Multicultural Identity Development
An Exploratory Study

Diploma Thesis
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Magistra der Sozial- und Wirtschaftswissenschaften
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STATUTORY DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis submitted is my own unaided work, that I have not used other than the sources indicated, and that all direct and indirect sources are acknowledged as references.
This printed thesis is identical with the electronic version submitted.

Unterweitersdorf, June 2017

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Abstract

This diploma thesis examines the question of multicultural identity development. Using the qualitative study method, it provides valuable insights into the ways individuals develop their multicultural identification. The data strengthen the assumption that multicultural identity is a very complex concept, with variations as unique as personal experiences of multicultural individuals. In the present study, the process of multicultural identity development cannot be separated from acculturation and therefore, its dynamics turned out to be similar to the ones of the acculturation process.

Among the factors influencing the development of a multicultural identity, time and social interactions with the members of the respective cultures are the most important ones. Time is needed for the acquisition of cultural knowledge, language skills, for building social ties and coping with acculturative stress. The role of language is not only instrumental (a means of communication) but also symbolic (a sign of cultural belonging). Other influential factors include attractive cultural values, societal acceptance, pride in one’s culture heritage and prestige of being a cultured person.

Based on this study, the development of multicultural identity is coupled with the development of cultural competence, intercultural competence, cultural sensitivity, global thinking and willingness for diversity. Multicultural individuals are also likely to develop a strong multi-faceted personality characterized by open-mindedness, adaptability, flexibility, willingness to learn and self-efficacy. They value and appreciate their multicultural experiences which seem to help them deal with various challenges of life.

Key-words: multicultural identity, global identity, multicultural personality, multicultural identity development, acculturation, diversity, intercultural competence
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1. **Introduction**

1.1. **Problem statement**

Globalization processes in today's world have brought about increased migration of people. The population composite and cultural background of people in many countries face tremendous shifts (Leong & Liu, 2013). Connectivity and mobility, the driving forces of globalization, have removed geographical barriers that had existed for a long time and made it possible for people with different cultural backgrounds to connect and interact with each other (Benet-Martínez & Hong, 2014).

Among people who experience exposure to several cultures are immigrants, international students, expatriates, sojourners and tourists (Grosjean, 2015). But even individuals who have never left their home may engage in cultural exchange through first-hand contacts with newcomers and through exposure to mass media and Internet (Jensen, 2003; Kim, 2015).

Through the massive cultural exchange the number of bi- and multicultural individuals grows. And if one considers the fact that most countries have never been culturally or ethnically homogeneous (Leong & Liu, 2013), multicultural individuals will soon constitute a significant part of the future world population (Doz, 2011; Leong & Liu, 2013; Verkuyten & Pouliasi, 2006). People with mixed cultural identities also make a growing part of today's working population and that is not only on the side of managers but especially on the side of employees. Therefore, it is vital to understand and appreciate their potential contribution to multinational organizations (Fitzsimmons, 2013; Thomas, Brannen, & Garcia, 2010).

The success of modern multicultural organizations depends largely on the ability to exchange information, transfer knowledge and practices across national boundaries. The role of individuals who can mediate between and within cultures becomes, therefore, increasingly important (Brannen & Thomas, 2010). With the growing population of multicultural employees companies have access to opportunities to bridge cultural contexts and integrate knowledge (Brannen, Garcia, & Thomas, 2009). Multicultural employees' latent skills could be also used for dealing with challenges of cross-cultural teams (Hong, 2010).

It is not surprising, that the topic attracts attention of scholars from many fields. Recent publications reflect increasing interest for the topic in the international and managerial journals: special issues of such leading academic journals as International Journal of Intercultural Relations (2015) and International Journal of Cross-Cultural Management (2010) have been devoted to multiculturalism and its implications. Cultural home in the globalized world (Chen, 2015; Kim, 2015), cultural transitions and identity development (Szabo & Ward, 2015), acculturation and intercultural competence (Van Oudenhoven & Benet-Martínez, 2015), globalization, cosmopolitanism and biculturalism (Gillespie, McBride, & Riddle, 2010), bilingualism (Ringberg, Luna, Reihlen, & Peracchio, 2010), dual cultural identity (Lee, 2010), bicultural competence and team effectiveness (Hong, 2010) are only a few examples to demonstrate the focus of current scientific research.

The way of thinking about multiculturalism has changed. Early on, it was believed that during the acculturation process (i.e. adjustment to a new culture) the person must more or less forget his/her own culture and learn the new culture. Most research came from psychology and was
conducted in western countries; bilingualism and biculturalism were associated with anxiety, stress, and were thought to provoke depression. Later on, an opposite view was developed according to which biculturalism has a positive impact on intellectual development and well-being (Chen, Benet-Martínez, & Bond, 2008). Individuals who value their multiple cultures have a rich and fulfilling life (Bennett, 2004; Padilla, 2006) and biculturalism may be seen as a strength rather than a disadvantage (Padilla, 2006).

People with mixed cultural identities do not only have knowledge of their own cultures but also possess unique skills which are not available to monoculturals. The recognition of cultural diversity within individuals may bring new ways of thinking about diversity in organizations. Organizations could create environments where bicultural individuals thrive and it would benefit both sides (Brannen & Thomas, 2010).

Exploring and understanding the process of multicultural identity development may deliver important insights for organizations in the sphere of diversity management, global managers development and cross-cultural training. This knowledge may be especially important for multinational corporations.

1.2. Research question

In the diploma thesis, I take a view on multiculturalism as a developmental process and explore its nature. The characteristics of multicultural identity development and critical influencing factors will be examined. Further, the consequences of becoming multicultural will be explored, that is, what competencies or skills do individuals acquire due to multicultural identity development and how these competences may be used by organizations? Finally, an attempt will be made to find out, what can be done by organizations to facilitate the development of their (potentially) multicultural employees.

Research question: How do individuals develop their multicultural identity and what are the implications for organizations?

Sub-question 1: What are the characteristics of multicultural identity development and what factors influence it?

Sub-question 2: What do multicultural individuals learn through their experience?

Sub-question 3: What can organizations gain from multicultural individuals and how can organizations facilitate their development?

Thus, the main purpose of the study is to understand the ways how individuals develop multicultural identity and describe the process of becoming a multicultural person. The empirical evidence collected with the help of qualitative method will be analysed and the consequences for organizational context will be determined.

Some words need to be said about terms “bicultural” and “multicultural” as applied to individuals, which will be used in this diploma thesis. Generally, the researchers on bi- and multicultural
individuals use both notions with the recent tendency to use the term “multicultural”. However, there can be confusion for the term “multicultural” because it is often used to denote “several cultural or ethnic groups within a society” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2016a) whereas “multiculturalism” often refers to “the presence of, or support for the presence of, several distinct cultural or ethnic groups within a society” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2016b). Yet, this diploma thesis is concerned with the multiculturalism within a person; therefore, “multicultural” will refer to individuals, if another meaning is not specified.

Fitzsimmons (2013) fairly notes that technically, biculturals are individuals who have internalized two cultural schemas whereas multiculturals are individuals who have internalized more than two cultural schemas. In her article, she uses the term “multicultural” for all of them for the sake of unity. Other authors (Brannen & Lee, 2014) prefer to use both terms interchangeably to denote individuals who identity with more than one culture.

Since many early publications were focused on bicultural individuals (Brannen & Lee, 2013), it seems appropriate to me to maintain the term “bicultural” when referring to the corresponding literature. The terms “multi-ethnic” and “bi- or multi-racial” will be used under the same consideration. In other cases, the term “multicultural” will be preferred, when referring to more than one culture.
Part I: Literature review

2. The interdisciplinary concept of multiculturalism

The phenomenon of bi- and multiculturalism has been evaluated differently depending on the field of study and time period. The interest for bicultural individuals in organization studies has not always been present, and most research comes from psychology and sociology (Brannen & Thomas, 2010). The goal of this chapter is to give an overview about the most important conceptional and research papers related to multiculturalism which have been accumulated till today. This overview shall contribute to a better understanding of the phenomenon and provide the theoretical basis for the next chapters.

2.1. Evolution of views on multiculturalism

2.1.1. The marginal man

The concept of multiculturalism is rooted deeply in the human history. From ancient times to contemporary period people have been relocating from place to place all over the globe: Greek and Roman expansions, Migration Period in Europe and global exploration during the Age of Discovery are only a few well-known examples. People brought their cultures with them and thus, cultural exchange happened in the world.

Due to migrations, fusions of peoples and cultures took place, and in fact, every nation had once been a huge melting pot of multiple cultures. As a result, there had inevitably existed individuals who found themselves between the cultures, a kind of cultural hybrids. Living and participating in both cultures, these individuals occupied the place on the periphery or on the margins of the societies. This fact makes it obvious, why American sociologist Robert E. Park (1928) introduced the term "the marginal man" for such a person. The marginal man is described as an emancipated and even enlightened individual, a cosmopolitan to a certain degree who takes a detached view on the world. In this sense, he is freer because he is not so constrained by the rules and conventions of the society (Park, 1928).

Yet, in the American sociology of the past century, the condition of being a marginal man was not mainly associated with positive outcomes for an individual. Another sociologist Everett V. Stonequist (1935) takes a close view on the problems of the marginal man which include cultural conflict and prejudice, constant strive to get a higher social status and be recognized by the majority culture. A person who is identified with more than one culture would experience pull and pressure from both cultures and contradictory sentiments. He will probably develop increased sensitiveness and self-consciousness but will suffer from feelings of inferiority as compared to representatives of the majority group (Stonequist, 1935).

Here should be noted that the starting point for the discussion about the marginal man, taken by Stonequist (1935), was the view that the majority of individuals grow up and spend their whole life in one cultural system. Such condition was considered to be beneficial because single-culture individuals enjoyed harmony and consistency of social patterns without experiencing cultural ambiguity and stress. Cultural conflicts experienced by immigrants or representatives of minority groups were assumed to be a natural outcome of a cultural melting pot and earlier or
later, such individuals were expected to go through a personal crisis. In order to overcome the latter, minority individuals had to either assimilate with the majority culture or to find their place in the ethnic culture, becoming a leader and a “revolutionary”, taking the role of a reformer or a teacher. The third option was isolation or removal to a third culture (Stonequist, 1935).

This model was later criticized by Poston (1990) as being deficit and concentrating on the problems of the Black minority in the USA where the reference point was the norms of the White majority. The model also shifted responsibility for developing marginal identity on individuals only and did not take into account possible influence factors like prejudice in the society which could make individuals internalize these beliefs and choose their identity according to them (Poston, 1990).

Further research also showed that it is possible that individuals living in two cultures find their position even more beneficial than living in one culture (LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993).

### 2.1.2. Acculturation: linear and multidimensional models

One of the most widely used definitions of acculturation was proposed by ethnologist Robert Redfield and anthropologists Ralph Linton and Melville J. Herskovits: “Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups” (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936, p.149).

Acculturation should not be mixed with assimilation, as the latter is only one of the three possible outcomes of acculturation process, the other two being adaptation and reaction. **Assimilation** (or acceptance) implies that assimilated individuals do not only take over behavioral patterns but also accept the values of the accepting group. **Adaptation** means that parts of both cultures are combined to produce a meaningful whole. Retention of conflicting attitudes can also be qualified as adaptation under the condition that they are easily reconciled in everyday life as a necessity arises. **Reaction** is related to contra-acculturative movements which arise either due to inferiority or if the movements have prestigious nature (Redfield et al., 1936).

This perspective is different from the position of Park (1928) and Stonequist (1935) outlined in Section 2.1.1. “The marginal man”. Their view is based largely on the assumption that it is possible to belong to culture A or culture B, or to neither but it is not possible to retain both cultures. Therefore, if an individual would like to become a member of one culture, he or she would have to abandon membership in another. This acculturation model is bipolar or linear in its nature, with two cultures occupying opposite positions on a single cultural continuum and an individual moving from one end of continuum to another (Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997).

The view on acculturation outlined by Redfield et al. (1936) foresees the possibility of cultural changes in both groups, not only in the minority group. It also explicitly acknowledges the possibility of combination of both cultures which represents a step further from linear to multidimensional models.
2.1.3.  Bi-dimensional acculturation conception of Berry (1997)

The immigration-based bi-dimensional model of acculturation by John W. Berry (1997) includes four possible acculturation patterns: assimilation (identification with mainstream culture only), integration (identification with both cultures), separation (identification with culture of origin only) or marginalization (lack of identification with either culture). According to Berry (1997), integration is the most desirable outcome for personal well-being and is associated with biculturality.

John W. Berry's works come from the field of cross-cultural psychology and deal with psychology of acculturation which is understood as “the general processes and outcomes (both cultural and psychological) of intercultural contact” (Berry, 1997, p.8). Berry (1997) is clear about the classical definition by Redfield et al. (1936), given in Section 2.1.2. “Acculturation: linear and multidimensional models”, but as a psychologist, separates cultural changes from psychological changes, because they belong to two distinct levels – collective level and individual level. Collective, or cultural changes include altering of social institutions and social activities whereas individual, or psychological changes include shifts in behavior and sometimes stress (Sam & Berry, 2010).

Members of culturally plural societies where people with different cultural backgrounds live together, inevitably face acculturation issues and must choose the strategies how to deal with them. Acculturation should not be mixed with assimilation; as it will be discussed further, assimilation is only one of the possible acculturation strategies (Berry, 1997). It should also be noted that “acculturation is not a linear process, with individuals ranging from unacculturated to assimilated, but rather a multidimensional process that includes one’s orientation to both one’s ethnic culture and the larger society” (Phinney, 1996, p.922).

Within culturally plural societies several cultural groups can be distinguished based on the factors of voluntariness, mobility, and permanence. For example, immigrants choose to participate in acculturation voluntarily whereas refugees or indigenous people do not have the opportunity to choose. Further, some groups (immigrants, refugees, sojourners) move to a new culture themselves and other groups (indigenous people, national minorities) have the new culture delivered to them. At last, some people experience another culture only for a particular period of time (sojourners, international students and workers) whereas for other groups (immigrants, natives) the acculturation process seems to be of relative permanent nature (Berry, 1997).

Though the basic adaptation processes should be common for all these cultural groups (Berry, 1997), most empirical support has been provided for immigrants’ experience. Yet, considering the above-mentioned factors which frame the experience of different groups, e.g. sojourners and immigrants, it is clear that they find themselves in different socio-cultural environments and have different motivation. Therefore, it is questionable if the theory can be applied to all of them (Sussman, 2000).

Two issues are faced by acculturating groups: maintenance of own culture and contact with another culture. These issues impose the following questions on an individual: “Should I maintain my own culture and to what extent?” and “Should I contact with another culture and to
what extent?" When both questions are answered simultaneously, four possible acculturation strategies evolve which together represent the conceptual framework of Berry (1997).

From the point of view of non-dominant society groups (e.g. immigrants or ethnic minorities) these strategies are called assimilation, separation, integration and marginalization. Individuals who do not maintain their original cultural heritage and interact with the host culture only, chose the strategy of assimilation. Those who maintain their original culture only and do not wish to interact with the host culture, apply the separation strategy. When individuals choose to combine both cultures, maintaining the culture of origin but also participating in the host culture, the integration strategy is used. Finally, marginalization means that individuals neither try to maintain their own culture nor wish or can participate in the host culture. Integration strategy corresponds to the term "bicultural", which means that individuals who choose to maintain and combine two cultures are bicultural individuals (Berry, 1997).

The choice of the acculturation strategy depends not only on an individual but also on the larger society. For example, a marginalization strategy is rarely chosen voluntarily; it is often a result of forced assimilation or discrimination by the dominant groups. Integration strategy, since it requires mutual accommodation of dominant and non-dominant groups, can only be successfully implemented in multicultural societies where cultural diversity is valued (Berry, 1997).
Biculturalism is a step towards recognizing the value of both cultures and acknowledging the possibility to belong to more than one culture. It represents a change of thinking about acculturation as either/or conception which assumes that maintenance of only one culture is possible and the more immigrants adopt the new culture, the less they can retain their first culture (Birman, 1998).

Cultural changes include superficial ones, like food eaten or clothes worn and deeper ones, like changes in language, religion and value system. Strategy choice may also depend on context, and time (generational status, length of stay) (Berry, 1997). There is a body of research based on Berry's (1997) conception which showed that integration is a likely outcome of acculturation (Barker, 2015; Berry, 2008). It was found that the chosen strategy may differ from domain to domain, e.g. individuals may emphasize one culture in public and another culture in their private life (Arends-Tóth & Van de Vijver, 2004; Navas et al., 2005). They evaluate different aspects of culture and then change or maintain those parts which they want, often combining them together individually and constructing a unique mosaic-like pattern (Barker, 2015).

2.1.4. Alternation model of LaFramboise, Coleman and Gerton (1993)

Teresa LaFramboise, Hardin L.K. Coleman and Jennifer Gerton (1993) described psychological impact of biculturalism using five models: assimilation, acculturation, alternation, multicultural and fusion. The authors call them models of second-culture acquisition which means that they describe the changes which happen during culture transitions. These models can be applied both on a group level and on an individual level, e.g. when an individual develops competence in a culture, other than his/her own (LaFromboise et al., 1993).

The Assimilation model presumes loss of original cultural identity and acquisition of the new cultural identity. Assimilation is sometimes thought to be connected with stress and anxiety due to the fact that an individual loses support from the culture of origin. Moreover, there is a possibility to be rejected by the members of the mainstream culture (LaFromboise et al., 1993).

The Acculturation model, similarly with the assimilation model, presumes a hierarchical relationship between two cultures. In this model, an individual from the minority culture is supposed to become a competent member of the majority culture but he/she will always be identified as a member of the culture of origin. Acculturation happens involuntary due to economic reasons (LaFromboise et al., 1993).

The Alternation model suggests that it is possible to know and understand two different cultures and change one's behavior depending on the social context. In such a way, an individual can participate in several different cultures. An important difference of the alternation model as compared to the acculturation and assimilation models, consists in its bidirectional relationship between the cultures which means that an individual doesn't have to choose between the cultures and may maintain both of them by alternating his/her behavior. In contrast, the acculturation and assimilation models presume unidirectional relationship which means that an individual has to more or less abandon his/her own culture to become a member of another (LaFromboise et al., 1993).
The Multicultural model is characterized by a pluralistic approach to cultures. In multicultural societies members of different cultural groups live and work side by side united by common economic or national needs. Only in such societies the integration strategy of Berry (1997) can be voluntary chosen. If different cultural groups or individuals with different cultural background maintain their own culture and actively participate in another culture, one can speak about the integration strategy (LaFromboise et al., 1993).

The Fusion model presumes that cultures will fuse together according to the melting pot theory. One culture has no superiority over another, on the contrary, different cultures interact as equals and intermingle to a new culture. This would be an inevitable result of multiculturalism; however, there are few examples of such cultures. Moreover, the process may be similar to assimilation of the minority group because they may need to sacrifice their ethnic identity in order to fuse with the majority group (LaFromboise et al., 1993).

The central point of the theory of LaFromboise et al. (1993) is the notion of cultural competence which enables an individual to effectively participate in societal life. The authors take a behavioral view on culture and describe cultural competence as follows: “to be culturally competent, an individual would have to (a) possess a strong personal identity, (b) have knowledge of and faculty with the beliefs and values of the culture, (c) display sensitivity to the affective processes of the culture, (d) communicate clearly in the language of the given cultural group, and (g) negotiate the institutional structures of that culture” (LaFromboise et al., 1993, p.396).

Cultural competence is conceptualized as a multilevel continuum; the more levels of cultural competence an individual achieves, the more effective his/her functioning within a particular culture will be. Taking into account the number of levels, one can see that developing cultural competence is a difficult task, which involves acquiring social skills and personality development. This becomes even more challenging if one has not been raised within that culture (LaFromboise et al., 1993).

2.1.5. Identification patterns of Phinney and Devich-Navarro (1997)

In their empirical study with ethnic minorities in the USA Jean S. Phinney and Mona Devich-Navarro (1997) proved that biculturalism is not a one-dimensional phenomenon. Based on the works of Berry (1990), LaFromboise et al. (1993) and Birman (1994), the authors presented six possible identification patterns for individuals who are exposed to two cultures: assimilated, fused, blended bicultural, alternating bicultural, separated and marginal. Two identification patterns from these six are examples of biculturalism: alternating biculturals, who move easily between two cultures by switching their behavior to fit the context (LaFromboise et al., 1993) and blended biculturals, who combine two cultures and behave biculturally independent of the context (Birman, 1994).

Three groups have been identified during the study: blended, alternating and separated. Among individuals who feel themselves bicultural, differences in attitudes and degree of identification with each culture have been observed. Blended biculturals experienced no or little cultural conflict and had positive feelings about belonging to two different cultures. Culture was often something vague for them. Alternating biculturals were more aware about two distinct cultures
and conflict possibilities than blended biculturals but still felt comfortable in both cultures by alternating their behavior as the situation demanded (e.g. at school they tried to follow mainstream culture, at home ethnic culture). The third group of participants showed separated pattern: they rejected being bicultural, claimed belonging to their ethnic culture only and experienced the two cultures as very different. They did not feel accepted by the society and found it necessary to choose between and impossible to combine both cultures (Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997).
The study included one important finding, namely, that there was no connection between identification with the culture of origin and the American culture. Those individuals who identified more with one culture did not identify less with another because of that (Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997). This finding can be qualified as a proof that the process of acquiring a new culture is not a transition from culture A to culture B. It is not necessary for an individual to abandon one culture to become a member of another but it is possible to participate in both cultures without having to choose.

2.1.6. Conception of Benet-Martínez (2005) – Bicultural Identity Integration

Like Berry (1997), Verónica Benet-Martínez and Jana Haritatos (2005) investigated the topic of biculturalism from the psychological point of view. Interested in psychological adjustment of an individual, they focus on exploration of subjective perceptions and experiences with biculturalism (Cheng, Lee, Benet-Martínez, & Huynh, 2014).

Their framework Bicultural Identity Integration (BII) is built around one of the acculturation strategies – particularly, the integration strategy and describes individual differences in bicultural identity organization. Thinking about the relationship between their cultures, biculturals may perceive them as conflicted and distant or compatible and integrated. Culture conflict and culture distance represent two scales which help to measure BII. Those individuals who score low on both scales (have high Bicultural Identity Integration) have successfully reconciled their both identities. They perceive no conflict between the cultures and integrate them. Individuals with low BII feel caught between the cultures and keep them separate. Both high BIIs and low BIIs identify with two cultures but the latter feel like they have to choose one of them (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Benet-Martínez, Leu, Lee, & Morris, 2002).

At first BII was designed as a unitary construct and measured as such. Later the concept was refined and two components, (a) cultural blendedness vs. compartmentalization and (b) cultural harmony vs. conflict, were inspected separately. These components were found to be psychometrically independent, that is, connected to different personality variables. A bicultural individual can have any combination of these components (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005).

Numerous studies have been conducted to explore BII and its relations with cognition, behavior, individuals’ adjustment and psychological characteristics. It was found, for example, that high BII is associated with higher self-esteem, lower depression, lower anxiety, greater life satisfaction and happiness (Chen et al., 2008). In turn, low BIIs have higher levels of cognitive complexity which could have developed because of the need to pay more attention to conflicting cultural cues and to analyse them (Benet-Martínez, Lee & Leu, 2006).
2.2. **Multiculturalism in the field of organizational studies**

2.2.1. **Differences in psychological and organizational approaches to multiculturalism**

The topic of multiculturalism and multicultural individuals has recently gained attention in the field of organisational management (Brannen & Thomas, 2010). Although there has been much research on culture-related issues, such as multicultural teams, expatriates, cross-cultural communication and cultural intelligence, these studies have focused more on differences among cultures and implicitly implied that individuals belong to one culture only. The question of multiculturalism within a person has not been investigated as such till recent time (Fitzsimmons, 2013).

Psychological research has already delivered many valuable insights into the ways how multicultural individuals feel, think and act. This information can be helpful for international human resource management, but should be carefully treated. First, it should be considered that psychology’s point of interest is an individual with his/her personal characteristics; in organizational studies these characteristics play a role if they are relevant for the organizational context, for example, if they are associated with skills or knowledge which can be useful for the organization. Second, findings from the field of psychology should be taken with caution in such issues as performance appraisal or promotion. In their job, individuals should be assessed according to their actual performance and not their ascribed characteristics, otherwise there is a risk of discrimination (Brannen & Lee, 2014).

Third, when categorizing multiculturals, one should be aware of risk of stereotyping. From the point of view of organizational studies, addressing such classifications would only make sense if it would imply certain outcomes for an organizational context. Yet, knowing that a bicultural individual of a particular type possesses distinct characteristics predicting his/her functioning in an organizational context, would inevitably involve stereotyping about this individual (Brannen & Thomas, 2010). And fourth, examining multiculturals only from the psychological side would mean applying a reductionist approach (Fitzsimmons, 2013). Yet, there are other variables that may be more salient than multicultural identity, depending on the situation.

2.2.2. **The concept of culture**

There are numerous definitions of culture. The American anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn (1959) defined culture as a man-made system of implicit and explicit patterns, which influence human behavior. He stated that “a culture is to a society as memory is to a person” (Kluckhohn, 1959, p.967). According to Hofstede (1980), culture is “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another” and “culture is to a human collectivity what personality is to an individual” (Hofstede, 1980, p.25).

Culture is differently treated in psychological and organizational research. Traditionally, psychological research worked with the concept of national culture (e.g. Chinese, American), which is monolithic, static, and nationally bound. Organizational studies, as compared to psychology, have developed a more complex understanding of culture. This includes knowledge about different levels of culture: national, organizational, functional, team culture and occupational culture. These cultures are interconnected with each other, e.g. team culture is a
part of a larger functional culture, which is a part of organizational culture, which is a part of national culture (Brannen & Lee, 2014).

The complex nature of national culture arises also from the fact that there are cultural variations within a larger society. A society consists of different ethnic groups and social classes, and each of them has its own values and traditions. Further, a country is divided into regions or areas and therefore, there exist different regional cultures and rural and urban cultures (Oberg, 2006).

Over the years of psychological research on biculturalism, it has become clear that a classical concept of culture as it has been used in cross-cultural psychology is not enough to investigate the complex phenomenon of biculturalism. Hong et al. (2000) introduced a dynamic constructivist approach to culture. The premises of this approach are two-fold: first, culture is not internalized as general whole but rather as domain-specific knowledge structure; second, individuals can internalize several cultural knowledge systems even if these systems conflict with each other. An individual just does not rely on both conflicting systems at the same time, rather, a relevant cultural schema is activated depending on the situation (Hong et al., 2000).

2.2.3. Bicultural types by Brannen, Garcia and Thomas (2009)

The typology of bicultural individuals by Brannen et al. (2009) includes four major types:

1. one-home biculturals (identify mostly with one of their cultures)
2. neither/nor biculturals (participate in both cultures but do not feel as a part of any)
3. either/or biculturals (identify with both cultures but alternate their behavior depending on cultural situation)
4. both/and biculturals (identify with both cultures, mix and combine them).

The typology highly resembles the acculturation patterns of Berry (1997). However, there is an essential difference which changes the way of thinking about multiculturals: whereas only one acculturation strategy is recognized as bicultural strategy by Berry (1997), all four types (including one-home and marginalized type) are marked as bicultural types by Brannen et al. (2009).

2.2.4. Identity organizing map by Fitzsimmons (2013)

The theoretical framework by Fitzsimmons (2013) aims to understand how multicultural employees can organize their identities and what are the antecedents thereof. The author proposed a map of identity organizing patterns, which is built around identity plurality and identity integration dimensions. The four patterns (prioritizing, aggregating, hybridizing and compartmentalizing) are conceptualized as ideal types (not categories) on different sides of a continuum (Fitzsimmons, 2013).

Individuals who have internalized more than one cultural schema may prioritize one of them over the others, i.e. organize them hierarchically (prioritizing pattern) or merge and integrate them (aggregating pattern). Further, individuals may keep their identities separated from each other, identifying with one or another depending on the situation (compartmentalizing pattern) or
integrate their identities (hybridizing pattern) (Fitzsimmons, 2013).

The development of multicultural pattern might be influenced by cultural context and cultural content factors. These include personal history antecedents (family), current context antecedents (city or country of residence) and cultural content antecedents (cultural tightness, cultural distance, cultural friction). Each pattern is unique and is associated with personal, social and task outcomes (Fitzsimmons, 2013).

Yet, since multicultural identity is only one of the identities taken by individuals, e.g. an engineer may also have identities of a woman, a Buddhist, a bicultural person, the question of identity salience is more important than identities per se (Brannen & Lee, 2014). Since beside cultural identification, employees have organizational identification, organizational context may moderate the relationship between cultural pattern and outcomes (Fitzsimmons, 2013).

2.2.5. Bicultural competence and intercultural competence

LaFromboise et al. (1993) proposed a concept of cultural competence which has been presented in Section 2.1.4. “Alternation model of LaFramboise, Coleman and Gerton”. Cultural competence is a basis to effective functioning within a culture. The alternation model supposes that it is possible to participate in life of several cultures, knowing and understanding them and changing one's behavior depending on social context. Bicultural competence helps an individual to do so. The dimensions of bicultural competence are:

- Knowledge of cultural beliefs and values
- Positive attitudes to both cultures
- Bicultural efficacy
- Communication ability
- Role repertoire
- Sense of being grounded
Individuals may develop bicultural competence by living simultaneously in two cultures. Yet, it is worthy to note that these skills, or levels of competence do not represent a dichotomous construct where a person is either competent or incompetent. The authors present cultural competence as a multilevel continuum where an individual can acquire these skills as a part of one's personal development. It is clear, however, that the more levels of competence have been mastered, the more successful an individual will be in his/her functioning within two or more cultures. Moreover, they may help to overcome psychological challenges imposed by being a member of several cultures (LaFromboise et al., 1993).

Organizational literature has accumulated much knowledge about the broad concept of intercultural competence and related concepts of global competence, intercultural sensitivity or cultural intelligence (Deardorff, 2015). Intercultural competence can be understood as “the appropriate and effective management of interaction between people who, to some degree or another, represent different or divergent affective, cognitive, and behavioral orientations to the world” (Spitzberg & Chagnon, 2009, p.7).

The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity by Bennett (2004) conceptualizes the process of intercultural competence acquisition as a movement from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism. The model comprises six stages: denial, defense (reversal), minimization, acceptance, adaptation and integration (see Figure 4 “The stages of development” by Hammer et al. (2003)). Developing cultural sensitivity does not include just knowledge, skills or attitudes, rather, it supposes a change of worldview. At the final stage of the model, the integration stage, identity shift happens. One’s identity is then characterized by cultural marginality, where an individual’s identity is construed at the margins of several cultures and not central to one particular culture (Bennett, 2004).

Cultural marginality may take two forms: encapsulated and constructive. In encapsulated form, cultural marginality is associated with feelings of alienation, individuals may feel “caught” between two cultures. In constructive form, individuals feel themselves as multicultural beings, easily move between cultures and often act as cross-cultural bridges (Bennett, 2004). It is worth noting that the encapsulated form seems very similar to the marginalization strategy in Berry’s (1997) acculturation model and low BII pattern in the BII model by Benet-Martínez and Haritatos (2005) whereas constructive pattern seems similar to integration pattern in the acculturation model and high BII pattern in the BII model.

There is empirical evidence that in addition to bicultural competence, acculturating individuals acquire culture-general knowledge and adopt a new, less ethnocentric worldview (Barker, 2015).
2.3. Who is multicultural?

2.3.1. Surface characteristics

Answering the question “Who may be multicultural?” many scholars first address the so-called *surface characteristics* as length of contact with other cultures, type of contact, ethnic characteristics. The following groups may potentially be multicultural: immigrants, their children and grandchildren, long-term migrants, indigenous people, people from multicultural households (Brannen & Thomas, 2010; Fitzsimmons, 2013).

Individuals may have contacts with more than one culture for a different length of time, from a few days to a lifetime (Sussman, 2000), for example, when they have short stays as tourists or they come to study, work or live in another culture. It can also happen that an individual has never had this cultural *transition* and has spent his/her whole life in close contact with two or more cultures as it often happens to immigrant children or members of culturally diverse societies.

This difference is reflected in division of multiculturals into prescribed and ascribed. *Ascribed biculturals* (*voluntary*) are sojourners who work or study abroad for a certain period of time or first-generation immigrants who were born and raised in one culture and then moved to another culture. *Prescribed biculturals* (also called *involuntary* migrants) are second-generation immigrants, i.e. born from parents from one culture and raised in another (Cheng et al., 2014).

As far as type of cross-cultural contact is concerned, there can be experiences through studies, work, personal relationships like friends and family, cross-cultural marriages, contacts through travelling, and living in a multicultural society. Theoretically, even the majority members of multicultural societies could acquire the second identity through a close contact to other cultural groups. Also, in a globalized world, global identity (as opposed to local identity) may be formed through education or employment by Western institutions (Chen et al., 2008).

As for ethnic characteristics, it seems obvious that individuals with mixed ethnicity might be multicultural just due to their origin.

It is widely accepted that surface characteristics alone are not enough to characterize an individual as bi- or multicultural (Brannen & Thomas, 2010). Yet, these characteristics are a premise to be multicultural since an individual with multiple cultural contacts can make a choice to be multicultural in comparison to an individual without such contacts who is uni-cultural per se (Pekerti & Thomas, 2016).

2.3.2. Definitions

The definitions of a multicultural individual vary from scholar to scholar and not surprisingly there are different opinions about who can be considered a multicultural person. Since much research has been done on acculturation, the integration strategy is associated with bi- or multiculturalism. Berry (1997) points out himself, that the concept *bicultural* corresponds closely to the integration strategy.
The choice of the integration strategy is often presented as a kind of ideal (Pekerti & Thomas, 2016) and is also a prerequisite to characterizing an individual as bicultural in the BII model (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). Some scholars even label as *truly bicultural individuals* only those high on BII. Individuals low on BII are then called not fully bicultural (Friedman, Liu, Chi, Hong, & Sung, 2012).

It is relatively common to define biculturals as individuals who have internalized more than one culture (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Fitzsimmons, Lee, & Brannen, 2013; Hong et al., 2000). Here, culture is understood as a knowledge structure or schema, which resides in individuals (Brannen & Lee, 2014). This definition dominates in many publications on multicultural individuals in the disciplines of psychology, sociology and management (Pekerti & Thomas, 2016).

Brannen and Thomas (2010) define biculturals as individuals who “identify with two (or more) distinct cultures because of having internalized more than one set of cultural schemas” (Brannen & Thomas, 2010, p.6). Cultural schema is a cognitive system of knowledge about values, norms, beliefs, attitudes and behavioral assumptions of a culture. It is not only knowledge that individuals should have about another culture to be considered bicultural. People should identify with that culture. In sum, there are three components that are necessary for a multicultural individual: knowledge, internalization and identification (Brannen & Thomas, 2010).

Grosjean (2015) defines biculturals as individuals who participate, to more or less degree in the life of several cultures, adapt their attitudes, values and behavior to these cultures and combine and blend aspects of these cultures. There are the components of knowledge, internalization and integration, yet the component of identification is missing. The scholar criticizes the criterion of identification with both cultures as a pre-requisite to being considered a multicultural person, since there are many biculturals who identify with either or neither culture (Grosjean, 2015). The early typology of Brannen et al. (2009) also recognizes this fact by dividing bicultural individuals in four types, some of which do not identify with both cultures (see Section 2.2.3. “Bicultural types”). Further, Fitzsimmons et al. (2013) use the term *marginalized biculturals* to refer to individuals who have internalized several cultures and do not identify strongly with any of them (Fitzsimmons et al., 2013).

Clearly, there are many ways to define multicultural individuals. Apparently, these overlaps exist because surface characteristics that enable characterizing an individual as multicultural *from outside* do not often find their reflections in his/her personal feelings about that fact. Someone’s multicultural/ethnic background can be visible but multicultural identification is hardly observable and thus, surface characteristics alone are not enough to draw a conclusion about a multicultural mind (Brannen & Lee, 2014).

Cheng et al. (2014) address this issue by explicitly making a distinction between multicultural person and multicultural identity. Strictly speaking, they write, an individual who has been exposed to and has learned from more than one culture is a multicultural person whereas an individual with a multicultural identity must have an attachment to these cultures, i.e. should identify with these cultures. This identification need not be, however, to the same degree by both cultures (Cheng et al., 2014).
It is possible that individuals with multicultural background have internalized two cultural schemas but do not identify with both cultures (Brannen & Lee, 2014). For example, they may retain their first culture identity while acquiring bicultural competence (Barker, 2015). They may also not acknowledge their multiculturalism (Grosjean, 2015) because they are not aware of their cultural identity (Sussman, 2000).

Conversely, it is possible to identify with more than one culture without having internalized multiple cultural schemas, e.g. somebody may identify with Danish culture because of having a Danish relative (Fitzsimmons, 2013).

### 2.3.3. Skills and competences of multicultural individuals

One of the fields of research on multicultural individuals is their (potential) skills and competences. Especially in the domain of organizational studies, this topic seems to attract much interest.

First of all, it was hypothesized and later empirically proved that multicultural individuals possess higher levels of *cognitive complexity*. The conceptual/integrative complexity in information processing and decision making refers to the ability of an individual to differentiate and integrate multiple dimensions within a certain domain. An individual with high integrative complexity can view the same issue from different perspectives and then integrate these perspectives by developing conceptual connections among them. The complexity is a personal trait but not an unchangeable one; it can be influenced by experience and organizational climate (Suedfeld, Tetlock, & Streufert, 2004).

It was empirically proved that experience of living abroad helps to increase the level of integrative complexity (Fee, Gray, & Lu, 2013). Being exposed to multiple cultures, individuals face divergent cultural norms and values and have to work out new cognitive schemas for explaining and integrating different worldviews. It was found that bicultural individuals (those who chose bicultural strategy over assimilation or separation) were more cognitively complex than monocultural individuals (Tadmor, Tetlock, & Peng, 2009).

Further, Benet-Martínez et al. (2006) found that biculturals with conflicted cultural identities were more cognitively complex than those with compatible cultural identities. This cognitive complexity is primarily relevant for cultural domain. *Cultural cognitive complexity* is defined as “people’s ability to think about culture in a highly complex manner. Specifically, this means incorporating, comparing, contrasting, and integrating multiple cultural perspectives” (Brannen & Lee, 2014, p.421).

Further, multicultural individuals were hypothesized to show more *creativity*. Indeed, empirical research proved that bicultural individuals displayed more flexibility, novelty and fluency by fulfilling of creative tasks and accomplished more innovations at work as compared to assimilated or separated individuals (i.e. those whose acculturation strategy supposed identification with one culture only) (Tadmor, Galinsky, & Maddux, 2012).

Brannen and Lee (2014) enumerate further skills and competences which can be associated with multicultural individuals: *intercultural effectiveness, perceptual acuity* (openness to other
views and flexibility to accept different perspectives) and *cultural metacognition*. Cultural metacognition refers to the awareness of individuals that culture matters (Brannen & Lee, 2014) and constitutes one of the dimensions of cultural intelligence (Ang et al., 2007).

However, it should be noted that not all competences are equally associated with all multicultural individuals. There are studies devoted to different types of multicultural individuals which state that they possess different skills depending on multicultural type. For example, multicultural individuals with high BII tend to be more innovative (Cheng, Sanchez-Burks, & Lee, 2008) whereas marginal individuals have higher levels of perceptual acuity (Brannen et al., 2009) and bicultural individuals with conflicted and more complex identities possess higher levels of cultural metacognition (Brannen & Lee, 2014).
3. The theory of multicultural identity \((n\text{-Culturalism})\) by Pekerti and Thomas (2016)

In the recently proposed \(n\text{-Cultural} \) model by Pekerti et al. (2015), four elements of multicultural identity are distinguished: knowledge as the central pre-requisite of being multicultural, which is accompanied by identification, commitment, and internalization. Pekerti et al. (2015) argue that \(n\text{-Cultural} \) individuals balance their identities actively because they recognize the value of each culture in themselves. This serves as motivation to be an \(n\text{-Cultural} \). Meta-cognition is the central concept which helps them to be aware and to value their identities.

The theory of \(n\text{-Culturalism} \) presents a continuum of multicultural individuals with an ideal \(n\text{-Cultural} \) type which exists on the extreme end of the continuum. The four elements of multiculturalism are present in multicultural individuals to a more or less degree and their combination is unique for each individual (Pekerti & Thomas, 2016).

3.1. Constituent elements of \(n\text{-Culturalism} \)

3.1.1. Cultural knowledge

Cultural knowledge is the foundation of \(n\text{-Culturalism} \) and the precondition of identification, internalization and commitment. Cultural knowledge includes "systems of values, attitudes, beliefs, and behavioral meanings shared by members of a social group (society) and learned from previous generations" (Pekerti & Thomas, 2016, pp.107-108).

Cultural knowledge may be acquired actively and passively. Without knowledge about cultural norms, values, beliefs, attitudes and behavioral assumptions it is not possible to develop the other three elements (Pekerti & Thomas, 2016).

Thomas et al. (2008) distinguish content knowledge and process knowledge. Content knowledge forms the basis for understanding and decoding of one’s own behavior and behavior of others. It deals with general culture values, attitudes and practices and helps to understand internal logic of a culture. Process knowledge is knowledge about how culture influences behavior (Thomas et al., 2008).

Multicultural individuals have easier access to cultural knowledge just due to the fact of their life context. Though cultural cues are the same for monoculturals and biculturals, the latter may have more complex cultural knowledge just because cultural information has more relevance for them (Benet-Martinez et al., 2006).

3.1.2. Identification

Most important psychological conceptions about multiculturals strive to investigate how these individuals identify with their cultures, e.g. the acculturation conception of Berry (1997), identification patterns of Phinney and Devich-Navarro (1997), the BII-model of Benet-Martinez and Haritatos (2005).
Identification is the psychological link between an individual and a group, the feeling of belonging and being a member of a group (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Individuals identify with a culture answering the question “Who am I” with regard to values, beliefs, attitudes and behavioral assumptions of a culture (Brannen & Thomas, 2010).

Integration of cultures cannot happen without identification with these cultures. However, the model does not imply the same level of identification with each culture (Pekerti & Thomas, 2016). Identification will be further explained in Chapter 4.

### 3.1.3. **Internalization**

Internalization means that an individual has incorporated the values and principles of the group as guiding principles. Whereas identification involves defining oneself (I am), internalization involves defining one’s values and attitudes (I believe). The fact that an individual identifies with a certain group does not automatically imply that he/she accepts the values of this group (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

Multicultural identities guide behavior only if they are internalized. They function as cognitive schemas that influence thoughts, feelings and behavior (Hong et al., 2000; Pekerti & Thomas, 2016).

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Figure 5: Constituent elements of *n*-Culturalism
Source: Pekerti & Thomas (2016, p. 108)
3.1.4. Commitment

Commitment refers to the “strength of an individual's belief in and acceptance of a group's goals and values, including affect (cognitive dimension), the degree of willingness to exert effort on behalf of the group, and the level of desire to maintain membership in the group (behavioral dimension)” (Pekerti et al., 2015). Commitment means conscious effort, and may find its reflection not only in a number of ties with representatives of a group but also in the strength of these ties (Pekerti & Thomas, 2016).

3.2. Continuum of multicultural identities

Pekerti and Thomas (2016) include following individuals into a continuum of multicultural identities:

- **Monoculturals.** These are individuals who no knowledge at all or have very little, often stereotypical, knowledge about other cultures. They identify with a single culture and have neither internalized nor feel committed to other cultures. Therefore, they do not really possess the four elements of multicultural identity and their behavior is guided by one culture only.

- **Pseudo-cosmopolitans** are those individuals who have profound and deep knowledge about other cultures, but identify with one culture only. They behave according to the rules of this culture and show commitment to it. They possess, therefore, only the knowledge component of multicultural identity.

- **Sympathizers** may identify (“sympathize”) with more than one culture but have internalized the norms and values of one culture only. The commitment to multiple cultures is also absent by them. Further, their behavior is ruled by a single set of cultural knowledge.

- **Chameleons** are individuals who know and understand several cultures so well, that they can exhibit socially appropriate behavior in these cultures. In other words, they have mastered the ability to tune their behavior to fit the cultural situation. That does not necessarily mean identification, internalization or commitment to multiple cultures. They may feel some psychological attachment but have not really accepted the values of another culture (Pekerti & Thomas, 2016).

- **Multiculturals** (True-cosmopolitans) possess all four elements of a multicultural identity: knowledge, identification, internalization and commitment. It should be noted again, that it is not necessary to have equal levels of identification with multiple cultures. However, according to the framework, only individuals with integrated (and not conflicted) identities, also known as hybrids (Fitzsimmons, 2013) are considered to be true-cosmopolitans (Pekerti & Thomas, 2016).

- **n-Culturals** possess knowledge of, identify with, have internalized and are committed to more than one culture. Here, n means any number of cultures. What differs them from multiculturals is the element of metacognition which enables n-Culturals to consciously
manage their cultural selves. They have learned to maintain the salience of several cultures simultaneously and can creatively integrate their identities (Pekerti & Thomas, 2016).

Due to the fact that commitment to several cultures often demands serious cognitive efforts in reconciling conflicting values and beliefs, n-Culturals have developed higher cognitive complexity (Tadmor et al., 2009) which is comparable to the notion of cultural metacognition (Thomas et al., 2008). They can consciously and accurately use their cultural knowledge and skills to match their behavior to different cultural settings and value different cultures in them (Pekerti & Thomas, 2016).

n-Culturalism is conceptualized as a *staged process* of developing multiculturalism which suggests that n-Culturals develop the techniques and skills to progress from monocultural to multicultural to n-Cultural. This is similar to the concept of cultural intelligence by Thomas (2006).

The concept of cultural intelligence was elaborated by Earley and Ang (2003) and further developed by Thomas and Inkson (2004). Cultural intelligence is defined as “a person’s capability for successful adaptation to new cultural settings, that is, for unfamiliar settings attributable to cultural context” (Earley & Ang, 2003, p.7) and as “capability to function effectively in culturally diverse settings” (Ang et al., 2007, p.335) and “capability to deal effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds” (Thomas, 2006, p.78). Cultural knowledge, mindfulness and cross-cultural skills represent three components of cultural intelligence which are interconnected (Thomas & Inkson, 2009).
4. Multicultural identity and its development

There are different views on multicultural identity development. According to some scholars, bicultural individuals do not choose cultural identity consciously, they gain their cultural knowledge and develop their multicultural identity subconsciously and non-volitionally as a result of being raised in particular cultural environments (Brannen & Thomas, 2010). Therefore, according to this view, an individual must get in touch with several cultures as a child already in order to become multicultural. Other authors state that it is also possible for adults to change their identity (e.g. from monocultural to multicultural or global), if cultural transition takes place (Berry, 1997; Sussman, 2000). This chapter defines social and cultural identity and presents three models which are useful for understanding identity changes.

4.1. Social identity and self-concept

In studying multiculturalism, one cannot avoid examining social identity processes since cultural frames and their switching underlies a mechanism of group identification (Verkuyten & Pouliasi, 2006).

The theories of self postulate that individuals have multiple beliefs about themselves, which are called self-schemas. These self-schemas include on the one hand thoughts about one’s personal attributes and on the other hand one’s membership in groups. Together they form a self-concept (Sussman, 2000). Self-concept is a relatively stable and consistently organized system with highly differentiated parts. Depending on the situation, some parts of self may be more salient than others (Turner, 1982).

Social identity is understood as “that part of the individual's self-concept which derives from their knowledge of their membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (Tajfel, 1981, p.255). Social identification is a cognitive process which demands division of the social reality into classes or categories (social categorization) and then finding one’s place within this system (self-categorization). In such a way, an individual can define oneself and others (Turner, 1982).

An individual can refer him-/herself to the following social groups: ethnicity, gender, religion, political views, occupation, marital status, etc. The sum of identifications used by an individual to define him-/herself is his/her social identity. Besides social identity, self-concept includes personal identity which is associated with appearance, psychological characteristics, competences, tastes, etc. In some situations, the personal identity may be less salient, even to the point that our behavior is based solely on the social identity, that is, our group membership (Turner, 1982).

Identities can be ascribed and achieved. Ascribed identities are given, sometimes even imposed, to someone automatically whereas achieved identities are consciously and voluntary chosen as a result of cognitive appraisal (Germain, 2004). For example, individuals may choose to become a member of a group if this membership has positive connection to them (achieved identity), however, this is not applicable for ethnic groups because individuals are just born into them (ascribed identity) (Jaspars & Warnaen, 1982).
4.2. Cultural identity

Cultural identity is “the sense of self derived from formal or informal membership in groups that impart knowledge, beliefs, values, attitudes, traditions, and ways of life” (Jameson, 2007). Cultural identity is often conceptualized as a correlate to national identity (Sussman, 2000), yet, it is also often associated with ethnic identity (Jameson, 2007). Cultural identification may be also seen as one of the four interdependent identifications of an individual which comprise cultural, national, regional and global identification (Banks, 2014).

Cultural identity often stays unformed or unrecognized in interactions with culturally similar individuals. Values and rules of own culture are often learned as something universal. For example, an individual can feel that particular behavior is expected not because it is typical for a cultural group but because it is generally good to do so. That is, an individual is unaware of culture role in shaping his/her behavior and way of thinking (Sussman, 2000). Only when an individual is confronted with another culture, cultural identity becomes salient and it becomes clear that familiar rules and norms represent only one of numerous ways for constructing reality (Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2014).

Since it is possible to understand culture as something that goes beyond national or ethnic borders (see the levels of culture: national, organizational, functional, team culture and occupational culture in Section 2.2.2. “The concept of culture”), cultural identity may also be defined as membership in societal groups, for example, social class identity, religious identity or professional group identity (Wan & Chew, 2013).

Wan and Chew (2013) determined three interconnected components of cultural identity: cultural knowledge, category label and social connections. The first component of cultural knowledge derives from understanding culture as shared knowledge traditions. This knowledge is not only possessed but also internalized and endorsed by an individual. The second component includes self-categorization of an individual regarding his/her membership of some collective. Category label may be personally chosen or imposed from outside (compare with prescribed and ascribed identity in Section 2.3.1. “Surface characteristics”). The third component encompasses individual social connections within a culture, e.g. family, friends, work relationships. Development of a (new) cultural identity happens through experience with a culture which may be gained through exposure to new cultures via traveling, presence of other cultures in the society or even through modern media like Internet (Wan & Chew, 2013).

4.3. Development of multicultural identity

The theories of identity development go back to Erik H. Erikson (1968) and his model of psychosocial development. According to the model, individuals go through several stages in their life and face crises at each stage. They are confronted with existential questions and go through their personal development by resolving these crises and answering these questions. Personal development continues the whole life (Erikson, 1968).

The issue of social identification becomes salient during adolescence when the youth between 13 and 19 have the task to define their place in the society. They have to answer the question
“Who am I” in terms of their social roles. Ethnic identity, as one of the forms of social identity, also becomes salient at this age (French, Seidman, Allen, & Aber, 2006).

Consequently, the focus group of much research on multi-ethnic, multiracial and multicultural identity development has been the youth (Bennett, 2006; Birman, 1998; French et al., 2006; Jensen, 2003; Kanno, 2003; Lee & Beckert, 2012; Matsunaga, Hecht, Elek, & Ndiaye, 2010).

However, there is evidence that cultural identity may change throughout the life due to cultural transitions. For example, immigrants, due to the need to adjust to new environment, inevitably go through cultural changes. They may want to choose an integration acculturation strategy and thus develop bicultural identity (Berry, 1997). Though the age of immigrants is not specified, it seems obvious that a great part of this group undergoes cultural transition as adults. A number of research papers deals with the acculturation of adults (Barker, 2015).

Further, there is a group of sojourners, who undergo short-term cultural transitions due business, study, governmental or other reasons. These short stays are always followed by re-entry or repatriation (Sussman, 2001). Yet, even these short-term transitions often result in self-concept changes. One of the consequences thereof is development of intercultural or global identity (Sussman, 2000).

Taking into attention the largely heterogeneous group of potentially multicultural individuals, it becomes clear, why there exist several theoretical models to describe multicultural identity development. In this diploma thesis, I present three models to match each cultural situation.

First of all, there is a model of biracial identity development for adolescents proposed by Poston (1990), which includes following stages:

1. **Personal identity** stage when an individual has a sense of self, independent of his/her ethnic background.
2. **Choice of group categorization** stage, when an individual is pushed by the society to choose a specific racial identity. This choice is two-fold: an individual may choose a multiracial identity or a dominant identity. Status factors, social support factors and personal factors (among them knowledge of languages and cultural knowledge) influence this choice.
3. **Denial** stage, characterized by feelings of disloyalty and guilt towards the parent, whose culture was not chosen.
4. **Appreciation** stage, when individuals begin to value their multiple identity and learn more about the second culture.
5. **Integration** stage, when one’s several ethnic identities are valued and recognized (Poston, 1990).

Another possibility to develop bicultural identity is due to acculturation. Speaking about immigrants and their acculturation, Berry (1997) distinguishes several phases of acculturation. (Positive) adaptation normally has a form of a U-curve. In the beginning of acculturation process small problems arise, then more serious problems come, and then the problems are disappearing as the individual has adapted to the new culture. However, there are not many empirical studies that prove this sequence or provide evidence for exact time periods (Berry, 1997).
Psychological acculturation may be accompanied by culture conflicts which may be rather serious. An individual experiences the so-called “acculturative stress” (Berry, 1997) or “culture shock” (Oberg, 2006).

Culture shock is defined as anxiety experienced by an individual when familiar signs and cues of social intercourse are removed, for example, when an individual enters a new culture. This anxiety can be compared with a state of being like a fish out of the water and has objective reasons, i.e. it affects every individual independent of his/her personal traits, such as open-mindedness or kindness (Oberg, 2006).

There are four stages which individuals undergo when they experience cultural shock:

1. The first one is the *honeymoon* stage which is characterized by positive feelings about the new surrounding and lasts from several days or weeks to six months.
2. The second stage is connected with *hostility* towards new culture and feelings of rejection. This stage represents a crisis and if overcome, makes adjustment to the new culture possible.
3. Having collected cultural information and having learned the language, an individual becomes able to function independently within the culture and reaches the third stage of adjustment.
4. At the fourth stage, an individual accepts the customs and rules of the culture and after some time, may begin to like and value them. Then he/she is fully *adapted* to the culture (Oberg, 2006).

Berry (1997) and some other scholars (Demes & Geeraert, 2015) prefer the notion “acculturative stress” over “culture shock” because “shock” would imply only negative experiences. Further, stress is understood in psychology as a reaction to environmental factors, and thus, has more theoretical basis (Berry, 1997). Anyway, the process of getting adapted to a new culture is connected with difficulties and takes some time. In addition to U-curve model, some other models were detected, e.g. a reverse J-curve and an inverse U-curve. It was also found that there are coping strategies which may diminish the duration and strength of stress (Demes & Geeraert, 2015). As a consequence of adapting to a new culture (having learned its rules, accepting and liking its values and behaving according to them), an individual may become bicultural.

Finally, Sussman (2000) proposed a model of cultural identity change during short-term transitions. She found out that before cultural transition, cultural identity is hardly explicitly recognized as a part of one’s self-concept (except for representatives of minority cultures who are usually more aware about their cultural background). In one’s own culture, an individual feels like a fish in the water; one’s cultural identification only becomes salient when cultural transition takes place (or at least more salient than before, which was empirically confirmed by Barker (2015)). An expatriate feels like an out-group member in a new culture, and his/her *cultural identity emerges*. This identification with the home culture is then even stronger than that of monocultural individuals (Sussman, 2000).

During the next phase, individuals must make a number of accommodation choices in order to adapt to the new environment. An expatriate may choose among a range of accommodation
modes, from maintaining one’s own home identity and behavior to “going native”. This is the stage where individuals try to find person-environment fit, and when they succeed, adaptation is successful. This period is also characterized by self-concept disturbance and identity changes, yet the latter become salient only upon repatriation when sojourners become out-group members in their own culture (Sussman, 2000).

There are four possible patterns of identity changes: subtractive, additive, affirmative and intercultural. The latter is characterized by a combination of several cultural scripts but it is different from integration of values or bicultural strategy in terms that a global identity evolves. Such expatriates may define themselves as world citizens and function effectively in international environments (Sussman, 2000).

Figure 6: Shifts in cultural identity throughout the cultural transition
Source: Sussman (2000, p.362)
Part II: Empirical study

5. Method

Many authors have already engaged with bi- and multiculturalism and delivered research articles. Quantitative methods were used in a great part of studies, for example, BII-scale for measuring bicultural integration and other measurement tools for intercultural effectiveness (Lee, 2010).

However, in the special issue of Journal of International Business Studies there is a call for more qualitative research on the subject of bi- and multiculturalism (Doz, 2011). Qualitative research is constructionist, inductivist and interpretivist in its nature (Bryman & Bell, 2007). It matches for new theory building and theory testing. Given that multiculturalism as applied to organizational issues is a relatively new field of study, this method would match better to explore the phenomenon. Therefore, for my diploma thesis I have chosen to apply the qualitative research method.

5.1. Sample

Given that individuals with multicultural identity are defined as those who have been exposed to and have internalized more than one culture (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005), the sample consisted of individuals who had a considerable living, working or studying experience abroad and were considerably influenced by more than one culture (e.g. through close contact to its members). The experience with Austrian culture was a necessary criterion for participating in the study. The sample also included individuals raised in multicultural environment and those in multicultural relationships. Such individuals potentially possess knowledge of cultures which is a prerequisite of other elements of multiculturalism (Pekerti & Thomas, 2016).

Since other dimensions of multiculturalism (identification, commitment and internalization) are not easily observable, it was helpful to rely on the above stated surface characteristics when choosing interview partners. The main goal of the study was finding out how individuals become multicultural, what shapes this process and what are the implications for organizations. Therefore, to answer these questions, multicultural individuals had to be interviewed on the topic, how they have developed another identity. Yet, it is known that not every individual who has much cultural exposure becomes multicultural. Consequently, it was not less important to find out, why individuals would not become multicultural and would not acquire one more identity, i.e. what factors would hinder multicultural identity development. Taking into account these considerations, the participants’ selection criterion was considerable multicultural experience which is manifested in the so-called surface characteristics. The question of their identity was first discussed during the study.

Potentially multicultural individuals were contacted and given prior information on the study, which included the selection criterion (individuals with tight contact to several cultures through life, work, family etc.), the approximate interview topics (relationship to these cultures and influence of these cultures on one’s life), approximate interview time (45-50 minutes) and promise to keep anonymity. Then they were asked if they were willing to participate.
The participants were found through personal contacts; some of them were recruited by a snowball principle. At first the individuals from personal network were contacted who then invited additional interviewees. Twelve individuals were contacted, ten of them agreed to give interviews. One more participant was interviewed after the main data collection had taken place and was only asked to answer the most important question of multicultural identity development due to time reasons.

Thus, the sample consisted of 11 individuals with considerable multicultural exposure. All of them had at least a two-year and at most sixteen-year experience of living in a culture, different from their first culture. All but one participants were individuals with a non-Austrian first culture who moved to Austria due to different reasons. Three of them relocated in teenager years, seven moved as adults. One interviewee was originally Austrian who has been working in the USA for about 16 years and has his home in both countries.

At the time when interviews were conducted, seven participants have been living in Austria on the permanent basis, one participant has returned to the first culture and two have moved to the third culture. Yet, the latter three participants keep personal contacts within the Austrian culture and visit from time to time. The participant with the first Austrian culture moves back and forth between the countries and also maintains close contacts in both cultures.

All participants have successful working and living experience in several cultures and speak more than one language. Since all but one participant at some time relocated to Austria and one participant has relocated to the USA, cultural transition was a common life event that shaped their experience. Yet, some interesting details have been revealed during the interviews, namely, only a few participants had been truly monocultural before their move. Many interviewees had already experienced contacts with other cultures due to living in a multicultural society, family background or prior transitions.

5.2. Data collection and analysis

The main data collection was conducted with the help of semi-structured interviews from May 2016 to December 2016, followed by an additional short interview in January 2017. The interview guide can be found in Appendix A of the diploma thesis.

The interviews were carried out in public, private or study/work places in the area of Linz, Upper Austria. All interviews were conducted face-to-face, audio recorded and later manually transcribed. No transcribing software was used.

At the beginning of the interviews the participants were asked to fill in the form with demographic and culture-related data. These data are summarized in Table 1 in Section 6.1. “Background information”. They were also asked to assess the degree of their identification with several cultures using the 6-point scale by Benet-Martínez and Haritatos (2005). The results were not meant to be quantitatively measured. Their aim was rather to give impulse for reflecting on one’s cultural experience.
After completing the form, interview questions were asked. Originally, the questions were organized around the three main topics, that corresponded the research sub-questions. Yet, during the interviews their sequence was sometimes spontaneously changed or some questions were omitted or replaced with other more appropriate questions. It was made to guarantee the smooth conversation, deepen the understanding of a participant’s point and avoid changing the subject abruptly. Yet, the beginning and the end of the interviews were always the same, i.e. the interviews began with a personal story, by answering the questions “Who am I” with regard to cultural background and finished with the definition of a multicultural and an n-Cultural individual.

The two ways to define participants’ (multicultural) identity were chosen due to the following reasons: the form was based on BII (Bicultural Identity Integration) questionnaire of Benet-Martínez and Haritatos (2005) which had been often used for studies on bicultural individuals. The table (see Appendix A) was aimed at helping to reflect on one’s cultural experience and prepare for the interview. As for “Who am I” question, the literature postulates that answering it with regard to values, beliefs and behavioral assumptions defines one’s cultural identity (Brannen & Thomas, 2010).

The interview languages were English (3 interviews), German (5 interviews) and Russian (3 interviews). The language choice depended on participants’ background and wish. The questions were originally composed in English and then translated into other languages. Yet, the original version of the 6-point BII scale (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005) and the definition of an n-Cultural (Pekerti & Thomas, 2016) were always provided to participants in English together with the German or Russian translation.

The template analysis by King (1998) was used to analyze the data. Template analysis is widely used in qualitative research and its essence consists of looking for themes, some of which can be identified a priori and some of which may emerge during analysis. In accordance with the procedure, the first template can be created using theoretical background and applied to data. As the data is analyzed, the template can be modified and at last final template is determined (King, 1998).

The first template was created based on the first 4 interviews and the interview questions and then applied to the next interviews. Then it was modified as new codes have emerged. Both initial and final templates can be found in Appendix B.
6. Findings

With the help of qualitative method, it was possible to collect rich data to answer the research question. The findings are organized according to the research sub-questions to give a more structured view on the problem under analysis. Though personal experience of the participants varied greatly, it was obvious that there were a number of themes common to all of the participants. The three main topics include: multicultural identity development, learning and personal development of multicultural individuals, organizational context.

6.1. Background information

At the beginning of the interview the participants were asked to fill in the information form, which included some background information about their cultural experience and demographic data. The form can be found in Appendix A of the diploma thesis. The overview with culture-related data is given in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Cultures</th>
<th>Years of close contact</th>
<th>Close contact through</th>
<th>Spoken languages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Peruvian/Austrian/ German/Latin American</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Work, studies, personal relationships, living in another country</td>
<td>Spanish, German, English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Canadian/Austrian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Work, studies, living in another country, traveling, personal relationships</td>
<td>English, German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Austrian/US/ European/world</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Work, living in another country, living in a multicultural society, personal relationships</td>
<td>English, German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Armenian/Austrian</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Studies, living in another country, living in a multicultural society, personal relationships, mixed ethnicity</td>
<td>German, English, Armenian, Persian, French, Russian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>German/Spanish/ Austrian</td>
<td>4,5</td>
<td>Studies, living in another country, living in a multicultural society, traveling, personal relationships</td>
<td>Spanish, English, French, German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>French/Austrian/ European</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Work, studies, living in another country, personal relationships</td>
<td>English, German, French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Russian/German/ Austrian/Tatar</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Work, living in another country, living in a multicultural society, traveling, personal relationships, mixed ethnicity</td>
<td>Russian, German, English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Albanian/Austrian</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Work, studies, living in another country, living in a multicultural society, personal relationships</td>
<td>German, English, Albanian, Serbo-Croatian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Armenian/Iran/ Austrian/all</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Work, studies, living in another country, living in a multicultural society, personal relationships</td>
<td>German, English, Farsi, Armenian, Russian, Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Russian/Ukrainian/ Austrian/Swiss</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Work, studies, living in another country, living in a multicultural society, personal relationships</td>
<td>Russian, Ukranian, English, German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Russian/Ukrainian/ Austrian</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Work, living in another country, personal relationships</td>
<td>Russian, Ukranian, German</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Background information
6.2. Multicultural identity development

The first large topic which corresponds to the first research sub-question deals with multicultural identity development. One of the goals of the study was to investigate the process of development, possible phases, factors which could influence identification. First, the interviewees were asked to speak about their current identity and then to recount how it has happened that they feel this way and what were the influence factors. The detailed interview questions are given in Appendix A.

Several meaningful sub-themes were identified within each theme. Factors which shaped the development process included time (length of cultural contact and phases), language and social activities as well as reciprocity between a sense of belonging and acceptance by the social surrounding.

6.2.1. Current identity

According to Benet-Martínez et al. (2002), multicultural individuals can be defined in terms of self-identification. Therefore, prior to answering interview questions, participants were asked to fill in the form and state which cultures they belong to or identify with and give points. After that, participants were asked to speak about their cultural background and answer the question “Who am I” regarding the culture.

Several patterns of identification were observed during the interviews which included bicultural identity, one-culture identity with cultural competence in another culture and broader cultural group identity or global identity.

● Bicultural identity was apparent when interviewees claimed their belonging to two cultures, one of which was Austrian culture. The participants clearly stated that they identify with both cultures and could not say that they have single cultural background. This identification pattern was observed by the participants who moved to Austria as adolescents and have lived here for more than 16 years:

“I would say it’s a mix of Armenian and Austrian, it’s Austro-Armenian. If you grow up in Armenian culture you automatically belong to that culture, and it’s the same in Austria. I like being in Austria, I think I wouldn't go back to Armenia and live there, because I enjoy living here, but … the fact that part of me is also Armenian, it’s I would say defines me, like part of me is Armenian and part of me is Austrian.” (Interviewee 4)

“Ich bin ethnisch Kosovo-Albaner … ich fühle mich heute noch mehr zur albanischen Kultur zugehörig, als zu österreichischen. Obwohl ich schon seit einiger Zeit in Österreich lebe, aber … ich fühle mich nicht nur als Albaner, sondern auch als Österreichier.” (Interviewee 8)

● One-culture identity with cultural competence with another culture was observed by participants who moved to Austria as adults and have had 2 to 9 years of close contact with Austrian culture:
“Ich bin eine Peruanerin ... und ich habe mich ganz gut angepasst an die österreichische [Kultur].” (Interviewee 1)

“With Austria, I chose 3 out of 6 because I've lived here for a couple of years now and there are some parts of the culture, I feel like I kind of adapt to and in some cases, I'm a kind of mixture of Austrian and Canadian, for certain. But I'm still if someone asks me, what about my culture, I'm not saying that I'm Austrian. I don't feel Austrian clearly although there are little things that I would say I've adjusted to. And for Canada, I've just picked 6, this is my home country and ... I feel like I definitely belong to this culture, I identify with it.” (Interviewee 2)

- Broader cultural group identification was observed by the participant with 16 years of close contact with Austrian culture:

  “Ich hoffe, dass ich eine Europäerin bin. Also, ich bin in einem Land geboren, ich bin in Frankreich geboren, ich habe in Deutschland zwei oder drei Jahre gelebt, ich war auch 2 Monate in England. Also... ja, ich bin eine Europäerin.” (Interviewee 6)

- Global identity was observed by the participant who originates from Austria, has had 10 years of close contact with the U.S. culture and very diverse travelling experience:

  “I think I am a world open, a very open world citizen, a citizen of the world. I think that's I wanna see me myself.” (Interviewee 3)

However, not by all participants cultural identification pattern was clear. Sometimes the results from the two sources (i.e. the statements “I identify with...” and “I am...”) were not uniform. For example, answering the question “Who am I”, two participants named less cultures as when they filled in the table. Consider the answer of Interviewee 7, who referred to two cultures while answering the question “Who am I” and four cultures while speaking about own’s cultural identification:

“My mother is Russian and father is half-German ... I lived in Tatarstan, in a multicultural city, where there were many different ethnic groups. But I still regard to myself as Russian. Of course, in Russia I more thought of myself as a German. My surname was so... I was always asked about my surname. I felt different. And here it turns out that I am Russian. We’re not Russians there, we’re not Germans here. That is why, 50/50.”

“Cultures I identify with... it’s Russian culture, for 6 points, that means very much, German culture not for six but for five, because of my father, I grew up like that. I would also like to include Tatar culture because I grew up among Tatars and I know the culture and food, at least for 3 points. And I give Austrian culture 4 points.”

In another case, answering the question “Who am I”, Interviewee 6 defined herself more broadly as European. Yet, filling in the table, she is more specific:

“Ich bin eine Europäerin” vs. „Ich identifiziere mich mit Frankreich und auch mit Österreich.“
Similarly, Interviewee 10 identified with Russian, Ukrainian, Austrian and Swiss cultures, yet, defined himself more broadly when answering the question “Who am I”:

“I would say probably [that I belong] to Slavic culture. Because I cannot distinctly emphasize either a particular country or a particular ethnic group because I was raised under the influence of different cultures. But as far as Slavic culture, or East-Slavic culture is concerned, it characterizes [me] more general.”

The different answers could probably be explained by the fact that answering the question “Who am I”, interviewees used their first (ethnic or national) culture as a reference point. The majority of the interviewees experienced close contact with another culture as adults already. Their first cultural identity must have been already developed which corresponds the model of Erikson (1968) outlined in Section 4.3. “Development of multicultural identity”. The participants have already had their place in the society of their origin and their identity was “fixed”.

Consider how Interviewee 1 mentions this point directly when speaking about her cultural background:


Yet, it is also known from the literature that one’s cultural identity can change in adult age due to several reasons, e.g. when cultural transition takes place (Sussman, 2000). It might have happened that by filling in the table, the participants thought more about the current situation, i.e. culture they live in now or have deep connection to. The format of the table might have given more impulse for reflection about different cultures and allowed participants to be more specific about their relationships to these cultures.

At the same time, participants have also used the possibility to reflect and explain why they identify with a particular culture. Identification with the first culture was mostly due to birth place, growing up in this culture (“I was born and raised here”, “it’s my home”, “das ist das Land, wo ich zur Welt gekommen bin”), language (“I feel close … because of the language”, “ich fühle mich … zugehörig, weil das ist meine Erstsprache”), family (“and also my parents and my family”), nationality and background (“aufgrund von meiner Nationalität und aufgrund meiner Biographie”).

Identification with the second culture was due to place of living, time spent in the second culture and social ties. Mostly, several reasons were named simultaneously: place of living (“because I’m living here, so it is also a big part of me”), time and social ties (“weil ich schon sehr lange da lebe und arbeite und soziale Kontakte habe”), time (“because I spend so much time in the US, I feel very much associated with this culture”), time and social ties (“weil ich schon doch seit einiger Zeit in Österreich lebe und österreichische Freunde habe”).

Sometimes, it was not at all easy for individuals with very much multicultural experience to characterize oneself as belonging to a particular culture or define some particular culture mix. It might be explained by the fact, that notions “culture”, “country”, “origin” are uniquely interwoven
in their biography in comparison to monocultural individuals. For example, Interviewee 10 explained the problem as follows:

“Austrians often ask me, if I identify with the Ukraine or Russia, which question is not easy to answer univocally. And Ukrainians often ask, with which country I actually identify more. And there are not two variants of answer but more. Especially now when I originate from one country, have citizenship of another country and I have to work in a third country, it is even more vague, because one can use even four or five variants.”

Interviewee 9 echoed:


She added further, that her identity included more than one culture and she would not like to choose because it would mean to limit it:


The above given examples testify that the nature of cultural identity is very complex. In addition to the difficulty to describe one’s multicultural identity univocally, using a distinct and unchangeable set of cultures, another issue has emerged during the interviews, namely, contradictory statements in defining one’s sense of belonging.

The traditional acculturation patterns of Berry (1997), outlined in Section 2.1.3. “Bi-dimensional acculturation conception”, suppose four possible acculturation outcomes. Two of them, integration and marginalization, evolve when an individual identifies with both (in the first case) or with neither (in the second case) culture. Yet, the interviews revealed that it could also happen that an individual identifies with both and with neither culture at the same time.

Consider the statements of Interviewee 9, who said at first:

“Ich nimm von dem, was gesehen habe … das Beste. … Ich fühle mich aber nirgends richtig zugehörig, stört mich aber nicht.”

And she added later:

“Was ich eben gesagt habe, dass ich mich nirgends reingehöre, das soll jetzt nicht so negativ klingen, ich könnte genauso sagen, ich fühle mich überall zugehörig.”
If traditionally, a bicultural individual was described as a person who identifies with both cultures and a marginal individual as a person who identifies with neither culture, the findings suggest that the boundary between these identification patterns might be not clear cut. Interviewee 8, who said that he identified with both Austrian and Albanian cultures, stated later that he felt neither fully Albanian nor fully Austrian, “neither fish nor flesh”:

“Wenn ich in Kosovo bin… Wenn ich ab und zu auf Urlaub fahre, … da fühle ich mich ein bisschen fremd … Und in Österreich bin ich genauso, weil ich kann mich noch so zugehörig fühlen, aber 100% kann nicht dann sein. Schlussendlich … Bei uns gibt es so ein Sprichwort, altes albanisches Sprichwort, das heißt: “as mesch, as pesch”, kein Fisch und kein Fleisch. Und so fühle ich mich dann, und so bin ich aber, in Wahrheit.”

In comparison to Interviewee 9, whose identification patterns (“both” and “neither/nor”) were independent from the context, Interviewee 8 spoke about a specific situation (visiting the first culture) which involved change of cultural context.

It should be noted here that though the research literature traditionally connected marginality with negative feelings, such feelings have been neither observed nor reported by participants. It might possibly be explained by their feelings of simultaneous belonging (to both cultures or to either of them), even if the situation or context makes them feel foreign. And indeed, such situations seem to happen rather often to multicultural individuals, when they are ascribed only one cultural identity. Grosjean (2015) notes that bicultural individuals are not always recognized as such by other people or by the society.

Consider how interviewees depicted the situations where they were ascribed one identity only (which exactly, depending on the situation).

“Ich bin eine Peruanerin hier … Eine Freundin hat gesagt, ja, wir machen ein Grill, und ich hab gesagt, “Ok, wann soll ich kommen? Ja, um 2 Uhr...“ Nein, nein, die Peruaner sollen um 1 Uhr 30 kommen!“ Weil sie wissen, dass ab und zu die Peruaner generell später kommen, die Latein Amerikaner, da haben wir eine halbe Stunde früher...“ (Interviewee 1)

“Wenn ich in Frankreich bin, bin ich die Österreicherin, wenn ich in Österreich bin, dann bin ich die Französin. Ich kann mir das immer aussuchen.“ (Interviewee 6)

"I feel myself multicultural but I am not perceived like I belong to them. Neither in the Ukraine nor here, because I still have foreign roots and another language." (Interviewee 11)

“I cannot say that I’m German, then they will ask, which part of Germany are you from? That is, to say I’m German is absurd here, because they will think that you have grown up in Germany and came here as a German.” (Interviewee 7)

Situational identity is not a new concept and it is known that situational factors play a role when an individual relates to societal groups (Kaufert, 1977). Therefore, it is not surprising that social context could influence the way multiculturals refer to their identity and feel different in different
situations. One of the conditions, mentioned by the interviewees, was acceptance by the members of the culture. The idea was exactly summarized by Interviewee 8:


In the end of the interviews all participants were asked if they think of themselves as of multicultural individuals and then asked to comment on the modified definition of n-Cultural by Pekerti and Thomas (2016). All but one interviewees answered that they felt multicultural and explained this feeling with their life experience. This one interviewee told than he has never strived to be multicultural and therefore, he is not fully multicultural but he is multicultural enough to feel comfortable psychologically and to have no problems at work or in social life.

Interviewees told that they felt multicultural because:

- this was their actual life experience (“there are different cultures in my life, that is my everyday experience”, “weil ich beide Kulturen irgendwie auslebe”, “because I live in a multicultural society and have close contacts with it”)

- due to their personal story and family background (“because I had experiences in different cultures and because background of my family consists of different cultures”, “so wie ich aufgewachsen bin, ich glaub, das ist die Begriffserklärung für Multikulturalität”)

- due to the mix of cultures in their personality („weil in meiner Persönlichkeit unbewusst und bewusst viele Eigenschaften von verschiedenen Kulturen sich eingebetten haben”)

- due to openness and cultural knowledge (“because I think I could gain an open-mindedness, it's easier for me … to live in a multicultural way. I can communicate with everyone and I can mich versetzen in other cultures”, “you have understanding of both cultures”, “I think that a multicultural person is an open person”).

6.2.2. Change in identification

Many of the interviewees seemed to be comfortable with the idea that cultural identity may change throughout life. Yet, some of them told that they had not always thought like this. Personal experience showed them, however, that cultural changes are possible. For example, Interviewee 2 told that she had changed her mind after having relocated to Austria:

“Originally, I thought that your culture is your nationality… and after moving, I see more that your culture may change.”

Another participant told that she had been convinced earlier that cultural identity would stay the same even if cultural transition happens. She had kept this opinion for a longer time living in
Austria yet finally she realized that she had acquired not only knowledge of language but also began to identify with the culture:


Though not many interviewees touched upon this question, it seemed that thinking of cultural identity as something unchangeable and ascribed might be one of the reasons for discrepancy in self-identification (when the participants identified with many cultures but at the same time defined themselves in terms of one culture only). Mostly it was someone’s national (citizenship) or ethnic identity which was emphasized. For example, Interviewee 7 stated:

“I came to Austria, but it was nevertheless Staatsbürgerschaft Russia.“

The idea that one’s cultural background is defined by one’s citizenship was explicitly expressed by several other interviewees. It seemed though, that in some cases they spoke not about their personal feeling but how they were perceived by the society:

“Als peruanisch-deutsche würde man betrachten die Leute, die seit längerer, längerer Zeit, seit der Kindheit vielleicht [oder] die Schule dort gemacht haben... oder mit doppelter Staatsbürgerschaft“ (Interviewee 1)

Thinking about cultural identity as about national identity seems to limit the possibilities to change one’s identification through cultural transitions. Considering both identities to be the same, one could assume that changing of one’s cultural identity would only be possible when changing one’s citizenship but this is not the case. However, personal cultural identification and national identification seemed to be very similar or even equal for many interviewees, especially those whose cultural experience was limited by two or maximum three cultures. Yet, upon reflecting about one’s culture during the interview, they became more aware of the differences between cultural and national identity and could give more nuanced answers about their cultural identification.

Speaking about the role of several cultures, some interviewees noticed that though the importance of cultures in their life might change, yet mostly the first culture stayed dominant. Even after having lived in another culture for years, they felt most attached to the culture of their origin. For example, one interviewee told that though he was more directly concerned with the problems and issues of the country he currently lived in, he still felt dominance of the first culture:

“The culture I identified from childhood on, its role has faded slowly. But it’s still dominant at the moment though it doesn’t take 100%. Later I began to identify more with Ukrainian culture, i.e. there was a shift from Russian to Ukrainian and even later towards Austria and Switzerland where I live and encounter the problems of these lands.” (Interviewee 10)
Yet, though all participants spoke about affective attachment to their first culture and its high importance, the further facts reported by them showed, that in many spheres of life they felt and acted multicultural. Upon deeper reflection, interviewees recalled their experiences referring to cultural changes which helped to describe the process of multicultural identity development.

6.2.2.1. Cultural transition

Multicultural identity of participants evolved mostly as a result of cultural transitions, i.e. movements from one culture to another. Cultural transitions may be short-term and long-term, temporary and permanent (Sussman, 2010). The majority of interviewees experienced multiple cultural transitions in their life and consequently, had close cultural contacts with more than one culture. Several participants took part in life of several cultures as children already, others had first contacts with other cultures as adults.

Nine of eleven interviewees experienced relatively long-term cultural transitions, i.e. more than five years of stay in another culture. The rest two interviewees had several short-term stays, from several months to 2 years. The temporary or permanent nature of cultural transitions could not be always easily defined. This is because of the fact that life plans of participants were not always foreseeable and according to their experience, could unpredictably change, e.g. for work reasons. It could be stated, however, that the intention for a long-term stay could already have influence on identification with a second culture.

For example, Participant 10 reported the growing sense of identification due to long-lasting plans connected with a country:

“*We have begun to have more serious plans for the future and identify more with this country, because we lived as a family all together here and reckoned upon that the daughter would study here and that the wife would work after she completed her studies and I also began to make plans that we would stay in this country.*”

Sussman (2000) stated that physical move brings an individual from in-group to out-group relation with the society and a sense of cultural identity becomes more salient. For monocultural individuals, it is their first and only cultural identity which becomes prominent. Yet, there are groups which already had a heightened sense of cultural identity, like small ethnic groups within a larger society (see Section 4.3. “Development of multicultural identity”).

Though for the majority of the participants, relocation resulted in new identification patterns in the long run, only a few of them already noticed identity change right after their move. A couple of interviewees mentioned feeling as outsider at the beginning. Yet for those, who had already had multicultural contact and who had been more aware about their identity because of their ethnic background, relocation resulted in some kind of “identity proof” by the society.

For example, for one participant of German-Russian descent, the changes in identification happened shortly after her move to Germany and later to Austria. Whereas in Russia she felt more like a German, in Austria she felt more like a Russian. Answering the question, if the way she identifies with different cultures changed throughout her life, she told:
“Yes, of course. It depends on, where I live. When I lived in Tatarstan, it was clear that I am not Tatar; because my appearance, language and culture was Russian. Yet, my surname was German, and it was pointed out that I’m German, I am not local. When I came to Germany, it turned out that I am Russian. And in Austria, I was Russian again, because of the Staatsbürgerschaft.” (Interviewee 7)

Another interviewee, who belonged to ethnic Armenian minority in Iran, moved to Armenia as a child. Despite her identification as Armenian, she was perceived as a Persian at first, yet she succeeded in getting acknowledgement as an Armenian.


6.2.2.2. Time

- **Length of cultural contact**

Time of very close contact or living in another culture seemed to be the most important factor that influenced identity. Time factor was stressed by almost all the interviewees when describing their identity development.

The participants who have developed the sense of belonging to several cultures stressed that this time was needed to adapt to a new culture and also to be accepted by the members of this culture (“man braucht Zeit um sich am besten anzupassen, zu adaptieren”, “after some period of time also the Austrians accepted you as a part of their culture”). It seems logical, because an individual needs to get enough knowledge about a culture in order to get adapted to it, and accumulating this knowledge needs time. Also, in order to be accepted by others as a member of a culture, one needs to master the language and learn behavioral rules.

Whereas a lengthy period of living in another culture was stressed as a necessary condition for identification with this culture, the opposite was also true: according to the experience of interviewees, short contacts with other cultures were not enough to develop the sense of belonging. The reason, why they did not identify with some cultures in spite of having close contacts with them, was a short time of living within those cultures (“ich glaube, da muss man noch länger wohnen”, “I wasn’t in either place for very long and I think, because of that they don’t feel like I belong to them”). At the same time, they supposed that they would identify more if they had lived in a culture for a longer period (“I think that I would identify more with Austrian, with the time that I’m living here”).
As for the length of cultural contact, necessary for developing a sense of identification, it varied from participant to participant. Taking into account the fact that each multicultural individual has a unique personality and a different life story, it seems also logical to suppose that some individuals need more time to develop multicultural identification than others. The gathered data showed, however, that multicultural identity development usually takes more than two years.

Since not all interviewees could tell the exact time periods (which might be explained by the unconscious nature of the identity development process), the scarce evidence delivers the following crucial time points: 2 years, 4 years and 10 years.

At least two years of close cultural contact seem to be needed to get cultural knowledge and learn behavioral rules. Yet, the sense of identification seems to just begin to evolve at this time. According to the experience of Interviewee 2, after two years of intense exposure to another culture, the periods of feeling at home and feeling foreign replaced each other depending on situation. Sometimes she indeed felt belonging to Austrian culture but after 2 years of stay it was still impossible for her to develop a general sense of belonging.

After 4 years of cultural contact an unconscious identification might be achieved, as the experience of Interviewee 1 showed:


And after ten years of multicultural contact one’s multiple identification seems to be fully developed:

“I think it came over the years, the more travelling the more people that you meet the more you realize that it would be cool to get to any place of the world and feel welcome there. … So probably it took 10 years.” (Interviewee 3)

It must be stated here, that obviously lengthy time periods are needed especially for those who have undergone cultural transition as adults. When one’s cultural identity has been already fully developed in a home culture, it seems to take more time and effort to construct a new sense of cultural identification. As Interviewee 6 fairly noted:

“Es geht nicht von heute auf morgen. Also, man stellt sich ganz viele Fragen, und man muss eigentlich seine Persönlichkeit weiter entwickeln”.

This idea was proved by other interviewees, who moved as teenagers and connected their bicultural identity development with school time. In their case, it took only a couple of years to develop a sense of belonging. So, it might be explained by the fact that in teenager years, individual’s socialization and identity formation is not completed yet. Therefore, an individual might be more open for new cultures and second identity acquisition might take less time.

One more important observation should be made here. The findings suggest that developing of multicultural identification (in the sense of being able to say, “I am a multicultural person”) and developing of a deep sense of belonging to several cultures (in the sense of being able to say,
e.g. “I am Austro-Canadian) do not require the same amount of time. Depending on the particular case, one of these identifications can be achieved quicker than the other.

- Phases

According to the model of Pekerti and Thomas (2016), the first point on the continuum of multicultural identities was occupied by monocultural individuals. The study delivered very scarce evidence from interviewees about monocultural period in their development because many of them were aware of other cultures at an early age already and others lived in a multicultural environment from the very beginning.

The monocultural period of interviewees could be characterized by one language and one culture only and continued not long, till school age at maximum:

“It was only one language, Russian, in the family, at school, in the neighborhood, that is why it was monocultural period, where I did not encounter other languages or cultures.”
(Interviewee 10)

The first encounter with other cultures happened at school (“then at school I needed to learn the Ukrainian language and literature and for me it was a discovery that there are other Slavic languages”) or through personal connections (“One of my neighbors married an American years and years ago, and they were visiting from the US”).

Revelation that there are other languages and cultures could be associated with discomfort because an individual should take efforts to master the new language (“I had bad marks in foreign languages and I had to learn more”) and with interest (“Es war Zufall am Anfang, aber dann hat es mich wirklich interessiert”).

It is known that individuals who experience cultural transition, have an adaptation period. Known as cultural shock (Oberg, 2006) or acculturative stress (Berry, 1997), this period was mentioned by many interviewees. A person needs time to learn about the new culture, to get used to it. After a while, when adaptation phase is overcome and individuals learned about rules and behavior patterns of a new culture, they could come to reconciliation and began to value positive things in both cultures. The process between the initial stage and later comfortable multiculturalism seemed to be unconscious and many interviewees could not describe it in detail. Typically, they began speaking about difficulties of the first stage, referring to culture shock, home-sickness, periods of ups and downs and then made a big leap to describe the state of being well-adjusted to the local culture.

The most interesting facts that could be observed, referred to some related issues which accompanied the process. For example, some interviewees spoke about differences between a temporary and more or less permanent stay. This difference could influence the way of thinking about one’s place in another culture. For example, if an individual had more long-lasting plans connected with his/her stay in a new culture, the motivation could be higher to get more knowledge about this culture, to learn the language and to adjust quicker to the new environment. But at the same time a change of residence intention could also invoke stress due
to realization of permanent nature of transition. Interviewee 2, who had lived and studied some time in Austria before she stayed here for work reasons, referred to this experience:

“When I actually moved here, it was like a shock, ok, now I'm actually living here, for a more permanent amount of time…” (Interviewee 2)

Independent from temporary or permanent plans to stay, many interviewees told about discomfort at the beginning. For example, Interviewee 3 reported that he felt home-sick at first. Home-sickness was described as an internal feeling that was not influenced by external circumstances. Feeling comfortable and “at home” in many cultures came with more experience and more travelling:

“I remember when I was in Boston the first time I was supposed to be there only for 6 months. And then the company was happy to extend it to another 6 months, I stayed there for a year. But I remember after about 8 months I really felt like I need to go home. … I guess I just missed home a little bit. So even though everybody over there made me feel comfortable, internally I thought I need to go home. But then the more travelling I did, the more I realized that my home is not only “home” home but I can also feel comfortable in all other places, even if I’m there longer time.” (Interviewee 3)

The first time was also characterized by feelings of uncertainty which is logical because an individual finds himself/herself in an unknown social environment where all familiar social cues disappear. These cues, which include norms, customs, facial expression, gestures, etc. might not even be a subject of conscious awareness but help us to be effective in a culture (Oberg, 2006). Almost all interviewees noted this initial uncertainty due to the lack of knowledge about norms and behavioral rules. Though the motivation to learn the new language, customs and traditions was high, they reported feeling confused and uncertain till they have gained enough cultural knowledge. This experience can be illustrated by the words of Interviewee 6:

“Ich war in meinem Umfeld, ich hab ganz genau gewusst, wie das funktioniert, wie das ganze abläuft, und war ziemlich... sicher! Und dann bin ich in einem Land, wo ich alles hinterfragen muss, ja, wo ich schaue, oh, Gott da es... oder wie ich Sachen angehe, dass passt vielleicht nicht zum Land oder... dann war ich ziemlich unsicher, ja. Und ... wenn man diese Phase überstanden hat, kann man sagen, ok. Beide Versionen oder beide Arten und Weise zu leben sind ok. Nebeneinander.” (Interviewee 6)

The feelings of denial and disapproval could also characterize this stage (see the hostility stage in cultural shock model by Oberg (2006) outlined in Section 4.3. “Development of multicultural identity”). Entering a new culture with an own cultural baggage, with own ideas about what is right and what is wrong could make an individual dislike the new culture at first. Some interviewees told, they opposed themselves to the local culture feeling that their first culture was superior to the local culture. Yet, after several years, when enough knowledge about the local culture was accumulated, these feelings faded away replaced by conscious choosing of cultural values, behaviors and patterns that would make life more comfortable:

“At first you don’t accept it, you dislike it, you oppose it but then you begin to understand and analyze if it matches you or not. What is more comfortable for you, what is easier. And then you behave as the society demands and it happens that you follow some
cultural patterns, norms of this culture and it happens non-volitionally that you become multicultural, whether you want it or not.” (Interviewee 11)

Analyzing the stages of multicultural identity development through cultural transitions, it can be said that they basically seem to coincide with phases of acculturative stress (Berry, 1997) or cultural shock (Oberg, 2006) where the end result is identification with several cultures. Yet, a lot of participants underlined the wavy character of phases which would imply not a linear but an iterative process of the second identity acquisition.

Interviewees described their experience as phases of alternating positive and negative feelings, which resembled a wave with many highs and lows:

“Am Anfang … hat man das Heimweh und solche Sachen. Dann ist es nur schlecht und wieder das Gute, und man sieht die schlechte von dem anderen. Und mit den Reisen auch wieder nach Hause und... wieder das Gute, und wieder das Schlechte... man merkt langsam, was es hat. Was es zu Hause gibt, was es nicht gibt, was macht man hier, was es hier gibt, was es nicht gibt…” (Interviewee 1)

Interviewee 2, who was at the adaptation stage at the moment of the interview and, therefore, could describe the current experience more exactly as compared to retrospective view of other participants, also underlined the wavy character of adaptation. This is this “feeling at home” which comes and goes depending on the situation and time:

“I have weeks when I think, yeah, I’m fitting to an Austrian culture very well and I understand all the people and you know I speak enough German to get around, good enough… But I have other weeks where I go out with a group of Austrians and they are speaking dialect, and I’m like, ok, I don’t understand people. Sometimes it feels like yeah, this is also kind of home and other weeks, ok, this is still very different kind of place, and I’m still feeling sometimes like a foreigner and sometimes more like a local.”

Comparing her experience with the classical U-model of cultural shock, she also stated an iterative character of an adaptation process. According to her, there were times of feeling more like a member of a new culture and of feeling as an outsider, which alternated. She supposed, that even if she had lived in a culture for a longer time, there could be times when she would feel more belonging to her first culture and then times when she would feel more at home in the second culture (this assumption was confirmed by other interviewees, see situational identity in Section 6.2.1. “Current Identity”):

“Adapting to another culture it is... maybe it’s like different stages, like cultural shock for example, and similar to initial cultural shock, honey moon phase and these kind of stages, but I think it is not like that you go through these steps, but you go back and forth between them, like I said, I have weeks that I feel more Austrian and weeks that I feel, ok, I’m still foreign, and so I think you go back and forth between more relating to one culture and then more relating to another culture... depending on what’s going on in your life.” (Interviewee 2)

Speaking about acculturative stress, Interviewee 10 compared it with exponential curve which resembles one of the stress patterns, the reverse J-curve, described by Demes and Geeraert
in their study of sojourner stress during cultural transitions. He supposed that acculturative stress will never disappear completely:

“This is like an exponential curve. That means, this discomfort level falls very quickly but it will never reach null. It is more than likely that I will feel little discomfort till the end of my life. But it was very acute in the beginning, during the first months … and gradually it approached zero but I could not single out some distinct periods. I could not say that it ends after one year or that it takes three years. That means that it will never end but it is most problematic in the first days and months.”

The evidence that a small discomfort could still be perceived after a long period was implicitly confirmed by other interviewees who spoke about challenges they had to face as multiculturals. In most cases these challenges included difficulties with acceptance by the society, perceived discrimination and identity reduction (that is, one is not perceived as a multicultural person but as an immigrant with a single identity and a foreigner in the local society). Clearly, these issues did not depend on a person but on his/her overall environment. Grosjean (2015) writes that societies do not easily accept the fact that a person can be part of their culture and also a part of another culture. Consequently, biculturals might feel more stress when they are confronted with such attitude.

Yet, despite these challenges, all interviewees noted that after the adaptation period was over, living multiculturally became natural for them. They felt comfortable within several cultures and they had no difficulties when dealing with cross-cultural situations. Several cultures became a part of their lives and most of interviewees told that they found it more interesting and fulfilling to live this way:

“Then, after a while, it became more comfortable when you have already this information, this competence, experience of living in another culture. You just perceive it as a normal condition and you just do not notice it.” (Interviewee 10)

To sum up, the experience of multicultural individuals who underwent cultural transition, resembled the acculturating experience described in sojourner and immigrant studies and resulted in cultural mix. They gained cultural competence in several cultures and also developed multicultural identity. The time factor was the most important in this experience, yet, there were other factors which were stressed by the participants as important. In the next sections, individual perceptions of the role of language, social activities and culture maintenance in multicultural identity development will be outlined.

6.2.2.3. Language

The role of language in multicultural identity development was mentioned by all interviewees. In fact, it might be the most crucial factor that can accelerate or diminish acquiring knowledge about another culture, building of social ties and feeling a member of several cultures.

It is well-known that language and culture are closely connected and influence each other (Jandt, 2007). The study showed that multicultural individuals were very much aware of the role
of language in understanding a culture. Most of them underlined the importance of learning languages, yet, with different nuances.

For example, according to the opinion of Interviewee 9, language incorporates culture and is a very beautiful means to preserve a culture. She connected language with feelings of belonging and appreciation:

“Aber eben es muss gewisse Zugehörigkeit da sein, man muss irgendwas gern haben und ich definiere das eher sehr stark mit Sprache. Eben weil das verbindet, und das ist das Schönste, was erhalten bleiben soll.”

Interviewee 10 evaluated the role of language as important but very much dependent on its practical application. According to him, the necessity to learn the language arises from the necessity to apply it and he learned a language “up to the level which would be sufficient to enable communication”. For him, the intention for a long-term stay in Austria served as motivation to learn German. This idea was also shared by other interviewees, that is, that the long-term plans connected with a certain culture demanded to learn the language.

Generally, all the participants who had moved to Austria were eager to learn German in order to be able to better communicate with Austrians. They stressed that overcoming the language barrier and developing German skills was necessary to create social ties and to understand the culture better:


“When I came, there was a language barrier but as the time passed by, every year it became less and less… But only when I crossed the threshold and began to communicate with colleagues at work, I began to understand this culture more.” (Interviewee 11)

A special difficulty about the German language, mentioned by the participants, was the Austrian dialect. The existence of the official language (“Hochdeutsch”) which is learnt in the language courses and the existence of the dialect which is used in daily interactions supposed acquiring of not one but two sets of German-speaking skills. It was noted by some interviewees that dialect use could not only hinder communication but also was a barrier to be accepted as a full member of the local society. Consider, for example, the experiences at work described by two of the interviewees where the issue with dialect was the reason for separation between Austrian employees and non-Austrian employees:

“We are … usually a little bit segregated from Austrians, they’re sitting together and international employees are sitting together which is also I think the language thing… Because Austrians are speaking dialect...” (Interviewee 2)

“I am not perceived like I belong to them … because I still have foreign roots and another language. They often say that they must switch to Hochdeutsch for me, what takes extra efforts.” (Interviewee 11)
Possessing language skills is crucial not only for communication but also for developing a deeper sense of belonging to a culture and of feeling at home. It is both true for the original culture and for a new culture. For example, Interviewee 2 noted that without sufficient language skills she felt like a foreigner and if she had mastered the language, it would help her to identify more with Austrian culture:

“For example, when I'm going out with a group of Austrians, I'm not understanding anything... then it's not that nice, like I'm not feeling at home and I feel like a foreigner and if I would master the language and things like that, I wouldn't feel that way anymore... If I stay here for another 3 years or so, and I have the language mastered then I would feel more half-half or probably not half-half, but a little bit Austrian anyway.”

At the same time, due to the fact that interviewees used their first language less, it happened to some of them that their native language proficiency suffered. Since the participants felt that language was closely connected to culture, language proficiency was assessed by them as a kind of marker of keeping or losing some parts of their first culture:


In accordance with the Complementary Principle (Grosjean, 2015), it is not surprising that the language which is rarely used undergoes changes: vocabulary may become obsolete, syntax structures of the second language dominate those of the first language, speech tempo changes. Some interviewees told that they did not only notice such changes in their first language themselves but also other people drew their attention to this fact:

“Das erste Mal war schockierend, weil bei der Erneuerung Party bei der Hochzeit meiner Eltern habe ich eine Rede gehalten, und viele haben schon gesagt, dass mein Spanisch sehr deutsch klingt. … Zum Beispiel, es gibt Konstruktionen wie die „aber“. Du sagst „aber“ fast am Ende. Und auf Spanisch kommt es immer am Anfang. Ich bin so gewohnt, ab und zu sage ich spanische „tambien“ am Ende, und es war lustig, wenn ich war in der Taufe vom Sohn von meiner Schwester, und da habe ich eine Rede gehalten, und … ich habe gehört von Gästen, dass sie gesagt haben, was ist los mit den Taufpaten … sie haben überhaupt die Sprache vergessen.” (Interviewee 1)

When the others emphasized the fact that the first language of the interviewees sounded different from “normal”, it sometimes evoked unpleasant feelings. Because the language was connected with the feeling of belonging to the first culture. As it was already said, all participants closely connected language and culture, but also language was a marker of identity for them. If
the social surrounding drew their attention to the drawbacks in language skills, it was perceived like a part of identity got lost. The example of Interviewee 2 illustrates this finding:

“Last time when I was home for Christmas, my friends told me that I actually have a little bit of a German accent, and my English didn’t sound quite Canadian anymore. And this... this wasn’t very nice for me to hear. It was like, I guess because I identify as Canadian and they tell me I don’t sound like a Canadian, this is kind of weird.”

It seems that when an individual wants to identify with a culture, language might be the most crucial element of this identification, which takes priority over all other cultural aspects like, for example, behavior and values. That is why probably it was very important for interviewees to underline the language aspect when talking about their identity. It should be noted that interview guide did not contain any explicit questions about the role of language for their cultural identity. The only question about languages was “Which languages do you speak?” and interviewees had to answer it in writing when filling in the form at the beginning of the interview. Nevertheless, almost every interviewee touched upon the importance of language issue during the interview.

There was also one interviewee who did not mention the difficulties of learning a new language. This was the only participant with the first Austrian culture who had moved to the USA. It might be connected with the fact that English has become *lingua franca* in the world (as compared to German, which usage is limited to several German-speaking countries). English is normally taught at school in many countries and, therefore, many people possess English-speaking skills. That was also the case by Interviewee 3 who could speak English long before he actually moved to the USA. As for other interviewees, many of them had to learn German after they had moved to Austria which imposed extra adaptation challenge for them.

It is worth noting here that all interviewees valued language diversity and seemed to be happy to be able to speak several languages. They also assumed that language knowledge had some “side effects”, for example, Interviewee 10 told that „knowledge of many languages develops creativity since a person can construct phrases in different languages”, and Interviewee 7, who characterized language as one of the “culture layers”, underlined the necessity to learn foreign languages to get broader perspective in life. One of the interviewees told that she enjoyed several languages in her life and found it very exciting to switch between different languages when working in multicultural groups. Another participant noted that speaking different languages allowed her to show different parts of her personality:


Knowledge of one language only was perceived by most of interviewees as something limiting which also prevented someone from learning other cultures. And though a couple of participants allowed the possibility to identify with a culture without knowing its language, for the majority of the participants their language skills were a pre-requisite for identification. Thus, it can be concluded that the role of language in cultural identification is not only instrumental (a means of communication) but also symbolic (a sign of cultural belonging).
6.2.2.4. Social interactions

As the language is mastered and allows communication, it becomes possible to learn more about the culture from the first hand, i.e. its representatives. In course of time, the interviewees acquired enough language-speaking skills to make the communication with local people possible. Social interaction was the second important factor (alongside with time) named by interviewees that was crucial for overcoming acculturative stress and developing the feeling of belonging:

“It’s just time and experience. Basically, there was nothing else as communication experience which comes with the time.” (Interviewee 10)

Social interaction was evaluated as the key to understanding the culture and its rules and has included communication with colleagues, schoolmates, friends and family. Many participants confessed that only when communication was possible and they could ask questions, build social ties, participate in social events, they had really learned the culture. Interviewee 1 underlined, for example, the importance of friendship with locals for learning the behavioral rules:

“Eine der größten Gründe, [warum Zugehörigkeitsgefühl] sich verändern kann, ist mit der Einheimischen Kontakt … ich habe viel Kontakt mit den Einheimischen, gute Freunde und man bekommt viel mit. Man lernt voll viele Regeln, weil die Regeln weißt du nicht, die Sachen muss man fragen und so. Und am Anfang es ist sehr gut, weil am Anfang wollte ich unbedingt schnell lernen und wissen, was es passt, was es nicht passt und so.“

As it is seen from the example, not only cultural knowledge could be gained through communication. Building of meaningful social ties is crucial for the sense of belonging: the more social ties an individual has, the more belonging to the new culture he/she seems to feel. The idea that culture is made by people, was more or less supported by all interviewees, meaning that culture is not something abstract that one feels attached to; rather, it was social surrounding, close personal ties and meaningful connections which let participants develop affective attitudes to the new culture.

For example, Interviewee 8 stated that he developed identification with Austrian culture through his friendship with Austrians. Participating in social events and collective celebrations with the Austrian friends he could not only learn about traditions but also developed an affective attitude to the culture:

“Das ist dann durch Freundschaften schließen dieses Gefühl entstanden. Dann sind wir auch zum Beispiel, zu Geburtstagsfeiern hingefahren oder auch zu Festen, zu Weihnachten essen gegangen und dann haben wir gesehen wie andere Kulturen so sind.” (Interviewee 8)

For several other interviewees, it was social interaction at work which had connected them to the local culture. They told that communication with colleagues really allowed them to immerse into the new culture and feel a part of it. Whereas many participants confessed to feel alone and foreign at the beginning of the adaptation period (see Section 6.2.2.2.b “Phases”) they seemed
to overcome these feelings as long as communication with locals became possible and social ties were developed. It seemed that also cultural knowledge which they gained through interaction with representatives of the culture was more meaningful than cultural knowledge they could possibly get from theoretical sources. This point was especially emphasized by Interviewee 11:

“I began to communicate with colleagues and then I began to understand this culture more. I observed and actively participated. We organized events and I watched how they behaved. ... Because you cannot [learn] it by reading books or by using some descriptions. Because otherwise it’s artificial, you cannot express yourself and you don’t know how to behave and if there are cultural differences.” (Interviewee 11)

Socialization in the new culture was especially successful at school, for those participants who moved to Austria as teenagers. Though they had a difficult time at first, gradually they were able to make friends and engage in social activities which allowed them to develop sense of belonging:

“In the first year of school, I mean you feel like an outsider but after a time you get a part of that culture, after some period of time also the Austrians accepted you as a part of their culture at school.” (Interviewee 4)

For most of them the initial time at school was difficult because of language skills, yet, they confessed that they had learned German very quickly as it is often the case with young people. They also hardly noticed a problem with dialect, at least they did not mention it during the interview. The opportunity to learn German and closely interact with representatives of local culture at school already was positively evaluated by them.

The amount of social interaction with representatives of a culture can either facilitate or hinder cultural identification. Socializing with members of the new culture helped interviewees to develop a feeling of belonging to it. However, their reduced cultural contact with people from the culture of origin was often a cause of feeling less belonging to the first culture. For example, Interviewee 1 noted that limited contact resulted in loss of some parts of the first culture:


The further evidence connected with social interaction was concerned with cultural and cross-cultural competence. A lot of interviewees told that interaction with other cultures did not only influence their identification but also helped them to gain cultural and multicultural competence. Communicating with representatives of other cultures, learning about differences and similarities and adapting own behavior to new rules, multicultural individuals acquired skills which enabled them to communicate with culturally different others.
6.2.2.5. Reciprocity

Another important issue that was mentioned in connection to feeling belonging was reciprocity. That means that not only an individual’s wish to identify with the culture but also acceptance from the members of the culture is important for developing a sense of belonging. This issue was directly mentioned by Interviewee 8, when he referred to situational identity (see Section 6.2.1. “Current identity”). He spoke about reciprocity once again when he explained what it means for him, to belong to a culture:


And he added further:

“Ich habe Erfahrungen in zwei Hinsichten gehabt, und zwar, es gibt immer wieder Leute, … nicht nur in Österreich, sondern auch überall, es wird auch bei uns Albaner so sein, dass man nicht alle Menschen irgendwie mögen kann oder alle Kulturen. Aber in Österreich hat es solche und solche gegeben. Es hat ein paar gegeben, da … fühlt man sich gleich zugehörig mit diesen Personen, weil sie auch sehr offen sind und es gibt auch die, die nicht so sind.“

The idea that there is a need for reciprocity was explicitly or implicitly expressed by many interviewees. The wish to belong and be a member of a culture cannot be fulfilled without acceptance by other members of the culture. But it could be observed that not only direct communication with representatives of the culture but also general climate of opinion in the society can be perceived by multiculturals as accepting or not. For example, Interviewee 7 explained:

“If the society detaches itself from you as a person, it segregates you. … It is not that you don’t want to belong … but you feel that you don’t belong to them. It is not necessary that you hold isolated position by yourself, it just happens.”

The idea of reciprocal relation between the larger society and immigrants was also expressed by Berry (1997), who wrote that new-comers can choose integration strategy only when the dominant society group allows it, that is, the mutual accommodation of both sides is needed. Several interviewees spoke about feeling reserved attitudes in the Austrian culture which, however, seemed to go back to cultural differences between Austrian culture and cultures of the participants (these will be discussed in more detail in Section 6.2.2.6. “Cultural differences”). Here, an example given by the interviewee with predominantly Russian cultural background can illustrate the perceived reserved attitude from the society which she explained by cultural characteristics. It is interesting to note here that knowing about objective cultural differences
seemed to help interviewees not to take such attitudes personally, though, it cannot be said that it did not influence them at all:

“Ask a Tirolese if he refers to himself as to Austrian? “No, [he would say], I am Tirolese”. Even among Austrians, there are groups. “I am from Mühlvierl and you?” “Me too!” “Ok, then we are friends.” “And where does he come from, he with the Swiss accent? No, he is not one of us.” I just heard it myself that Austrians speak like that… like, we are not quite of the same blood… that is why to say that they do not treat foreigners well… They do not treat foreigners worse than others, they are just like this by their nature.”

Acceptance from the society was also mentioned by Interviewee 3 who has his roots in Austria and living experience in the USA. In his case, the perceived hospitality of the society allowed him to feel belonging to the society from the very beginning:

“In the US I never felt as an “Ausländer”. Obviously, I used the word “Ausländer” now because it is a very strong strange word, that we use in Germany or in Austria, because I think “Ausländer” means foreigner but I think sometimes it is a very negative term associated with it. I think so. You're an Ausländer, that means you are... you don't really belong here. And in the US, I never felt like I don't belong there. I think I just belong there because everybody belongs there.”

Comparing his words with those of other interviewees, one can see that the cautious attitude to foreigners was noticed not only by the new-comers to Austria but also by the person who originally came from Austria. Though this finding cannot be generalized, because of the limited number of interviewees, it still represents a valuable insight into people’s thinking about acceptance in the society and its role for cultural identification. Especially interesting was the comparison of societal attitudes in Europe and the USA, observed by this participant. The idea of different attitudes was also expressed by another participant, with roots in Germany. She said the following:

“Ich glaube, was in Deutschland spezifisch ist, dass wir uns ganz lange als Nation dagegen gewehrt haben, anzuerkennen, dass viele Leute zu uns kommen und bleiben und über längere Generationen auch schon dort leben. Es ist ganz andere gesellschaftliche Entstehungsgeschichte, als in den USA zum Beispiel, wo es man auch aufgrund der aktuellen politischen Debatte merkt.”

The comparison of societal climate with regard to cultural diversity in different cultures could be a matter of a special investigation since society and its attitudes seem to be one of the important factors in developing multicultural identity.

To sum up, one could say that there are several levels or reciprocity: personal and societal (group) level. Multicultural individuals can feel the reserved or open attitudes on both levels and feel more or less belonging depending on the situation. Also, from the observations of interviewees it can be concluded that general perceived opinion of the society as a whole need not necessarily be shared by every its member. And what is more important, this difference in societal mood and personal attitudes seemed to be well captured by the participants. Due to their rich experience, they were aware about existence of diverse attitudes and opinions within a larger society and could also see the differences between societies. Therefore, they seemed to
treat the issue of society acceptance with cautiousness and tried to avoid generalizing. The reason for that could be their developed ability to deal with generalizations and stereotyping which will be discussed later in Section 6.3.2.2. “Dealing with stereotypes and generalizations”.

6.2.2.6. Cultural differences

Cultural differences were mentioned to some extent by the majority of the interviewees mostly as an evidence for their cultural knowledge and cross-cultural competence. Yet, some participants also directly connected particular cultural values with the willingness to belong. The explanation to this could be as follows: if a person has a positive attitude to some value or idea, he/she seeks to be a part of the group in order to share this value with its members. When a potentially multicultural individual is exposed to different cultures, he/she faces cultural diversity which is not available to a monocultural person. Cultural differences, expressed in norms, ways of thinking and values can, therefore, play a role, how an individual positions him/herself with regard to different cultures.

Liking some value which does not exist in the culture of origin, can make an individual want to seek belonging to the culture which represents this value. For example, Interviewee 3 told that openness as a European value made him wish to identify as a European:

“I love the concept of Europe, that's why I see myself as a European and that actually means, that I'm open to other cultures. I think it's a very strong thing. I definitely think I'm European, I think I have a European spirit in me…”

The difference between Armenian and Austrian culture in gender equality and more freedom for women pushed Interviewee 4 more towards Austrian culture:

“I assume I realized cultural differences between Austrian and Armenian and one of them was … the equality of men and women. So, my brother was allowed to go out and had fun and I wasn't. … I saw other girls who were going out and having fun and in this open or free culture they were allowed to do things and they went to class with me, so I was like… at this point I wanted to be Austrian. Or I chose to be more Austrian than Armenian because I saw that I had more freedom and more rights…”

Not only in connection to Austrian culture but also generally, a sense of freedom was related to positive attitude and emotional binding towards particular cultures. Interviewee 9 who, prior to moving to Austria, had moved from Iran to Armenia, told:

“Ich kann ewig lang über Armenien sprechen. Das war auf jeden Fall eine kulturelle Umstellung, aber … ich habe es als eine sehr positive Erfahrung wahrgenommen. … Da war ich dann komplett frei in Armenien. Also, ich war selbstständig, ich hab rein und rausgegangen, wie ich wollte, weil es eben sehr sicher war. … Das war für mich sehr lebenswerte Ereignisse, ich war plötzlich von null auf hundert frei. Und es sind zwar Nuancen… kein Kopftuch tragen müssen, ich habe mich nicht darum sorgen zu müssen."

Alongside with the values of openness, freedom and gender equality, other cultural differences were named like punctuality (attitudes to time), direct versus indirect communication,
affectionate versus reserved behavior. Other cultural aspects like food, music and language were mentioned as things which make somebody want to identify more with the culture because of positive feelings they evoke:

“Latino is a little bit a personal thing, … I just love the positive vibe of the music and … I think such powerful positive music just impacts the way these people live. And I just like the positiveness, and I love the music, it makes me feel better, and that's why I love the Latino culture, that they are very friendly and they like to dance, they like to sing…”
(Interviewee 3)

The role of such cultural aspects as food, music, popular culture, celebration traditions and rituals in self-identification was noted by other interviewees, too. Feeling positive and even affectionate attitudes to such cultural aspects was connected with a sense of belonging and willingness to identify. For example, many interviewees preserved the traditions of their first culture in their everyday life but also took over elements of other cultures, uniquely mixing them together.

Speaking about cultural differences, it is interesting to note that cultural values seemed to play a role for developing identification with a new culture only when they were different from the first culture. That is, when it was really a matter of differences, not similarities. Of course, the reason why similarities were hardly mentioned by the participants might be their obviousness, that is, they were taken for granted whereas the differences have deserved more attention. Or in fact, cultural differences might really have more influence on changing one’s cultural identification. It should be also noted here, that interviewees could evaluate these differences positively or negatively. The willingness to identify was connected with positive attitude to some value. As for the negative attitude, there was no explicit evidence that negative attitude to some differences could hinder identification, though it would be logical to assume it. Rather, interviewees told that they did not take over cultural aspects they did not like. Therefore, it seems that negative aspects did not influence their willingness to identify generally.

6.2.2.7. Pride and prestige

Though rarely mentioned in direct connection with multicultural identity development, proudness of one’s cultural heritage was a theme that emerged again and again in interviews (“Ich bin Armenierin, was bei uns dadurch, dass wir in Iran gelebt haben, sehr viel stärker definiert ist. So, Nationalstolz“, “Ich fühle mich sehr stolz auf meine Kultur”).

Being proud of one’s roots could mean emotional binding with the first or ethnic culture but also was connected with the sense of prestige when an individual was proud of some achievements connected with his/her culture. It could be some product, music, well-known personality, something famous for the whole world:

“I think we are very happy that we have a very beautiful country, and people taking care of the country itself, this is green and this is clean … I'm also very proud of our history, that we have a music, that we've known for, people like Mozart, and I always typically also bring up Falco … Another thing that I always bring up to is very strange maybe, it's Red Bull, because Red Bull is a kind of Austrian product and nobody really knows that it's
an Austrian product … I'm proud to say... by the way, this is Austrian export.” (Interviewee 3)

It could also be societal position of one’s cultural group, prestigious status or belonging to some particular occupation:

“In Russia, yes, I was proud that I … [had German background], though it was national minority but I was proud because I saw what kind of people they were, what they had achieved. That most of them were educated, they worked as doctors, as engineers … that these people strived to reach a better position [in the society]. Of course, I was proud…” (Interviewee 7)

It seemed that sense of being proud strengthened identification with the first culture, and filled interviewees with power and self-confidence. It seemed also that feeling proud of one’s first culture was shared by all interviewees, independent of their explicit underlining this point. They referred to their first culture as their home and their roots which should not be forgotten. It seems that pride of one’s cultural background serves as a motivation for cultural identification.

It might be however, that in some cases holding on one’s roots and being proud could also be the reason for non-accepting the second identity openly. For example, Interviewee 1 insisted on defining “identification” as “adaptation” because after her own words, she did not want to lose connection with her home culture:


This evidence suggests that there might be a fine line between being multicultural, feeling multicultural and recognizing it. Also, it shows that becoming multicultural can happen against somebody’s will and despite strong pride of one’s cultural heritage.

As for the feeling of positive attitude to a new culture, it would be probably more correct to define it as “prestige” not as “pride”. It was mentioned by two interviewees, that the desire to be accepted by a prestigious group (e.g. members of the dominant culture) as a “cultured” person, a person who knows how to behave, could serve as motivation for developing identification with the new cultural group:

“I had to take learning of traditions, language and culture more seriously, in order not to get into any unpleasant situations when you look uncultured or you break some rules or laws or behave improperly by local standards. So, I felt a need to look like the members of the dominant culture, that is, Austrians.” (Interviewee 10)
To sum up, the findings on proud and prestige, though very scarce, imply that there could be two mechanisms that play a role for multicultural identification: first, cultural (or national) pride might be a very strong reason for identification with the first culture and might hinder identification with a new culture. Second, looking for prestige might serve as a motivation for identification with a new culture.

6.2.3. Summary

Summarizing the first part of the findings on multicultural identity development, it can be said that multicultural identity is a complex phenomenon. Several patterns of identification which could be observed by the participants were not of stable nature because participants defined themselves differently depending on the question and situation. Nevertheless, the most of them identified with several cultures and were considerably influenced by more than one culture, which gave them a feeling to be a multicultural person.

The participants developed their multicultural identity mostly through cultural transitions. Multicultural identity development started for many of them with relocation to a new culture. One of the most important factors which influenced the development process was time which was needed to go through the phases of acculturative stress. Other important factors were language, social interactions with representatives of relevant cultures, reciprocity (acceptance by the representatives of the new culture), cultural differences (positively perceived characteristics of a new culture helped to identify), pride and prestige.

6.3. Learning and personal development

A great part of the interviews was devoted to the question of learning. In accordance with the research question, it was not only important to investigate how the development of multicultural identity happens but also what individuals learn through this experience. The results were organized around the topics emerged rather than around the interview questions due to the fact that it makes a better picture of the competences gained by multiculturals. The main domains where multiculturals reported to develop knowledge and competences included cultural knowledge, cross-cultural competence and social competence. Besides, all interviewees possessed the knowledge of several languages. Many interviewees noted that they also noticed their personal growth due to their experience and that they appreciated being multicultural.

With regard to cultural knowledge and cross-cultural competence, it is important to underline that 4 of 11 interviewees had an experience of participating in cross-cultural training or got access to cultural information through similar ways, e.g. making courses on cross-cultural communication during their studies. The role of cross-cultural training will be discussed separately. For now, it should be mentioned that all but one interviewees named their direct experience and not trainings as the main source of cultural knowledge and developing their competences.
6.3.1. Cultural knowledge

Acquiring knowledge about another culture can happen due to move, i.e. physical relocation and consequent immersion into this culture. Yet, it is not always necessary to cross the border of one’s country. In multicultural societies, it is possible that individuals can gain another cultural experience when they move from region to region. Several study participants could thus gain multicultural experience before moving to Austria. For example, interviewees who had their roots in Russia, in Canada, in Iran or in the Ukraine stated that they had grown up in multicultural societies. Yet, it seems that cultural transition (move to Austria) was the most critical experience in their life in connection with multiculturalism, because many of them spoke about their cultural knowledge and competences with reference to their immigration experience.

6.3.1.1. Culture-general knowledge

Definition of culture-general and culture-specific knowledge can be derived from two approaches to intercultural learning. Culture-general knowledge refers to the basic understanding of what culture is, how we construct the reality depending on our cultural lens and what are general cultural characteristics. This knowledge can be applied in any region to any culture as compared to culture-specific knowledge which can be applied only within the boundaries of a particular culture (Sieck, Rasmussen, & Duran, 2016). Further, culture general knowledge can be used to interpret culture-specific information (Simons, Lambert, & Myers, 2000).

All interviewees showed culture-specific knowledge and some of them demonstrated cultural-general knowledge as well. For example, they developed a deep understanding of what culture is. Though the participants often spoke about such “visible” aspects of culture as music, food, traditions, they also mentioned values, beliefs and worldviews. For example, Interviewee 3 defined culture by mentioning all these aspects. Note, that he has acquired this knowledge only through his experience as he had not participated in any cultural trainings:

“Culture is defined by people that have inherited certain aspects of how they live their life in certain area and how they gave it from generation to generation, whether it is something very obvious like in Austria we have certain clothes which we call traditional and it was passed over the generations, but basically culture means how do we go through life as a larger community, meaning a country, or a bigger geographical area, how do we deal with certain things, you know... what are our events when we as a community come together, how do we celebrate certain festivities, how do we solve certain problems, are we more open-minded or closed-minded, or like we feel if nature is a big part of us or not.” (Interviewee 3)

It seemed that interviewees were also knowledgeable about different levels of culture, implicitly making a difference between national culture and personal culture. In this connection, the example of Interviewee 6 can illustrate at best the complex thinking about culture which multiculturals could develop. She told that she did not support an idea of a single homogeneous national culture. She mentioned different layers or levels of culture, i.e. national versus individual culture, urban versus rural culture, thus underlining the complex nature of culture phenomenon. Note that complexity of culture is also discussed in the organizational literature, for example,
within national culture, sub-cultures can be distinguished, e.g. organizational, occupational, etc. (Brannen & Lee, 2014).

"Was ich gelernt habe, dass ist, das es nicht eine Kultur gibt. Ich lebe in Österreich, man lässt uns glauben, dass es eine österreichische Kultur gibt, aber das gibt es nicht. Wenn ich meine Kolleginnen beobachte oder hernehme, sie sind so unterschiedlich, dass es dieses Bild von einer Einheit, einer homogenen Nation, ist eigentlich nicht vorhanden … ich komme aus dem Land, und mein Partner kommt auch aus dem Land, und ich glaube, dass wir, dadurch, dass wir beide am Land groß geworden sind, viele-viele Ähnlichkeiten haben, als zum Beispiel, der Unterschied wäre größer zwischen dem Leben am Land und dem Leben in der Stadt als am Land in einem Land eins und am Land in einem Land zwei." (Interviewee 6)

Further, speaking about culture, interviewees often referred to behavior ("It can be behavior you can see or not. It can be the way they are acting," “Kultur zeigt sich im Verhalten von Menschen”), values (“Culture is the values”), and personal experience (“Cultures are like a mix of your experiences”).

It would be misleading, however, to claim that all interviewees could easily speak on the topic of culture or give a definition of it. Some interviewees could not describe culture as something abstract and showed little culture-general knowledge. Yet, they were very aware of cultural differences between the cultures they had close contact to, thus showing profound culture-specific knowledge.

### 6.3.1.2. Culture-specific knowledge

All the participants possessed culture-specific knowledge with regard to cultures they originally come from and currently live in. Again and again during interviews specific themes emerged which were related to cultural differences and cultural norms. These categories included direct versus indirect communication, sequential versus synchronous time, attitudes towards criticism, affective and neutral cultures. Such categories may be an example for culture-general knowledge, since they can be applied to any culture. Yet, I chose to summarize the answers in culture-specific section because the participants mentioned these differences when comparing their first culture and their second/third culture. Thus, this cultural knowledge shows their cultural competence within each culture. It is not, however, excluded that participants might apply this knowledge to other cultures as well.

Interviewees were not only knowledgeable about these differences but they applied this knowledge to their behavior in order to culturally tune it. On the one hand, they possessed cultural competence within several cultures which enabled them to effectively participate in the societal life. On the other hand, those of the interviewees who possessed knowledge about certain cultures without actively identifying with them (mostly through working experience), applied this knowledge when communicating with representatives of these cultures which showed high level of their cross-cultural competence.
For example, Interviewee 1 mentioned communication differences in Peruvian, Austrian and German culture and explained direct and indirect communication styles. Her knowledge was very detailed and practically oriented which implies that she was very experienced in applying it:

“Jede Kultur hat ihre eigenen Regeln. Zum Beispiel, in Peru kannst du über alles reden. In Österreich und Deutschland weißt du, über Gehalt soll man nicht reden, solche Sachen …. Zum Beispiel in Peru darf man nicht direkt reden. Du kannst nicht sagen, was dir nicht passt hat. In Peru sagst du immer: „Alles perfekt, alles super,“ und du redest nie über solche Probleme. Und in Deutschland sagst du sofort, nein, das gefällt mir nicht, also bist du ganz klar. Und selber in Deutschland und Österreich ist es ganz anders, die Deutschen sagen sofort, was sie wollen. Und die Österreicher sagen es ganz auf die andere Art und Weise, es ist viel netter: „Könntest du, würdest du das vielleicht machen, es wäre super wenn du das nicht machst...“ Und in Deutschland es: „Bitte, mach das so, bitte es ist so.“ Und sie haben überhaupt kein Problem damit, für ihnen ist es nicht so, sie sehen das nicht als frech oder unhöflich, und in Österreich kommt es schon vor... wenn du das direkt sagst, ist es ein bisschen frech. Wenn du das anders formulierst, das irritiert wieder die Deutschen, weil sie sich nicht auskennen, was ist jetzt los...“

Interviewee 2 mentioned different understanding of punctuality in Canada and Austria and noted that this knowledge helped her to change her behavior to fit better to Austrian culture:

“For example, at the work place in Austria, when I have a meeting, if I have a meeting at nine o'clock, it means that you arrive there at nine o'clock whereas in Canada it means, you are ten minutes earlier and you start at nine o'clock. And so, when I first came here I was earlier for a lot of things and people didn't really like it, they were like oh, you are really not on time. And I thought, ok, in Austria you really have to be this exact time. So, I have get used to that now and now I know, it's different punctuality means.”

This specific knowledge about their multiple cultures played for the interviewees an instrumental, practical role in many cases. Having to adapt to the demands of a society and follow behavior norms they could apply this knowledge immediately and check it correctness. Some of the interviewees gained this knowledge from own experience, through trial and error; others exchanged information with their friends or colleagues or observed the behavior of others. At last, there were some interviewees who admitted having got culture-specific knowledge through cross-cultural courses or training.

As already stated above, culture-specific knowledge was not limited to the cultures, multiculturals identified with. If they had exposure to other cultures, e.g. at work, they could acquire this knowledge as well. A number of participants especially stressed cultural differences with Asian cultures as being very distant from European ones. For example, they mentioned attitudes towards criticism and indirect communication style. This cultural knowledge was actively applied by the participants and helped multiculturals to deal with cross-cultural issues at work:

“Mentality is very different. For example, you should communicate very cautiously with colleagues of Asian origin, for instance, Chinese. Because if you criticize them or just point out the mistakes, in order that the person knows about these mistakes and does not make them anymore, [the Chinese] may perceive this criticism very sensitively and get
easily hurt. It can provoke some conflict situation and the person may give up and stop doing his work." (Interviewee 10)

Knowing about cultural differences could facilitate effective communication at work. For example, Interviewee 3 described his experience with conducting trainings in Asia (he was a trainer). Learning about hierarchical cultures from own experience helped him to rethink communication style within these cultures:

“Certain cultures are... just not asking questions. It's not good for some Asian cultures, especially from Chinese I know that, or Japanese. If you are an authority for them, because you are explaining them something, don't expect them to ask questions. It's just not in their culture that they ask somebody questions that has an authority status. At least not in front of other people. So maybe if you take them aside and say: “Do you have any questions? Can I help you?” Then maybe they come with questions. But if you ask them in front of the group, so I did a lot of trainings, “Does anybody understand this?”, and “Do you have any questions?” then everybody would say, “Sure we understand everything, we don't have any questions anymore”, because they don't want just to ask something out in front of the group. These are the things that I've learned.” (Interviewee 3)

According to the evidence of the participants, knowing about cultural differences helped them to reduce frustration level in cross-cultural situations and therefore to become more effective at work. Through possessing cultural knowledge, the participants felt generally more competent and experienced and most of them were aware that their cultural knowledge represented an important asset for their career. Certainly, it depended on their field of occupation. Yet, since many of them had to deal with different cultures at work, they could benefit from their cultural knowledge.

6.3.2. Intercultural competence

6.3.2.1. Open-mindedness

Nearly all participants reported that their experience made them more open-minded than before. They underlined that they gained broader perspective, more freedom of thinking and ability to think in relative terms:

“Ich glaube, wie gesagt, dass man den Horizont erweitert. … [Man wird] empfänglicher für etwas Neues auch. Weil manchmal die Freunde, die ich in Frankreich hab, sie haben eine ganz klare Vorstellung, was „normal“ ist. Und ich sag, naja, wo ich jetzt lebe, das ist nicht normal. Das ist nicht die Norm. … Also, man relativiert einfach.“ (Interviewee 6)

“Wenn man neue Kulturen kennlernt, dann schaut man mehr über den Tellerrand, über den eigenen Tellerrand. … Es gibt ja Leute, die sehen immer nur das eigene. Sei es, das ist super und alles andere ist, was weiß ich… nicht gut oder… Und wenn man da neue Kulturen kennlernt, dann wird man offener.“ (Interviewee 8)

“And you learn to understand that not all people are the same and not all people perceive the things similarly and you gain a broader perspective of life… That means, it must not
necessarily be like your parents taught you or like where you come from, but it can be also different or be perceived differently." (Interviewee 10)

Multicultural experience which participants gained, not only changed them personally but also put them in different situations and let them see the world from another side. They got familiar with different social roles in their life which helped them to have more understanding in different situations and think relatively. For example, Interviewee 7 directly said:

“It teaches you to be patient, not to be so strict and generally understand that there is not the only correct decision, there is not the only truth in life.”

Openness to something unknown included, among other issues, being open to other people and other cultures. The participants did not only testify that they gained these qualities themselves but they also highly appreciated them and recommended others to be open. They saw openness as an advantageous trait of character which also helped them to communicate easier with other people, thus adding to their social competence. Being open to new experience, especially with other cultures, other people and other ways of thinking was associated with new perspectives and broader horizon, with fuller life experience. Consider the example of Interviewee 3, who compared life with a book and defined openness to explore new places and new cultures as readiness to fully embrace life:

“I think if you have a chance to meet other people it just totally opens your horizon. Some also call it out there, if you never travel it's like you read a book and you only read the first page … or maybe not the first page but the last page, like the summary, right? So, if you travel you see the full book, but you actually got to know the whole story and not just what somebody wrote a summary about it. Well, I can just encourage everyone to be open even though it might be scary at the beginning…” (Interviewee 3)

Some participants underlined that the condition of being not open-minded somehow limited a person, made an individual "limited" or narrow-minded. Making the things the way they have always been made, holding on obsolete traditions, not letting new things into one’s life were seen as restrictions for gathering one’s experience. Further characteristics that were opposed to openness included conservative thinking, ethnocentrism, xenophobia. Being not open meant for interviewees a disadvantage in life, a self-created life constraint which should be abandoned for one’s own good.

6.3.2.2. Dealing with stereotypes and generalizations

Almost all interviewees mentioned that they have learned how to deal with stereotypes and tendency to generalize. The literature on cultural sensitivity suggests being careful with stereotyping and generalizations. Rather, one can use stereotypes as the first best guess which should be modified after actual observation and experience (Adler & Gundersen, 2008).

Some interviewees acknowledged that they had possessed some stereotypes, before they experienced close contact with other cultures. What helped them to reconsider those, were inconsistency between the expectation and reality and being confronted with stereotypes about
their own culture. For example, one of the stereotypes about Austrian culture was the reserved and cold nature of Austrians:

“Das habe ich gewusst, dass die kalt sind, dass die trocken sind, aber sonst mehr habe ich nicht gewusst.“ (Intervieewe 1)

Personal experience with cultures did not only help interviewees to reconsider their beliefs and stereotypes. It made them generally aware of people’s tendency to have prejudice and draw quick conclusions when dealing with other cultures. Most of the interviewees told that their experience helped them to consciously deal with stereotypes and generalizations. For example, Interviewee 2 acknowledged that the mismatch of what she had thought and what she experienced allowed her to make the conclusion to avoid generalizations in the future and to avoid explaining behavior of others with culture only:

“For example, when I was during exchange semester in Austria, I first met all of the Austrian guys that I knew from this student group … which are partying all the time, I was like, wow, Austrian guys are really crazy, they go out all the time. And even if I [met] ten guys like this I thought, it was applicable to the Austrian guys. This is not the case because it's just this kind of group of friends who are kind of similar social and they’re doing a lot…. And so, I think it's important to be careful about generalizations, because if you meet some Austrians or another culture who are acting in a specific way, not everybody is like that because it's not only culture, it's also personality. … I think it's important to keep an open mind when you're going to a new culture and maybe to have some things at the back of your mind, e.g. ok, I expect Austrians to be punctual, this is at the back of my mind but if it's not true like that's ok…” (Interviewee 2)

The idea that behavior of others should not be explained exclusively by their culture was shared by other interviewees as well. Also, the way they spoke about these issues testified that they themselves tried to avoid stereotyping and generalizations. For example, when speaking about different cultures, many interviewees added phrases like “I'm not sure if it’s true for every Latino because I don't wanna put every Latino in there”, “es ist schwer, alles zu pauschalisieren”, “ich habe versucht es nicht zu pauschalisieren, und keine Schlüsse zu ziehen über die gesamte Kultur”, “this person does not reflect one hundred percent of the culture” etc. Many of them confessed that they had reflected on this topic and came to conclusion that though cultural differences do really exist, one should also take into account personal characteristics of an individual. On the one hand, interviewees were aware that culture influences people. On the other hand, they were also sure that every person is a unique being and can differ from other representatives of the same culture.

The question of stereotyping seemed to be of personal interest for the participants, because by having undergone cultural transitions, they got “on the other side” themselves, finding themselves in the shoes of those, against whom stereotypes were held. Not all interviewees faced stereotypes directly, but those who did, described this experience as a very unpleasant one:

“They asked me, where are you from and I said I am from Austria. And the first thing they said, oh you are a jodling Nazi? So, it was his stereotype about Austria. Probably he has never been to Austria, he does not even know that jodling is what probably one percent
of the population actually knows [how to] do and we are all Nazis just because we all have our history.” (Interviewee 3)

Some of interviewees directly said that being on the other side helped them to change their own way of thinking and to consciously deal with stereotypes:

“Für mich jetzt zählt Mensch als Mensch und nicht als ein Aussehen von draußen oder so. Es ist ganz andere Gedanke. Aber es ist, glaube ich schon, dass dieses Gefühl gekommen ist, weil ich jetzt gespielt habe die andere Seite. Also, ich war diejenige, nicht so wert, wie die anderen und dann man sieht vielleicht nur, wenn man hinter dem Spiegel ist. Aber es ist ganz die positive, also ich bin sehr dankbar, dass ich diese Gedanken jetzt habe.” (Interviewee 1)

Interestingly to note, that not only the way of thinking seemed to have changed by participants, but also the way they acted in relevant situations. Having lived in several cultures and being aware of prejudice which can exist in cross-cultural interactions, many interviewees strived to reveal stereotypes and to sensitize other people against the topic, if the situation allowed it. Mostly, they tried to unveil stereotypes about their first culture and to show their interlocutors that people have much more in common that it is assumed due to stereotypical pieces of information about other cultures. For example, Interviewee 3 told:

“Because I travel so much right now, and I meet so many new people, I always have similar conversations and trying to define and explain what it really is, that it’s not about “The sound of music”, that we are all just people.”

It should be noted here that interviewees often used the statements of the kind “we are all the same”, “we are all just people” which emphasize the similarity of people. Such statements could be an example of the cultural sensitivity stage known as “minimization of differences” (Bennett, 2004). Yet, the further inquiry showed that this was not the case by the respondents. Rather, they called for treating every person with respect, independently of their cultural background:

“I wanna make sure that … everybody in the world understands that we all are the same people and treat each other with respect.” (Interviewee 3)

6.3.2.3. Global thinking and multicultural worldview

The findings showed that many of the interviewees had a common worldview concerning diversity and multiculturalism. They thought globally and perceived the world around them as a highly diverse place where many cultures were mixed. Both on the societal and on the organizational level, they observed diversity and cultural mix. For example, Interviewee 4 said:

“Nowadays it’s quite common if you come to a big company, that there are a lot of cultures coming together. In a globalized world or in the EU where you are allowed to work in other cultures, I mean, it’s quite common when people from other cultures are working together … If diversity of people is quite high it also reflects kind of the reality. I would like to work in a company like this.”
Diversity was interviewees’ reality, on the one hand because they were multicultural themselves, and on the other hand, because they lived and worked in close contact with many other cultures. Most of them dealt with different cultures at work, friends and relatives of various cultural origin. Their own cultural transitions were also mostly caused by today’s globalization processes which gave the opportunity to live, work and study in countries, different from the country of birth. One interviewee even mentioned that she perceived today’s globalization as another Migration Period and said:

“We live in a multicultural [society] now, and we cannot deny it, we must not fence us off. If you fence yourself off, you will only lose.”

It seems that perceiving the world around them as a culturally diverse place served as a motivation for multiculturals and was one of the reasons to value their multicultural experience. For example, one interviewee said that due to globalization, one should possess knowledge about different cultures and those who do not have this knowledge would have a disadvantage. Other participants added that their experience with multiple cultures and cross-cultural competence helped or would help for their career.

According to participants, treatment of diversity and multiculturality as an advantage and an asset is also important for organizations. Being aware of the tendencies in a globalized world, interviewees (especially those with economic studies background) believed that for companies it is important to recognize and utilize diversity. This is not only crucial for global organizations but also for smaller exporting companies. Further, they valued diversity at the (potential) workplace and considered it an opportunity rather than an obstacle. For example, Interviewee 3 said:

"If something is different it means it is an opportunity, it's not a STOP sign. And it is an opportunity for me as an individual to learn more from other people and become a better person overall and coming back to companies, if you allow and see diversity as an opportunity, it will make you a stronger company. That's what I believe."

### 6.3.3. Personality

#### 6.3.3.1. Flexibility and adaptability

Quite a number of interviewees admitted that they became more flexible as before due to their multicultural experience. The necessity to adapt to new life conditions due to cultural transition made them find new opportunities and new ways of mastering their career and social life. Since most of the interviewees moved to other cultures as adults already, they must have already had some vision and ideas concerning social and working environment. These expectations were culturally conditioned and by changing their cultural environment, they had to tune their mode of thinking and behavior to match the demands of a new culture. This experience made them more open and flexible.

For example, Interviewee 6 shared her experience of adapting to new working conditions and occupational culture. As compared to acculturation process described in Section 4.3. “Development of multicultural identity”, adaptation to new working environment happened
similarly: after “denial” or acculturative stress stage the adaptation stage was achieved and later, she appreciated this experience:


Interviewee 2 mentioned that the necessity to be out of comfort zone made her more outgoing by meeting new people thus adding to her social competence and more flexible by taking over new tasks:

“It changed me personally, [I became] a little bit more outgoing and I … meet people easier. I kind of used to be out of my comfort zone, which is directly may not be applicable to the workplace but, of course, it's like personal development. But if … they ask me to work on something that I'm not comfortable with… I've been out of my comfort zone many times since I'm in Austria, so maybe it's more ok for me to take it on.”

This experience of being out of comfort zone, feeling inconvenient and facing the necessity to deal with unknown, new things was common for all interviewees. The reason for that was acculturative stress or culture shock. It seemed, however, that for many participants this stress had a benevolent character and was perceived by them as a learning period afterwards.

The experience of being out of comfort zone allowed to compare the periods of stability with periods of discomfort. On the one hand, interviewees confessed that this stressful experience made them value the condition of stability. On the other hand, having gone through acculturative stress once, multicultural individuals could gain self-confidence and self-trust which gave them strength to face new cross-cultural challenges. The example of Interviewee 1 illustrates this idea:


Having used multicultural experience as a possibility to learn and to adapt, many interviewees confessed that their flexibility and adaptability helped them not only in personal life but also at work. Some told, they felt that they could better adapt to new tasks or new organizational culture. Others underlined their willingness to work all over the globe and be flexible when adapting to new cultures and rules. For example, Interviewee 4 told:

“I would say I am rather a flexible person and I can react quite flexible to different cultures. If I would have to go to Iran or some other cultures, it would not bother me to wear a Kopftuch.”
Some interviewees also told that their organizations already benefited from their flexibility. For example, Interviewee 3 noted that his social and cross-cultural competences and willingness to work with multiple cultures was appreciated not only by organization but also by the clients:

“I think people think that I communicate well and therefore they are also willing to send me to other places because they know I'm not making some stupid mistakes … I've showed that I have no problem travelling in no place in the world. I can typically make friends with everybody out there. And that's why people want me back as well, not only my company sends me to places but also these people ask me to come back.”

6.3.3.2. Multi-faceted and strong personality

Speaking about their multicultural experience, quite a number of interviewees noticed that they became stronger and more confident personally. One of the reasons was their immigration experience and necessity to build up a career and social ties in a new culture. Having developed cultural competence in a second culture, they were aware of their achievements and appreciated their experience. Interviewee 6 told, for instance, that she was proud of having built a new life in a new culture and about her personal growth:

“Ich glaube, dass man schon stolz sein kann, wenn man in einer anderen Kultur das aufgebaut hat. Weil … das Umfeld merkt sehr oft die Fehler, was man nicht kann, “Sie haben das nicht und Sie haben das nicht, und das können Sie nicht.” Aber sehr selten heißt es, “Hey, sie bringen uns etwas. Weil sie können das und das.” Und ich glaub, dass man schon eine starke Persönlichkeit entwickeln muss, um das irgendwie zu… überleben ist nicht das richtige Wort, aber zu überstehen.”

She and several other interviewees added that multicultural experience made them reflect on many questions and helped to further develop their personality, to become stronger, more confident and courageous:

“Man stellt sich ganz viele Fragen, und man muss eigentlich seine Persönlichkeit weiterentwickeln. Und man wird durch diese Erfahrung mit der anderen Kultur würde ich sagen, eine neue Person … eine weiterentwickelte Person.“ (Interviewee 6)

“Ich denke, wenn ich das geschafft habe, das kann ich wieder schaffen und was kann nicht der Mensch? Der Mensch ist so anpassungsfähig.” (Interviewee 1)

Not all interviewees mentioned self-confidence as their personal trait directly. Yet, this personal characteristic was obvious in their considerations and conscious choice of alternatives that multiple cultures offered them. Though they had to adapt to the demands of several cultures, they seemed to consciously evaluate and critically think over these demands. They constructed their own cultural mix, using different cultures as knowledge pools and choosing things which matched themselves and abandoning those which did not, thus developing a unique, more complex personality:

“I understand that I become multi-faceted. I’m eager to experience [something] in this way and in that way. And accept some traditions and to build my own culture, by taking
something from here and something from there. Because I believe that there are positive and negative things in any society and I try to create my own optimum.” (Interviewee 11)

The idea of building an own culture was also expressed by Interviewee 7 who told that taking part in life of several cultures and adopting the things which one likes enriched the personality. Expanding one’s horizon by getting to know more cultures gives an individual more possibilities in life, and first of all, possibility to choose one’s own way:

“[Many cultures] enrich you. The more the better. … It gives you broader perspective and you understand that there is nothing ideal, on one hand. But the more cultures you see, the more possibilities you have. To adopt something for you, for your life. … But if you don’t like it you don’t need to adopt it.”

Constructing their own identity with the help of multiple cultures, taking the best and having the possibility to compare, multiculturals could also get more freedom of thinking and be less bound by the society constrains. Consider the example of Interviewee 6, who told that her multicultural experience gave her the possibility to enjoy more freedom:


6.3.3.3. Appreciation of multicultural experience and choosing the best

All interviewees highly valued their experience and perceived being multicultural as an advantage in life. According to the n-Cultural model of Pekerti et al. (2015), recognition of the value of cultures within themselves was one of the crucial qualities of n-Culturals which gives them motivation to be an n-Cultural. Yet, during data analysis it was difficult to strictly divide two spheres: namely, appreciation of multicultural experience and appreciation of the cultures, interviewees actively identified with (which constructed their cultural identity).

Some interviewees admitted that they took over values and constructed their attitudes by using rich cultural mix, which was not limited to cultures they identified with but included aspects of other cultures they were familiar with.

For example, Interviewee 7 said, that for her, it was possible to value and adopt openness in social interaction from American culture, hospitality and warm-heartedness from Russian culture and punctuality from German culture. She defined herself as Russian and also identified with German and Austrian cultures. Yet, she did not like reserved and restrained nature of Germans and told that she had decided for herself not to take over this quality (“I decided for myself that I will not be like this and I don’t want be like this.”) She told further that she highly appreciated the opportunity to get access to multiple cultures in her life because it gave her broader perspective, rich experience and possibility to learn.
Other interviewees also confessed that they often adopted different aspects of several cultures, not limited by the cultures they identified with. By their multicultural experience, interviewees valued primarily the opportunity to take the best from several cultures. They seemed to not blindly follow the norms of a particular culture but consciously choose those positive things which made sense for them in order to enrich their life, depending on their individual preferences and personality. Due to multicultural exposure, they could choose the best from all cultures they had close contacts to. This opportunity to choose and to learn was highly appreciated by interviewees:

“Dieses Misch-Masch zwischen den Kulturen, wie das ist, es gefällt mir total, also ich denke, ich habe das beste von beiden.” (Interviewee 1)

“[Eine Kultur] wäre mir zu wenig, weil zwei Kulturen besser sind, als eine. Oder reicher sind! … Der Horizont ist einfach weiter. … Man nimmt das Beste aus allen Kulturen.” (Interviewee 6)

“Ich nimm von dem, was gesehen habe… das Beste. Ich lerne immer was dazu und ich finde, alle Kulturen haben was Schätzenswertes in sich, was man weiterverbreiten könnte.“ (Interviewee 9)

Apparently, the connection between cultural values and personal values was reciprocal. Surely, a person could adopt consciously or unconsciously values of several cultures but also personal values influenced the decision which values would be adopted.

Further, the interviewees told that they valued their experience because it also helped them to understand other cultures and other people better. Having dealt with representatives of several cultures and having taken different roles (as cultural insiders and outsiders), participants learned how to deal with such issues as stereotypes, generalizations and cultural differences. They also developed empathy and acceptance for other cultures. Some of them especially underlined the usefulness of this experience at work, which helped them to effectively interact with culturally diverse colleagues and clients.

In certain circumstances, multicultural experience could also give an opportunity to feel at home in many places. All interviewees had a rich social network which was spread over countries and continents. By maintaining these connections with family and friends, participants enjoyed the possibility to have homes in different places:

“I'm very fortunate with my job, that I travel so much, that I can actually... I'm at home at both continents right now, because I'm 50% here and 50% there, it's perfect.” (Interviewee 3)

The findings indicate, therefore, that appreciation of multicultural experience was one of the most distinctive characteristics of the interviewees. They seemed to enjoy being multicultural and were excited about diversity in their life:

“Ich finde, dass Multikulturalität eigentlich ein Plus ist. … Ich liebe zum Beispiel, in multi-kulti Gruppen zu sein, also, ich liebe, mit jemandem Deutsch zu reden, mit dem nächsten
Französisch, und mit dem dritten Englisch und hin und her. Das finde ich ganz spannend!” (Interviewee 7)

6.3.3.4. Double resources and experience help

Appreciation of multicultural experience which was characteristic for many interviewees seems to be based partly on the possibility to use resources of several cultures. For example, some interviewees told that their first culture helped them to cope with stress and pressure at work and studies. By comparing their first culture with Austrian culture they confessed to perceive Austrian culture as more competitive, goal-oriented and having more performance pressure than their first culture. Using the coping resources of their first culture, they could then resist stress and master challenging situations at work:

“Eine schlechte Eigenschaft von österreichisch-deutscher Kultur ist diese ständige Leistungsdruck, Kompetitivität und solche Sachen. Die ganzen unbegrenzten Möglichkeiten, und wenn du es nicht schaffst, dann bist du selber schuld, so auf der Art. Und die peruanische es ist so, es wird vom Gott und Schicksal und solche Sachen beeinflusst, und ich versuche einfach ein Gleichgewicht zu halten, zwischen was ich ändern kann und was ich nicht ändern kann. Und sowieso so viel Druck ist nicht gut für die Gesundheit, für den Körper, für die Seele, wird man unglücklich. Und dann versuche ich die Eigenschaften, die peruanische Eigenschaften zurückzuholen und sagen, nein, es wird gut, man weiß warum, es ist nichts verloren, so, die Gelassenheit in meine Leben zu führen. Damit diese Deutsche druck, Leistungsdruck und generell Druck mich nicht so runterreißt.” (Interviewee 1)

Also, some interviewees who came from more affective cultures (Armenian, Peruvian, Albanian) than Austrian culture underlined that they were aware of this cultural trait. Further, they told that this affective characteristic helped them to socialize at work and more easily build connections with their colleagues. For example, Interviewee 9 told that due to her cultural background, she was more open and willing to communicate which was an advantage while interacting with more reserved cultures:

“Durch mein Herkunft bin ich ein bisschen offener, also wir sind, wir sagen, warmblute, also, Warmblut. Also, wir sind temperamentvoller und reden noch sehr gern und sehr laut, und das hilft auf jeden Fall. Also, wenn man ja mit den Mitteleuropäischen ruhigeren Art zu tun hat, um das mal aus der Reserve zu locken. Das hilft auf jeden Fall.”

Interviewee 1 added that her openness and cheerfulness was also noticed and valued by her colleagues and her superior manager. But not only different cultural characteristics were reported to help in social interactions but also knowledge of several languages. By some interviewees, speaking different languages was a part of their job and thus, language skills constituted an important asset for their career. By other participants, several languages were not a necessary requirement but they told that it was possible to use different languages informally when communicating with other colleagues who spoke the same mother tongue. Interviewees confessed that it helped to create friendly atmosphere and was advantageous for team-building.
But not only resources of the first culture helped interviewees to deal with challenges at work or master social interactions. The pieces of the second or the third culture which were available to interviewees through their rich multicultural experience were adopted to create a unique personal life strategy.

Quite a number of interviewees told that they consciously chose the best qualities of both cultures which were available to them to make their life easier. For example, they abandoned habits which they perceived to be hindering and acquired such Austrian characteristics as punctuality, goal-orientation, planning and being organized:

“Ich reflektiere über das Leben, und reflektiere über die beiden Kulturen, und schaue, was ist, das ich will von dieser Kultur haben, was ist, das ich nicht will. Von der peruanischen Kultur ich will nicht alles für die letzte Minute lassen oder nicht mehr, weil das habe ich früher gemacht. … In Peru, es ist alles langsam, schlechter strukturiert, man kann gar nicht planen… Man lebt das Leben wie es kommt, und ab und zu es ist gut, Strukturen zu haben, Ziele zu setzen, einen Zeitraum zu setzen. … Ich versuche eine geeignete Mischung zu finden, damit mein Leben einfach schön und bequem bleibt.” (Interviewee 1)

The ability to abandon old habits and beliefs to give way to new ones seemed to be a logical consequence of openness to new cultures and new information. At the same time, the traits of the first culture were not just given up, rather, they seemed to be carefully evaluated and compared with those of a new culture. Thus, multiculturals could consciously choose those patterns which helped them most in a current situation and could resort to resources from several cultures. In such a way, their multicultural experience helped them in different life situations giving a wider pool of opportunities and strategies to master relevant tasks.

6.3.3.5. Interest for other cultures and willingness to learn

When speaking about the role of different cultures in their life, a lot of participants noted that they possessed a strong interest for other cultures (“I’m just curious about Asia, because it feels so different to what I know”, “I’m eager to experience [something] in this way and in that way,” “I think it’s nice to get to know different cultures. I’m interested in them.”) It seemed that this interest was closely connected with open-mindedness and willingness to learn about other cultures and to discover the diversity of the world.

By some participants, it seemed to be a personal trait which had evoked very early in life through influence of family and personal background. For example, one participant told that interest came to her when she was a child together with reading adventurous stories by a foreign writer and through her parents who had multicultural experience. Two other interviewees told that their family background was culturally mixed and that was one of the reasons to discover the cultures of their ancestors. Two more participants described their family as very open to others, e.g. in the religion question and interested in other people.

Other interviewees told that they could develop interest for other cultures only when they had a chance to directly contact other cultures (“Neugierig bin ich geworden, als ich zum Beispiel,
Alongside with curiosity and interest for other cultures, some interviewees mentioned their willingness to learn. They were ready to learn about the cultures they lived in (“ich war bereit, es zu lernen”), but also about other cultures (“you learn from these people”) and some accumulated considerable bundle of knowledge about different cultures. It seems that curiosity and willingness to learn constituted that necessary character trait which was closely connected with the motivation to be multicultural. Consider, how Interviewee 7 explained her view about the importance of constant learning through discovering new cultures:

“I can recommend people from the very beginning to invest in their horizon, in languages, in travelling. When you are young … you should use all your resources for travelling. Honestly. It is not that [later] you will not be able to travel. Of course, you will be. But especially when you are young, I think it’s easier to change your worldview.”

Willingness to learn was focused not only on acquisition of cultural knowledge. Interviewees perceived multiple cultures as knowledge pools and therefore, through their multicultural exposure, they had access to more knowledge. On the one hand, participants wanted to acquire more cultural knowledge (that is, learn about other cultures). On the other hand, they wanted to learn generally (that is, learn from other cultures, acquire general knowledge or competences which they could apply in their life).

6.3.4. Summary

Summarizing the findings on learning and personal development connected with multicultural identity development, it can be said that a willingness to learn was high by all interviewees. On their way to becoming multicultural, participants acquired general and specific cultural knowledge which was not limited only to cultures they identified with. Further, they showed intercultural competence which manifested in open-mindedness, cultural awareness and careful treatment of stereotypes, avoidance of generalizations. They possessed global thinking and multicultural worldview, seeing the world as a highly diverse place.

Multicultural interviewees also developed a stronger and multi-faceted personality, which was characterized by self-confidence, adaptability, flexibility and rich experience. They appreciated their cultural resources and used their multicultural experience to cope with societal pressure and keep their life in balance. Some of them also developed interest and curiosity for other cultures, whereas others confessed that they had always possessed this trait.
6.4. Organizational context

6.4.1. Potential contribution of multicultural employees to organizations

The study findings indicate that potentially, multiculturals could contribute to organizations with their cultural knowledge, intercultural competences and knowledge of several languages alongside with flexibility and global thinking. These aspects have already been discussed in Section 6.3. “Learning and personal development”. Further, interviewees told about some other aspects that could be useful for organizations. These include cultural bridging, willingness to work in diverse environment, and awareness about disadvantages of diversity. Findings about experience with cross-cultural training and its perceived usefulness close the section.

6.4.1.1. Cultural bridging

Cultural bridging is connecting two or more different sets of cultural knowledge and helps to share knowledge in organization (Brannen & Lee, 2014). During the interviews a number of participants acknowledged that they had experience of transferring and sharing cultural knowledge at work and in private thus acting as mediator between the cultures:

“Ich finde, dass es ein bisschen wie im Spiel. Man ist an der Grenze zwischen den zwei Kulturen und man ist wie ein Mediator... das ist nicht das passende Wort aber... man vermittelt zwischen zwei Kulturen. ... Ich bin vielleicht eine... Wie könnte man das nennen? Vielleicht eine Brücke einfach, eine Brücke zwischen den zwei Kulturen.“ (Interviewee 6)

Cultural bridging included, for example, explanation of culturally conditioned behavior. For example, Interviewee 1 told that she explained her behavior to her friends in order to avoid misinterpretation and misunderstanding. Possessing two sets of cultural knowledge, she could see cultural differences and possible risks of misunderstanding. In order to prevent it, she preferred to directly address potentially risky issues:

“Freunde von mir haben solche Sachen gesagt und ich sage, ja in Peru, wir sagen das so, und dass empfinden wir nicht so böses dahinter. Ich weiß es nicht, wie das ist hier. Ich erkläre immer ... meine Hintergründe ... für österreichische Freunde, also in Peru ist es so... Ich sage, wie es in Peru ist, und warum ich mich so verhalte.”

Using the same strategy of clarifying potential cultural ambiguities at work, Interviewee 1 also told that this approach was positively evaluated by the superior manager because it helped to avoid misunderstanding and created transparent and positive communication atmosphere.

Further, cultural bridging could include dispelling of stereotypes and explaining the essence of a culture to outsiders. Most of interviewees strived to do it when stereotypes concerned their first culture. But some of them also explained cultural characteristics and dispelled stereotypes about their second or third culture. Using cultural bridging, participants tried to reduce cultural distance and bring people closer together.

Some of interviewees also strived to help other people, e.g. their friends or colleagues to overcome cultural misunderstanding and to avoid frustration. It could happen that an interviewee
was the only person who possessed cultural knowledge in some situation, and then he/she shared this knowledge. For example, Interviewee 3 told that through his experience with Latin cultures, he learned about different understanding of time and punctuality. He described how he transferred cultural knowledge to his colleagues to help them deal with frustration:

“One of our executive managers, also they had meetings organized and they also had the same experience, like hey, they had a meeting organized but nobody showed up in the first minutes and I told them, "They are not rude to you. This is just in their culture, it's a little different.”

It seems logical, that if interviewees possessed cultural knowledge about some culture, they could share this knowledge. But even if they did not have much experience with particular cultures, their cultural awareness was still helpful in ambiguous situations, where the motives of behavior were not clear. For example, Interviewee 1 spoke about the situation when she tried to help her friend who had difficulties in cross-cultural communication. Being culturally aware, she supposed that the behavior of the other person might be culturally conditioned:

“Meine Freundin, Österreicherin, arbeitet mit Asylbewerbern, und sie hat mir gesagt, dass ein Freund von ihr, der aus arabischen Ländern kommt, dass er immer sagt, „Ah, ich habe dieses Handy und das hat mir so viel gekostet, und dann habe ich diese Jacke und das hat mir so viel gekostet.” Und sie hat gesagt, ihr stört das, dass er so ständig über Geld redet. Und dann habe ich ihr gesagt, “Weißt du, du solltest ihm das sagen, dass in Österreich nicht so gern davon gesprochen wird, vielleicht ist es die Kultur, weil in der Kultur über Sachen klar sprechen oder so…” (Interviewee 1)

The findings on cultural bridging suggest, therefore, that not only culture-specific knowledge can be transferred by multicultural individuals. But also, those of them who are highly culturally aware, might share this knowledge with other people thus sensitizing them about culture.

6.4.1.2. Creativity

One more point that was brought by one interviewee concerned creativity. Multicultural individuals possess multiple resources and problem-solving methods which originate from different cultures. Seeing cultures as knowledge pools, it becomes clear that some methods which are quite common in one culture may be novel for another culture. That means that when multicultural individuals transfer problem-solving methods from one culture to another or mix them altogether they apply more creative approach than monocultural individuals.

The example of Interviewee 10 illustrates how multicultural experience helped him to elaborate more creative and sometimes cheaper problem-solving methods at work:

“Non-standard approach for problems solving is highly appreciated in my work because the more creative your approach is, the more successful the result may be. That is why you should try not to march on lockstep with others but to look for your own way and the more unusual your way is, the more profit it can bring. … For example, you can solve a problem which a German would solve using more expensive methods. Using your experience from the Ukraine where there were fewer resources, you can apply cheaper
method and it will be more beneficial for Austrians or Germans. They could be positively surprised and value such employee more. Because everybody can use the “German” method, every German and there are few people like you who can do it differently.”

Creativity was a theme that emerged relatively late in the data gathering process and was mentioned directly by one interviewee only. As a consequence, it could not be discussed with other participants. Yet, it seems that it might be applied to other interviewees as well, who might not be conscious about such ability. This topic needs further investigation.

6.4.1.3. Willingness for diversity

Another theme, which emerged during interviews is concerned with the willingness for diversity which was characteristic for many participants. Some of them told, for example, that they engaged in multicultural projects, currently worked in multicultural organizations or would like to work with many cultures. About a third of interviewees reported that they engaged or had engaged in activities that supposed dealing with different cultures, not only confined to cultures they identify with. For example, two participants engaged in integration activities for refugees on a voluntary basis and other two participants worked as foreign language teachers, one of them was also engaged in an organization aimed at cultural exchange.

Several interviewees expressed their wish to work in culturally diverse organizations and told that they appreciated those companies which introduced the policy of diversity. They felt that they possessed qualities which could be useful for such organizations, like knowledge of languages, willingness to travel and interact with other cultures:

“Ich würde auf jeden Fall so gerne in einer internationalen Organisation arbeiten, weil ich Erstmal von der Sprache profitieren kann, vielleicht weil ich mehr Kulturen kennen kann, also einfach verreisen. Ich würde sehr nützlich für die Organisation generell sein, weil ich diese Offenheit habe, also, das es ist, nicht so konservativ denken.“ (Interviewee 1)

“I wouldn't mind to go to another country to have a job. I can imagine to live in another country for a year, it would not be a problem for me. It would be my case to say, I'm willing to go abroad. Or also to learn other languages, this would not bother me. (Interviewee 4)

Further, many interviewees considered that diverse and open organizational culture would help them to thrive and feel more comfortable and secure. Some of interviewees worked in such organizations already and could therefore evaluate their present experience. Their interest for other cultures, cross-cultural competences and global thinking was successfully supported by the open atmosphere of multinational companies. The fact, that such companies employ people from various cultural backgrounds made such organizations very attractive for the interviewees:

“Jetzt wo ich arbeite, ich war sehr froh, weil es gibt viele andere Herkunftsländer auch, also Personen von anderen Herkunftsländer, die dort arbeiten, und es gibt eine gewisse Lockerheit, man fühlt sich sicher einfach, dass es keine starre Gedanke ist, eine nur die deutsche Kultur ist, es gibt andere Kulturen, andere Arten von denken und das hat mir mehr Sicherheit gegeben.“ (Interviewee 1)
Interviewees were aware about the possibilities which diversity brings: they connected diversity with new ideas, new perspectives, creativity and out-of-the-box thinking. Valuing openness to new cultures and willingness to learn by themselves, it was not surprising that they also valued organizations which could offer them this possibility. Interviewee 3 stressed, for example, that such organizations would predominantly attract him as employee:

“The cool thing about bringing diversity in, I think as an organization you have more options because everyone you bring in, has his own perspective, has new ideas ... And I think you should also use this as an advertisement in your job offerings. You know, you could say, hey, we have 50% of our people who are working in our Austrian office are actually from other countries. We speak so many different languages, we have these many cultures. For me it would be appealing to work for that company versus a traditional company.”

Other participants, on the contrary, possessed working experience in monocultural organizations being the only employee with multicultural background there. Thus, they could describe the drawbacks of such organizations for them. For example, such disadvantages as thinking in stereotypes and reserved attitude towards other cultures were named. Further, these interviewees confessed feeling like outsiders in such organizations and expressed their hope that culturally diverse organizations would give them more feeling of belonging and integration into an organizational culture. Interviewee 11 had the opportunity to compare the situation of being an only culturally different individual at work with the situation when another multicultural employee was there. After that, she realized that she would like to work in a culturally diverse environment:

“There was one week when another employee [with multicultural background] was there and I felt more comfortable when there was somebody else. Maybe because the attention of my colleagues was focused not only on me as a special individual. I felt that I am not the only person who is culturally different.” (Interviewee 11)

Yet, for a couple of interviewees diversity in organization was not the crucial factor when speaking about their job wishes. Though they had a successful working experience in culturally diverse conditions, it was more important for them to apply their professional skills or work in the area of interest. However, nobody of participants expressed unwillingness to work in multicultural environment in spite of being aware of the related challenges (see Section 6.4.1.4. “Awareness of challenges in multicultural teams”). Rather, they prioritized the possibility to use their professional skills over the possibility to use their intercultural skills.

### 6.4.1.4. Awareness of challenges in multicultural teams

Reading about appreciation and willingness of the interviewees to work in culturally diverse setting one should not think that participants were not aware about the challenges of such working environment. Many interviewees confessed that they had experienced situations when cultural differences had led to misunderstanding and frustration.
During the interviews, some participants directly mentioned the challenges connected with teamwork in multicultural setting. These included, for example, the difficulty to bring together different perspectives, necessity for more explanations and, therefore, more time consumption. Yet, for most interviewees the advantages which they saw in diversity seemed to overweight these challenges. Here, it should also be noted that many interviewees developed their strategies for coping with possible cross-cultural misunderstandings. Some of them have already been mentioned in Section 6.4.1.1. "Cultural Bridging", e.g. direct explanation of one’s behavior and motives.

Further, the strategies to deal with challenges in multicultural teams included being open towards other cultures. Openness was a pre-requisite for understanding the viewpoints and working habits of others whereas cultural knowledge helped to explain this behavior and avoid frustration. The example of Interviewee 9 illustrates such a strategy:

“[Offenheit] ist natürlich toll fürs Team. Wenn du etwa ein bisschen Grundtoleranz hast, dass sie die andere Arbeitsweise haben. Wenn du kennst, ok, etwas kommt vielleicht zu spät, aber es kommt dafür in bester Verfassung. Das ist auch, dieses Verständnis, und das hat mir auf jeden Fall auch geholfen, dass man halt ein bisschen die Mentalitäten kennt und was Positives damit verbinden kann."

Another strategy to deal with challenges of multicultural teamwork, proposed by Interviewee 10, also required cultural knowledge and was aimed to effective communication and task division. In contrast to Interviewee 9, he put more emphasis on team performance and effectiveness rather than on team dynamics:

“When you work and you have colleagues … from other countries, you make a correction for your cooperation with them. For example, you cannot expect precision and punctuality from Italians, so you make a correction that [the work] will probably not be done on time and will probably not be done very accurately. With Chinese, you should clearly tell what you want, make an accent on the result you expect. But you can give them some uninteresting work and expect that it will be done accurately. Therefore, you can use the cultures differences to make your work more effective and also to anticipate and prevent problems.”

It should be noted, that though all interviewees were aware of challenges and most of them nevertheless were eager to work in multicultural teams, there were some interviewees who were less enthusiastic about team diversity. In one case, an interviewee had a possibility to choose tasks and colleagues and preferred the strategy of avoiding (change of a working partner) or switching (working on another task) if the cooperation was too uncomfortable. The explanation for that was an attempt to save time and resources which one needed for finding a compromise in cross-cultural communication. In another case, an interviewee was interested in culturally diverse working atmosphere but also aware about challenges and that fact seemed to make her more neutral towards the possibility to work in multicultural teams. Further, she had more possibilities to choose between monocultural teams (consisting of the representatives of her first culture) and multicultural teams, because she has returned to her first culture.
6.4.2. Role of cross-cultural training

In order to investigate if cultural knowledge of the interviewees came only from the experience or was acquired through other means, they were asked if they had undergone any cultural training or had got information from other sources and if they found it useful. Three of 11 interviewees told that they either had participated in cross-cultural training or took cross-cultural courses during their studies. Two participants did international business courses. One participant got access to some pieces of cultural information at school. Five participants got cultural knowledge only from their experience and most of them wished that they had had the possibility to undergo the training.

Cross-cultural training seemed not only to deliver cultural knowledge but also to build awareness about cultural issues. Two of interviewees among those who had undergone cross-cultural training said that the training was helpful because it explained cross-cultural issues which might not be clear by themselves. For example, Interviewee 1 told that the university course on cross-cultural communication helped her to realize what was happening when she first immersed in the new culture and pushed her to reflection about cultural issues:

“Dann waren mir viele Sachen bewusst… Ich hätte nicht gewusst, dass es schon Studien gibt, die das Verhalten, zum Beispiel, mein Verhalten in manchen Phasen eine Erklärung hätte, wie zum Beispiel, diese Cultural Schock… also die ganze Erklärung, es war mir erleuchtend. Und das hat mir auch geholfen, an diesem Moment auch über anderen Kulturen selber zu reflektieren.”

Due to the fact, that participants had such a close experience with different cultures, it seems logical that trainings complemented their self-obtained knowledge and made it more meaningful for them. Yet, the interviewees evaluated the practical experience to be more important for their development than theoretical knowledge. Especially such characteristics of multiculturals as open-mindedness and interest for other cultures seemed to be the consequence of their experience or personality rather than an outcome of cross-cultural trainings.

The most interviewees supported this idea of priority of their personal experience over theoretical knowledge. For example, Interviewee 7 told that trainings or cross-cultural communication courses could only be useful when the knowledge could be directly applied (“The things which you do not come in direct contact with, stay theoretical for you. Without practice, theory is nothing.”)

Though interviewees recognized that theoretical knowledge could influence their way of thinking, they were all together consent that personal experience brought the most changes in their identity and relations with multiple cultures. Especially culture-specific trainings seemed to have little influence when not accompanied by practical experience. One interviewee even criticized culture-specific trainings as being focused too much on differences rather than on similarities. She told that after she had accumulated her personal multicultural experience, it became clear to her that culture-specific information, aimed at presenting the differences between the cultures had not been very useful. According to her, information about what culture was as a phenomenon or how the cultures were constructed would have been more helpful.
As for those interviewees who did not have an opportunity to have a cross-cultural training and who acquired cultural knowledge only through personal experience, they expressed their wish to take part in such training. They hoped that it could extend their cultural knowledge and save many efforts and mistakes that they had made. For example, Interviewee 3 told that unfortunately, he had not undergone any cross-cultural training but he believed that training would have been helpful for him in order to show more respect for other people:

“[Cross-cultural training] would have been very beneficial. For instance, if somebody would have told me, that if... with the Indians, it's like this and it's like this… Or I think in some of the Asian countries... they have presents, so they brought something from their home country, and I think it's also expected a little bit that you also bring something and give them… Or the thing that if you hand in the business cards to somebody, you do it with both hands, and you expect the other person to take it also like this. This is like something precious. I give you this and you are supposed to take it like this [with both hands] and not just ok, thank you, but it's really... These are the things I would have wished that somebody would have told me earlier. Because I believe by just taking like, ok, thank you, I probably offended that person…”

Some other interviewees also shared the idea of importance of cross-cultural trainings, especially in culturally diverse organizations. Whereas some of them expressed a wish to get more culture-specific information, others were also interested in culture-general information. One interviewee underlined the importance of showing similarities among the cultures and presenting differences as something positive. The motivation to take part in trainings observed by many interviewees was rooted in their desire to better understand other cultures, to behave appropriately in cross-cultural situations and to save efforts by acquiring cultural knowledge through trial and error.

Only two interviewees did not openly express their wish to participate in cross-cultural trainings, and one of them told that he would participate only if he had seen direct influence of such training to his career.

6.4.3. Summary

Summarizing the findings on multicultural identity development in connection with organizational context, it can be said that multicultural individuals indeed possess skills which could be useful for organizations. First, thanks to their intercultural competence they could easily navigate in cross-cultural situations and moreover, also transferred their cultural knowledge thus performing cultural bridging.

Further, by addressing different cultural knowledge pools, they could be more creative by problem-solving. Most of them were aware of challenges of diversity but developed their strategies to cope with them and were willing to work in multicultural organizations. The role of cross-cultural training was assessed differently, yet generally it was found to be helpful when accompanied by the real experience. Theoretical cultural knowledge which was transmitted through trainings could explain cultural issues and push to reflection.
7. Discussion

The main research question of the diploma thesis and the subject of the qualitative study was:

**How do individuals develop their multicultural identity and what are the implications for organizations?**

The conducted qualitative study helped to answer this question with regard to characteristics of multicultural identity development, learning and consequences for organizations. Multicultural identity development was found to be a long and complex process which may reshape and give growth to one’s personality. In the present study, this process can be hardly separated from acculturation.

The discussion will be structured around the three sub-questions which altogether deliver the answer to the main research question. At the beginning the general conclusions about multicultural identity issue will be discussed, further, each sub-question will be answered separately.

Before proceeding with the discussion of the findings, it should be noted that the present study was of exploratory character. Using qualitative method, an effort was made to investigate the process of multicultural identity development and to find out possible patterns within very diverse personal experiences. A number of topics had been determined before the data collection, other themes emerged during the data collection and data analysis. The following table gives an overview of the themes and the results of the study which will be further discussed in detail:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Multicultural identity development</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current identity</strong></td>
<td>Several patterns of identification were observed: bicultural, global, one culture with competence in another culture, multicultural. Identity proved to be a complex issue, self-identification was not stable and depended on context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Factors, important for change in identification and multicultural identity development</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time</strong></td>
<td>Several years are needed to develop multicultural identification whereas multiculturals go through phases of acculturative stress (cultural shock).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language</strong></td>
<td>Knowledge of language was a pre-condition to being able to identify with a culture. Language skills were a precondition for acquiring cultural knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social interactions</strong></td>
<td>Social interactions with friends and colleagues were important for acquiring cultural knowledge and developing a sense of belonging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reciprocity</strong></td>
<td>Acceptance by the cultural group was important for developing a sense of belonging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural differences</strong></td>
<td>Positive attitudes towards values of a culture influenced the willingness to belong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pride and prestige</strong></td>
<td>Pride could hinder acknowledgment of a new identity, seeking for prestige could influence the willingness to belong to the society.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Learning and personal development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural knowledge</th>
<th>Multicultural employees showed culture-specific knowledge which was not limited to cultures, they identified with. Some of them also possessed culture-general knowledge.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercultural competence</td>
<td>Interviewees were open-minded, were aware of and could deal with stereotypes, thought globally and had a multicultural worldview, perceiving the society around them as a highly diverse place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality</td>
<td>Interviewees developed a complex multi-faceted personality and became stronger, more confident, flexible and adaptive. They possessed interest for other cultures and willingness to learn. They appreciated their experience and used resources from several cultures to deal with stress and make their life more balanced.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Organizational context

| Potential contribution of multicultural employees | In addition to intercultural competence, most interviewees showed willingness for diversity and desire to build bridges between cultures, transferring cultural knowledge. They were aware of challenges which arise in multicultural settings and developed strategies to deal with them. |
| Role of cross-cultural training | Cross-cultural trainings were mainly positively evaluated, yet own experience had more importance for cultural competence acquisition. An optimal mix between culture-general and culture-specific trainings as well as theory and practical experience is needed. |

Table 2: Summary of findings

Beginning with the general considerations about multicultural identity, it should be stated that multicultural identity proved to be a very complex issue. As it was already stated in Chapter 6 “Findings”, the way multicultural individuals define their identity seems to depend very much on context and the question asked. For example, during the interview one and the same person could come with different statements, which cultures he/she belongs to. The way, the identification question was asked (Who are you with regard to cultures? Which cultures do you identify with?) seemed to pre-define an answer, e.g. in the first case, interviewees inclined to relate to their ethnic/national background, in the second case, to cultures they felt attached to and possessed cultural competence.

The feeling of belonging could be stronger or weaker depending on the situation and in an extreme case, belonging nowhere and belonging everywhere was the same, i.e. a person could identify with both and neither culture at the same time. These findings were surprising and suggest that one’s cultural identity can hardly be determined with the help of a short question only (e.g. What cultures do you identify with?) since its nature is more complex and deep, depending on the situation, context and even on the mood of an individual.

There might be several reasons for these inconsistent findings.

First of all, the explanation might come from the linguistic side. There is a semantic difference between identify with and identify as. Whereas identify with means to associate closely with, to “regard as having strong links with”, identify as means “assign (a particular characteristic or categorization) to oneself; describe oneself as belonging to (a particular category or group)” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2017). Indeed, many interviewees had positive feelings and attachment to
cultures they not only lived in but also got to know through travelling and social connections. They *identified with* these cultures. Since all but two interviewees lived in Austria, they of course, identified with Austrian culture. Yet, they were hesitant to *identify as* Austrians due to their ethnic and national characteristics.

The deeper insight into the question of cultural identity was possible, when the question of cultural belonging was discussed. Here, interviewees could tell, which cultures they felt they belonged to. “Belonging” was translated into German as “Zugehörigkeit” and to Russian as “принадлежность” and seemed to have deeper meaning than “identification with a culture”. The meaning of “belonging” with regard to degree of identification could probably lie between “identify with” and “identify as” on an imaginary scale.

Therefore, it seems that interviewees’ answers were influenced by the question because of word choice. Different ways to ask about one’s identity might have conveyed different meanings for participants and thus, push them to different answers.

The reason why some participants were hesitant to define themselves as (half-) Austrians, even after years of living in this culture, having positive attitudes towards it and possessing the necessary cultural competence, might be that they felt inappropriate to do so because of their national or ethnic background. That is, they were multicultural in fact but did not identify as representatives of several cultures. The difference between being and feeling multicultural was discussed by Grosjean (2015), who wrote that though identity had been a central topic in biculturalism research, it was not a central defining characteristic of multiculturalism.

There are many reasons, why an individual does not acknowledge being a part of two cultures, one of them (and seemingly the most powerful) is the acceptance of multicultural identification by the society. While categorical membership can be chosen by the self or imposed by others, some categories can be based on one’s birth (Wan & Chew, 2013). That might be the reason why many interviewees referred to their first (birth) culture as their only identity.

Cultures do not easily allow people to openly identify with one of them, being at the same time a member of another. As Grosjean (2015) writes, “The attitude is either “You are A” or “You are B” but rarely “You are both A and B”.” (Grosjean, 2015, p.582). This explanation combined with the findings of the study indicates that it is possible to *be* multicultural (possessing cultural competence, being able to effectively live and work in several cultures and having affective attitudes towards them) without saying “I am both A and B”. Further, since *identification* means “psychological attachment to a culture” (Pekerti et al., 2015, p.9), all interviewees in fact identified with several cultures, without saying “I am both A and B”. The question of the society acceptance and importance of reciprocity will be addressed once again further, when discussing the findings on multicultural identity development.

Finally, some interviewees seemed to be reluctant to define themselves in terms of their cultural background because they did not primarily think of themselves as culture representatives but put their personal identity to the foreground. That is, they defined themselves not as members of some culture, but underlined which cultures have influenced their personality and became a part of them. The possible explanation for the phenomenon could be rooted in another acculturation strategy, different from the four possible strategies introduced in Section 2.1.3. “Bi-dimensional acculturation conception of Berry (1997)”.

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This strategy is known as an individualistic acculturation strategy (Bourhis, Moïse, Perreault, & Senécal, 1997) which means that immigrants take a cosmopolitan attitude and choose and adopt elements of different cultures without feeling strongly committed to them (Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2014).

Bourhis et al. (1997) revised bi-dimensional acculturation model of Berry (1997) and proposed individualistic acculturation strategy which comes into play when immigrants prefer to define themselves and treat others as individuals rather than members of cultural groups and choose their group membership depending on their personal needs and group demands, joining and leaving these groups on a voluntary basis.

![Figure 7: Revised bidimensional model of immigrant accultural orientations](source: Bourhis et al. (1997, p. 377))

The way, the interviewees spoke about their cultural orientation, seemed to have very much alike with this strategy of individualism. Though they strived to find their place in a new culture, their personal identity was more important than cultural identity and they consciously chose those cultural norms and beliefs which matched them as a person. As one of interviewees noted, “Man nimmt das Beste aus allen Kulturen... Aber man muss trotzdem sich treu bleiben”.

Therefore, it becomes clear that multiculturalism in a person is “greater than the sum of its parts” and rather “represents creating an individualized culture” from elements of the first and the new cultures (Schwartz, Vignoles, Brown, & Zagefka, 2014, p.79).

Finally, it should be noted that all interviewees saw themselves as multicultural persons and also possessed multicultural personality, which they developed thanks to their multicultural experience. The term “multicultural personality” refers to individuals with multicultural worldview or multicultural orientation in life. Such individuals have positive attitudes towards cultural diversity, which enable adjustment and successful adaptation in cross-cultural interactions. Some other characteristics of multicultural personality include multiple cultural perspectives and
willingness to learn about other cultures (Ponterotto & Fietzer, 2014). The findings on personality will be discussed further, when addressing the second research sub-question. Now, I will proceed with the first research sub-question which reads as follows:

**What are the characteristics of multicultural identity development and what factors influence it?**

The results of the study showed that one of the main characteristics of multicultural identity development process is its lengthy character. It took about 5 years for participants to develop a sense of belonging to one more culture. This time was needed to acquire knowledge about a new culture, get familiar with behavior rules and thus achieve cultural competence. The process was complicated by the culture shock and it may be concluded that before the initial shock has not been overcome, and the adaptation stage has not been achieved, identification with a new culture cannot be developed.

Yet, the findings also suggest that in some cases it might be possible to develop multicultural/global identification and develop multicultural personality for a shorter time period, if a person has accumulated some multicultural experience before the actual long-term transition (e.g. living in a multicultural society or through travelling).

Since many participants mentioned the importance of social contacts with representatives of another culture for developing a sense of belonging, it implies that intensifying such contacts could lead to facilitation of the process. Social connections represent psychological links to a culture, which include relationships with the family, friends and colleagues. Social networks may also be helpful in transferring cultural knowledge (Wan & Chew, 2013). The last fact also found its reflection in the findings.

Language as an instrument for communication, was helpful to get cultural knowledge and to create social networks. Language as a marker of cultural identification gave the feeling of belonging (or not) to a certain culture. Interestingly to note, though Grosjean (2015) writes that language component and cultural component in bicultural or bilingual individuals can exist separately (i.e. one can be bicultural without being bilingual and vice versa), it was not the case with interviewees who always connected language knowledge with cultural identification. It might be explained by the fact that their multicultural identity evolved as a result of cultural transition and in order to become a member of a new culture, they had to learn its language. Therefore, language knowledge seems to be a necessary factor for developing multicultural identity through cultural transitions.

Cultural differences which exist between the cultures could also play a role for the willingness to identify. Certain cultural values, if positively perceived by potential multicultural individuals, could appeal them towards a new culture. Further, the desire to be recognized as a cultured individual (prestige) could strengthen one’s motivation to acquire cultural knowledge and observe cultural norms, that is, to achieve bicultural competence and thus become a multicultural person. Whereas pride could hinder developing cultural identification, that is, recognizing oneself as a multicultural person.

All the above-mentioned factors (language skills, social interactions, following cultural values, prestige) may be managed by an individual himself/herself. For example, an individual can
master the language, build a social network, adopt cultural values and learn the behavior rules, thus acquiring his/her cultural competence. Yet, the factor of reciprocity, mentioned by several interviewees involves also another side (a person or larger society) and cannot be easily managed.

Certainly, an individual can choose his/her social connections consisting of people who accept him/her as a multicultural, thus strengthening his/her sense of belonging. But it is still challenging to develop cultural membership if attitudes of a larger society do not allow it. As Schwartz et al. (2014) noted, it is difficult for an individual to identify with a society which “simply does not view him as "one of us"” (Schwartz et al., 2014, p.78).

The individualistic identification pattern might be then the explanation for developing multicultural identification in the sense of being able to say, “I am multicultural” when social attitudes do not allow to say, “I am A and B”. The study results suggest that many interviewees did not find it easy to become a member of an Austrian society to the degree of being able to say, “I am Austrian” (which would be the first step towards developing “A and B” identity). One of the reasons might be the fact that they moved as adults already and their cultural identity had been fixed by that moment.

Yet, the findings showed that they developed multicultural identity, which proves that the identity can change in an adult age. Therefore, it seems that the reason that most of them could not say, e.g. “I am Austrian Peruvian” or “I am Austrian Russian” while identifying with both cultures might be that they felt socially inappropriate to do so. There were some common beliefs concerning this issue. The participants believed, for example, that it would be possible to identify as bicultural (that is, to be able to say, “I am A and B”) under the following conditions:

- in case of double citizenship
- when an individual was born in a mixed family
- if an individual would belong to ethnic minority within a larger society
- if an individual would have moved to another culture as a child.

It seems, therefore, that an identification as a bicultural individual in the sense of “I am A and B” might be restrained by common beliefs/social attitudes whereas identification as a multicultural individual in the sense of “I am a multicultural/global person” appears to be sensed as more appropriate by those who underwent cultural transition as an adult.

Coming back to an individualistic approach in acculturation, it might be the case, that this approach could be the strategy that makes more sense for grown-ups in a globalized world and this approach might be the one leading to developing of multicultural/global identity and multicultural personality. Individualistic approach supposes that the individuals do not assess the success of acculturation in terms of maintaining of the first and/or adopting of the second culture. They identify as individuals rather than cultural group members and treat others the same way (Bourhis et al., 1997). Individualistic approach might, therefore, be the reason for taking a more detached perspective on the cultures and a more cosmopolitan view.

Summing up the considerations about this part of the study, it can be stated that a long-term cultural transition combined with rich multicultural experience are the life events that can produce multicultural identity. An individualistic acculturation strategy seems to be one of the
conditions to facilitate multicultural identity development. The factors, which take influence on the developmental process include time, language, social interactions, reciprocity, pride and prestige. The previous multicultural experience also seems to play a role; such individuals might need less time for acculturation and multicultural identity development. Since all interviewees underwent cultural transition and acculturation, cultural shock was an integral part of developmental process. The influential factors, therefore, apply to the stage of acculturative stress as well.

The second sub-question of the study and the next topic for discussion reads as follows:

**What do multicultural individuals learn through their experience?**

The findings suggest, that through their multicultural experience individuals get a number of social skills and develop their personality. First of all, multicultural individuals acquired *bicultural and intercultural competence*. Whereas bicultural competence means the ability to function effectively in several cultures (LaFromboise et al., 1993), intercultural competence means effective communication with culturally different others. Interviewees showed *cultural knowledge* and shared their experiences of successful cross-cultural communication.

Since experience of living in another culture represents an excellent learning opportunity for development of intercultural competences and higher cultural intelligence (Fischer & Wildman, 2016), it is not surprising that by participating in life of several cultures, interviewees acquired these competences. Of course, in many cases the competences were self-assessed but many participants also reported that they had got positive feedback from their superior manager on their intercultural skills or made conclusions about their competences based on the successful cross-cultural communication.

The most multiculturals also showed *intercultural sensitivity* which is associated with higher levels of intercultural competence. According to Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) (Bennett, 2004), as people become more interculturally competent, a shift in the quality of their experience can be observed, which is called by Bennett (2004) the move from *ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism*. Ethnocentrism means that an individual believes that his/her (national) culture is the center of the world, i.e. the way of doing things accepted in this culture is the only and the best way (Oberg, 2006). Ethnorelativism is the opposite of ethnocentrism and means that an individual thinks of own culture as one of many possible organizations of reality (Bennett, 2004).

Individuals who developed multicultural identity, have also developed more ethnorelative views of the world. Bennett (2004) hypothesized that a critical mass of cultural knowledge is needed in order a person can understand other views and also, individuals must be “ready” to hear that information. Through their exposure to several cultures multicultural individuals seemed to get a great amount of cultural information. Further, it seemed that own experience of being cultural outsiders at the beginning of acculturation process might be the reason that changed their (in some cases ethnocentric) views and made them ready to comprehend this information.

The characteristics, reported by interviewees, stayed in line with the characteristics of culturally sensitive individuals described by Bennett (2004) in his model. The ability to deal with stereotypes and generalizations, open-mindedness, acceptance and respect of culturally
different others indicated that the most of interviewees achieved higher levels of cultural sensitivity. According to one of the assumptions within the DMIS, there are people who can be more or less culturally sensitive and among those who are especially sensitive, are individuals with higher cognitive complexity. Since it was found that multicultural individuals were more cognitively complex (Tadmor et al., 2009), it becomes clear why multicultural individuals could develop higher cultural sensitivity.

The last stage in the DMIS, identity integration, is characterized by the state when an individual constructs his/her identity on margins of different cultures expanding not only one’s behavior repertoire but also the perception of oneself as a complex cultural being (Bennett, 2004). Such high levels were especially noticeable by interviewees who had experienced several cultural transitions and close contacts with more than 3 or 4 cultures.

In addition to cultural competence in several cultures, intercultural competence and cultural sensitivity, participants could develop a stronger, multi-faceted and complex personality. It is known that personality plays an important role in potentially stressful intercultural settings and some personality traits are connected with successful mastering of cross-cultural challenges (Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2014).

One of the character traits reported by interviewees was their self-belief and courage, which evolved out of the necessity to be out of their comfort zone. They learned from their multicultural experience that they possessed power and abilities to master difficult situations and cope with life challenges. The described character trait seems to be self-efficacy which is a “people’s belief about their capabilities to exercise control over their own level of functioning and over events that affect their lives” (Bandura, 1993, p.118). One's perceptions about self-efficacy may influence one's behavior, e.g. an individual would avoid the situations where one believes to have insufficient coping skills to master them and would rather engage in activities where one believes to possess necessary skills (Bandura, 1977).

Speaking about their experiences, some interviewees told that the necessity to organize their life under new cultural conditions made them aware that they were able to cope with the situations they had not thought they could master before. It made them more confident about their capabilities and gave a feeling of success. Self-efficacy as an individual factor was found to be predictive for expatriates adjustment (Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer, & Luk, 2005) and together with learning orientation, important for general cross-cultural adjustment (Palthe, 2004). Thus, this important personal trait which has been developed by multicultural individuals adds to their competences useful to master future cultural transitions.

One more personal trait reported by interviewees was flexibility. Many interviewees noted that they had become more flexible due to their experience because they had to adapt to a different environment. There was also one interviewee who told that she had always been a flexible person. Flexibility and adaptability are the traits which play a significant role for successful intercultural adjustment (Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2014) and therefore, having developed these traits, multicultural individuals will probably have less difficulties in adjusting their behavior to new cross-cultural settings.

The next personality trait could be called gratitude because interviewees were thankful to their multicultural experience and appreciated the possibilities that different cultures gave to them.
Most of them told that they valued the opportunity to choose the best from several cultures and that resources from several cultures helped them in different situations, e.g. to cope with stress, to better communicate with colleagues and superior managers, to fulfil job tasks more creatively, to understand other cultures and other people better. Gratitude is generally connected with subjective well-being and represents an affective state (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). Pekerti and Thomas (2016) postulated that for multicultural individuals, valuing of cultures within themselves serves as motivation to be multicultural. Indeed, most interviewees told about advantages of being multicultural and positive attitudes towards several cultures. Furthermore, the findings on gratitude suggest that affective attitudes towards cultures might facilitate development of cultural identification which is also based on affective attachment. That is, one of the reasons for identification with several cultures might be gratitude towards them for the possibility to enrich one’s life.

Alongside with other positive attitudes, interviewees showed interest and curiosity for other cultures and willingness to learn about them. There are several considerations about interest as a positive emotion. First, curiosity motivates an individual to explore the subject of interest, and thus broadens the mindset. Second, interest usually arises in safe situations (Fredrickson, 1998). Taking into account these considerations, it can be supposed that cross-cultural situations which are usually described as stressful and even threatening (Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2014) might be perceived by multicultural individuals as safe and interesting. Thus, they could better use the learning opportunities which arise in such situations and communicate more effectively than individuals who feel more stressed in intercultural settings.

Because cross-cultural situations also constitute a challenge for one’s identity, strong personality may be very helpful for maintaining of one’s multicultural identity (Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2014). Since multicultural individuals went through the process of multicultural identity development and developed a strong personality, it can be supposed that personality and identity might be in reciprocal relation with each other. That is, development of multicultural identity involves development of a stronger personality whereas personality helps to balance multicultural identity.

Summing up the considerations about the second part of the study, it can be concluded that multicultural individuals have acquired knowledge and developed skills which make them effective in cross-cultural situations. They possess bicultural competence, which means that they function effectively within several cultures. They possess intercultural competence, which supposes that they can effectively communicate with representatives of other cultures. At last, they possess cultural sensitivity which means that they are less ethnocentric, more open-minded and empathetic with culturally different others.

Further, they developed multicultural personality which was not only characterized by multicultural worldview and interest for other cultures but was also a complex, strong and more confident personality. They showed self-efficacy, flexibility and adaptability which is predictive of successful cross-cultural adjustment and also had positive and grateful attitudes which are connected with general personal well-being. These findings suggest, that multiculturals might possess higher levels of stress-resistance and a well-developed ability to cope with cross-cultural challenges.
The third research sub-question was:

**What can organizations gain from multicultural individuals and how can organizations facilitate their development?**

As the previous discussion shows, multicultural individuals possess skills that could be useful for multinational organizations. These competences include intercultural competence, intercultural sensitivity and several active languages. Further, they possessed a number of personal traits which predict their successful adjustment in cross-cultural situations.

Interest for other cultures and willingness to learn motivated multicultural individuals to engage in cross-cultural interactions. Further, they often took a role of “cultural bridges” or “translators” (Brannen & Lee, 2014), transferring cultural knowledge and helping others to master intercultural situations. Being aware of cross-cultural challenges, many of interviewees were nevertheless eager to work with culturally different others because they possessed positive attitudes towards diversity.

It should be noted, however, that for two interviewees cross-cultural challenges represented a reason to be less enthusiastic of working in cross-cultural environment. They shared the idea that diversity was a double-edged sword and was connected not only with benefits but also with liabilities (Brannen & Lee, 2014). One of them insisted that companies often oversee and ignore difficulties of multicultural teamwork and called for objective attitudes towards cultural diversity.

Therefore, it cannot be generally assumed that all multicultural individuals are eager to work in culturally diverse settings. Each individual is unique and personal preferences and expectations also play a role. So, it should be warned against generalizing and stereotyping about all multicultural individuals as striving to work in multicultural teams because some of them have a neutral position towards this question.

On the one hand, since one of the interviewees mentioned the lack of successful diversity policy, this might be the reason for neutral attitudes towards multicultural teamwork. Maybe better diversity management within organizations is needed to sensitize employees towards advantages and challenges of multiculturalism and provide them with coping strategies and approaches to organize the cooperation more effectively. On the other hand, it might also be the case that other factors just have more importance than team diversity for such individuals (e.g. job content, individual characteristics of team members).

At the same time, there were interviewees, for whom the diversity policy of a company would be an essential criterion for job choice. Many interviewees stressed the importance of an open organizational culture which they felt to match better to their expectations. It seems, therefore, that also with reference to organizational culture (which represents one of the culture levels), multicultural individuals might apply the same selective approach as they use in their national culture orientation. That is, they seem to look for values that match them and therefore, consciously choose organizations to work for.

Those of interviewees who currently work for multicultural organizations, highly appreciated diversity policy of their organizations and were thankful for travelling and learning opportunities that their company granted them. One interviewee also told that he got job offers because of his
multicultural experience. All these findings suggest that multicultural companies look for multicultural employees and vice versa. It is not surprising including the fact that values of such companies and values of such employees coincide, that is, both sides think globally, appreciate openness, welcome multiple perspectives and see diversity not as a threat but as an opportunity. It becomes clear why interviewees expressed strong wish to work for such companies because there, multicultural background and competences are perceived as an advantage of employees which is not always the case in other organizations.

Summing up, multicultural individuals seem to thrive in organizations with an open organizational culture and indeed, possess competences which would make them to successful expatriates, cross-cultural negotiators and cultural bridgers. These abilities could be employed by MNCs to support knowledge transfer between headquarters and subsidiaries, to successfully communicate with international clients and to facilitate effective work in cross-cultural teams.

Before I proceed further, it seems important to link the present findings to those mentioned in the literature (see Section 2.3.3. “Skills and competences of multicultural individuals”). Brannen and Lee (2014) warned organizations against the threat of discrimination in cases when individuals’ promotion is tied to their personal or demographic characteristics. They also argued, that it is the multicultural mindset rather than individual's surface characteristics (ethnicity, multicultural experience) that matters and can be assessed.

As already mentioned in Section 2.3.3. “Skills and competences of multicultural individuals”, there have been studies that connected abilities of multicultural individuals with a particular bicultural type (Benet-Martínez et al., 2006; Cheng et al., 2008; Tadmor et al., 2009). As a consequence, it was suggested that organizations could find out the bicultural type of potential employees in order to know which skills should be expected from them (Brannen & Lee, 2014; Friedman et al., 2012).

The present study did not pursue a goal to assess multicultural identification types. Though several patterns of identification have been observed (see Section 6.2.1. “Current identity”) which correspond the types described in the literature, they were not stable and sometimes changed during the interview. Therefore, no conclusions can be made with regard to relations between competences of the interviewees and their identification patterns (i.e. “types” in accordance with acculturation model of Berry (1997), BII conception by Benet-Martínez and Haritatos (2005) or typology by Brannen et al. (2009)).

Moreover, the findings suggest that there seem to be as many unique types of multiculturals as there are individuals. Someone’s descriptions of his/her identification appear to depend on context, situation and the question asked. It may be even contradictory, equating marginal type (“neither/nor” identification) with bicultural type (“both” identification), which reminds of a possibility to be a constructive marginal (Bennett, 2004). In this respect, it is questionable if measurement of one’s identity with the help of assessing instruments (like, for example, BII scale (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005)) would deliver results that are applicable to someone’s identity once and for all.

However, a supposition can be made with regard to relation between multicultural individuals’ competences and their views of self. Namely, all participants saw themselves as multicultural individuals with very rich and valuable experience, lucky to have access to several worlds with
the possibility to choose the best. It might be probable, therefore, that multicultural identity as well as intercultural competences, willingness to learn and especially willingness for diversity and for being cultural bridgers are connected to positive perception of one’s multicultural background.

Some theoretical and empirical works provide support for this idea. First, according to the n-Cultural conception by Pekerti et al. (2015), recognition of the value of cultures within oneself is a distinctive feature of n-Culturals which serves as a motivation to be an n-Cultural. Second, it was found that identity can be managed, e.g. higher levels of integration can be achieved through recalling positive experiences connected with multiple identities (Cheng & Lee, 2009).

These considerations lead us to the question about multicultural employees’ development and about the role of organizations in their development. Assumed that valuing of cultures within oneself serves as motivation for being (or becoming) multicultural, it might be possible that an open organizational culture and diversity policy of multicultural organizations could represent that supportive environment which would facilitate multicultural individuals’ development. Indeed, a lot of interviewees stressed importance of an open organizational culture and their wish to work for such organizations. Having developed skills and competences which are useful in intercultural settings, multicultural employees would then be able to apply their full potential by using their skills and fulfilling their wish for diversity.

As for potentially multicultural individuals who have not (yet) achieved the state of identity reconciliation and still struggle with multiple identities, multicultural organizations could represent for them a safe supportive environment for multicultural identity development. It would be especially important in cases where larger society is not accepting one’s multicultural background. If within a company, one’s cultural heritage would be seen as an advantage, or at least as not a disadvantage, it might help an individual to develop a positive attitude to his/her several identities. Here, the factor of reciprocity (acceptance by the cultural group) would be influenced. To remember, mutual acceptance between an individual and other people/society was important for developing a sense of cultural belonging.

Thus, one of the areas where organizations might have influence on the development of their (potentially) multicultural employees is a social sphere. Since social contacts based on reciprocity (mutual acceptance and appreciation of multicultural background) were indicated to be important for identification, organizations could employ the policy of cultural diversity and appreciation of multiple cultural backgrounds of its employees.

What exactly could be done in this respect? First of all, it should be stated that multiculturalism is not always perceived positively and if individuals feel that cultural differences are highly conflicting, they tend to magnify them. This hinders the possibility to bridge the cultures and was also found to have a negative effect on team performance (Brannen & Lee, 2014). These facts seem to be true not only for multicultural teams, where the members should find the ways to overcome cultural differences within a team but also for multicultural individuals who strive to reconcile several cultural identities within themselves. Thus, it might be helpful for all these groups of individuals to learn about different cultures and about culture concept generally.

In this respect, cross-cultural trainings seem to be useful not only for employees who are going for international assignments but also for all employees who stay at home but still have to work
within a culturally diverse environment. Cross-cultural or sensitivity trainings were positively assessed by interviewees who participated in them, however, it should be noted that some interviewees directly emphasized the importance of presenting cultural similarities over differences. Taking into account the considerations of Brannen and Lee (2014) about conflicting cultural differences, it seems logical that placing a focus on the cultural similarities and trying to find a common ground would enhance the possibilities of cultural bridging thus facilitating culture integration.

On the other hand, some interviewees wished to get more specific cultural knowledge and learn about certain cultural rules of different cultures. For them, other programs are needed.

The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity by Bennett (2004) would be a good starting point for finding customized programs since it postulates that the content of training depends largely on the stage of intercultural sensitivity development. For example, for those individuals, who are defensive against cultural differences, it is recommended to establish commonalities whereas for those, who minimize the differences, it is recommended to develop cultural self-awareness (Bennett, 2004). These practices would be useful for managing diversity within an organization but also within a person thus creating conditions for multicultural identity development. Multicultural individuals who have already achieved high levels of cultural sensitivity, elaborated sophisticated culture understanding and intercultural skills could be those employees within organizations who would motivate others for culture integration.

Further, Pekerti et al. (2015) proposed the Multicultural Mentor Modeling Program (MMMP) for providing social support. Aimed at developing of understanding of self and cognitive processes, this program would assist multicultural individuals who experience acculturative stress. Supplying of multiculturals with cultural knowledge and psychological knowledge, this program is deeper than cross-cultural training because it focuses on cognitive and behavioral aspects.

Since cross-cultural adjustment is more than just a learning process about another culture but also a psychological cognitive process, which seems to be characterized by cultural cognitive dissonance (Maertz, Hassan, & Magnusson, 2009), the programs aimed at both cultural learning and understanding of cognitive processes might indeed be helpful for acculturative stress reduction.

The MMMP would help multiculturals to challenge destructive thinking, to develop multicultural identity and balance the sense of belonging to other cultures as well as a sense of uniqueness as a multicultural individual. In addition, mentors could create environment where multicultural individuals would feel welcome in organizations (Pekerti et al., 2015).

The present study provided support for the importance of mentoring and cultural trainings. As already mentioned above, cultural trainings were generally well appreciated by the interviewees. Trainings could help individuals to acquire and organize cultural knowledge, develop intercultural skills and intercultural sensitivity. Further, one of the interviewees even expresses the idea of mentoring or coaching within the organization by pairing two individuals from different cultures together so that local employee could assist a new employee by integrating into a new culture. Generally, the idea of creating positive atmosphere and intensive social contacts within an organization was supported by the majority of the interviewees.
The conducted interviews also provide conclusions for the contents and possible topics of trainings or mentoring programs. After the interviews, I got a positive feedback from interviewees on questions and themes touched upon. While some of them confessed that they had reflected much on cultures and acculturation processes before, for many others thinking about identity development issues was new and they stressed the value of such discussions. Not all questions were easy to answer at once but upon reflection, interviewees could relate to cultural and identity topics more consciously. It seems therefore, that inviting multicultural individuals to reflect upon their identity and the role of different cultures for one’s development would enhance their better understanding of a multicultural self and thus, could be on an important part of assisting programs. Further, since recalling of positive experiences with cultures was found to be helpful for culture integration (Cheng & Lee, 2009), it would also be advisable to invite the training participants/mentees to reflect on positive sides of multiculturalism within a person.

Alongside with trainings and/or mentoring programs, organizations could introduce other measures for assisting individuals during their acculturation. Companies could facilitate acquiring of language skills, since language was one of the crucial factors for multicultural identity development named by the interviewees. For example, it can happen that employees do not speak the language of the country where they currently work (e.g. expatriates, immigrants, sojourners).

Speaking about MNCs which are multilingual per definition (Luo & Shenkar, 2006), many of them often use English as an official corporate language since English has become lingua franca of international business (Charles, 2007). Nevertheless, the role of local language was found to be very important for developing identification with a local culture. In the Chapter “Findings” Section 6.2.2.3. “Language”, I provided an example that communication among colleagues was impeded because of insufficient local language skills. Interviewee 2, whose first language was English, could use it officially at work but noted that insufficient German skills (especially dialect) hindered developing a sense of belonging to Austrian culture. She felt that international employees were “segregated” from locals due to language reasons.

Therefore, if companies would like to assist multicultural individuals in their acculturation and generally, facilitate cultural integration and communication within an organization, it would be advisable to promote learning of local language by the employees. In Austria and other countries where different dialects are spoken, it could also be possible to organize courses on local dialect for employees with another first language. As for local employees, they could be sensitized about the difficulties of dialect for their multicultural colleagues.

Finally, it should be noted that time factor was named as one of the most powerful for multicultural identity development. It was underlined by all interviewees that one needs a certain amount of time to adjust to a new culture, which means that there are objective limits for the possibility of process acceleration. Therefore, it should be borne in mind that even if the environment is supporting, there are psychological mechanisms that determine the process of acculturative stress and an individual might still have the feelings of alienation, homesickness and frustration. It becomes evident that certain amount of time should be granted to those struggling with the necessity to develop cultural competence in another culture and to develop multicultural identity.
Summing up, multicultural individuals could contribute to organizations with their intercultural competences, language skills, open-mindedness and in many cases willingness to work in culturally diverse environments. In their turn, organizations could assist individuals on their way to multiculturalism by creating social support within an organization, facilitating language learning and providing mentoring programs. Further, intercultural trainings seem to be helpful not only for potentially multicultural individuals but for all employees in order to create an open atmosphere within an organization. These actions would contribute for successful diversity management both within an organization and within individuals.
8. Conclusion

8.1. Summary

Today, when the globalization processes have brought about increased human migration and Internet has interconnected all parts of the world, the questions of biculturalism/multiculturalism, culture integration and cultural diversity become more and more significant. Though multiculturalism is not a new phenomenon, it gains special importance in the 21st century.

Integration processes in the world let cultural transitions happen with relative ease. People move from one country to another for work, study, travel and personal reasons. Finding themselves in a new cultural environment, they experience acculturative stress and need to acquire cultural competences in order to function effectively in a new culture. Yet, they bring their cultures with them and therefore, also the members of receiving cultures have to adapt to life in a multicultural context (Schwartz et al., 2014).

As a consequence, more and more people get in close contact with more than one culture and thus, might become multicultural. Thus, the number of multicultural individuals will grow and they would also constitute a great part of future employees and managers (Brannen & Thomas, 2010). Having long been a subject of sociology and psychology, now multiculturalism within a person also attracts attention of researchers from the field of organizational studies.

This diploma thesis examined the question of multicultural identity development and provided valuable insights into the nature of multicultural identity, into the characteristics of multicultural identity development process, influence factors and the possibilities to manage this process. At first, the theoretical part of the diploma thesis followed up the history of thinking about biculturalism and introduced the relevant theoretical models and concepts as well as research findings from different disciplines (sociology, psychology, anthropology and organizational studies). Next, within the framework of the qualitative study, the data on multicultural identity development was collected, analysed and presented to give an exhaustive material for the discussion. Further, the results were discussed and attempted to be explained using the theoretical part of the thesis and some new literature. Several assumptions were made regarding the nature of multicultural identity and its development. Finally, suggestions were made concerning the role that organizations could take in the process management.

The study showed that the question of cultural identification and multicultural identity is a very complex one. Thanks to the qualitative design of the study it was possible to get a deeper insight into the way multicultural identity is constructed and thus, make the following contribution to the existing stream of research:

- First, there seem to be endless variations of multicultural identity, since each identity is unique and represents a result of one’s personal experience. Rephrasing Phinney and Devich-Navarro (1997, p.29), one might say, “there is not just one way to be multicultural”.
- Second, definitions of one’s identity may be context dependent and have fluent boundaries. Depending on the question asked, a national or an ethnic identity may be emphasized, thus delivering different answers. It would be important to consider this point when conducting quantitative studies on identity.
Third, feeling oneself multicultural (multicultural identity) and feeling oneself as a member of several cultures (social identity) indeed seems to be not quite the same. Multicultural identity appears to represent a multicultural/global mindset, characterized by openness, cultural and intercultural competence as well as cultural sensitivity rather than high levels of identification and belonging to particular cultures.

In the framework of the present study, multicultural identity was mostly a result of cultural transition and acculturation. The most important influence factors included time, language, social interactions and reciprocity (acceptance by other people/receiving society). Some interviewees also named attractive cultural values and feelings of pride/prestige as motivational factors. Acculturative stress, characterized by ambivalent feelings, was an integral part of multicultural identity development.

Proceeding through this stress, individuals had to overcome challenges connected with finding their place in a new culture. They learned the language, acquired cultural knowledge, created social networks thus having become a part of the society. They highly appreciated their experience which helped them to become more confident and multi-faceted and were grateful for the opportunity to have more perspectives and choose the best from several cultures. Many of them seemed to consciously and voluntary choose cultural values adopting only those which they liked, mixing them together in a unique individual manner. This individualistic approach seems to be an effective strategy for cultural conflict resolution since a person experiences less pressure and feels free to choose one’s way of thinking and behavior.

Further, acculturation represented an excellent learning opportunity, including learning about the social world and about oneself. Interviewees acquired cultural knowledge which was not limited to the cultures they identified with but also included cultures they had contacts to. They became more open-minded than before, more curious and interested in other cultures and willing to engage in multicultural interactions. Finally, they developed a stronger multifaceted personality characterized by more complex relativistic views, self-efficacy, adaptability and flexibility.

8.2. Managerial implications

Knowledge about the nature of processes which stay behind cultural transitions (psychological issues connected with acculturative stress, factors which make adaptation successful, positive outcomes of developing multicultural identity) gives organizations a better understanding for the conditions of their employees who deal with several cultures in their daily life. This knowledge can be applied not only for employees with multiple cultural background but also for expatriates and frequent travelers. Further, since not only individuals who experience cultural transitions but also those who stay at home will encounter multiple cultures more and more often in the future, acculturation processes and identity issues become an important matter for all organizations, not only for MNCs.

Organizations may assist their employees in dealing with acculturative stress using training and mentoring programs aimed at developing intercultural sensitivity, acquiring of culture knowledge and providing information about acculturation processes and identity changes. These programs can be tailored according to individual demands, to meet personal needs of the...
participants of acculturation process. However, the most important topic seems to be cultural awareness (and especially cultural self-awareness, recognition of own culture (Bennett, 2004)) which could be the starting point for other training programs. Further, diversity policy within organizations and open organizational culture would contribute to conditions where multicultural minds will thrive.

Taking into account competences and personal qualities developed by multicultural individuals, there are several spheres where they could contribute for organizations. First, multicultural individuals seem to be excellent candidates for international assignments since they not only possess intercultural competence but also developed self-efficacy which was found to facilitate successful cultural adjustment (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005). Second, multicultural individuals can be effective members of multicultural teams since they are aware of the challenges in cross-cultural interactions and have developed coping strategies. Third, they might take a role of cultural bridgers, thus contributing to cultural knowledge transfer within an organization. Finally, they could help in mentoring programs for employees who undergo acculturative stress or need support and assistance by culture integration.

8.3. Limitations and future research

There are several limitations for the study conducted in the framework of the diploma thesis. First, since the data for diploma thesis was collected in three languages, there was a need for translation of interview questions and findings. The problem of transferring of culturally conditioned meanings from one language into another and possible lack of equivalence is known to be a constraint to intercultural research. That is why it is recommended to apply a concept-driven approach rather than translation-driven approach, i.e. to transmit the idea rather than to use direct translation (Erkut, Alarcón, Coll, Tropp, & Garcia, 1999). By following this recommendation and using qualitative research method it was possible to get deeper insights into culturally conditioned concepts and meanings thus reducing the problem of translation. However, the fact that there are objective limits for conveying completely equivalent meanings from one language to another should be noted as the first limitation to the present research.

The second limitation is due to the demographic data of the participants. Each of them had a unique multicultural experience, which made it possible to investigate a rich spectrum of ways for multicultural identity development. Yet, all interviewees were highly educated and possessed or would shortly get a university degree. Further, some interviewees had an opportunity to get cultural knowledge from other sources (training, cross-cultural courses) than only their own experience. These facts limit the application of results to potentially multicultural individuals who do not have higher education and who did not get any access to theoretical cultural knowledge.

Further, the participants possessed immigrant experience and underwent cross-cultural transition as adults or adolescents when they moved to Austria. Though some of them had mixed family background and multicultural experience as children, this experience was limited to cultures other than Austrian culture. Thus, the sample does not represent the population of bicultural individuals born and raised biculturally in Austria.
The limitations to the present study as well as its results suggest the following areas for future research on the topic of multicultural identity:

- How do the second-generation immigrants in Austria develop their multicultural identity and what are the differences to the experience of the first-generation immigrants?
- How does the education level of individuals influence multicultural identity development and especially acquisition of such characteristics as open-mindedness and willingness to learn?
- What is the role of personality in acculturation process?
- And finally, which role does globalization play for developing one’s multicultural identification? How does the easiness of people’s movement and connectivity via Internet affect the choice of the acculturation strategy?

Conducting studies on these issues would contribute to better understanding of the phenomenon of multicultural identity and give valuable insights into the ways individuals develop their multicultural identification. Due to globalization, our world is changing and the questions of cultural diversity and multiculturalism within a society as well as within a person gain more and more importance. If we want to know, how to overcome the challenges and to benefit from the advantages of cultural diversity, we need to find out how to integrate multiple cultures taking the best of them. Learning from the experience of multicultural individuals who succeeded to do so and applying this knowledge in organizations would contribute to better diversity policy and creating optimal working conditions for employees of the future.
References


Appendix A – Interview guide

Interview Guide (English version)

Background Information
Close contact to other cultures due to

- work
- studies
- living in another country
- living in a multicultural society
- traveling
- personal relationships (marriage, partnership, family, friendship etc.)
- mixed ethnicity
- other ________________________________________

Approximate number of years_______

Which languages do you speak? _________________________________________________

What is your occupation now? __________________________________________________

Age:

- 15-20
- 20-30
- 30-40
- 40-50

Please fill in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Culture I have experience with</th>
<th>Culture I feel close to / identify with</th>
<th>Points from 1 to 6:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6 – very close / I definitely belong to this culture / I identify with this culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 – only a little close / I feel just little belonging to this culture / little identification</td>
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Interview questions

Topic 1. Multicultural identity development

Q1: Please tell me your story in regard to your cultural background? Who are you?

Q2: How has your sense of belonging to these different cultures changed over time? Why do you think has it changed, what were the reasons, what has influenced this change?

Q3: Have other people (e.g. family, friends, colleagues) influenced the way you feel about belonging with different cultures? E.g. what did people around you said about your cultural background? Maybe you felt some pull or push from outside towards one or another culture?

Q4: Which role do different cultures play in your life and how has it changed over time?

Q5: Imagine somebody were going to make the same experience as you. Would you give them some advice?

Topic 2. Skills and competences learned by multiculturals

Q6: What have you learned from your experience with different cultures? What new skills/competences/knowledge do you think you have acquired? Please think of the situation where you have applied these skills.

Q7: What have you learned about culture(s)? What is culture? What are cultural differences and why do they exist?

Q8: Have you undergone any cross-cultural training? Was it useful for you and in what way?

Topic 3. Organizational context

Q9: Do you think that your experience with different cultures influenced somehow your professional life (career/studies/job performance/relationships to colleagues/fellow-students)? In what way?

Q10: What organizations do you think could need you with your experience? In what way could you contribute to them?

Q11: What advice would you give organizations which employ individuals like you? Or just imagine a perfect working environment for you?

Q12: Do you feel like a multicultural person? Why? Why not? Have you felt like this earlier or was it different?
How would you comment on the following definition?

A multicultural individual

- has knowledge of,
- (partly or fully) identifies with, and
- is (partly or fully) willing to follow the values of more than one culture.
Interview Guide (German version)

Background information
Engen Kontakt mit anderen Kulturen aufgrund:

- Arbeit
- Studium
- Leben in einem anderen Land
- Leben in einer multikulturellen Gesellschaft
- Reisen
- Persönliche Beziehungen (interkulturelle Ehe/Partnerschaft, Familie, Freundschaft, usw.)
- Gemischte ethnische Herkunft
- Sonstiges

Engen Kontakt für _______ Jahre
Welche Sprachen sprechen Sie?
Was ist Ihre derzeitige Beschäftigung?

Alter:

- 15-20
- 20-30
- 30-40
- 40-50

Bitte füllen Sie folgende Tabelle aus:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Culture I have experience with Kultur, mit jener ich Erfahrung habe</th>
<th>Culture I feel close to Kultur, zu jener ich mich nah/zugehört fühle</th>
<th>Points from 1 to 6:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>6 – very close/ I definitely belong to this culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 – only a little close/I feel just little belonging to this culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Punkte von 1 bis 6:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6 – sehr nah, ich gehöre definitiv hin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 – nur ein bisschen zugehört</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Interview questions**

**Topic 1. Multicultural identity development**

Q1: Please tell me your story in regard to your cultural background - Who are you?

Erzählen Sie bitte ihre persönliche Geschichte in Zusammenhang mit Ihrer kulturellen Hintergrund - Wer sind Sie?

Q2: How has your sense of belonging to these different cultures changed over time? Why do you think has it changed, what were the reasons, what has influenced this change?

Wie hat sich Ihr Zugehörigkeitsgefühl zu diesen Kulturen im Laufe der Zeit verändert? Warum hat es sich verändert und was könnten die Gründe dafür sein?

Q3: Have other people (e.g. family, friends, colleagues) influenced the way how you feel about belonging with different cultures? E.g. what did people around you said about your cultural background? Maybe you felt some pull or push from outside towards one or another culture?

Haben andere Leute (z.B. Familie, Freunde, Kollegen) Sie beeinflusst, in der Art wie Sie sich zu verschiedenen Kulturen zugehörig fühlen? Z.B., was haben die Leute gesagt über ihre kulturelle Zugehörigkeit? Vielleicht haben Sie Druck von außen gefühlt, der Sie in Richtung einer oder anderer Kultur gedrängt hat?

Q4: Which role do different cultures play in your life and how has it changed over time?

Welche Rolle spielen verschiedene Kulturen in Ihrem Leben, und wie hat sich diese Rolle im Laufe der Zeit verändert?

Q5: Imagine somebody were going to make the same experience as you. Would you give them some advice?

Stellen Sie sich vor, dass jemand die gleichen Erlebnisse wie Sie machen würde. Welchen Ratschlag könnten Sie dieser Person geben?

**Topic 2. Skills and competences learned by multiculturals**

Q6: What have you learned from your experience with different cultures? What new skills/competences/knowledge do you think you have acquired? Please think of the situation where you have applied these skills.


Q7: What have you learned about culture(s)? What is culture? What are cultural differences and why do they exist?

Was haben Sie über Kultur(en) gelernt? Was ist Kultur? Was sind kulturelle Unterschiede und warum existieren sie?

Q8: Have you undergone any cross-cultural training? Was it useful for you and in what way?

Haben Sie jemals ein interkulturelles Training absolviert? War es nützlich für Sie und warum?
Q9: Do you think that your experience with different cultures influenced somehow your professional life (career/studies/job performance/relationships to colleagues/fellow-students)? In what way?

In welcher Art hat Ihre Erfahrung mit verschiedenen Kulturen ihr Berufsleben beeinflusst (Karriere/Studium/berufliche Leistung/Beziehungen zu Arbeitskollegen/Kommlitonen)?

Q10: What organizations do you think could need you with your experience? In what way could you contribute to them?

Für welche Organisationen könnten Sie aufgrund Ihrer Erfahrung mit verschiedenen Kulturen von Nutzen sein? Was könnten Sie bei diesen Organisationen beitragen?

Q11: What advice would you give organizations which employ individuals like you? Or just imagine a perfect working environment for you?

Welchen Ratschlag würden Sie Organisationen geben, die Arbeitnehmer wie Sie beschäftigen? Oder stellen Sie sich einfach ein perfektes Arbeitsumfeld für Sie vor?

Q12: Do you feel like a multicultural person? Why? Why not? Have you felt like this earlier or was it different?

Fühlen Sie sich wie eine multikulturelle Person? Warum? Warum nicht? Haben Sie sich immer so gefühlt oder war dies früher anders?

How would you comment on the following definition?

A multicultural individual
- has knowledge of,
- (partly or fully) identifies with, and
- is (partly or fully) willing to follow the values of more than one culture.

Was ist Ihre Meinung zur folgenden wissenschaftlichen Definition:

Eine multikulturelle Person
- besitzt Kenntnisse über mehr als eine Kultur,
- identifiziert sich teilweise oder völlig mit mehr als einer Kultur,
- ist teilweise oder völlig bereit, den Werten mehrerer Kulturen zu folgen.
Interview Guide (Russian version)

Background information

Пожалуйста, ответьте на следующие вопросы:

За счёт чего у вас возник тесный контакт с несколькими культурами?

- работа
- учёба
- проживание в другой стране
- проживание в мультикультурном обществе
- путешествия
- личные отношения (отношения, брак с представителем иной культуры, семья, дружба)
- я принадлежу к смешанной этнической культуре
- другое ________________________________________________________________

В течение которого времени Вы имеете тесный контакт с разными культурами?_____лет

На каких языках Вы говорите?______________________________________________

Ваша занятость на данный момент___________________________________________

Ваш возраст:

- 15-20
- 20-30
- 30-40
- 40-50

Пожалуйста, заполните следующую таблицу:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Culture I have experience with</th>
<th>Culture I feel close to</th>
<th>Points from 1 to 6:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Культура, с которой я сталкивался в своей жизни (имел опыт взаимодействия)</td>
<td>Культура, с которой я чувствую свою общность (с которой я себя отождествляю, которой в той или иной степени принадлежу)</td>
<td>6 – very close/ I definitely belong to this culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 – only a little close/ I feel just little belonging to this culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>6 - полностью отождествляю себя с данной культурой</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>1 - совсем немного отождествляю себя с данной культурой</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interview questions

Topic 1. Multicultural identity development

Q1: Please tell me your story in regard to your cultural background? Who are you?
Расскажите о себе, своем этническом происхождении и культурном опыте. Кто Вы такой?

Q2: How has your sense of belonging to these different cultures changed over time? Why do you think has it changed, what were the reasons, what has influenced this change?
Изменялось ли Ваше чувство принадлежности к разным культурам в течение Вашей жизни? Как? Как Вы думаете, каковы причины этих изменений?

Q3: Have other people (e.g. family, friends, colleagues) influenced the way how you feel about belonging with different cultures? E.g. what did people around you said about your cultural background? Maybe you felt some pull or push from outside towards one or another culture?
Оказали ли другие люди (члены семьи, друзья, коллеги) влияние на ваше чувство культурной принадлежности? Например, говорили ли они что-либо по поводу Вашей культурной или этнической принадлежности? Тянули/толкали ли Вас внешние обстоятельства или люди в сторону той или иной культуры?

Q4: Which role do different cultures play in your life and how has it changed over time?
Какую роль играют разные культуры в Вашей жизни и как эта роль изменилась с течением времени?

Q5: Imagine somebody were going to make the same experience as you. Would you give them some advice?
Представьте, что кто-нибудь собирается получить опыт взаимодействия с разными культурами, похожий на Ваш. Какой совет Вы могли бы ему дать?

Topic 2. Skills and competences learned by multiculturals

Q6: What have you learned from your experience with different cultures? What new skills/competences/knowledge do you think you have acquired? Please think of the situation where you have applied these skills.
Чему Вы научились благодаря вашему опыту взаимодействия с разными культурами? Какие навыки, способности, знания Вы приобрели? Можете ли Вы вспомнить ситуации, в которых Вы применили эти знания или умения?

Q7: What have you learned about culture(s)? What is culture? What are cultural differences and why do they exist?
Что Вы узнали о культуре/культурах благодаря своему опыту? Что такое культура? Что такое культурные различия и почему они существуют?

Q8: Have you undergone any cross-cultural training? Was it useful for you and in what way?

Принимали ли Вы когда-либо участие в межкультурном тренинге? Был ли тренинг полезен для Вас и почему?

**Topic 3. Organizational context**

Q9: Do you think that your experience with different cultures influenced somehow your professional life (career/studies/job performance/relationships to colleagues/fellow-students)? In what way?

Как Ваш опыт взаимодействия с разными культурами повлиял на вашу профессиональную жизнь (карьеру, учёбу, профессиональную работоспособность, отношения с коллегами и однокурсниками)?

Q10: What organizations do you think could need you with your experience? In what way could you contribute to them?

Как Вы думаете, в каких организациях Ваш многокультурный опыт был бы наиболее востребованным? Какой вклад Вы могли бы внести в качестве сотрудника?

Q11: What advice would you give organizations which employ individuals like you? Or just imagine a perfect working environment for you?

Какой совет Вы могли бы дать организациям, берущим на работу сотрудников с многокультурным опытом? Или представьте себе идеальные условия труда для вас.

Q12: Do you feel like a multicultural person? Why? Why not? Have you felt like this earlier or was it different?

Вы чувствуете себя мультикультурным (поликультурным, бикультурным) человеком? Почему да/нет? Ваше ощущение себя в этом аспекте как-то изменилось со временем?

How would you comment on the following definition?

A multicultural individual
- has knowledge of,
- (partly or fully) identifies with, and
- is (partly or fully) willing to follow the values of
more than one culture.

Пожалуйста, прокомментируйте следующее определение, взятое из научной литературы:

Мультикультурный человек
- обладает знаниями о нескольких культурах,
- полностью или частично чувствует свою принадлежность/отождествляет себя с несколькими культурами
- полностью или частично готов следовать ценностям нескольких культур.
Appendix B – Templates

Initial Template

1 Multicultural identity development
   1.1 Current identity
      1.1.1 Self-identification (ID)
         1.1.1.1 Ethnicity and nationality
         1.1.1.2 Behavior and values (BH, VA)
      1.1.2 Outside identification (SO, FF)
         1.1.2.2 Perception of the society (SO, OI, IR)
         1.1.2.3 Perception of meaningful others (FF)
      1.1.3 Views on identification (WW)
         1.1.3.1 Volitional vs. non-volitional identification (Def.I, SUB)
         1.1.3.2 Possibility of identity change (PR, FP)
      1.1.4 Multicultural identity: definitions of participants (Def.MC and Def.nMC)
   1.2 Change in identification (CH)
      1.2.1 Cultural transition (MV, CH)
      1.2.2 Time factor (TI)
         1.2.2.1 Length of cultural contact (TI)
         1.2.2.2 Phases (PH)
      1.2.3 Language (LG)
      1.2.4 Social environment and activities (AR, A, SI, SN)
      1.2.5 Reciprocity (RC)
      1.2.6 Cultural differences (CD, VA)
      1.2.7 Pride and prestige (PR, PS, RO)
   1.3 Challenges (CN)
      1.3.1 Communication problems (CP)
      1.3.2 Discrimination (DS)
      1.3.3 Identity reduction (IR)
   1.4 Motivation (MO)
      1.4.1 Interest for other cultures (IC, CU)
      1.4.2 Valuing culture diversity (CV, VD, LI, MCT) and choosing the best (CI)
      1.4.3 Development opportunities (DP, PG)
      1.4.4 Coping strategy and positive thinking (CS, PT)
      1.4.5 Double resources (DR)
      1.4.6 Positive values: freedom (FR), education (ED)
2 Learning and personal development

2.1 Cultural knowledge (CK)
   2.1.1 Culture-general knowledge (Def.C)
   2.1.2 Culture-specific knowledge (CK)

2.2 Cross-cultural competence (CO)
   2.2.1 Open-mindedness (O, AN, R, EM, TO, RL, RG)
   2.2.2 Mindfulness (RF)
   2.2.3 Cultural bridging (CB)
   2.2.4 Dealing with stereotypes (ST, PnC)

2.3 Personality
   2.3.1 Flexibility (FL)
   2.3.2 Willingness to learn (WL)
   2.3.3 Perspective taking (PTA)
   2.3.4 Stronger multi-faceted personality (SB, SY)

3 Organizational context

3.1 Contribution of multicultural employees to organization
   3.1.1 Global thinking (GT)
   3.1.2 Foreign languages (LG)
   3.1.3 Willingness for diversity (DW, WD, WMC, MCE, MCT)
   3.1.4 Flexibility (FL)
   3.1.5 Experience with cultures (EH)

3.2 Expectations of multicultural employees
   3.2.1 Cultural diversity at workplace (NMC)
   3.2.2 Equal treatment

3.3 Organization's influence spheres
   3.3.1 Discrimination (DS)
   3.3.2 Diversity management
   3.3.3 Facilitating of multicultural employees' development

3.4 Role of cross-cultural training (CTR)
Final Template

1 Multicultural identity development
1.1 Current identity
1.2 Change in identification (CH)
   1.2.1 Cultural transition (MV, CH)
   1.2.2 Time (TI)
      1.2.2.1 Length of cultural contact (TI)
      1.2.2.2 Phases (PH)
   1.2.3 Language (LG)
1.2.4 Social interactions (AR, A, SI)
1.2.5 Reciprocity (RC)
1.2.6 Cultural differences (CD, VA)
1.2.7 Proud and prestige (PR, PS, RO)

2 Learning and personal development
2.1 Cultural knowledge (CK)
   2.1.1 Culture-general knowledge (Def.C)
   2.1.2 Culture-specific knowledge (CK)
2.2 Intercultural competence (CO)
   2.2.1 Open-mindedness (O, AN, R, EM, TO, RL, RG)
   2.2.2 Dealing with stereotypes and generalizations (ST, PnC)
   2.2.3 Global thinking (GT) and multicultural worldview (WW)
2.3 Personality
   2.3.1 Flexibility (FL) and adaptability
   2.3.2 Multi-faceted and strong personality (SB, SY)
   2.3.3 Appreciation of multicultural experience (CV) and choosing the best (N+P)
   2.3.4 Double resources (DR) and experience help (EH)
   2.3.5 Interest for other cultures (IC) and willingness to learn (WL)

3 Organizational context
3.1 Potential contribution of multicultural employees to organization
   3.1.1 Cultural bridging (CB)
   3.1.2 Creativity (NST)
   3.1.3 Willingness for diversity (DW, WD, WMC, MCE, MCT)
   3.1.4 Awareness of challenges in multicultural teams (CS)
3.2 Role of cross-cultural training (CTR)