings and the original contribution to knowledge the research offers. It revisits the limitations of the study and concludes by identifying the possible implications of the educational ACE conceptual model to teaching practice.

6.1 Aims of the study

The purpose of this research was to give students that have participated within MCGW an opportunity to voice their experiences. In addition, the aim was to capitalise on the student voices from the findings of the study. The student voices provided suggestions as to how to improve communication and integration between students from different cultures participating in MCGW. From these student voices, a conceptual model was created that might aid lecturers to better prepare students with the skillset needed to collaborate effectively in a multicultural group-work environment.

The study attempted to uncover the routed perceptions of the students' views of their culture. Having obtained these individual 'truths,' the study then explored if the students considered their upbringing influenced their behaviour when participating within MCGW. This study also found the student's perceptions of other cultures' behaviour and how this impacted the MCGW process. Importantly, the study attempted to unravel the challenges the students faced when studying in a multicultural group work environment and also the benefits they gained from participating within MCGW. An essential part of the research was to hear the students' proposals on how the MCGW process could be improved. The students had first-hand experiences of participating within MCGW. The study sought to elicit student ideas as to how to develop their intercultural skillset and intercultural sensitivities, and most importantly,

to improve the 'critical skillset,' as indicated by the students and formulated and defined in this research. These skillsets are becoming ever more critical as the process of globalisation bringing students from different parts of the world together has influenced the type of skills needed by the student, favouring a need for a global skillset rather than a local one. The research also attempted to identify what measures can be adopted to allow students to be more aware of different cultural expectations during MCGW. The study intended to identify steps that might bring harmonious interactions leading to positive solutions to problems set within the MCGW. The findings gave rise to the development of the ACE conceptual model. Lecturers within higher education could adopt this model to better prepare students for participating in MCGW. The literature review gave rise to two main research questions, which were investigated using the qualitative approach. This approach was adopted due to the nature of the inquiry, which grew into an exploration of students' perceptions and opinions of their experiences within MCGW. A questionnaire by means of a structured-interview was jointly conducted by the participant and researcher to establish the students' cultural dimensions. The structured interview, which was facilitated with the questionnaire study, was followed by a semi-structured interview. The structured interview questionnaire was analysed using a basic statistical technique in order to categorise the students' cultural norms. The interviews were analysed using the content analysis approach to generate thematic categories. A series of focus groups were conducted that provided the building block for the educational ACE conceptual model.

6.2 Contribution to knowledge and key findings

One of the key findings of this study was that the students' upbringing, and the cultural norms society conveys, have an impact on their thinking process and subsequent behaviour

within MCGW. From the discussions within the interviews, it became apparent that for the collectivist

cultures, parental influence, the notion of respecting authority and behaving according to societal expectations were important. This study identified that during their upbringing, the process of decision making by the students was often deferred to parents or those in positions of authority. The study revealed that the perceived collectivist cultures considered the lack of opportunities they had to voice independent thought as a result of deferring decision making to authority, which had impacted their confidence and ability to contribute within MCGW. The study identified that the perceived individualist cultures considered the perceived collectivist cultures as quiet and unengaged within MCGW. The study recognized that misunderstandings occurred as the perceived individualist cultures were not aware of perceived collectivist cultures' expectations of behaviour and vice versa. The study provided insights into the perceived collectivist cultures' behaviours. It identified that the perceived collectivist cultures had demonstrated restraint from challenging other students' opinions within MCGW and ignored deviant behaviour to avoid conflict and to maintain harmonious relations. These behaviours stemmed from their cultural upbringing. The perceived collectivist cultures demonstrated loyalty to the society or group they considered themselves to belong to. As such, their behaviour often meant they sacrificed their own individual goals and prioritised group goals. This study also highlighted the personal qualities and behaviours the perceived Individualist cultures brought to MCGW. They demonstrated contrasting attributes as they were eager to take leadership positions. They appeared confident in the teaching environment and were vocal during the discussion sessions and did not feel the need to refrain from challenging authority. They strived for individual achievement, and they considered that this was more important than developing a sense of belonging and loyalty to the group. They

prioritised individual goals, resulting in their attitudes and behaviour within MCGW, often appearing insensitive or impatient to the students from the perceived collectivist cultures' value systems. It appeared that perceived individualistic cultures made assumptions about the perceived collectivist cultures behaviour and vice versa, leading to misunderstandings. The perceived individualistic cultures appeared rude towards the perceived collectivist cultures, even though this was not their intention but a consequence of their quest to strive for individual goals. There appeared to be contrasting value systems, and this research only touched on this. There remains scope for further research in this area. The other main findings were that language, and the interpretation of language presented a barrier to effective communication. For the perceived collectivist cultures, an added hurdle was presented due to the difference in the educational systems these students were brought up in, which were significant. The perceived collectivist cultures felt the MCGW assessment favoured the individualist cultures as they were better prepared for MCGW, considering they were familiar with the assessment strategy from their earlier education systems. The findings of this study identified a set of 'critical skills' the students needed to have to engage and debate and provide critical contributions when participating in MCGW. These were: being able to articulate their opinions in debates, and negotiate ideas; having the skills to communicate confidently; being able to learn independently and plan and organise their group work activities, and, most importantly, being able to address their lack of cultural awareness. It was concluded that it is important to provide an enabling environment helping transition into the UK education system.

Despite these concerns, the study highlighted that the benefits of partaking in the MCGW process significantly outweighed the concerns. The better learning that occurred when participating in MCGW was due to different perspectives being visible, as each culture provided a different outlook on a problem. Students developed confidence, which allowed them to contribute to group discussions. This study raises questions as to whether the

students are prepared adequately to participate within MCGW and whether they have the intercultural and the critical skillset as defined by this study to participate effectively within MCGW. This brings attention to the role of lecturers in preparing the students and whether this has been done adequately. In order to bring some direction to the professional teaching practice as to how an intercultural and critical skillset can be developed, the ACE conceptual framework presents an approach that is developed from the voices of students who have the first-hand experience in the process and from the models and theories that emerged from the literature review. The ACE model may aid in propagating a shift in the conscious mind to develop intercultural sensitivity.

This study found there were similarities between the cultures, similarities, such as both cultures had a desire to learn about the other cultures' behavioural norms, and they both valued differences in behaviours. After integrating into MCGW over a period, cultures were open to listening to each other's views, and both individualist and perceived collectivist cultures started to appreciate the fact that their thinking might differ due to cultural upbringing. All cultures evidenced a sense of empathy and understanding of different cultural, behavioural expectations. This was not from the onset, and it occurred only after serval weeks of interactions between the different cultures. It may be argued that too much emphasis is placed in the literature on the differences between cultures and not on the commonalities. The main conclusions have been summarised in table 6.1.

Table 6.1: The main conclusions

- The analysis of data for this study uncovered that the long-term impact of family and societal expectations did subsequently appear to shape the students' behaviour within MCGW.

Where they had similar cultures, the findings demonstrated that they had a better understanding and felt there were fewer misinterpretations. This study found that in many instances, the cultures did not understand each other's expectations and that there were differences in expectations between the perceived collectivist and perceived individualist cultures. The study also found that there were differences in the value-systems between the perceived individualistic and perceived collectivist cultures, in particular as to how they interpreted respect and loyalty towards group members, and this impacted their behaviour within MCGW. These differences in expectations caused tensions

within MCGW. For example, the study identified that individualist cultures need governance, rules, and regulations to be established within MCGW. They did this in order to avoid uncertainty and minimise risk. While governance and regulations provided the individualist culture certainty to a degree, the emphasis on adhering to a timeline frustrated the perceived collectivist cultures.
• This study also showed that perceived collectivist cultures experienced more challenges than individualist cultures. The challenges fell into four broad areas: Transition issues; Communication, Teaching and Learning Environment, and Time management. This study revealed new insights that the perceived collectivist cultures experienced challenges when settling into the external environment, which included: transitioning into the UK, communicating with group members, living in a different culture, speaking a different language, the adjustment to the teaching and learning environment and assessment strategy of MCGW – all of these appeared to be significant. In contrast, the individualist cultures had two main concerns: that of being unable to manage project deadlines and experiencing communication challenges during the discussions held with the perceived collectivist cultures-
• Despite the challenges experienced the benefits outweighed the challenges
• A vital deduction made by this study is that there appears to be a shift in the perceptions the students have of other cultures due to new understandings, which resulted in them becoming not only tolerant towards different cultures but developing curiosity as to how better relations can be developed
• The students lacked the 'critical skills' the students indicated they would benefit from having before participating in MCGW. The ACE model has been designed using the student suggestions about how the development of how these skills can be integrated within the MCGW process.

6.3 Possible implications of the ACE educational conceptual model for teaching practice.

The need for multicultural education systems and having the skillset to integrate with all cultures has become more essential today than ever before due to global issues, such as the closing of borders and polarisation of cultures. The motivation for this research stemmed from the point of globalisation and migration of students seeking to obtain the best education they can result in a multicultural student base (Bridges 2014; Marginsen and Van DerWande 2007). To avoid '*misunderstandings, tension, and clashes,* it is important to recognise cultural diversities based on pluralistic philosophy, to enable the pursuit of mutual understanding based on empathy and communication (Halbesleben et al., 2005; Ko-Hung 2015; Willie, 2002). This study has shown that the lack of awareness of different cultures' cultural norms may contribute to misunderstandings and misinterpretations within the group work process (Hahn, 2016). The ACE educational conceptual model provides a significant contribution to

new knowledge. This research identified the reasons why tensions arose within MCGW stemming from cultural expectations. This research also identified that cultural expectations and subsequent behaviour had a significant impact on the integration process within MCGW. Importantly this research identified from student voices how students can be better prepared for MCGW process and how they can develop skills that can enable them to appreciate their own culture and better understand other cultures expectations thereby enabling societies to co-exist better. Importantly, the research identified student suggestions on how to welcome and embrace the cultural differences and similarities, to allow for better integration and outcomes. The conceptual model does this by attempting to bring understandings and by developing the student's intercultural and critical skills, so students are better prepared for MCGW. The study also identified that if students have an appreciation of their own identity, intercultural strengths, and weaknesses, they may be better able to address their limitations when collaborating with their members, and also be able to capitalise on their strengths. The conceptual model attempts to help students identify their own cultural identities and value-systems and develop a critical consciousness via cosmopolitan ethics and learning (Nussbaum, 2004; Lin et al., 2008). Conducting this study was an immense joy as each student came with their richness of values, traditions, identities and personalities, aspirations, shaped by their society, upbringing, and educational experiences. Celebration of differences, opportunity to express individual freedom is essential.

6.4 Limitations

This study was qualitative, and only a small sample of students was interviewed, and only four focus groups were conducted. It is recognised that each student's account is individual to their perceptions, experiences, and upbringing and their interpretations of their culture. No attempt is made to stereotype cultures. I have tried to interpret their accounts as

perceived in their eyes and attempted to avoid being biased. However, the very nature of the research being selective, means that certain accounts will be reported, and others neglected due to time, which inevitably brings bias to what is reported. This study aimed to bring student voices to the front, albeit a limited number. As such, there is a need for future studies to explore the cultural norms of students participating within MCGW to bring better insights. This research does not promote any cultural norm or value-system. From the accounts given, each culture has a deep understanding of their traditions and heritage. From their interviews, it was clear that each country has instilled the cultural-norms that were appropriate for their countries' value-systems. There appeared to be nuances between the cultural norms and value-systems each culture has. What intercultural competencies allow for is the development of an appreciation of justices, ethical behaviour both for oneself and for other students, and an appreciation for seeing alternatives and other perspectives so harmonious discussions can occur within MCGW. This was the underlining premise for the design of the conceptual model. This study has shown when differences are valued; they allow for different perspectives to be seen. It is important to bridge the differences, and often varied teaching approaches can be an enabler. UNICEF, Anti-bias curriculum, and Peace Education allow for many techniques that higher education can use to build connections between different cultures. As such, they, therefore, are the underlining theories used for the development of the conceptual model. An Important finding this study touched on which needs to be explored in further studies, is that once the students become friends and bond with the other students, there were more connections between cultures than differences. If future research focuses on the similarities and the connections cultures have, then the differences in cultures may appear insignificant, allowing for better relations. The connection does not necessarily mean agreement, and focusing on similarities does not mean to eliminate understanding of differences. This study identified the importance of students understanding their own cultural identity and

expectations and their value-systems to understand their own emotions better. However, this research provided a limited perspective, and more research needs to be conducted on how the similarities that exist between cultures, can provide better cultural relations to be developed. Although this research provided several frameworks for studying culture, it is suggested that more research should be conducted in this area, as students are transitioning between different countries, and that may change the dimensions of how we understand the culture. The study compartmentalised students into perceived collectivist and individualist cultures, as previous studies have opted to label individuals into categories (Hofstede 1994; House et al. 2002). However, this study found that projecting a culture onto a compartmentalised group or label is not necessarily beneficial to understand cultures. This is for two reasons.

Firstly, it means the focus is on differences, and secondly, the students I interviewed are now global. They found it hard to say if they were Korean or Malaysian, as they have lived in many countries. Thus, their identities are now blurred and almost impossible to fully categorise into one compartment. There were some limitations to this study, which have been covered in the methodology section. However, further acknowledgment is given that this study was carried out by a researcher brought up in England. To fully understand the culture, future researchers may wish to consider using researchers who speak the native language of the students, as this research found that the English language itself is a barrier in attempting to explain their traditions and values. Lastly, if this study were to be repeated, then a more accurate picture could be obtained if further research is conducted on a larger sample. In addition, it is recommended that several researchers should be selected from different cultures that reflect the students being interviewed, to avoid misinterpretation of cultural norms.

To end, it can be argued that the students needed to have the disagreements during MCGW to become more bonded. However, this study identified that the time taken for a

student to become comfortable with other cultures and be able to appreciate their contributions is far too long before the benefits of MCGW materialise. It is, therefore, to be encouraged that lecturers put mechanisms such as the ACE framework in place before MCGW starts so students are prepared and the benefits capitalised on. The most valuable finding was that the benefits of MCGW far outweigh the challenges, and the learning was improved as more perspectives of a solution were reached due to each culture approaching a problem differently. It was found that there were assumptions made by the students due to a lack of knowledge of the cultural expectations of other cultures, and misunderstandings occurred. However most interestingly, students said once they had a better understanding of other cultures' they changed their behaviour slightly to accommodate the other cultures' expectations to build better relations. No one indicated that they did not want to understand another culture, and no one showed any hesitation in wanting to accommodate the other cultures, so better connections could be made; quite the contrary, all students said they had benefitted immensely from experience. In that, perhaps, there is an important finding of the similarities in natures between cultures that need to be explored further.

To conclude the essence of the student journey, the findings and interpretations made in this study indicated that the student journey of participating in MCGW led to some interesting insights. A closing message to conclude the student journey **…** b*y partaking in MCGW, the students encountered different cultural norms from their own; experiencing differences in behaviours and expectations of behaviours due to cultural norms, enabled them to understand their own identities better. By exploring their own identities and that of other cultures, they were also able to see similarities between cultures, and drawing on the similarities enabled the students to appreciate differences in cultures, leading to bonding. Once bonded, the*

students drew on the strengths that different cultural realities provide, that of perceiving different ways of seeing realities, which led to the development of better solutions to problems.

6.5 Reflections

Finally, I would like to share some reflections about my doctoral journey. I found the doctoral journey extremely challenging and enjoyable. It provided me with immense insight into different cultures' upbringings, cultural norms, thought processes and perspectives. The process of discovering new knowledge that may benefit students and lecturers to make the MCGW collaborative process more effective, gave me enormous satisfaction. In chapter one I explained how I started my journey. It started with the many conversations I had with lecturers, expressing their concerns regarding the challenges students experienced when participating in MCGW. It was important for me to hear the student voices as to what were the problems they experienced. More importantly, I found fulfilment in hearing the student voices on how these challenges can be addressed. I valued the suggestions they made as to how students can enjoy their own cultural norms and at the same time learn and appreciate other cultural norms and cultural expectations. I really appreciated them sharing their experiences to bring better understandings about cultural interactions. These insights brought value to my own learning journey.

As a lecturer, I now have a deeper understanding of how culture influences students' behaviours. In addition, I obtained understandings on how the MCGW process can be better facilitated so students gain maximum benefit when participating in MCGW. The literature review was an important journey helping me to develop my analytical and critical thinking and writing skills. It also enabled me to appreciate different opinions. The research process

familiarised me with the different approaches to conduct research. I feel more accomplished and confident and inspired to continue to identify new opportunities for research and to seek out new knowledge that can help the student population.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Hofstede`s Dimensions of Culture.

Explanation of the dimensions of Culture as created by the Hofstede study (1994; *Shi 2011)*
Power distribution **Large (high) power distance societies** In the family: obedience to parents, At School: Teacher-centred education **Small (low) power distance societies** In the family: children encouraged to be independent. At School: Student-centred education
Uncertainty avoidance **The society's tolerance to uncertainty and ambiguity** **Low uncertainty avoidance societies or Uncertainty acceptance Cultures are more tolerant of opinions from others** In the family: Ease, low stress, Aggression and emotion not shown. At School: students comfortable with unstructured learning. Vague objectives. No timelines **High uncertainty avoidance societies. Seek ways to minimise uncertainty by planning and creating rules.** In the family: high anxiety and stress, Showing of emotions acceptable At school: structured learning, Detailed assignments strict time table
Individualism – collectivism The degree to which individuals are integrated into groups. **Collectivist culture** Education to the 'we' consciousness, Obligations to the group, Respect **Individualist societies** Education towards 'I' consciousness, Obligations to self:
Long-term and short-term orientation **Short term**: Respect for tradition, Fulfilling social obligations, Protecting one's face **Long Term**: Thrift and perseverance

Appendix B: Ontological Perspectives

Ontological perspectives

The diagram demonstrates the ontological and epistemological position this research adopted

Adapted from Patel (2015) and Memmott (2017) Ontology, Epistemology, and World View - Oh My! http://salmapatel.co.uk/academia/the-research-paradigm-methodology-epistemology-and-ontology-explained-in-simple-language/

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Ontology
Concerned with ‘what exists’. What is reality?
There are two perspectives:</td><td>Connections to this research</td></tr>
<tr><td>Realism/ Objectivism
There is a real-world independent from perception.</td><td>Phenomenology
The real world is based on our perceptions and interpretations.
Social Constructivism – individual learning that takes place because of his or her interactions in a group</td><td>This study explores students’ identity constructions by enquiring about their subjective perceptions of their own realities of their Culture and that of other Culture as experienced within the MCGW process.
There are multiple constructions of realities – formed from inner constructions dependent on values, attitudes and beliefs of the individuals holding them.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Epistemology
How can I know reality? How do we know what we know – how do you bring meaning to experience in order to understand it
There are two world views:</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Positivism
There is a single reality or truth.</td><td>Interpretivism
There is no single reality or truth.
Reality is created by individuals in groups.
Our interpretations are based on our social context.</td><td>The research aims to uncover and provide meaning to the subjective experiences and perceptions of students participating in MCGW.
The focus is on how students think and interrelate, how their worlds are constructed and what understanding and perceptions they have of the MCGW process.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Theories on How Research is Developed</td></tr>
<tr><td>Deductive - We have a hypothesis, a theory and then we test it.
Quantitative research
Quantitative approach e.g. questionnaire</td><td>Inductive – we look at a single or few study and then we develop a theory.

Qualitative research</td><td>This research is not based on a hypothesis, it looks at individual student experiences as told by the students themselves and from their accounts new knowledge is created and small-scale theories are developed.
This research was based on Social Constructivism Phenomenological paradigm so the methods used were interviews and focus groups. The main and sub-research questions examine the perceived subjective student experiences with different Culture within MCGW, uncovering meaning as it is constructed through interactive dynamic dialogue between students.
However, to categorise the student Cultures, a quantitative approach was taken not to create generalisations but to help provide parameters for comparison</td></tr>
</table>

Appendix C: The Pilot Study Questionnaire

A questionnaire capturing cultural-norms. This questionnaire was modelled on Hofstede's Dimensions of Culture.

Theoretical framework: Hofstede studies	**Specific questionnaire item** **The QUESTIONNAIRE.** **Watch the videos to explain Hofstede's :** **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EcrFudqIGr4** **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SYbynThuONs** **Are you Male or Female?** **What age group are you?** **20-30 30-40 40-50 60 -70** **Where were you born?** **Please state all the countries you have lived in and the length of stay in years** **How long have you been in England?** **What course are you studying?**	
Power distance	In a scale of 1 to 100 how do you score your perception of power distance? Low power distance ---------- 100 high power distance Do you expect to obey your leader without question? Y/N Or do they want your opinions to be taken into account before a decision is made? Y/N What are your experiences of how different Cultures particularly what is your view regarding the Power distance relationship within teams? In your opinion, how is this managed between Cultures?	RQ1 RQ1 RQ2 RQ2
Uncertainty avoidance	In a scale of 1 to 100 how comfortable are you will uncertainty? 1 very uncomfortable --------100 very comfortable with uncertainty Do you feel that group leaders should use strict laws and regulations to minimise uncertainty Y/Nor should group team leaders be more accepting and tolerant of opinions different to what they are use to - thereby trying to have as few rules as possible Y/N	RQ1 RQ1
Individualism vs collectivism	In a scale of 1 to 100 how important is loyalty to the team for you? 1 Loyalty to the team not important ---------- 100 Loyalty to the team very important Do you consider team loyalty to be more important that your own individual goals? Y/N In a scale of 1 to 100 do you like to work in teams? 1 don't like to work in teams/ prefer to work as individual ---------- 100 Enjoy team work How is communication perceived within teams?	RQ1 RQ1 RQ1 RQ3
Long term vs short term: -	In a scale of 1 to 100 how important is demonstrating respect for tradition in a team? not important ---------- 100 very important. In a scale of 1 to 100 how important is fulfilling social obligations demonstrating respect for tradition in a team? 1 not important ---------- 100 very important In a scale of 1 to 100 how important is protecting one's face? in a team?1 not important ---------- 100 very important	RQ1 RQ1 RQ1

Appendix D: Student Information sheet

Researcher:

Name Zabin Visram

Phone: [redacted]

Email: zabin.visram@uwl.ac.uk

Supervisor:

Name Dr Helen Bilton

Phone:

Email: Helen Bilton (h.o.bilton@reading.ac.uk)@reading.ac.uk

Student information sheet for Questionnaire and Interview

Research Project: **E**xploring how cultural norms and values impact the multicultural groupwork assessment process

Project Team Members: Zabin Visram

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study exploring the impact of cultural influences on student group work.

What is the study?

The study is being conducted by an EdD research student studying for the Doctoral in Education at the University of Reading. It aims to investigate the experiences of students studying in culturally diverse groups within Higher Education.

It proposes to analyse and evaluate student experiences to date and report on their experiences so that future lecturers and students can obtain an insight into how best to manage a culturally diverse groupwork experience within Higher education.

The study is composed of a questionnaire followed by an interview. The questionnaire is designed to gage your socio-cultural norms. The interview will be an opportunity for you to discuss your own cultural norms and your experiences of working in a multicultural group. It will be an opportunity for you to discuss how socio-cultural norms promote or provide a barrier to multi-cultural group work.

Why have I been chosen to take part?

You have been invited to take part in the project because you have experience in studying and or being assessed in culturally diverse groups within Higher Education.

Do I have to take part?

It is entirely up to you whether you participate. You may also withdraw your consent to participation at any time during the project, without any repercussions to you, by contacting the Project Researcher, Zabin Visram, email: zabin.visram@uwl.ac.uk

What will happen if I take part?

You will be asked to participate in a questionnaire followed by an interview. The questionnaire will be jointly completed by the researcher and yourself. The researcher will be there to clarify any terms. This will take around 10 minutes. Once the questionnaire is complete you will then be asked to participate in an interview. The interview will last between 60-90 minutes. The interview will be recorded and transcribed with your permission. The transcription will be shown to you in order for you to check its accuracy and you will be given the opportunity to

correct it. You will also be given the opportunity to confirm that you are still happy for its contents to be used.

What are the risks and benefits of taking part?

The information you give will remain confidential and will only be seen by the research team listed at the start of this letter. You will not be identifiable in any published report resulting from the study. Information about individuals will not be shared within the University.

Participants in similar studies have found it interesting to take part. We anticipate that the findings of the study will be useful for university lecturers in planning how they can effectively prepare students for working in culturally diverse groupwork and guide them on how to build on their individual strengths and develop intercultural skillsets that enable them to be more effective in MCGW.

What will happen to the data?

Any data collected will be held in strict confidence and no real names will be used in this study or in any subsequent publications. The records of this study will be kept private on a secure computer which is protected by a login and password system. Participants' identity will be kept protected by using pseudonyms. No identifiers linking you, or the University to the study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Participants will be assigned a number and will be referred to by that number in all records. Research records will be stored securely on a password-protected computer and only the research team will have access to the records. The data will be destroyed securely once the findings of the study are written up, after five years. The results of the study may be presented at national and international conferences, and in written reports and articles. We can send you electronic copies of these publications if you wish.

What happens if I change my mind?

You can change your mind at any time without any repercussions. During the research, you can stop completing the activities at any time. If you change your mind after data collection has ended, we will discard your data.

Who has reviewed the study?

This project has been reviewed following the procedures of the University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct. The University has the appropriate insurances in place. Full details are available on request.

What happens if something goes wrong?

In the unlikely case of concern or complaint, you can contact Dr Helen Bilton, University of Reading; email: h.o.bilton@reading.ac.uk@reading.ac.uk

Where can I get more information?

If you would like more information, please contact Zabin Visram or Dr Helen Bilton

email: zabin.visram@uwl.ac.uk

I do hope that you will agree to participate in the study. If you do, please complete the attached consent form and return it, sealed, in the pre-paid envelope provided, to us.

Thank you for your time.

Regards

Zabin Visram

Research Project:

Consent Form

I have read the Information Sheet about the project and received a copy of it.

I understand what the purpose of the project is and what is required of me. All my questions have been answered.

Name of student: _____

Name of University: _____ _____

Please tick as appropriate:

I consent to partaking in a questionnaire and interview ☐

I consent to the questionnaire and interview being recorded ☐

Signed:____ _____

Date:

Appendix E: Consent form for questionnaire and interview

Researcher:

Name Zabin Visram

Phone: [redacted]

Email: zabin.visram@uwl.ac.uk

Supervisor:

Name Dr Helen Bilton

Phone:

Email: Helen Bilton (h.o.bilton@reading.ac.uk)@reading.ac.uk

INFORMATION SHEET

You have been asked to participate in a research study and selected to be a possible participant because of the experience you have gained from participating in multicultural group work within Higher Education. The purpose of this study is to explore

Main Research Question 1) To what extent are group behaviour and attitudes within MCGW related to cultural expectations? (sub RQ1,2).
Main Research Question 2) What are the key factors that need to be included in a pluralistic model for MCGW? (sub-RQ 3,4).

Sub Research Questions
Sub RQ (1) What are the students' cultural attitudes and behaviours?
Sub RQ (2) What are the student's perceptions and experiences of other cultures within MCGW?
Sub RQ (3) What are the challenges and benefits of participating in MCGW?
Sub RQ (4) What approaches and key factors can bring awareness to cultural diversity and maximise the benefits of MCGW?

The results of this study will be used for research purposes, within my doctoral studies and as part of possible external research publications in the future.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire and then participate in an interview. The questionnaire is designed to gage your socio-cultural norms. The questionnaire will be jointly completed by the researcher and yourself. The researcher will be there to clarify any terms. This will take around 10 minutes. Once the questionnaire is complete you will then be asked to participate in an interview. The interview will last between 60-90 minutes for the interview. The interview will be recorded and transcribed with your permission. The transcription will be shown to you in order for you to check its accuracy and you will be given the opportunity to correct it. You will also be given the opportunity to confirm that you are still happy for its contents to be used.

The records of this study will be kept private on a secure computer which is protected by a login and password system. Participants' identity will be kept protected by using synonyms.

The information gathered will be used by the student researcher for data analysis.

Any data collected will be held in strict confidence and no real names will be used in this study or in any subsequent publications. You will be assigned an identification number (ID) only to distinguish your responses from those of other participants. This ID is in no way associated with your name. The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you to the study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely on a password-protected computer and only the student researcher, Zabin Visram and the researcher's supervisor, Dr. Helen Bilton, will have access to the records. The student researcher can also send the results of this research to you electronically if you wish to have them. We do not anticipate that participation in the project will involve you in any expense.

Your decision to participate is entirely voluntary. Also, you are free to withdraw your consent at any time, without giving a reason, by contacting the student researcher, Zabin Visram, on e-mail zabin.visram@uwl.ac.uk if you wish to withdraw from the study.

This application has been reviewed following the procedures of the University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct.

If you have any queries or wish to clarify anything about the study, please feel free to contact my supervisor by emailing

Signed: (Researcher)

Zabinvisram

Date:

Consent Form

Project title: **E**xploring how cultural norms and values impact the multicultural groupwork assessment process

I have read and had explained to me by Zabin Visram the Information Sheet relating to this project.

I have had explained to me the purposes of the project and what will be required of me, and any questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to the arrangements described in the Information Sheet in so far as they relate to my participation.

I understand that I will be interviewed and that it will be recorded and transcribed.

I understand that I will participate in a questionnaire, which will be jointly completed by the researcher and myself. The researcher will be there to clarify any terms.

I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw from the project any time, without giving a reason and without repercussions.

I have received a copy of this Consent Form and of the accompanying Information Sheet.

Please tick as appropriate:

I consent to completing the questionnaire and to being interviewed: ☐

I consent to this questionnaire and interview being recorded: ☐

Name: Signed:

Appendix F: Questionnaire facilitating the structured interview

A survey exploring cultural norms within the multicultural group work process

---

1. Which Culture were you born in?

2. How many years did you live in the country you were born in?

3. Which Culture do you feel your socio-cultural norms confirm to?

4. Identify all the continents you have lived in and say how many years you have lived there

		Between	Years	
	10 years or less	10 years to 15 years	15 or more years	Have not lived here.
Asia	○	○	○	○
Australia	○	○	○	○
Antarctica	○	○	○	○
Africa	○	○	○	○
Europe	○	○	○	○
America	○	○	○	○

5. our cultural norms confirm to?

6. How do you like to learn?

This question explores whether you like to learn in groups of alone	I strongly disagree with this question	I disagree with this question	I am neutral about this question	I agree with this statement	I strongly agree with this statement
6a) I prefer to learn on my own	○	○	○	○	○
6b) I learn better in groups	○	○	○	○	○
6c) I learn more in multi- cultural groups than in a group composed entirely of my own Culture	○	○	○	○	○
6d) I believe the group members should appreciate the value of the overall group	○	○	○	○	○
6e) I value group loyalty over my own individual goals	○	○	○	○	○

7. How comfortable are you with the power distance distribution within the group work process?

	I strongly disagree with this question	I disagree with this question	I am neutral about this question	I agree with this statement	I strongly agree with this statement
	.	.	.	.	.
7a) I expect to obey my group team leader within MCGW without question	○	○	○	○	○
7b) I think power should be shared equally in a group	○	○	○	○	○
7c) I prefer to have a decisive group team leader who gives direction	○	○	○	○	○
7d) I think the group team leader should find out the opinions of people within the group when deciding what we should do	○	○	○	○	○

8. How comfortable are you with uncertainty within the group work process?

	I strongly disagree with this question	I disagree with this question	I am neutral about this question	I agree with this statement	I strongly agree with this statement
8a) Do you consider the starting and ending of group meetings should happen on time	○	○	○	○	○
8b) The goals and task allocated to each group member must be made clear to everyone	○	○	○	○	○
8c) I would like group members to agree on the rules for the group	○	○	○	○	○
8d) I believe it's important to plan the project milestones well in advance	○	○	○	○	○

9. How important is respect for tradition and social obligations within the multicultural group work process?

	I strongly disagree	I disagree with this question	I am neutral	I agree	I strongly agree
9a) I encourage group members to respect and adopt the decisions made by older members of the group	○	○	○	○	○
9b) I have a good understanding of socio-cultural norms of other Cultures, other than mine	○	○	○	○	○
9c) I encourage group members to respect each other's differences	○	○	○	○	○
9d) I value the importance of social obligations over and above my individual goals or the goals of the project	○	○	○	○	○

9e) I think it's important to value friendliness, show generosity and kindness to other group members even if my own individual goals are not met.	○	○	○	○	○
9f) I consider myself to be assertive within the group work process	○	○	○	○	○
9g) I think being rewarded for individual performance is more important than being rewarded for group work	○	○	○	○	○

10. After participating in the multi-cultural group work process, how helpful was the process in helping you develop your social relations with other Cultures

	I strongly disagree	I disagree	I am neutral	I agree	I strongly Agree
10a) I am keener to form social and working relations with others	○	○	○	○	○

10b) I am more willing and able to interact outside of my comfort zone	○	○	○	○	○
10c) The process has helped me to better understand the behaviour of other Cultures	○	○	○	○	○
10d) I can now more easily accept different Cultures	○	○	○	○	○
10e) I now better value inclusion and contributions of others, being included and having one's contribution valued	○	○	○	○	○
10f) It has helped me to have a voice and allow others to have a voice	○	○	○	○	○
10g) I now better understand others, their worlds and situations	○	○	○	○	○
10h) It has helped me to value and enjoy differences	○	○	○	○	○

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire

Appendix G: Interview Questions

Theoretical framework	Category	Interview Questions	Research Questions
Bourdieu	Exploring Cultural norms	How do they perceive their own cultural norms? What are the traditions and Cultures you were brought up with? Explain your family upbringing What values did your Culture teach you? How do these impact their behaviour within the MCGW? What are their individual experiences of negotiation and debating, voicing their opinions within the MCGW process and how is it different from the behaviours of students from different Cultures? Has their knowledge of cultural norms and how to better manage cultural expectations increased due to this process? Explain how	RQ1 RQ1 RQ1 RQ1 RQ2 RQ3 RQ4
Popav et al (2012)	Exploring student attitudes and experiences in MCGW	Has the process helped them develop skillsets that will better enable them to work in multicultural teams? What are their experiences of managing conflict and how has Culture affected this process? What are their experiences of motivation and group member attitudes within MCGW? How do students perceive what the role and characteristics of the group leader should be?	RQ4 RQ3 RQ3
	Exploring learning	What benefits did they feel MCGW process offered that the homogeneous didn't and what challenges? Has their cognitive learning been enhanced by collaborating with different Cultures?	RQ4 RQ3 RQ4
	communication	What are your experiences with communication, different styles of interaction?	RQ2
	Attitudes and motivation	What are your experiences of student members' attitudes and motivation within the MCGW process?	RQ3 RQ2
	Conflict management	What are your experiences of how different Cultures manage conflict? How do you manage communication between group members? How do you manage dominant group members? How is free riding managed by different Cultures?	RQ3 RQ3 RQ3 RQ3
	Problem solving	How do you defend a group decision even if you don't agree with it? What are your experiences of how different Cultures solve problems? Do you prefer to plan long term or short term?	RQ1 RQ2 RQ2

Appendix H: Focus Group Questions

Focus group preamble / Researcher explanation:

This is a focus group session. I will be conducting individual interviews discussing the challenges you face in MCGW process. However, this focus group session is focused on your ideas and views on how to make MCGW more effective and productive. This may mean you have to revisit some of the issues you may have faced. Please don't mention names when making comments. Focus on your experiences with different Cultures and provide suggestions on how we can improve the MCGW process. Culture can be categorised in many ways but I am focusing on national cultures and as such I will ask you for some information about where you were born, where you have lived and worked and studied. If you are happy to share, please do. This will allow me to identify the focus group participants. No names or any form of identification will be recorded. Your comments will be kept confidential and anonymous. Please be careful with you the words you use; we are not attempting to stereotype Cultures rather to discuss your experiences and to get a better understanding of the richness different Cultures bring. The aim of the focus group is to provide you with an opportunity to voice how the challenges that exist in MCGGW can be overcome. To voice how the richness MCGW brings can be capitalised.

Again, a reminder you do not need to participate and may leave at any point.

Focus Group Questions

How can the challenges that exist in MCGW be overcome?

How can the richness MCGW brings be capitalised?

Please share your ideas on how we can make the MCGW process more effective

Appendix I: Content analysis key categories and associated sub-categories

Content analysis key categories and the associated sub-categories from the semi-structure interviews conducted.

The key categories	**Sub categories**	**codes**	**Sub Research question (Sub-RQ)**
Culture	**Cultural expectations of behaviour, Values, Care, Loyalty**	Collectivist Culture: Codes for the Cultural expectations of behaviour: influence of tribes Bribery and corruption, structure within society, class society, traditions, social behaviours, comfortable with uncertainty, authoritarian, collective goals, Codes for Loyalty: loyalty to Family and society, Codes for values: respect for elders, parents and teachers, consideration of other people's feelings, sense of belonging Codes for care: care for the family, elderly and society	Sub-RQ 1
		Individualist Culture: Codes for Cultural expectations of behaviour: Independent thought, prefer certainty of rules and regulations, low power distance, individual goals Codes for Loyalty: trust	

Family	Family unity	Collectivist Culture: Parental expectation of behaviour, extended family, Strong cohesive Family unit, parental authority, right and wrong behaviour, respect and obedience to parents, punishment.	
		Individualist Culture: Weak family unit, disunited,	
Schooling	Teaching and assessment approach Confidence to engage	Collectivist Culture: Codes for Teaching and assessment approach: teacher led learning, teacher punishment, unfamiliar with teaching and assessment approach Confidence to engage: lack confidence to participate in MCGW.	
		Individualist Culture: Codes for Teaching and assessment approach: student-led learning Codes for Confidence to engage: voice opinions, able to critique, assertive, confident in debating in groups, familiarity with teaching and assessment of MCGW	
Perceptions and Experiences of other Cultures within MCGW	Collectivist Cultures perceptions of individualist Culture	Arrogant, impatient, distant, intolerant, assertive, organised, leadership, confident, articulate, decisive, knowledgeable, punctual, strict on deadlines, participative, unfriendly, disciplined and organised approach	
	Individualist Cultures perceptions and experiences with collectivist culture	Quiet, respectful, tolerant, approachable, unengaged, lack confidence in speaking in discussions, don't critique arguments, or challenge in MCGW, followers not leaders, inability to integrate and participate, friendly Cultures, reserved Cultures, relaxed Cultures, inability to show emotion, Lack planning, tolerant to other Cultures and polite.	Sub-RQ 2
Challenges experienced within MCGW	Transition issues, Communication and confidence in MCGW, Teaching and learning environment, Time management and planning.	Collectivist Cultures Codes for Transition issues**:** Complications of time pressures due to opportunities in the UK and settling in UK, transition issues to UK teaching and assessment, time taken to translate and think in English and misunderstandings, time to translate from English language and understand meanings of conversations, unfamiliar with rules and following rules, sense of belonging outweigh individual goals. Codes for communication and confidence in MCGW:	Sub-RQ 3

		Difficulties in debating and sharing of ideas, lack of confidence, body language, lack of awareness of cultural expectations, losing face - afraid of looking silly, Codes for Teaching and learning environment: Difficulties to adjusting to independent learning, unfamiliar teaching environment, unfamiliar with assessment strategy	
		Individualist Cultures: Codes for Communication and confidence in MCGW: communication breakdown – Lack of awareness of cultural expectations, collectivist Culture unengaged, lacks confidence to speak in MCGW, impacting dynamics and formation of ideas not being generated, debates are not productive as they should be, individual goals not prioritised by collectivist Cultures. Codes for Time management and planning: Planning and organising group work with other cultures is challenging.	
Benefits of MCGW (by both the collectivist and individualist Cultures).	Changed behaviour, improved cultural awareness and understandings of Cultures, confidence building, improved learning,	Codes for Improved cultural awareness and Understanding different Culture: Cultural awareness and understandings, appreciation of other Culture traditions, values and beliefs, managing expectations and understanding expectations of behaviour of other Cultures. cultural perceptions of life, friendships, understand and appreciate differences in behaviour. Codes for Confidence building: Built confidence in discussions and developing solutions to problems, building courage, grades improved, broader understandings, Codes for Improved learning: Different perspectives, different approaches to solving solutions, improved project management.	Sub-RQ 3

Appendix J: Total frequencies (snap shot)

The analysis process produced 27 pages of data analysis. The table below is a snapshot of how the total frequencies for the codes were calculated for the sub-category ‘values.

				English	Chinese	Malaysian	Ghana	Latvian	Kenya	German	Korean	italy
	Values		respect		3	1	1	1	3		3	3
			Respect elders older people views		2	1	2		3		3	
			Respect parents	1			1	1	1		2	
			Respect teachers				1	1	1		1	
			Not free to speak their mind						1		1	
			Reserved		1				1			
			Respect privacy								1	
			Integrity									
			Think of others – collective Culture		3			1			1	
			Other people's feelings are important.		4						1	
			Lose face – others look down on you.		2						1	
			Pretence		1							
			belonging		1							
			Keeping up appearance		1							
			Socialise		1							
			Equality		1							

			Power		2		1				1	
			Earning ability									
			Authoritarian Culture.		1		2				1	
			Respect tradition			1	1				1	
			better survival skills					1				
			Freedom					3				
			Safety					1				
			More Confident upbringing					1				
			Freedom to make own choices - independence.									
			Christian values			1	1					
				1	23	4	10	10	10	0	17	3