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Negotiating cultural identity through the arts: Fitting in, third space and cultural memory

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Abstract

The article examines ways in which arts-based educational approaches were applied to a group of African descendant youth in Western Australia, as a way of understanding challenges to their bicultural socialization and means to developing their bicultural competence. Drawing on African cultural memory as a cultural resource enabled participants to discover the relevance of African cultural memory and embodied knowledge to their bicultural socialization and bicultural competence. The article challenges the argument that successful integration into dominant culture

is only possible when migrants remain focused on acquisition of dominant cultural values – ‘Fitting in’. The African Cultural Memory Youth Arts Festival (ACMYAF) offered an alternative conception of successive integration as a process inclusive of creative appropriation and revaluation of ancestral culture through cultural memory. The festival became a third space through which the participants explored embodied knowledge and African cultural memory towards a positive self-concept and bicultural competence.

Keywords

African Youth

migration

cultural identity

arts

cultural memory

third space

Background

In recent years Australia has become home to a significant number of African migrants. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS 2011), sources reveal that in 2006 there were 248,699 people¹ born in Africa who were resident in Australia. According to Jakubowicz (2009), Africans have arrived in Australia in different waves. With the initial intake (before 1976) being primarily South African whites and Egyptians, mainly of Christian and Jewish background. Sub-Saharan Africans started arriving in significant numbers in the 1990s, mostly from troubled spots of Africa, namely: Liberia, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Congo, Rwanda and Burundi. A smaller number of sub-Saharan Africans have migrated to Australia under the skilled migrants’ scheme

where preference is given to migrants who all ready have existing skills to meet economic objectives (Phillips 2006).² African descendant youth, the focus of this article, are faced with social and psychological challenges associated with adjusting to Australian culture. These social challenges include factors evolving from migration and cultural difference such as ‘visibility’, intergenerational conflict and situations in which two or more cultures share the same geographical area, with one culture maintaining a higher status than another. The psychological challenges involve a state of what Du Bois (2006) labelled ‘double consciousness’ or the simultaneous awareness of oneself as being a member and an alien of two or more cultures. This dual pattern of identification and a divided loyalty may lead to an ambivalent attitude (Berry 2007; LaFromboise et al. 1993). As Sampson and Gifford (2009) observed, although resettled youth of African descent have left behind the physicality of past places, they have not left behind connections to those social worlds. In addition, the ‘trauma’ associated with migration experience is well known and is often manifested in poorer health-related outcomes for both voluntary and refugee migrants alike (Littlewood and Lipsedge 2004; Silove 2004). Therefore, important to their sense of identity and wellbeing is being able to transcend the locality of place to connect with friends and relatives who are scattered across the globe.

Accordingly the African Cultural Memory Youth Arts Festival (ACMYAF) drew on the participants’ cultural memory and psycho-social experiences to organize a theatrical event that was both informative and educative; festivals being a powerful way of expressing and affirming identity. The methodological tools used in both developing and implementing the project included: Arts-based Research (ABR) approaches (Barone and Eisner 2011; Knowles and Cole 2008); Participatory Action Research (PAR) (Conrad 2004; Foster-Fischman et al. 2010), and Critical African

centred pedagogy theory (CACPT) (Akinyela 1996). These methodological approaches provided useful tools for this enquiry into the challenges associated with bicultural socialization of the African descendant youth in ways that were responsive to context, dialogic, processual, critically reflexive, and trans-disciplinary in nature (Keifer-Boyd 2011).

African cultural memory is relevant to the socialization experience of the African descendant youth, both as a source of cultural ideas for strengthening bicultural identity reflecting these young people's heritage, and as a means of sustaining intergenerational harmony through intracultural and intercultural dialogue. Through the research process it was possible to explore ways in which the arts may be used innovatively to develop empowering approaches to bicultural existence. This was important because the existence of a dialectical power relation between the subordinate (African) and dominant (Eurocentric) culture influenced the performative nature of the participants' cultural identities (Akinyela 1996; Darder 1991; Jayasuriya 2008; Solis 1980), consequently the project also had a strong social justice element (Keifer-Boyd 2011). Hence it was the researchers' intention to create a festival that would be both a research and an aesthetic space – a 'third space' (Bhabha 1994) away from the everyday western world – through which participants could explore issues relating to their cultural memory and identity. In this sense the project became an embodiment of 'cultural learning' through which participants not only had access to their own cultural heritage, but also the opportunity to contribute to a culture of their own making (Yothu Yindi Foundation and Garma Festival 2011; Royal Society of Arts 2009).

Participants

The participant group included twelve young people, two artists and six 'Elders', including the researcher, who constituted the patron's committee or steering group. The twelve young people were all of African descent with ages ranging between 12 and 24 years. Nine of the twelve participants claimed ancestry from different parts of Eastern Africa: Uganda (6), Tanzania (2) and Ethiopia (1) and three from Sierra Leone (2) and Liberia (1) in West Africa. Four of participants were male and eight female. In terms of cultural socialization, seven of the participants had lived most of their life in Australia and identified as African Australians. Of the five who had recently arrived from Africa, three had been in Australia for less than three years and identified as African. The last two of this five had been in Australia for six years and identified as African-Australian. Therefore, the group was diverse in terms of ancestry, cultural socialization, and identification.

Significance of ACMYAF

ACMYAF was a useful communicative vehicle for building and affirming bicultural identity. The festival provided a new perspective of understanding cultural identity and communicating it performatively; preserving ethnic identity while reevaluating ancestral culture to meet the challenges of dominant culture (Kaeppler 1987). The ACMYAF festival became a *third space* through which embodied knowledge of the participants and cultural memory were mobilized to develop self-affirming discourses.

Third space

Bhabha (1994) used the term *third space* in his critique of modern notions of culture, his argument being that *third space* is produced in and through language as

people come together and particularly as they resist cultural authority, bringing different experiences to bear on the same linguistic signs or cultural symbols. In the *third space* self-affirming knowledge is articulated in order to counter exclusive cultural narratives emanating from the dominant culture. In the context of the African Australian youth *third space* merges the *first space*, the African-Australian's home, community, and peer networks with the *second space* of the discourses they encounter in more formalized institutions such as work, school, church and media³ (Moje et al. 2004). African descendant youth display an interesting mix of optimism, pessimism, anxiety and fear, which reveals a duality in their formation and actualization of their agency (Materike 2009; Windle 2008). Through their ambivalent duality African Australian youth are searching for and defining an African Australian 'essence', and for most this occurs in a liminal space, the *third space* a place 'betwixt and between' (Turner 1967; Wright 2002), hence the significance of the ACMYAF and the researcher as a cultural translator (Akinyela 1996; de-Anda 1984; Wakholi 2010).

Cultural translators

Cultural translators are potentially the most effective agents in promoting dual socialization (de-Anda 1994; Phipps 2009). A cultural translator is an individual from a bicultural individual's own ethnic or cultural group who has undergone the dual socialization experience with considerable success (de-Anda 1984). The cultural translator is able to share his or her own experiences, provide information that facilitates understanding of the values and perceptions of the dominant culture, and convey ways to meet the behavioural demands made on subordinate members of the society without compromising ethnic values and norms. Thus, the increasing success of each successive generation in dealing with dominant culture depends not so much on the degree of assimilation, as on the increase of the number of translators available

(de Anda 1984; Gordon 2001, 2007). In the ACMYAF, the researcher played the role of a cultural translator.

Methodological approaches

Ladson-Billings in critiquing the aggressive manner of the Euro-American epistemological tradition, observes that different discourses and epistemologies serve as both counter-knowledge and liberating tools for people who have suffered, and continue to suffer, from the Euro-American 'regime of truth' (2003: 399). Epistemology is more than a 'system of knowing' (Billings 2003: 399) that has both internal logic and external validity. Literary scholars, for example, have created distinctions between literary genres such that some works are called *literature* whereas other works are termed *folklore*. The literature of the people of colour is more likely to fall into the folklore category. As a consequence, folklore is seen as less rigorous, less scholarly and, perhaps, less culturally valuable than literature (Finnegan 1970; P'Bitek 1970). Consequently, the claim of an epistemological ground is a crucial legitimating force (Smith 1999; Akinyela 1996; Asante 1988; Freire [1970] 2000; hooks 2003, 2010; Ladson-Billings 2003). That is why some scholars argue that research should be concerned with moral discourse, with the development of sacred texts and a site for critical conversations about democracy, race, gender, class, nation states, globalization, freedom and community (Akinyela 1996; Denzin 2003; hooks 2003; Nabudere 2002; Smith 1999). Critical conversations among the ACMYAF participants required a space in which they would feel empowered to explore issues relating to their identities and marginality. Furthermore, the ACMYAF project was designed to facilitate both intracultural⁴ dialogue among young people of African descent and cross-cultural dialogue with co-performers from the dominant culture in this way both being 'within and between' them.

PAR, CACPT and Performance as research inquiry (PaRI) offered appropriate frameworks for conceptualizing, designing, and implementing the research approaches to the ACMYAF project. For example, the Ujamaa Circle (Akinyela 1996), based on CACPT (Akinyela 1996) was the method used to facilitate dialogue among the participants. This technique teaches through structured dialogues. Dialogue or focused two way conversation that encourages questions and answers from participants can be a strengthening educational tool with which participants are able to uncover knowledge about a subject. Often this knowledge being sublimated for participants in a way that they did not know they possessed. Participants are also able to discover new knowledge, which is gained from other participants and the facilitator (Akinyela 1996; Wakholi 2005). Specifically the Ujamaa circle was complimentary to arts-based enquiry approaches applied during the research process (Barone and Eisner 2011). In addition, through its emphasis on dialogue, CACPT, with its origins in the family therapy theory (Akinyela 1996, 2000, 2005), is aimed at creating effective strategies of liberation from everyday domination experienced by black (African) people (Akinyela 1996, 2000, 2005; Asante 1988) living in predominantly Eurocentric societies (Akinyela 1996, 2000, 2005; Asante 1988).

Critical African centred pedagogy (CACP) maintains a historical view of knowledge (Akinyela 1996; Gordon 2001; Mays 1986; Murrell 2002; Ngugi 1993). In this approach knowledge is recognized as socially constructed and culturally mediated within societies and therefore affected by historical context. The educational significance of CACP lies in the way that human beings construct knowledge in their critical reflection upon lived experiences out of which they are able to define and name their own social and political reality. Moreover social group issues like colonialism, globalization, migration, visibility, racism and bicultural identity

challenges are motivating forces of history and the locus of knowledge construction. This means that awareness of context, informed through 'history', developed through reflection is key for young people of African descent.

CACP grows out of the developing traditions of participatory research. PAR is a philosophy of social research often associated with social transformation in the 'Third World', championed by people such as Freire ([1970] 2000). It has roots in liberation theology and neo-Marxist approaches to community development (Kemmis and McTaggart 2005) centred on the concept of 'Development'.

PAR differs from other forms of social enquiry because it integrates more clearly its political and methodological intentions (Kemmis and McTaggart 2005). Consequently, it provided ACMYAF with a framework for conscious engagement with issues pertaining to cultural identity and power relations associated with bicultural socialization challenges of a group of African descendant youth in Australia (Australian Human Rights Commission 2010; Flanagan 2007; Kayrooz and Blunt 2000; Mungai 2008; Smith and Reside 2009; Tanner 2008; Udo-Ekpo 1999; Wakholi 2005).

Three particular attributes are often used to distinguish PAR from conventional research including: shared ownership of research projects, community-based analysis of social problems, and an orientation towards community action (Bessette 2004; Kemmis and McTaggart 2005). PAR is an empowering approach through which participants and the researcher examined cultural challenges and everyday experiences towards emancipatory outcomes. In ACMYAF, PAR along with CACPT and the Ujamaa circle were applied to the research process by including young people, artists, patrons, funding agencies and the researcher in a collaborative approach to the festival both as actors and agents within these processes.

According to Leavy (2009), performance-based methods can bring research findings to life, adding dimensionality, and exposing that which is otherwise impossible to authentically (re)present. For example, embodied knowledge can be brought to life performatively recognizing that all knowledge is mediated at some level through the senses (Wright 2011a). Performance as ABR can provide a balance between rigour and creativity, imagery and accuracy, the individual and the collective (O'Toole 2006). Consequently, ACMYAF involved participants in diverse performative activities including: imaginative play, singing, dancing, drumming, story telling, reflective journal writing, script writing, painting, cooking, role playing and acting; public speaking and memory exercises. Therefore, PaRI, had the benefit of both aesthetic and educative outcomes seamlessly integrating the hand, heart, and head.

ACMYAF drew on these paradigms to create a pedagogical and performative research approach to the festival that was multi modal in nature (hooks 2003; Hirsch and Smith 2002; Gordon 2001, 2007; Sonn and Fisher 1998).

The festival process

Initial sessions

Young people were offered the opportunity to participate in the project through links between the patrons and their networks and communities. Once useful contacts had been established, the researchers organized several sessions with potential participants. These sessions were intended to generate interest and ideas from the participants through verbal dialogue and performatively through their embodied knowledge; this process recognizing that young people themselves were critical sources of knowledge in relation to bi-culturation.

Performance was central to each session as a means of raising the participants' consciousness about arts as a tool for exploring cultural identity, and as Greene (1995) reminds us, consciousness always involves creativity and imagination. Each workshop had a programme and usually each session begun with a Ujamaa circle where people sat in a circle under the facilitation of the researchers to dialogue on diverse issues. The Ujamaa circle set the mood and purpose of a given workshop session. Usually a session ended with an evaluative activity in the form of a performance or reflective sharing. All the workshop activities were documented through minute taking by one of the participants, and involved photographic and video recording. Workshop sessions were also a bonding opportunity for the participants.

Bonding was an idea young people identified came up with as a means of building relationships through organizing performance activities of their own choice. We define bonding as a performative process, in a liminal space (Turner 1967), through which participants were involved in relationship building through artistic activities, as a means of exploring cultural memory and lived experiences towards bicultural competence. Bonding as a theatrical event includes a concept of theatre as part of playing culture (Sauter 2004). Bonding is therefore a signifying process through which *Otherness* is enunciated, performatively in a third space.

Bonding through a liminal position challenges liberal multiculturalism that is an attempt both to respond to and to control the dynamic process of *articulating* cultural difference (Akinyela 1996; Bhabha 1990, 1994; Castles et al. 1990; Hall 1990; May 1999; Taylor 1994; Theophanous 1995). Liberal multiculturalism accommodates cultural diversity as a symbolic celebration of difference avoiding issues relating to power relations and representation that may offer sustainable

development of minority ethnicities. Bonding is therefore both a cultural practice *and* psycho-social strategy aimed at engaging participants' in reflective practices about their *Otherness* through relation building (Said 1993).

Through the practices of bonding participants were provided with the opportunity to connect with each other and develop sensibilities about African culture and bicultural socialization through memories about Africa, which benefited their emergent identities. These practices provided opportunities for participants to create counter knowledge performatively that contradicted assimilative experiences and stereotypes emanating from dominant culture. This was important because as Bhabha (1990) observed, liberal multiculturalism presents challenges to ethnic migrants in that although there is an encouragement of cultural diversity, there is also a corresponding containment of it by regulatory policies that promote and reinforce monocultural and monolingual practices; this being juxtaposed against the way that all cultures are signifying systems that produce meanings and subjectivities (Bhabha 1990). These issues are elaborated in next section through two theatrical events that were part of the ACMYAF namely: the play *The Real Deal* and *AfricanOz Idol*.

The Real Deal

The *Real Deal* was a group-devised play (Oddey 1994) about migration and identity. The *Real Deal* was a creation from a storyline provided by one young participant. In this story a young man who recently migrated from Africa to Australia is in a relationship with an Australian girl to whom he is reluctant to reveal his African ancestry. The storyline was then developed by the participants under the facilitation of the researcher to give it a fictional context that would articulate some of the cultural identity issues experienced by the young people; this process both providing 'access' to the issue but also providing aesthetic distance from it (Alexander 2003; Diaz and

McKenna 2004; Eisner 1985). The participants, along with the researcher, developed a fictional context for the play based on cultural experience and background of the participants therefore elaborating this story with authentic experiences from participant's own lives. The structural outline of the play that was an outcome of this process provided the theatre facilitator with a blue print for directing the improvisations with the young people. The recorded improvisations were transcribed by participants and edited into a script, under the guidance of the theatre facilitator and the researcher. The play was performed at Nexus Theatre (Murdoch University). The themes and characters in the play provided insight about psycho-social and cultural challenges to the resettlement experience of African migrants. This was suggested by one participant in this way:

The character, Kadajah, brought out more [of the challenges] so allowed the members of the play to explore the issues concerning African-Australian youth. Without her role there would have been no conflict and issues, brought out in the production. This conflict enabled the cast to explore the issues that are really experienced by members of the group.

The aesthetics of African culture and the reappropriation of African cultural symbols were evidently manifested through the performance of the *Real Deal*.



As one observed:

As an African who has spent most of my life in Australia I have a bicultural identity but from the experience of the 'Real Deal' production I have learnt a lot more about my identity as both African (cultural) and Australian.

What this suggests is that *The Real Deal* was a useful context for exploring issues relating to bicultural socialization of the African descendant youth because the theatrical process enabled the participants to explore their own experience performatively.

AfricanOz Idol

AfricanOz Idol was a theatrical event through which young people developed a series of performances in a third space as a means of exploring their bicultural socialization experience. hooks suggests that 'creating trust usually means finding out

what it is we have in common as well as what separates us and makes us different' (2003: 109). Accordingly *AfricanOz Idol* brought the twelve participants from different African backgrounds together to explore their cultural identities performatively through dialogue.

AfricanOz Idol was an idea that came from the young participants and was developed by them under the facilitation of the researchers. This is how one of the participants explained its intent:

AfricanOz Idol was a comedy sketch that the youth with the help of PW our founder, came up with. The premise/theme for whole thing was to be IDENTITY ...The sketch is basically a take on [the reality television talent show] Australian Idol, although it doesn't poke fun on the television show, rather it pokes fun of stereotypes, generalisations about 'Africa', and what it means to be African or African Australian. Each individual brought to it their own ideas, and that's what it was about – primarily defining who we are for ourselves (by responding to the skit's judges criticisms, comments and other feedback) and to the audience.

Consequently, *AfricanOz Idol* provided a context for exploring cultural identity and African cultural memory; it was an enunciative theatrical event, through which performances were enacted and their relevance to cultural identity explored. For example, one participant performed a popular song by an African Artist, 2face Idibia, entitled 'You are my African Queen'. Each participant contributed a theatrical item or collaborated with others to perform an item. Besides those participants who were the 'performers' for the satire, other roles included three Judges; a Master of Ceremony (MC) and the spectators. The MC was the facilitator of what became a dialogic

process. For example, through their critical comments and questioning the judges engaged performers in a dialogue that subsequently informed the bicultural socialization process. Each judge had a distinct character orientation and role. The first judge was a 'good' judge and according to one participant this meant that:

Everything is good. The judge truly supports the individual who has presented, encouraging them even if the act had not been all that great. They may dislike some aspects but generally they try to see the positive out of each act no matter how difficult it may be.

The second Judge was the 'sentimental' judge, who was described this way:

Gives feedback that may not be appropriate (own personal opinions) without any real back up as to why they didn't connect/appreciate or like the material presented; may often be viewed as the mean judge.

The third judge, it was decided, should focus on the cultural identity context of the performance; he or she provided a cultural identity critique and through her questioning narratives relating to cultural difference and bicultural socialization were generated. For example:

The judge is able to give constructive criticism on the material presented. They are able to find out or determine the connection that the material has with the individual who shares it with the group. Through asking open ended questions they were able to determine the connection of the material presented with the individual/performer (with their African-Australian Identity). This enabled the members from both the panel and

the stage to reflect on the connection between the material performed and the performer.

Engaging the performers with critical questions seeking to clarify the connection between the performed piece and their identity challenged the performers to reflect on their bicultural socialization experiences. The stories and themes that emerged from the dialogues informed praxis for bicultural competence. This approach provided the participants with the opportunity to explore and define themselves through the theatrical event and its associated practices. Therefore it was empowering, but also transformative because it challenged the performers to think about what they were doing, and why they were doing it.

The power of *AfricanOz Idol* was the way that it was located in a liminal space enabling the young people to perform their cultural identities with the object of exploring their bicultural socialization experience. During the preparations for the event the participants drew on their African cultural memory and popular culture, individually and collaboratively to learn songs and dances. As noted by this participant:

A great deal of it was improvisation, one song we did – Sioshwe Dhambi Zangu, a Kiswahili hymn for instance was quite plain to begin with. Then I told Isa to drum faster after we'd sang the 1st verse. The 2nd and 3rd time, my sister and I sang higher and faster along to the drum beat. Whatever would sound better we did, and it went from there. I taught my sister... some songs so we could provide backup. [...] anything to help the team out we all did, we worked together.

Collaboration was an important aspect of the theatrical event and therefore an act of cultural identity negotiation. Moreover, *AfricanOz Idol* was also an enunciative space for the participants about ‘who they are’ as described this way:

[...] it’s about conveying one of the narrow views that might still exist – that is that others can define who we are. Our job is to show/explore the different ways we define who we are; but first for ourselves and then more easily to others. That was my interpretation of the event anyway. And furthermore, if we are clear in our mind that this is what we are doing then that should shine through to everyone else.

Bicultural competence demands cognitive flexibility and ability to adapt to situational contingencies (Liebkind 1992). Therefore, intentional generation of self-knowledge that informed the participants’ perspective of themselves was an important outcome of the theatrical event.



AfricanOz Idol provided participants with a space for enacting self-affirming narratives that defined their perceived identities. The conscious engagement with the self with the view of generating informative self knowledge was an important process towards bicultural competence (Gordon 2001, 2007).

Discussions and conclusions

According to Sampson and Gifford (2010), places that support youth in maintaining their social networks across time and space are important for their well-being and identity. These ‘places’ may also play an important role in feelings of social inclusion, particularly in early years when they are strangers in a new land. Indeed, the ACMYAF provided an appropriate space for the young people to feel safe and confident about enacting embodied knowledge and appropriating cultural symbols from the African cultural memory through performance. Through these two significant theatrical events, knowledge about bicultural socialization towards bicultural competence was revealed. And as Berry (2007) observes, from a psychological and sociocultural adaptation context of new migrants, the most adaptive attitude for newly arrived migrants is to maintain their own cultural identity and learn to participate in a new society. The ACMYAF demonstrated this possibility of enabling participants to appropriate cultural symbols from ancestral culture *and* incorporate them into new cultural contexts.

Gordon (2001) further argues that ‘bicultural competence’ is a deliberate process of becoming bicultural, rather than merely making erroneous claims of biculturality as an automatic and defensive response to the realities of being ‘black’ in white society. In order to achieve transformation towards ‘bicultural competence’, Gordon (2001) proposes that it is necessary to gain: self knowledge; educate the self for critical consciousness; nurture one’s internal world; and seek support and embed

process in life as a way of being. Achieving ‘bicultural competence’ means being competent not only in terms of the culture of residence, but also and importantly, the ‘culture of origin’. The festival incorporated Gordon’s principles in its theatrical processes; these arts practices reflecting *other* ways of knowing, doing and being (Wright in press).

Bicultural socialization educational programme

Through the festival and its associated process we can now understand the festival as a Bicultural Socialisation Educational Program (BSEP). This is consistent with the ways that the arts can be used in educational ways (Bresler 2007; Deasy 2002; Stevenson and Deasy 2005), and through which participants developed an African cultural literacy (ACL) that informed their bicultural identities and competence. Bicultural competence is the ability to function successfully in both the dominant and subordinate culture.

The festival as a BSEP provided an artistic and educational experience through which African cultural memory and knowledge about bicultural socialization was generated, and developed consciously by the participants towards bicultural competence. Through the BSEP diverse ‘funds of knowledge’, including the African cultural memory, were explored critically and performatively, towards a positively self-affirming discourse giving these young people experiences of cultural learning where they both strengthened access to their own cultural heritage, and became ‘culture makers’ (Fels and McGivern 2002; Royal Society of Arts 2009). This was indeed a hope-ful project.

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¹ The largest group were born in South Africa (104,133 or 41.9% of the total Africa-born population living in Australia), 13.5% were born in Egypt, 8.1% in Zimbabwe, 7.7% in Sudan, 7.3% in Mauritius, 4.0% in Kenya and 2.3% in Ethiopia. Africa-born people also came from 51 other countries, each contributing less than 5000 persons (or less than 2.0% of the total).

² For details see Phillip's article at the Parliamentary Library Website of Australia http://www.aph.gov.au/library/intguide/sp/skilled_migration.htm

³ The first and third spaces are arbitrary as they may be swapped, the first space being the dominant culture and the second space being that associated with subordinate culture.

⁴ We use intracultural to imply dialogue about culture among people with similar cultural background or from a similar cultural environment with many shared symbols. Cross-cultural is used to imply dialogue between people of very distinctively different cultures with probably very few shared symbols.